

MINUTES
Allies and Advocates

Women and Work APPG Meeting, Monday 28 October 2019
3-4pm, Committee Room 11, House of Commons

Chair: Jess Phillips MP, Co-Chair of the Women and Work APPG

Parliamentarians in attendance:

- Baroness Howe of Idlicote
- Baroness Prosser
- Lord Lucas
- Gillian Keegan MP
- David Lammy MP

Co-Chair of the Women and Work APPG, Jess Phillips convened the meeting as Chair, welcoming attendees and panellists.

Minutes

The first speaker, **Louise Johnston, UK Chief Compliance Officer and Chair of Amex's Diversity Council, American Express (Amex)** explained that her role is to drive diversity and inclusion within company strategy. Amex has a diversity council that has been running for a year and a half. It focuses on equality issues in the workplace through both tactical and strategic means; by continuing engagement with diversity networks and using them to make change. Louise explained that the council still has a way to go in refining its operations, but currently it works closely with 10 organisations set up for colleagues from marginalised groups. She argued that allyship is driven by networks, as individuals may feel alienated by the pursuit of a more balanced workplace but emphasised that Amex aims to use the power of storytelling to bring together its resources and services, showing all of its employees that it supports them.

Louise also explained that Amex sponsor Brighton Pride – as their head office is located there – saying that the diversity of the city chimes with the company's ethos. She said that the concepts of intersectionality and allyship were new and challenging ideas for the company; admitting that Amex is in its first phase of embedding a culture of allyship within the organisation, by raising awareness of what the term means and how colleagues can be better allies. She added that Amex are trying to make their workplace more ethical through inclusive leadership training, running internal programmes to recognise and celebrate allies, and through the creation of a confidential ethics hotline. Louise concluded by saying that Amex doesn't have all the answers but the company is listening, discussing best practice, and honouring people's lived experiences.

Philippa Handyside, Director and General Counsel, Association of British Insurers (ABI) said that diversity and inclusion pose challenges in the insurance and long-term savings sector, but ABI are a leading advocate for change. She explained that they have been the first association in the industry to lead coordinated action encouraging members to publish detail of shared parental leave entitlements, which is important for allowing men to be

working parents and sets an example for other companies. Philippa added that the insurance industry will be the first to create a job share portal, which will address gender imbalance in heterosexual couples by mitigating which parent undertakes the majority of childcare responsibilities, prevent women's careers from being affected by becoming mothers, and bring part-time work to more senior roles. She stated that ABI is the first in the financial services sector to have a diversity and inclusion festival, and the first financial services trade body to sign up to the Women in Finances Charter.

ABI convene a board of chief executives from the biggest insurance and long-term savings companies and have put diversity and inclusion – particularly regarding BAME and LGBT+ inclusivity – on the board's agenda. The board now see it as a "*commercial imperative*" to liberate the untapped growth and potential trapped in marginalised members of the workforce and are focusing on tangible objectives for addressing this. Philippa outlined the various networks ABI participates in as part of its diversity and inclusion work, such as the He for She mentorship programme. Philippa stated that ABI are leading by example to promote best practice and bring together diversity and inclusion leads in all of its member companies, so that they can share good and effective practice with each other. She said ABI also collect data to service their evidence-based initiatives; proving which approaches are effective. She mentioned that ABI are technically too small an organisation to report its gender pay gap, arguing that therefore size matters in determining which companies are able and compelled to act on equality issues.

Jess Phillips MP responded by pointing out that Philippa's evidence disproved the argument that small businesses can't address equality.

Philippa agreed and said that organisations have to ask themselves why their internal disparities exist.

David Lammy MP explained that he is Chair of the APPG on Fatherhood and wanted to share the perspective of people who advocate for fathers in discussions around gender, as it is often an overlooked point. He added that the gains women need to make in the workplace to achieve parity won't be possible until issues surrounding fatherhood are addressed. He explained that he started the APPG on Fatherhood for two reasons: partly because his father left his family when he was 12, and because the proportion of young men in the Afro-Caribbean community who grow up without a father in the home has risen to 60%. He said that his work in the APPG has identified issues in maternity wards, as they are often created as women's zones, leaving many fathers without places to stay overnight and men's toilets often being far away or inaccessible. He added that mothers were often distressed that they couldn't have their baby's father with them throughout their time on a maternity ward.

David also expressed concern that there are 0.5 million babies per decade who are registered without their father's name on their birth certificate. He noted that in circumstances of domestic abuse or sexual violence he supported this but argued that it is particularly common in working class families who often don't know that the father needs to be present. He argued that this has repercussions for how fathers begin their journey into parenthood, particularly for teenage parents. He said that lots of factors are at play inhibiting working class fathers from fulfilling their responsibilities after the

relationship with their child's mother breaks down. One example he gave was that centres offering childcare services often don't have a male toilet, which institutionalises the expectation that fathers aren't present. He contended that this creates a consistent assumption that mothers carry the full load of parenting duties – especially in young families – and that this creates a huge problem for all genders.

