



## Women Collaborating with Men

# EVERYDAY WORKPLACE INCLUSION

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*Women Collaborating with Men:  
Everyday Workplace Inclusion*  
Armstrong, J. and Ghaboos, J. (2019)  
Murray Edwards College,  
University of Cambridge.

We invite you to also read our report,  
*Women Collaborating with Men:  
Inclusive Networking and Sponsorship*

Both are available for download at  
[www.murrayedwards.cam.ac.uk/  
collaborating-with-men](http://www.murrayedwards.cam.ac.uk/collaborating-with-men)

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# PREFACE

**Equality of opportunity at work  
is not just a ‘women’s issue’.**



DAME BARBARA  
STOCKING, PRESIDENT  
MURRAY EDWARDS  
COLLEGE

“The Collaborating with Men research from Murray Edwards College reveals that according to three in four women and two in five men, UK workplace culture stalls women’s careers. We embarked on this survey and workshop-based research because as a women’s college, we want our aspiring young women to achieve academically and in whatever career path they choose. We want to help improve equality of opportunity in workplace culture for our graduates and all women”.

## NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Gender diversity refers to differences in perspectives, backgrounds, experiences and attitudes possessed by all genders. Culture is defined here as the values of an organisation that shape how its leaders and employees behave and interact. An inclusive culture respects all individuals and actively encourages people to be themselves at work and fulfil their potential.



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 1. Our contribution

- Our Collaborating with Men research programme addresses the slow progress made in women's representation in senior and leadership positions when compared to their representation in management and professional roles as a whole. Women of colour are even more poorly represented.
- This report provides practical pointers for action from leaders, people managers and individuals at all levels, to build inclusive cultures, circumvent unintentional gender bias and promote equality of opportunity.

**We propose simple and effective actions that individuals can take and organisations can facilitate. These solutions are drawn from research participants and the organisations and individuals supporting our research programme. ►**

- ▶ ● Most people believe they promote on 'merit' – but underestimate the degree to which 'merit' is a judgement that can itself be subject to bias.
- Research consistently tells us that a key factor explaining women's underrepresentation in leadership is unintentional gender bias within workplace culture. Unintentional gender bias can be practised by women as well as men but women tend to experience more negative career consequences.
- We recognise systems and organisational processes need to be debiased, creating more equality of opportunity in recruitment and assessment. Much research and organisational action is already squarely aimed at these issues.<sup>1</sup>
- Our specific contribution focuses on the way things are 'done' in the workplace – and in particular on the everyday acts, workplace practices and behaviours that influence inclusive workplace cultures.

## 2. The case for collaboration

- Involving men as *equal partners* in creating equitable workplaces is a relatively new idea. Years have been spent focusing on 'fixing the women' to better fit in with the way things are, rather than changing the in-built inequalities within the culture of society and the workplace. Focus only on women and the opportunity is lost to involve men who are more likely than women to be in positions of influence. Women clearly need to remain central to organisational work on gender. However, it's vital that men join the discussion – sharing and owning the change we aspire to make. This is important not least because 70% of managers and leaders are men.<sup>2</sup>
- We need to think harder, individually and collectively, about how men can work alongside women to improve everyone's experience of work and make career progress more equitable. 'Collaborating' sets that tone and states an intention to include men in pursuit of equality of opportunity for all genders.

**This report provides practical pointers for action from leaders, people managers and individuals at all levels, to build inclusive cultures, circumvent unintentional gender bias and promote equality of opportunity.**



- Collaborating has the additional benefit of increasing the chance of change.
- There is a long tradition of men allying with women on gender equality issues.<sup>3</sup> Importantly, the work of allies needs to be recognised and accepted by the people allies are seeking to support.
- Practically, collaboration shares the workload between male and female agents of change.
- Men speaking out about gender equality provides a different perspective on this well-trodden topic, amplifying the impact of the message to a wider audience.
- Men also have much to gain personally from more gender equal workplace cultures.
- That said, men start in a different place from women in regard to gender equality. Men are often unaware of how women can experience the same workplace differently from them. This is particularly true of men under 35 who have been educated in an environment that appears gender equal and often have mothers with careers. What follows is that men are often unaware of what they can do to promote gender equality of opportunity. Men often feel reticent about having a view on gender equality - including on what gets in the way of men's equal access to flexible work or equal parental leave. In the wake of #MeToo, gender pay gap reporting and targets for 30% representation of women on boards and executive committees, some men feel they have less chance to be promoted than their female colleagues.
- This is why the recommendations that follow take care to address men as well as women.

