

MINUTES

Getting Women Through the Door

Women and Work APPG Meeting Tuesday 27 February 2018
4.00pm, Committee Room 19, House of Commons

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

Parliamentarians in attendance:

- Peter Bottomley MP
- Tracy Brabin MP
- Baroness Garden of Frognal
- Baroness Hollins
- Stephen Metcalfe MP
- Maria Miller MP
- Baroness Scott of Needham Market
- Caroline Spelman MP

Minutes

Co-Chair of Women and Work APPG, Jess Phillips MP introduced the topic, Getting Women Through the Door, and the inquiry theme for 2018, How to Recruit Women for the 21st Century.

The first speaker, **Jazz Bhogal, Deputy Director, Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion** introduced the diversity and inclusion strategy in the civil service. She talked about progress that has been made and future plans for improving diversity.

She said that the journey for diversity and inclusion in the civil service isn't new and has been gathering pace within the last 5-10 years. Gender and equality has been on the agenda since around 2004. 54% of civil service employees are now women whereas in the 1970s it was 20% and the majority were in lower grade positions. There are 400,00 people in civil service, of which 6,000 are senior civil servants. 42.5% of these are women. The gender pay gap is around 11-12%. She argued that the civil service is ahead of the corporate sector, but there is still a lot of work to do, particularly in terms of parity at Permanent Secretary level. It is not equal across Departments, for example in the Department for Education, there are almost 50% senior women but in the Ministry of Defence there are about 25% senior women.

Jazz explained that last year the civil service published a strategy for moving toward better representation in other groups particularly people with disabilities and minorities. She noted that diversity has a range of different facets. And the experience of women in the civil service and make their mark in the workplace.

Jess Phillips asked **Jazz Bhogal** why she thinks civil service has made such good progress in gender recruiting? Jazz said that the main factor is leadership. Jeremy Heywood and Gus

O'Donnell set clear expectations about gender recruiting. Initiatives such as the mentoring and active sponsorship of talented women, and the promotion of 'ally men', helped remove glass ceilings by promoting the reputation of women for promotion further down the line. It was also helped by the wider shift in society and the private sector.

Jess Phillips asked if flexible working benefits make a difference. Jazz Bhogal said that the civil service has good options for flexible working. She said that to reach the best talent you have to offer different ways of working.

Chair of the Women and Equalities Select Committee, Maria Miller raised her concerns about the number of women taking the top positions in the Permanent Secretary post, and the different grades within that which could be masking the number of women actually at the top.

Responding, Jazz Bhogal noted that about 30% of Permanent Secretaries are women. There is a high number of female Director General's (DG's), which should create gender balance in the future. The highest proportion of people coming into DG level are men, this is mainly because of they are the kinds of roles are where men have a higher prominence generally, e.g. finance and digital. She argued that more needs to be done to increase gender balance in those sectors, for example by looking at how to find women leaders in tech. She highlighted the fact that women are under-represented amongst disabled leaders in the civil service, and said that intersectionality is important. It is not just about representation, it is about women's experience in the civil service.

The second speaker, **Tom Hadley, Director of Policy, Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC)** outlined the role of recruiters in encouraging diversity. He said that recruitment professionals can be advocates for change, but that we need to start a national conversation about how we hire. There is more to be done on the links between education and employment say. The REC's vision is for a future jobs market is one that is all inclusive. Recruiters have a pivotal role to play by offering advice on job design, job description and also where to place ads and expand the pool of candidates. Every recruiter will work with dozens and sometimes hundreds of employers; the recruitment sector can amplify the diversity message and provide a unique channel for creating a real tipping point in the way that the UK business community approaches equality and inclusion issues.

The REC's research team will continue to drive new research projects in this area. Forthcoming work will include a specific focus on unconscious bias and flexible hiring over the coming months. REC will also be pro-actively taking forward the recommendations of the REC's Future of Jobs Commission which included a specific focus on inclusion and equality.

The third speaker, **Emma Stewart, Co-Founder and Joint CEO of Timewise** outlined the campaigns which Timewise runs to promote flexibility in the workplace. They help employers to design and implement flexible working solutions to ensure that they attract, retain and develop the best talent. She said that we need to stop just talking about flexible working and start talking about flexible hiring. Employers should be open about the option to work flexibly from day one. Instead, too many employers still see flexibility as a concession which is based around an individual request. They respond when an employee

asks directly about flexible working, but don't have a proactive policy and approach. She argued that we need to move away from this model. There is a difference between a flexible working policy and a flexible working strategy. The top three things that will help to achieve change are: leadership; supporting hiring managers understand job design, and helping employers to articulate their offer. She said that, at Timewise, they prefer to talk about a gender progression gap rather than simply a gender pay gap.

Responding to this idea, **Dame Caroline Spelman MP** asked the APPG to consider the gender attrition rate as well, noting that too many women are lost from the workplace.

The final speaker, **Tiina Likki, Principal Adviser in the Behavioural Insights Team** outlined her work. She said that it is a good time to be talking about female recruitment because the introduction of gender pay gap reporting means that employers are listening. She argued that the wording of job ads can have a huge impact. She described studies which show that "masculine" and "feminine" language used to describe the same role can change the profile of who applies. She highlighted in particular the importance of trialling different approaches to recruitment and tracking these over time to develop an evidence base on what works.

