
FREETHS

EDI Strategy 2026-8



Our purpose

We are committed to being a place of possibilities, opportunities and belonging for all; a place which values 'culture-add' as much as 'culture fit', where curiosity and fresh perspectives can thrive, and diversity is a non-negotiable foundation for innovation and sustainable growth.

The EDI team provides the subject matter expertise to make this a reality. We:

- build individual and organisational inclusion capability
- advise on the gold standard of inclusive practices
- engage the voices of lived experience to translate theory into meaningful change



The story so far

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) sit at the heart of life at Freeths. We're proud to be a place of possibility, where bright minds and bright ideas can flourish and spark off each other. Our progress is already driving positive change across the firm and within our Partnership.

In recent years we've introduced a Promotion Pathway, mentoring programmes, inclusive recruitment guidance, staff networks, and learning programmes, all in the pursuit of equity and workplace social justice. We've focused on building systems and a culture where everyone can perform, belong, and reach their potential.

84% of colleagues say they feel respected and valued by their colleagues. It's a fantastic result that we're committed to improving even further.

Our staff networks have been vital in breathing life and authenticity into our EDI work. Growing by an average of 43% last year, they continue to create safe, supportive spaces and help shape the actions that make the biggest difference to everyday experiences.



Stepping forward as a Responsible Business

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As we move into the next step on our journey, we are delighted to be doing so as part of wider Responsible Business team and strategy, incorporating sustainability, community and wellbeing alongside EDI.

With a sharp focus on impact, this joined-up approach and the value it can bring to the business is a golden thread through the new Freeths strategy: One Firm. One Future 2030.

We have asked ourselves, “What does an outstanding Responsible Business do to catalyse equity, diversity and inclusion for its colleagues, clients and communities, and where do our information sources tell us we can have the greatest impact?”

The pages that follow contain our answers.



EDI: Our strategic 'why'



People

EDI creates new practices and possibilities for all to thrive. A sense of belonging is a measurable driver of engagement and productivity as well as fostering workplace harmony and enjoyment.



Growth

Growth is sustained by a strong sense of community. Our openness to collaboration and knowledge exchange makes us attractive to new business. Considering equity in key business decisions means our values aren't lost in the pace of change.



Clients

Prospective clients have high regard for tangible actions which make a measurable difference. This is what we deliver. Relatability with clients helps forge strong, trusting relationships, and our diversity helps us achieve this.



Brand

Our bold actions in the pursuit of equity make us stand out from the crowd. Our people are visible and vocal champions of our inclusive culture. Not because we asked; because they feel it. We are known for excellence and knowledge-sharing.



Innovation

Diversity of thought is essential. Innovation happens in psychologically safe spaces where questions, curiosity and fresh perspectives can thrive.

EDI strategic objectives



Equity

Rigorously identify and address systemic issues which may create or compound disadvantage, to ensure fair opportunities for all.



Diversity

Attract, engage and empower diverse talent and perspectives at all levels to drive innovation, increase employee satisfaction and retention, and positively impact client relations and reliability.



Inclusion

Develop our culture of inclusion and belonging, where colleagues can learn from and about each other, with space for healthy disagreement and compassionate coexistence across different worldviews.



Client collaboration

Develop and deliver a range of collaboration, learning and networking opportunities, with and for our clients.

Core EDI principles

1. Equity: Seeking to understand and resolve any practices which may inadvertently create disadvantage
2. Insights: Being data led, including statistics, colleague insights, sector expertise and relevant research
3. Accountability: Being transparent in our ways of working and our progress against objectives
4. 365: keeping EDI priorities meaningfully on the radar all year round, not just during celebration dates
5. Universal: EDI benefits and is owned by all colleagues
6. Respect: We expect everyday interactions to be respectful as we compassionately co-exist across our differences
7. Leadership: Being led from the top and embedded in Firm strategy
8. Humility: Maintaining channels to listen to and value the lived experiences of colleagues so we can correct our course as needed



Data-led EDI

To inform the strategy, evidence has been collated across a range of sources, including:

- 2025 IIP Survey
- Pay Gap reports and consultations 2023-2025
- Workforce data:
 - Representation, starters, leavers, promotions, engagement in L&D
- EDI engagement survey
- Colleague networks
- External benchmarks and comparators



Equity

Rigorously identify and address systemic issues which may create or compound disadvantage, to ensure fair opportunities for all.



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Promotions

Build on our promotion pathway to include guidance for part-time colleagues, an equivalent pathway for business services, and a development model for partners.