### 3. Key recommendations

- Invest in understanding and measuring gender inclusion - understanding people's qualitative everyday experience is powerful and tends to be under-explored. This is key to recruiting men as gender allies.
- Motivate individuals to change their behaviour by ensuring people understand the alignment between the core purpose of the organisation and diversity and, especially, inclusion objectives.
- Build in structures to deliver inclusion from the bottom up as well as the top down (case study on p.60).
- Collaborate to identify what needs be done differently and why.
- Use the case studies on Workplace Culture Workshops (p.48), Gender Intelligence (p.50) and Reverse Mentoring (p.52).
- Appoint and train managers to be inclusion advocates and give advice about how to deal with inappropriate comments or behaviour (p.54).
- Share with people the language and tactics to use to call out everyday gender bias, to make assessments gender neutral and run inclusive meetings (p.42-47).
- Push equal parental leave and innovative approaches to flexible working to disrupt gender stereotyping (case studies p.63-67).



# COLLABORATING WITH MEN

**Our six part research programme.**

# 1

## ALUMNAE RESEARCH

(2014)

The Collaborating with Men programme started with an insight from survey research conducted with our Murray Edwards College alumnae in 2014. Our survey showed 38% of challenges to career progress were attributed to workplace culture, in comparison to a lesser 22% being attributed to the difficulties of combining work and family life.<sup>4</sup>

# 2

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

(2016 – 2019)

We reviewed literature on women's career progression and the role of workplace culture from academia, consultancy groups and think tanks. We identified that little academic research examined men's views on workplace culture issues and the impact on (mainly) women's career progression. This is what we have sought to address.

# 3

## QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AMONGST MALE MANAGERS

(2016)

We conducted focus groups to explore men's views on the workplace culture challenges experienced by women, and some men. The research culminated in a conference attended by some of the male research participants, working with women to identify actions that could be trialed in the workplace. Our 2016 reports are available on the Murray Edwards College website.<sup>5</sup>

We interviewed 40 men working in a range of medium sized to large organisations from the private and public sectors.

### WHO

- 6 x gender champions (senior in career stage)
- 28 men: early career stage to middle management
- 6 x individual interviews (senior in career stage)

### HOW

- 1/2 day workshop to help frame the research
- 4 x 2 hour focus groups
- 1 hour interviews

## 25 ORGANISATIONS

STEM business  
Professional services  
Academia  
Public sector

## 6,942 PEOPLE

49% women  
51% men

# 4

## LARGE SCALE, MULTI-SECTOR QUANTITATIVE SURVEY ON WORKPLACE CULTURE

(2017-2019)

This report introduces the findings from our own, large sample, gender balanced survey-workshop research on the specific impacts of subtle, unintentional gender biases in workplace behaviour. We believe this survey is unprecedented in scale, scope and in comparing the views of men and women working as colleagues. All these organisations were UK based although participants reflect the globalised workforce.

# 5

## POST-SURVEY WORKSHOPS

(2018-2019)

We have run single-gender, followed by mixed gender workshops in 11 organisations. The aims of these workshops were to:

- Get reactions to the survey results and stimulate change.
- Build alliances between men and women by building a common understanding of the different perceptions of issues explored in the survey and sharing examples of experiences of their shared workplace culture.
- Identify issues the participants think need to be addressed.
- Start the process of identifying ideas that will encourage behavioural change amongst individuals/teams to make the workplace more gender inclusive.

**These workshops (and those held in 2016) are the source of many of the ideas for individual action covered in this report.**

# 6

## CASE STUDIES AND LITERATURE REVIEW

(2018-2019)

Case studies on promising interventions were sought from leaders and diversity and inclusion specialists working in private and public sector organisations. Literature reviews produced other ideas for individual action.



# MEN AS GENDER ALLIES

**Why it's important to have male  
gender allies and what stands in  
the way of more men taking action.**

# ADVICE FROM MALE GENDER ALLIES

There is real benefit in men talking to other men because, rightly or wrongly, men's words receive more attention from other men when challenging everyday sexism. We talked to men who are actively working on workplace gender equality about their experiences.

One of these men, Tunde Olanrewaju, Senior Partner at McKinsey and Company says: "I think that men building awareness amongst men is very important. If a man is noticing a gender bias situation and you don't, you probably wonder even more why you cannot see it. Whereas a woman noticing it isn't as surprising".

Paul Lincoln, Director General of the Border Force in the UK Civil Service agrees: "Whether you like it or not, a male advocate can help to push change particularly when you have other men who are not recognising that there are benefits in better gender representation or that women face a number of challenges that men tend not to experience so they don't notice that this is happening."

***"I think that men building awareness amongst men is very important."***

TUNDE OLANREWAJU, SENIOR PARTNER  
AT MCKINSEY AND COMPANY

**There is real benefit in men talking to other men because, rightly or wrongly, men's words receive more attention from other men.**

Paul has been appointed to the role of Gender Equality Champion in the Home Office. He describes his role as: "Being an advocate to ensure that challenges associated with being female (but by no means only apply to women) can be properly understood so people as a whole can become more aware about it and take collective action across the business to try and drive change. It's about changing the culture so the different ways it's helpful to behave eventually become business as usual." Paul also points out that having a formal role helps him act effectively as a gender advocate. "When I start by saying 'as the gender champion' this makes any comment I pick up on come over as something to reflect on rather than a challenge to people's authority."

