

MINUTES

Breaking the Pattern Of Occupational Segregation

Women and Work APPG Meeting Tuesday 11 July 2018

4.00pm, Committee Room 6, House of Commons

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

Parliamentarians in attendance:

- Jess Phillips MP
- Baroness Gardener of Parkes
- Baroness Howe of Idlicote

Minutes

Co-Chair of Women and Work APPG, Jess Phillips MP introduced the topic, 'Breaking the Pattern of Occupational Segregation', and the inquiry theme for 2018, How to Recruit Women for the 21st Century.

The first speaker, **Susan Bowen, Chair, Skills and Diversity Council, techUK** said that women have the opportunity to bridge the digital skills gap and that trading floors are filled with opportunity but not attracting female talent. She discussed the Tech Talent Charter, gender pay gap reporting and increasing the amount of role models, emphasising the importance of digital skills. She explained that this doesn't mean technology-based jobs or coding, rather an aptitude for digital work. This is essential for the jobs of the future.

Jess Phillips MP said that when coding first existed (punching codes into cards), it was almost exclusively women, and as soon as it became a powerful thing to be able to do and a lucrative source of employment, it became a more popular thing for men to.

The second speaker, **Professor Adam Tickell, Vice-Chancellor, University of Sussex** opened by talking about the university's equalities and inclusion strategy. He said universities are broadly liberal, but also can also be complacent and conservative institutions. He said that the University of Sussex doesn't have a systematic equal pay issue but does have a pay gap issue. It is less about how people are paid in individual roles, and more about occupational structure. They are tackling this by addressing a relative lack of women in senior roles, especially senior academic roles. Secondly, they are taking a new approach to flexible working by making it the default approach for all employees.

He added that there is a challenge in terms of progression, and that diversity training is now mandatory in recruitment and promotion. In the university's engineering school, they have the self-declared 'robo girls' who go into schools to encourage young women into engineers. He said that the University of Sussex is institutionally committed to making substantial changes and other universities are looking to copy their changes,

Jess Phillips MP said that it is important to note that while universities are places of liberation, institutionally they can be old-fashioned and that this is an interesting dynamic.

The third speaker, **Beverly Sawyers, Head of Operational Excellence, American Express (AmEx)** outlined her experience and said she has been at AmEx for 30 years largely because of how it treats

women. The AmEx gender pay gap was 15.2% in 2017, this is better than average and substantially better than peers in financial sector, but there is work to be done and it comes down to progression.

Giving some examples, she said AmEx builds support networks for mentoring, informal talks, and specific workshops about women in technology. The CEO also made an explicit commitment to make sure women are considered for senior roles and more generally.

She said it is also important to think about ambition, leadership and culture, and that her experience shows some women have a problem saying they are ambitious. AmEx also runs programmes in the community, such as Code Girls, seeking to get young women and girls interested in technology. Support throughout their career is also important, including Shared Parental Leave, and encouraging fathers to take time off. She said she is taking a 3month sabbatical next year and it's important that examples like this are publicised.

Jess Phillips MP said that big companies are often leaders in the area of flexible working, because big organisations are obsessed with talent and people, and when people are your skill, talent matters so much more.

Beverly Sawyers discussed the economic incentive for this, and the fact that clients are also diverse.

Jess Phillips MP introduced the third speaker, **Professor Chantal Davies, Director, Forum for Research into Equality and Diversity, University of Chester.**

Chantal Davies introduced the work she is doing with the Young Women's Trust, looking at occupational segregation in apprenticeships, particularly construction, ICT and engineering. Specifically, she is looking at ways to practically resolve this without rolling out the same initiatives. The specific tool found to be useful was preference-based positive action to increase female representation in male dominated sectors and vice versa.

