

Promoting diversity through the downturn

(Message from Angela Darling, Chair, Professional Standards Board (PSB) Diversity Action Group)

Over the past few years, we have been asked to adapt to rapidly changing times, both economically and socially. With some sources suggesting that nine out of ten new jobs over the next decade will be in the professional or managerial sectors, it follows that we should take a keen interest in making sure the top talent from all backgrounds have access to professional careers in insurance and financial services. The business case for diversity has never been stronger.

As Chair of the CII's Professional Standards Board Diversity Action Group, I have worked with the CII over the years to ensure that we as a profession continue to evolve our membership service and services to the public. Like other professions, we strive to become more inclusive and raise awareness of key issues like the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and the Equality Bill to best support our members. It is important to understand that we need to comply with the legislation, but the role of a professional body is to go beyond compliance – what we need to know and do – to encourage understanding and promote diversity amongst our members and the profession.

Diversity starts with monitoring and awareness. The CII has long invested in staff diversity training, and this has helped the organisation improve its membership offering in multiple areas. For example, the CII has developed equal opportunities monitoring for all governance positions. After an initial survey of Local Institutes' diversity awareness, the CII will be providing diversity training to Local Institutes in the near future, along with all Faculty Boards. Commitment to diversity is also enshrined in the new Code of Ethics launched last year as a separate section of the Code. Members can keep abreast of developments by logging on to the CII Diversity Web Page, which also includes useful resources like our definition of diversity and an interfaith calendar:

http://www.cii.co.uk/pages/about/diversity_subgroup.aspx.

To learn about more about the CII's work in the context of what other professions have been doing to promote equal access and opportunities, please see Equally Professional's first progress report online at: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/professional-bodies/>.

The PSB Diversity Action Group would be delighted to hear from anyone who is interested in the work of the group or has any views or ideas to promote diversity at a local level, nationally or internationally. Please email us at: hina.shah@cii.co.uk.