

MINUTES
Building the Pipeline

Women and Work APPG Meeting Wednesday 28 March 2018
5.00pm-6.00pm, Committee Room 18, House of Commons

Chair: Gillian Keegan MP, Co-Chair of the Women and Work APPG

Parliamentarians in attendance:

- Baroness Howe of Idlicote
- Tracy Brabin MP

Minutes

Co-Chair of the Women and Work APPG, Gillian Keegan MP introduced the topic, Building the Pipeline. She explained that the last meeting looked at what employers can do to attract more women, and that this meeting will look at what women can do in their own job searches. She said that we need to be more flexible in the way we work and train, as that's the way the world works now. She said the APPG is discussing how to make sure that women thrive and do well in that work environment.

She outlined some key facts and figures to set the scene:

- Data from the Young Women's Trust found that 53% of women aged 18-30 worry about their abilities, compared to 43% of men. 54% of young women agreed they lacked self-confidence, compared to 39% of men.
- City & Guilds found that, when young women found an application process difficult, 49% said it knocked their confidence and at least a quarter said it made them less likely to apply for other jobs.
- Girlguiding UK has identified a 'self-belief slump' that takes place for girls in their teens. While 63% of 7-10-year-old girls say they feel confident in themselves, only 31% of young women aged 17-21 say the same.
- A 2017 study by professional services firm Egon Zehnder found that only 54% of women have access to senior leaders who act as mentors or informal sponsors in their career.
- When moving towards the top of the pipeline, women receive less directly career-related advice from their manager than men by a ratio of 4:1.

The first speaker **Dr Carole Easton, CEO, Young Women's Trust (YWT)** outlined how her organisation supports and represents young women on low or no pay, with a focus on financial independence. She identified a cycle of barriers facing such women, including increasing anxiety and low confidence, which form a vicious spiral. YWT conducts research, carries out influencing activity, and delivers services directly. She talked in more detail about one of the services offered by YWT, Work It Out. Before starting YWT polled young

women and conducted focus groups to review what was already out there and see what services people were using. The research showed that only one in five women thought that Jobcentre Plus helped them get a job, and 59% found it humiliating. Carole said that it was quite rare to see positive experiences of Jobcentre Plus. She said that women were being funnelled and given stereotyped advice, for example many of them were directed into childcare.

She said that there is a cycle of women not in the workplace, not receiving support, and not being encouraged. Women said that they wanted a professional service to build their knowledge, skills, confidence and employability. Work It Out delivers free coaching which is tailored to suit the needs and reality of women's lives. Volunteers with relevant experience can provide detailed feedback on job applications and CVs. Evaluation has shown that around 42% participants last year came from the most deprived households, and 41% were unemployed. Those who were employed were often on low-paid and/or zero-hours contracts. Carole said that YWT have seen participants' confidence improve dramatically, as women start recognising their skills and successes. 84% of participants last year reported a positive change in their employment situation or employability.

The second speaker was **Priscilla Casey**, from the **Young Women's Trust Advisory Panel**. She had participated in the Work it Out programme and outlined her own experience. She was jobless and homeless before she participated, living in a hostel and on benefits. She said that she thought her life would not get better but the Work it Out programme helped to transform it. She now has her own apartment in London. She said that she now recognises she had all the skills she needed but did not believe it at the time. Her coach reminded her that she is a capable, strong woman who can do anything. She suffered from depression and anxiety, but said that her coach understood and did not make her feel like a failure. The first step was to work on a morning routine, then look at education, then job prospects. She told the meeting that she took on a youth work role at a centre in Brixton, and her coach advised her on how to perform well and take the next steps. She knew that it would be a valuable investment in her future. She said that targeted, personal programmes like Work It Out are so important, and that she never believed she could get a job and earn a living, never mind have her own apartment.

Gillian Keegan thanked Priscilla for speaking about her experience and said that she didn't know about the service previously and would like to know more. She highlighted the importance of supporting homeless people into work.

The third speaker, **Girlguiding UK Advocate, Juliet Dowley** started by highlighting how women are not represented in certain roles and occupations, such as leadership and management, politics, and finance. But research from Girlguiding UK shows that 63% of girls aged 11-21 said they wanted to be a leader in their chosen job.