She said that positive action is usually misunderstood and not seen positively. The ambit of the law is often what is confusing and there is a lack of clarity around key obstacles such as legal liability, reverse discrimination, reverse principle of merit. She said it is key to engage SMEs, and address procurement, but noted that SMEs have fewer resources. She added that positive action is not a magic formula, and it needs to be part of a holistic approach in conjunction with anti-discrimination provision and so on. Recommendations from her research include:

- 1) Employers should make greater use of positive action to recruit female apprentices in sectors where they are under-represented
- 2) Sector bodies should be promoting positive action, providing greater clarity and cohesion
- 3) Government should visibly support, publicise and promote the use of effective and robust positive action to address women's under-representation in apprenticeships

Q&A

Adam Tickell noted that the majority of students are women, including PHD students, and that there isn't a problem at all for early stages. He said this comes later, particularly after the choosing to have a child - it needs to be easier for women to come back to the work place.

Susan Bowen outlined her own experience with her partner. Together they decided that she should take one year out and he, after 23 years working, also took time out and is now on phased return.

She said he is suffering from the same issues that she faced after returning to work, and companies big and small need to recognise that talent they have already invested in is worth bringing back.

Jess Phillips MP noted the importance of changing perceptions of what a mother's role is as much as what a women's role is, adding that the perception of men who undertake caring duties is also important - not to over-accolade or be condescending.

A member of the audience asked about short-term policy issues to support women in the UK, using the example of the extension of the childcare voucher to ad hoc childcare.

Baroness Gardner noted that parliament can be a great vehicle for getting such messages across

A member of the audience asked whether it is useful to think about think about these issues as a whole or segmented.

Jess Phillips MP responded saying that the all these issues are part of what makes women feel unsafe at work. She said if these are not addressed as a whole, the risk is potentially missing some of the points. She added that it isn't possible to tackle the gender pay gap in the same way as sexual harassment, but they are related. She said that having women at every layer of leadership is likely to help reduce sexual harassment – noting that women are more likely to die at the hands of a violent partner and men are likely to die from health and safety failure. She said sexual harassment should be taken into account as a health and safety issue.

Discussing positive action, **Jess Phillips MP** said that a key reason why people dislike talking about positive action is because it makes them feel like someone has to miss out, and a man will miss out. Using the example of domestic violence legislation, she said it's not just about supporting victims it's about dealing with the perpetrators: it's about recognising a deep-seated problem within the organisation and as a society. Confronting this as an organisation means listening and having a care path – its thinking around the fundamental patriarchal system

Professor Claire Annesley from the University Sussex said it is important to actively look for the people that you want to recruit, and that very often the advert goes out but people don't come forward. Actively going out and looking requires positive action. She added that it's not true that female talent does not exist, instead they are not on the radar of the people who are recruiting. She gave the civil service as a great example of positive action, flexible working and job sharing, adding that these form part of a process of cultural change.

Jess Phillips MP concluded saying: I am very ambitious and not afraid to admit it, and I admit it because it's a feminist statement to say so.

Non-Parliamentarian attendees

Susan Bowen	techUK
Adam Tickell	University of Sussex
Beverly Sawyers	American Express
Chantal Davies	University of Chester
Gill Thomas	Royal Academy of Engineering
Josie Betts	PICTFOR
Alexi Ozioro	Building Engineering Services Association
Tess Oversby	Charles Stanley

Liz Hayward	Charles Stanley
Sarah Thorne	The Return Hub
Teresa Boughey	Jungle Diversity
Fiona Alfred	The Association of Women in Property
Sarah Hopkins	Hopkins Longworth
Lenny Rolles	University of Sussex
Claire Annesley	University of Sussex
Clare Gray	Shaw Trust
Amrit Kaur Gill	Department for Education
Phil Hall	AAT
Deborah Owoyemi	AAT
Nicole Dulieu	Young Womens Trust
Joy Lancaster	Young Womens Trust
Gemma Parmar	BITC
Joe Levenson	Young Womens Trust
Emma Hotchkiss	Young Womens Trust
Debbie Petford	Building Engineering Services Association