She talked about the role of interviews in the recruitment process, noting that interviews generally are not good predictors of performance. Instead, task-based assessment can be more reliable. For example, you don't hire a chef by asking them "*are you good at cooking*", so why do we rely on this approach for other roles? Even within the interview process, changes can be made. In unstructured settings interviewers tend to vary their questions based on their response to the person in front of them. This might be unconscious, but can lead to different results. She recommended getting interviewers to pre-commit to a set of structured questions, which would even the playing field.

Finally, she talked about encouraging employers to vary how and where they do outreach during the recruitment process, so that they are not always looking to the same places, but are thinking creatively. She spoke about the examples of a LinkedIn study, which found that putting the number of applicants next to job ads made women more likely to apply.

Shadow Education Minister, Tracy Brabin suggested a top up for recruiters to incentivise them to get women into higher profile roles, or fill a flexible role.

Tom Hadley agreed that it is important to look at how to motivate recruiters to make a difference, because jobs transform lives. The REC actively promotes good recruitment practices to employers through the Good Recruitment Campaign. A key message is that companies need to think differently about how they hire if they want to attract talent and stay ahead of the competitors. The campaign covers good practices in specific areas such as job design, the wording of adverts and addressing sub-conscious bias through innovative recruitment procedures. Using good recruitment as the hook is a means of engaging with employers who might not instinctively gravitate towards diversity and inclusion initiatives but who can subsequently be encouraged to use different approaches.

Tracy Brabin spoke about the issue of childcare and how it relates to recruitment. She outlined her Ten Minute Rule Bill on shared parental leave. **Baroness Burt of Solihull** agreed with Tracy Brabin about the importance of making shared parental leave work. She

asked attendees to send her ideas about how to do this. She agreed with previous comments about gender pay gap reporting pushing the issue up the agenda, stating that it is making employers think about how they structure their workforce more generally. It is not just about men and women, companies do better when they are more diverse and more voices are needed. The REC actively promotes good recruitment practices to employers through our Good Recruitment Campaign. A key message is that companies need to think differently about how they hire if they want to attract talent and stay ahead of the competitors. The campaign covers good practices in specific areas such as job design, the wording of adverts and addressing subconscious bias through innovative recruitment procedures. Using good recruitment as the hook is a means of engaging with employers who might not instinctively gravitate towards diversity and inclusion initiatives but who can subsequently be encouraged to use different approaches.

Jess Phillips agreed, and said that it can be really damaging for your business if you are a bad employer for women. **Tom Hadley** said that recruitment is getting harder, which is why recruiters and employers need to get better.

Emma Stewart said that measures to improve recruitment for women can help across the whole talent pipeline. She said that we need to help business think about what work works.

Baroness Garden of Frognal asked the panel about the role of careers advice in getting women into traditionally male-dominated jobs. **Tom Hadley** said that this is hugely important, and that we have to carve out time in the curriculum for careers education. He said let's create a world-class system that addresses structural recruitment barriers. **Emma Stewart** spoke about vocational education. She emphasised the role of part-time apprenticeships, of which there are hardly any. You need to be able to earn and learn.

An audience member asked about the role of 'returnships' and what we can learn from them. In response, **Jazz Bhogal** outlined her experience with 'returnships' in the civil service, which have been successful.

An audience member asked about positive action, noting that there is confusion about the difference between positive action and positive discrimination. What can be done about this, how far does the law let employers go in this regard, and what can we do so who employers what they can actually do?

Responding, **Jazz Bhogal** said that the law lets us go quite far in this regard. She argued that we need to support HR professionals to see opportunities for positive action.

Tiina Likki said that, in her experience, employers want interventions to be generally inclusive, and not just addressed at women. This is backed by some behavioural science research.

Jess Phillips closed the APPG meeting. She thanked the panel for their contributions. Summing up, she said that, ultimately, she doesn't think that the carrot works. Eventually only the stick works.

The APPG has opened a call for evidence on How to Recruit Women for the 21st Century, which will run throughout the year. More information on how to submit evidence can be found on the APPG website.

Non-Parliamentarian attendees

Chandri Patel	Impellam Group Plc
Colin Brown	Institution of Mechanical Engineers
Corinna Duszynski	Finalta
Crystal Lee	Recruitment & Employment Confederation
Dawn Childs	Women's Engineering Society
Jane Moffett	Kangaroo Coaching
Jayne Winch	CB Resourcing
Jo Smith	
Joanna Barnard	Virgin Money Plc
John Elliott	Powerscourt/ The Return Hub
Karen O'Reilly	Recruitment & Employment Confederation
Keith Jones	Institution of Civil Engineers
Laura Cannell	Finalta
Nicki Seignot	The Parent Mentor
Odette Chalaby	
Sarah McConnell	TSSA
Sarah Moulin	Sky
Sarah Thorne	The Return Hub
Simon Burton	CB Resourcing
Sophie Smith	University of Exeter
Sophie Wingfield	Recruitment & Employment Confederation
Stephanie Dillion	Inclusivity Partners
Stephen Howse	Semta
Tim Julier	Daphne Jackson Trust