David then addressed the issue of parental leave, in particular the low take-up of shared leave. He said that the policy hasn't received sufficient promotion and the financial compensation for it is inadequate. He argued there should be mechanisms in place and enough financial support for people of various working lifestyles to undertake shared leave.

David argued that there's an expectation embedded in the state that fathers will irresponsibly spend money meant for their children. As an example, he cited that it is still not possible to pay child benefit directly to fathers.

David explained how race intersects with fatherhood, stating that there needs to be a way of empowering BAME men and being fair to women at the same time. As an example, he described how it's extremely hard for single men to access housing – and a disproportionate number of BAME men are in need of housing – which makes it much harder for single men who have children to support and their mothers. He added that this means more women have to support their children alone, and makes outcomes for the children themselves more precarious.

Turning to how fatherhood has been treated politically, David contended that in the liberal, progressive sphere, the fight for women and children's familial rights has made it difficult to include fathers in discussions about families. On the other side, he explained that conservative politics have focused on traditional, heterosexual marriages to an extent that has excluded other kinds of relationships. He concluded by saying that many of the pressing issues in society place a particular burden on women, but that it is important to assess them from the perspective of fathers and men too.

Ez Duggleby, Higher Education Account Manager, Diversity Champions Programme, Stonewall began by contextualising the state of play for LGBT people in the workplace. More than one in three LGBT staff have hidden their identity at work for fear of discrimination. One in eight BAME LGBT employees have lost a job in the last year because of their identity, compared to 4% of white LGBT employees. One in eight trans people have been physically attacked in the workplace – because of being trans – in the last year. She noted that these statistics are from a report published in 2018; since which the situation has become more acute, especially for trans people. Ez argued that this is evidence that a “goodwill atmosphere” hasn't made enough progress and instead, structure is needed to affect change.

She stated that Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme works with 850 organisations around the UK, including with 25% of the employee base in Northern Ireland. It looks at issues like shared leave for same sex couples, policies for transitioning at work safely and without discrimination, and how employers can create a safe working environment for LGBT people to be visible and convey this in recruitment advertising.

Ez argued that there needed to be resources available for non-LGBT people to learn from and use to be effective, practical allies. These need to address pressing issues like transphobia and the rights of lesbians going through IVF treatments. She argued that she sees lots of rainbow merchandise, but she wants there to be education behind the branding so its value for LGBT people can be realised.

Ez said that Stonewall's network of organisations supportive of their LGBT staff use mechanisms like reverse mentoring schemes – where senior leaders are mentored by different people in the organisation, giving them a platform. They also ensure organisations are monitoring their recruitment processes and employee cycles within their organisation to ensure LGBT people are being given opportunities and supported once hired. Stonewall also encourage companies in their network to look at their procurement and make sure that the companies they outsource services to are matching their scrutiny of tendering and discrimination processes. She emphasised the importance of service or outward facing members of an organisation – such as security or hospitality staff – being aware of how to be respectful of LGBT people, for example how to use pronouns sensitively. She said that Stonewall look at how organisations are offering resources to support the external LGBT community too, either locally or more widely. Ez concluded by saying that she wants to see visible and consistent commitment for LGBT people, especially throughout the year; not just at Pride.

Jess Phillips MP thanked the panellists for their introductory comments and opened the floor to questions.

Q&A

Maureen Paul from Ofgem pointed out that data is powerful in getting people to act. She argued that although people are talking about diversity problems, they are nonetheless getting worse, especially for BAME women. She said that more significant action is needed to address intersectional issues and produce change for people affected by them, noting that the diversity of London is not reflected in many of the city's workplaces. Maureen reasserted that companies need to talk about race and use data to address this.

Jess Phillips MP agreed, stating that 25% of the people in Birmingham are Muslim women, but they are significantly underrepresented in the workplace.

A member of the audience said that a concern is clarifying vernacular, as some words are ambiguous or umbrella terms – like 'transgender' – and can mean a variety of things, while for other words, it is more inclusive to be broad, for example by using neutral terms like 'parent'. She argued that having consistent vernacular across sectors would help people to use the right terminology and foster knowledge.

Jess Phillips MP highlighted the importance of intent when discussing language, asserting that this is more important than whether someone uses the wrong terminology.

Ez Duggleby added that this issue is a big challenge for Stonewall, as the perception of language is changing, but there is consensus that intent is most important. She also stated that it is easy to correct people constructively and most LGBT people are willing to educate people who want to learn.

Jess Phillips MP said that it won't be possible to stop people using gendered terms like 'motherhood' and 'fatherhood', especially in working class communities, and that it's important to be accommodating of differences and ensure that leaders are able to speak to the audiences they have. She also argued that having good intentions makes room for difficult conversations about inequality to happen in the workplace, noting that the backlash to the 'Me Too' movement often led to powerful men seeing mentoring young women as too risky, but this is counterproductive and not what the movement was seeking. She acknowledged that it can be scary to be an ally in the workplace, as people can worry about saying the wrong thing, but reiterated the importance of intent.