2

Reward

Introduce a recognition scheme for EDI network leads.
Increase transparency and consistency in discretionary bonuses.

3

Part time, full power

Design and deliver a myth-busting campaign with supporting resources for colleagues and managers, to break down perceived and real barriers to progression for part time colleagues.

4

Pay gap

Work with key stakeholders to deliver targeted actions to narrow the pay gap over time, focussing on inclusive recruitment, a race equity action plan, and workforce composition at all levels of the firm.

5

Disability and access

Increase awareness and uptake of Tailored Adjustment Plans. Develop an 'accessible and inclusive offices' policy. Achieve Disability Confident Leader status.

Diversity

Attract, engage and empower diverse talent at all levels to drive innovation, increase employee satisfaction and retention, and positively impact client relations and reliability.



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Attraction

Develop an appealing web area and social media presence to showcase our EDI profile and benefits.

2

Recruitment

Develop a 'licence to hire' learning asset to deploy to all recruiting managers; embed evidenced-based practices which have an impact on inclusivity in recruitment.

3

Pipeline

Understand our recruitment, progression and leavers data and complement it with qualitative research to identify and address 'leaks and blocks', building strong gender and ethnic diversity at all levels of the firm.

4

Role models

Make sure it's easy to find and learn from relatable role models from a range of backgrounds, through online content, mentoring, networks and external profiles.



Inclusion

Develop our culture of inclusion and belonging, where colleagues can learn from and about each other, with space for healthy disagreement and compassionate coexistence across different worldviews.

1

Networks

Continue to grow our EDI networks, supporting them to work intersectionally, have a strategic voice, and create community.

2

Learning

Develop bitesize resources which are relevant to the firm, easy to access and appropriately pitched; embed EDI principles throughout firmwide and third-party learning provision.

3

Engagement

Improve communication and engagement methods for EDI activities to create community and active participation rather than 'noise' and passive consumption; engage with REACH and Rise networks to develop an anti-racist culture.

4

Resolution

Communicate robust and accessible resolution pathways to actively promote a zero-tolerance approach to inappropriate behaviours.

5

Culture

Support EDI champions and Office Managers to enable and encourage local opportunities to connect on EDI themes; be intentional in ensuring inclusion is relevant for all, including socially conservative and majority groups.

Client collaboration

Develop and deliver a range of collaboration, learning and networking opportunities, with and for our clients.



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Knowledge

Develop a structured programme of knowledge-sharing opportunities for clients to advance their – and our – EDI maturity,

2

Theory in practice

Help translate theory into practice, for example supporting Freeths' lawyers with appropriate practice-based content to complement relevant legal webinars.

3

Small businesses

Quantify a pro-bono advice and guidance offer on developing EDI strategy or activities, for small business and not-for-profit clients who don't have the resources for in-house EDI practitioners.

Measuring impact

Objectives

- Ensure EDI initiatives result in measurable changes in the recruitment, retention and progression of equality groups
- Achieve equitable representation of equality groups in promotions compared with peers
- Upwards movement on colleague engagement survey questions relevant to EDI
- Increased ease of meeting requirements of bids and tenders to generate new business with likeminded
- Increased engagement with Freeths IMPACT Pledge activity

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How we will deliver our ambitions

- Improved data focus and data literacy across all functions to identify priorities and monitor progress.
- Embed evidence-based, inclusive processes and practices.
- Establish diverse shortlists as a norm.
- Support proactive workforce planning with longer lead times for talent attraction and avoiding speculative hiring.
- Require key suppliers to track diversity of candidates provided.
- Build confidence and capability on inclusive recruitment, management and leadership practices.
- Create collective ownership and accountability.

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Governance

The EDI strategy is overseen by an EDI Steering Group (EDISG), which reports to the Responsible Business Committee. The EDISG draws expertise from our Senior Partner (EDI Senior Sponsor), Chief People Officer, Responsible Business Director, and Executive Sponsors of our colleague EDI networks.

The EDISG meets quarterly to receive progress updates from the EDI team and the Diversity Action Group, and to provide insight on EDI issues and initiatives.

The Responsible Business Committee has oversight of Freeths' approach to Responsible Business in line with the firm's strategic objectives and values. It is a sub-committee to Freeths' Management Board and includes the Senior Partner, Chair of the Management Board, COO, CPO and Director of Responsible Business.

The firm's Managing Partner receives all RBC meeting minutes.



Governance and Delivery



Thank you