Academic research shows men experience fewer negative consequences for calling out sexism and their actions are taken more seriously.<sup>6</sup> However, research also shows that men acting as advocates for inclusion has been over-emphasised as the 'silver bullet' solution. This can perpetuate the existing power hierarchy and alienate women.<sup>7</sup> This is why we emphasise men and women working together.



# WHAT PREVENTS MORE MEN FROM BEING GENDER ALLIES?

Many men are supportive of gender equality.<sup>8</sup> This is because they have a strong sense of fair play, they have experiences of female role models and career mentors, and they empathise with women or minority groups who have had negative experiences.<sup>9</sup> However, there aren't many men who are taking specific action. Why is this? Our research has found there are four specific factors that act as barriers and discourage men from acting as gender allies.

**In order to collaborate for change, men and women need to share a common UNDERSTANDING of the persistence of challenges to equality of opportunity in career advancement.**

## Understanding

Many men, especially men under 35, think the 'gender issue' in the workplace is dealt with. Others think that women's choices (between family and ambition) lie behind gender inequality in leadership. This underestimates how much choices are constrained by societal factors. Such as society's expectation that the mother will be the parent who takes primary responsibility for their children's care and the father will be the primary earner and/or most ambitious.<sup>10</sup>

Many men and women believe that individuals are promoted on merit. This may be the case but it is worth scrutinising how merit is being defined, by whom and how well this definition accommodates the socially-shaped strengths and characteristics of each organisation's whole workforce. Many men are supportive of equality of opportunity at work but are unaware of the specific career challenges women often face in their workplace due to unintentional gender bias. ►



## ► Relevance

Gender inclusivity is not a ‘women’s issue’ but organisations can often frame the discussion in this way. This excludes men. It is not often seen as beneficial to men’s career progression to be involved in gender equality work. For example, inclusion objectives are often not core to the way managers’ performance is assessed – and everyone is busy. Also, less emphasis is placed upon the benefits to men of gender equality and more inclusive workplace culture. These benefits include being able to thrive whatever their individual qualities, benefits to health and well-being and opportunities to spend the time needed to be involved parents.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, too little is made of the opportunity for supportive men to engage because it is not often clear what they are being asked to do.

## Reticence

Many men feel it isn’t their place to get involved with a ‘women’s issue’ and/or men lack of awareness of what they can do to tackle workplace inequalities. Many men fear saying the wrong thing or being accused of ‘mansplaining’ [usually taken to mean a man explaining something to a woman in a patronising or condescending way]. Many men also fear facing cynicism from men and women who may question their motives for being involved in discussing gender equality of opportunity. ►

**Understanding goes some way towards making action relevant. Men and women co-developing solutions makes action more likely by overcoming reticence.**

## ► Backlash

There is growing evidence of a backlash, from women and men, thinking women are being treated more favourably than men. In particular, a perception that gender equality initiatives focusing on promoting women into leadership positions are ‘unfair and not meritocratic’.<sup>12</sup>

Positive action is being interpreted by some as positive discrimination. (Positive action meaning a range of measures allowed under the Equality Act 2010, which can be taken to encourage and train people from under-represented groups to help them overcome disadvantages in competing with other applicants).

A substantial minority feel the focus of getting women into leadership positions is undermining the ability of men to progress their careers – for example, Ernst & Young’s (EY) Race, Gender and Exclusion<sup>13</sup> research found that 32% of the men they surveyed in the US felt personally excluded from promotion opportunities and 35% of the men and women combined felt the focus on diversity meant white men were being overlooked.

Our Collaborating with Men survey also reveals a sizeable minority of men and women who hold views about unfairness to men or think gender inclusion priorities are compromising the reputation of ambitious women. ●

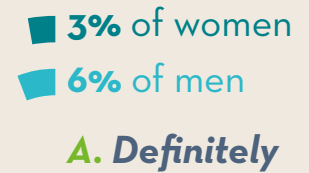
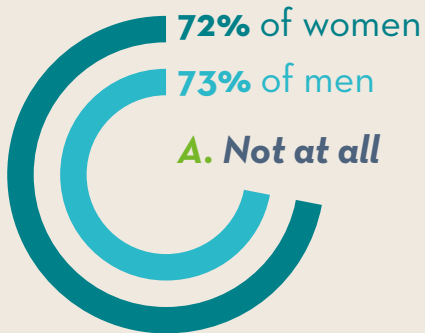
***“This isn’t opinion, the manager at the time admitted this. At my site a female was employed over a male in order to have a female on the team even though the other candidate was stronger.”***