Juliet said that Girlguiding UK's 2016 Girls' Attitudes survey may shed some light on this. It found that 86% of girls aged 7-10 said girls and boys have the same chance of succeeding in future jobs. For girls aged 11-16 the 86% figure falls to 54% and amongst girls aged 17-21, 35% thought that girls are as likely as boys to succeed in future jobs. Juliet argued that perhaps, as women grow up and see women stereotyped in the media or in their everyday life, something happens to make them lose their confidence. She asked what can be done to counteract this, and put forward some suggestions.

Firstly, she said that making sure female role models are visible can make a difference. This could be through mentoring schemes, inviting female leaders to speak at events for young women, or working the portrayal of women in the media. Stereotypes have a real impact on girls' lives. Girlguiding UK uses resources such as the Science Innovator badge, the computer badge for Brownies, and the Be Constructive and Experiment activity packs to show that there are opportunities for girls, even in male-dominated fields.

She emphasised the importance of access to high-quality, non-gendered careers advice. In 2014, 32% of young women aged 11-21 reported that young women get different careers advice than their male counterparts, even when their interests are similar. Finally, she said that we need to make sure that MPs and others in power listen to girls' voices, because they know what they want and need. For example, in 2017 87% of girls said they felt childcare should be shared equally, but in 2016 only 29% felt that having children would not affect their career. Only 27% of girls think that politicians understand the issues that girls are facing today.

Gillian Keegan thanked Juliet for her speech and said that it reminded her of when she started her apprenticeship. She was strongest in maths and science but was told that she would be better on the commercial side, rather than engineering. She said that she was shocked and surprised that this is still happening today.

The final speaker, **Karl Simpson, Founder and CEO, Lifestream**, started by stating that he would talk from three different perspectives. Firstly, as the CEO of a company delivering executive recruitment services in the life science. Secondly as a member of the Board of the Women's Business Council. Thirdly, as Chair of the Association of Executive Recruiters, an industry body working to address issues in the sector, particularly diversity and inclusion. He said that it has been consistently found is that women are substantially under-represented in life sciences. Fewer than 2% of Board Chairs are women. The figure is around 7-9% for CEOs, and around 20% at executive committee level. But at entry level women and men come in in equal numbers, with the same education and the same opportunities. Looking at why this drop-off happens, Karl said that there is a problem with the system, which has been built by men, for men, and continues to be operated by men. He argued that there are biases and failures at every point which lead to inequality. He noted that there are efforts to mentor women and increase confidence, but stated that until the system is better, the problem will be a perpetual one.

Karl outlined several things that could be looked at to try to solve this. One is making sure women recognise themselves in organisations at every level, giving them a cultural affinity. He said that a large contributor to the notion of women lacking confidence is that they spend years and years trying to play the game and expecting the results to be different, but they never are. They feel a profound sense of inequality, and they then withdraw from playing the game entirely. To combat this, we need to change the culture of business, and the culture of leadership.

Gillian Keegan said that she recognised this from her own experience. Having made it to executive level, usually she was the only female. She agreed that everyone needs to feel comfortable and welcome in their place of work and said that in Parliament this can be a difficulty. It is important that the work environment is comfortable, flexible, approachable, and suitable. She then asked the audience for their questions and thoughts.

Teresa Peacock, the managing director of a maritime recruitment firm, asked Karl if he thought that there was a real argument for quotas. Karl said that this is a contentious issue, and that research has shown that women do not seek quotas, they just want a fair and equitable environment. He said that the Davies Review shows that a voluntary approach can work. It is not the ultimate recipe, but neither are quotas. **Tracy Brabin MP** said that quotas have worked for the Labour Party. **Gillian Keegan** suggested a show of hands to see who would be in favour of quotas and estimated that there was a 60/40 split in favour in the room. **Carole Easton** said that, whilst not looking specifically at quotas, YWT has commissioned research into positive action at apprenticeships level. What it has shown is that employers are frightened of using positive action. She argued that there is no reason it cannot be used, if we can remove anxieties and help organisations to understand the legislation.

Katy Bowden from the **UK Space Agency** said that she has always wanted to be recognised for her skills, but as she has moved up and seen what has been happening around her, she has realised it doesn't happen. Not everything is equal or unbiased. She doesn't particularly support quotas, but she has seen young women come in to the workplace, do well, and then be discouraged by aggressive competition from men.