Philippa Handyside pointed out that hard lines can defeat aims as people will always fall on the wrong side of the line. She said that a principles-based approach based on good intentions should work for everyone but added that policymakers in the public and private sectors need to be as accurate as possible when putting things in writing.

Jess Phillips MP said that efforts should be directed toward systemic change rather than rooting out individuals, as well as amending systems to elevate as many people as possible.

Another member of the audience stated that an intersectional focus was important. She expressed that a person's background can significantly inform their perspective and what stereotypes they believe.

Jess Phillips MP responded by saying that ideas within communities and about communities both need to be challenged. She said it was important to look at supply-side issues – for example those that make Muslim women less likely to be in work – and not to be afraid to talk about them. She added that steps need to be taken to ensure that Muslim women have access to the same mentoring and other services at university, and make sure that familial and communal conventions that may inhibit access to education aren't binding. She noted that this is in addition to addressing demand-side issues like name discrimination when considering representation in employment.

Another member of the audience agreed that it's important to have policies in place to address equality issues, but intent is most important. Leadership in some companies can be in danger of assuming that policies tick boxes when really they are determined uniquely every time and boil down to individual intent. Nonetheless, this can create problems with consistency.

Louise Johnston stated that policy can be interpreted in different ways; they are a good starting point but cannot be where efforts end. She added that a safe environment is key, as are continuation, repetition, and an ethos that filters down from the top, so that change is tangible. She said that labels are less important than who you are, what you do and how you want to be treated. She concluded by emphasising the importance of fostering loud, impactful messages that everyone in the organisation hears.

Ez Duggleby said that structure and intent can't be relied on; organisations need balance. She contended that it's impossible to have simple answers and solutions. She added that people themselves aren't intersectional, but structures intersect to affect people, arguing that these are what need to be addressed.

Philippa Handyside said that groups like APPGs raise the noise of the conversation around inequality and elevate structural permission for allies to speak up and act on problems. She said that allies and champions should be celebrated, not criticised for advocating causes that may be at odds with an organisation's aims.

Non-parliamentarian attendees

Name	Organisation
Lesa Molinari	Colt Technology Services
Rachel Collins	Colt Technology Services
Kate Lloyd	AMAR Foundation
Rachel Miner	AMAR Foundation
Isobel Graham	Association of British Insurers
Lola Kueton	REC
Melanie Fernandes	KPMG
Gabi Ashton	Care Quality Commission
Alison Fendley	Forensic Archive Ltd
Claire Marie O'Grady	Tate & Lyle PLC
Jane Moffett	Kangaroo Coaching
Nicki Seignot	The Parent Mentor
Iman Achara	British Black Anti-Poverty Network
Ada Offonry	Association of Accountancy Technicians
Alice Devlin	Government Equalities Office
Claire Gray	Shaw Trust
Eleanor Lynch	On behalf of Lord Taylor of Warwick
Eleanor Waithe-Arnold	City, University of London
Sophie Cubbin	City, University of London
Roisin Hynes	Aegon Asset Management/Kames Capital
Nina Doehmel-Macdonald	Atlas Partners
Madeleine Field	FDM Group
Sue Hyde	Skanska
Laura Forster	Road Haulage Association
Chris Seaton	Road Haulage Association
Fiona Dorrington	The Institute of Physics
Elisabeth Kelan	University of Essex
Simona Cilenti	American Express
Nikeeta Phagura	American Express
Debra Stein	American Express
Charlotte Abrahamson	Whitehat
Diana Scott Brown	College of Podiatry
Claire Argus	College of Podiatry
Mara Lilley	Share Action
Rachel Hargreaves	Share Action
Victoria Jones	American Express
Manaalee Trivedi	Enterprise Rent-A-Car/Holdings
Jennifer Moses	NASUWT Teachers' Union
Deborah Turner	Federation of Small Businesses
Kinjal Vadgama	The Financial Ombudsman Service

Debbie Enever	The Financial Ombudsman Service
Matt Ross	American Express
Julia Green	Ambition
Keith Jones	Institution of Civil Engineers
Claire Hunt	CEP Imperial College
Cecile Communal	British Library
Tanya Dolan	International Aviation Women's Association
Maureen Paul	OFGEM
Shiler Mahmoudi	David Lammy MP's office
Lenny Rolles	University of Sussex
Indiah Salerno	University of Sussex
Rachel Sutton	University of Sussex
David Galindo	King's Fund
Siham Dahir	King's Fund
Joyti Chandegra	Kent Wildlife Trust
Tim Julier	Daphne Jackson Trust
Collette Byrne	OCD Action
Alex Turpin	Williams
Balvinder Ahluwalia	Gard LTD
Emma Elson	Association of British Insurers
Keith Clarke CBE	Active Building Centre
Teresa Boughey	Inclusion 247