An audience member noted that, in her experience, it is structures that prevent women from progressing in their careers. She said that it is 100 years since some women got the right to vote, yet we are still talking about gender equality issues. She noted that BAME women are doubly disadvantaged, and that quotas are good to help people to get into the system.

Sandy Rhys Jones from the **Association of Women in Property** said that the progress of women in the construction industry has been glacial. She argued that if a quota will help you get into the room you should seize the opportunity and prove you are worth it. An audience member from **Business in the Community** argued that we need an intersectional approach to equality. **Julia Waltham** from **Working Families** said that we need to consider carers, because women take on most of the burden of caring responsibilities. She argued that this can be mitigated against by encouraging shared parental leave and introducing dedicated paternity leave.

Responding to the points raised, **Karl Simpson** said that we need to create a generally inclusive culture. Gender is just the tip of the iceberg in dealing with equality issues. **Juliet Dowley** said that mentoring is important, and that women need to see role models in real life, not just on the TV. **Carole Easton** said that YWT tries to make its service accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities and BAME groups. **Priscilla Casey** said that her own experience working with YWT supports this. There is a diverse range of people involved.

Baroness Howe of Idlicote asked what role Parliament can play. She argued in favour of targets rather than quotas. She said that there is a yearly engineering lunch in the House of Lords, which is now attended by more women than ever, which is a really exciting prospect. She said that we need to share experiences and best practice across organisations and noted that in many cases men want to play a greater role in family life.

An audience member noted that women's patterns of living can be quite different at different stages. She said that the most difficult age group, in terms of unemployment, is women over the age of 35. **Lisa Strong** from Centrica said that they are supportive of gender pay gap reporting, but noted that there is a danger of getting caught in a cycle of "fixing women". We should also look at the role of men in family life.

In her closing comments, **Carole Easton** said that we should not lose sight of women stuck in low paid work. She said that if you are in low pay out of a job, you are most likely to be a woman. **Priscilla Casey** agreed that women in low paid jobs often neglected. She highlighted the fact that she was in a stronger financial position when she was on benefits, but that she is now a trainee youth worker. She said that people still try to push her into childcare work, because she is a woman. She said that people need to be more open minded.

Karl Simpson noted everybody who confronts this topic looks for a simple solution, but there aren't any. It requires all stakeholders, including, business government and society to act. He said that you must isolate different components and see what you can do to best address them.

Non-Parliamentarian attendees

Ursula Tavender	Mumbelievable
Tim Julier	Daphne Jackson Trust
Phil Hall	AAT
Sarah Thame	The Return Hub
Celine MacDougall	Powerscourt
Jane Moffatt	Kangaroo Coaching
Nicki Seignot	The Parent Mentor
Kaammini Canrai	Business in the Community
Rebecca Foden	TfL
Yvonne Greeves	NatWest
Amanda Parker	PIPA
Sophie Wingfield	REC
Karen O'Reilly	REC
Emma Feasey	YWT
Nicole Dulieu	YWT
Timothy Chigbo	N/A
Regine Lee	Women in Wine London
Fleur Butler	Conservative Women's Organisation
Maryam	Khadiyah Trust Foundation
Iman Achara	Khadiyah Trust Foundation
Jayne Winch	CB Resourcing

Rachael Anderson	How Do You Do It
Cassie Raine	PIPA
Alex Webber	Girlguiding
Sarah Hopkins	Hopkins Longworth
Vanessa Curtis	Cushman & Wakefield
Prina Shah	Cushman & Wakefield
Sandi Rhys Jones	Women in Property
Mark Hoda	Shaw Trust
Joanna Herton	Institution of Mechanical Engineers
Helena Rivers	AECOM
Jo Strange	CGL
Lisa Strong	Centrica
Chris Wright	Centrica
Eleanor Ball	Graphic Structures
Kate McSweeney	Mumsnet
Kyra Folkes	Sky
Felicity Oliver	UK Music
Michelle Regan	BOA
Julia Trusler	BOA
Laura Cannell	Finalta
Corinna Duszynski	Finalta
Jayne Runcares	Prospects
Emma Bradman	Prospects
Alice Devlin	GEO
Joe Levenson	YWT
Katie Bowden	UK Space Agency
Teresa Peacock	Spinnaker Global and WISTA
Rachel Shart	HR Magazine
Julia Waltham	Working Families