MAN IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY,  
ENGINEERING, MATHEMATICS (STEM)

***“We are actively driven to address the gender bias within the management layers of the teams - this leads you to have to employ more women. If a man is the better candidate that doesn’t help with the equality quota.”***

MAN IN PUBLIC SECTOR

**Q. Do you feel that your organisation is positively discriminating in favour of women?**



*n. 756 women and 1212 men. Positive discrimination means actively favouring an under-represented group.*

It needs to be acknowledged some men will experience losses as women's proportional representation in positions of leadership becomes more equal. This loss can also be positioned as loss of unfair privileges and unearned advantages.<sup>14</sup> Most people are comfortable with this. It's about fairness and equality of opportunity.



# CHALLENGES FACED

**In the next section we examine the impact of unintentional gender bias and share our original research.**

# WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION

The Chartered Management Institute's (CMI) large-scale 2016 survey of 214 UK-based organisations shows the fall-off in female representation as roles get more senior<sup>15</sup> (see diagram below).

Proportionality is the key issue:

- Male managers are 40% more likely to be promoted into middle management than women.<sup>16</sup>
- Men are 4.5 times more likely to make it onto an executive committee than a woman embarking on her career at the same time.<sup>17</sup>

The picture is similar across many sectors:

- Women occupy 15% of management roles in Science, Engineering and Technology.<sup>18</sup>
- Women account for 50% of lawyers but only 28% are partners in private practice.<sup>19</sup>
- Women account for 25% of professors in UK universities.<sup>20</sup>
- Women account for 25% of Executive Committee members and Direct reports combined, in 182 companies in the FTSE 250.<sup>21</sup>

The situation is worse for women of colour:

- The Parker Review concluded that ethnic minority representation in the boardroom across the FTSE 100 is disproportionately low, especially when looking at the number of UK citizen directors of colour. 'Of the Board appointments made following the Davies review, relatively few of them have gone to women of colour'.<sup>22</sup>
- Of the female professors working in UK universities, only 0.005% are black.<sup>23</sup>
- Key reports on BAME representation tend not to break down issues by gender.<sup>24</sup>

An important factor explaining why this happens is unintentional gender bias.

## Mind the Gap CMI, 2016 survey

n. 60,517





# UNINTENTIONAL GENDER BIAS HOLDS BACK WOMEN'S CAREERS

We are far from alone in highlighting the link between gender inclusion and what many call unconscious bias in workplace culture.<sup>25</sup> We prefer the term unintentional bias because this leads more directly to the idea that you can intentionally do something to overcome this bias.

We define unintentional bias as attitudes and behaviours derived from the ways in which people have been socialised to think of the strengths and attributes of each gender. We all automatically take mental shortcuts that manifest themselves in stereotypical thinking about an employee's strength and potential based on their gender and men and women being held to different standards of behaviour.

This is not a simple issue because neither all women nor all men are all the same. Few men or women are intentionally sexist. Stereotypical thinking can also impede equality of opportunity for many men. For example, men find it harder to ask for shared parental leave and harder to access flexible working that involves working fewer hours.<sup>26</sup> However, gender biased judgements and behaviours tend to work mainly to the detriment of women's careers because:

- Qualities most commonly associated with leadership tend to be stereotypically masculine.<sup>27</sup>
- All women are commonly judged to be less ambitious and committed to their careers because of their potential to become mothers.<sup>28</sup>
- Mothers, but not fathers, tend to experience career penalties in advancement and remuneration.<sup>29</sup>

This is important because most people believe they promote based on merit. This belief is particularly strongly held in relation to gender. Yet, as Sir Philp Hampton, Chair of the Hampton-Alexander review of FTSE women leaders commented: "Given the disproportionate number of men to women in senior roles, business should question the soundness of their meritocracies".<sup>30</sup>

Unintentional biases, practiced by men and women, lie behind everyday behaviours that influence the way we define merit.

## UNINTENTIONAL BIASES<sup>31</sup>

- Interrupting and talking over colleagues
- Not crediting colleagues for their contributions
- Side-lining groups of people in social and work networks
- Making judgements about strengths and weaknesses based on gender stereotypes
- Judging the same behaviour by different standards
- Not offering opportunities due to benevolent assumptions
- Not giving direct and clear feedback because you are afraid of upsetting an individual
- Sexist 'banter'
- Giving 'office housework' jobs to women
- Remarks about physical appearance
- Different dress-codes

Some of these subtle attitudes and behaviours listed above may seem trivial. However, they can have equally negative outcomes for the careers of individuals as overt (illegal) forms of discrimination.<sup>32</sup> Repeated experience of behaviour that is perceived to be unfair can sap morale, contribute to feelings of not 'fitting in' in an organisation and result in a decision to move on.



# ORIGINAL RESEARCH DATA

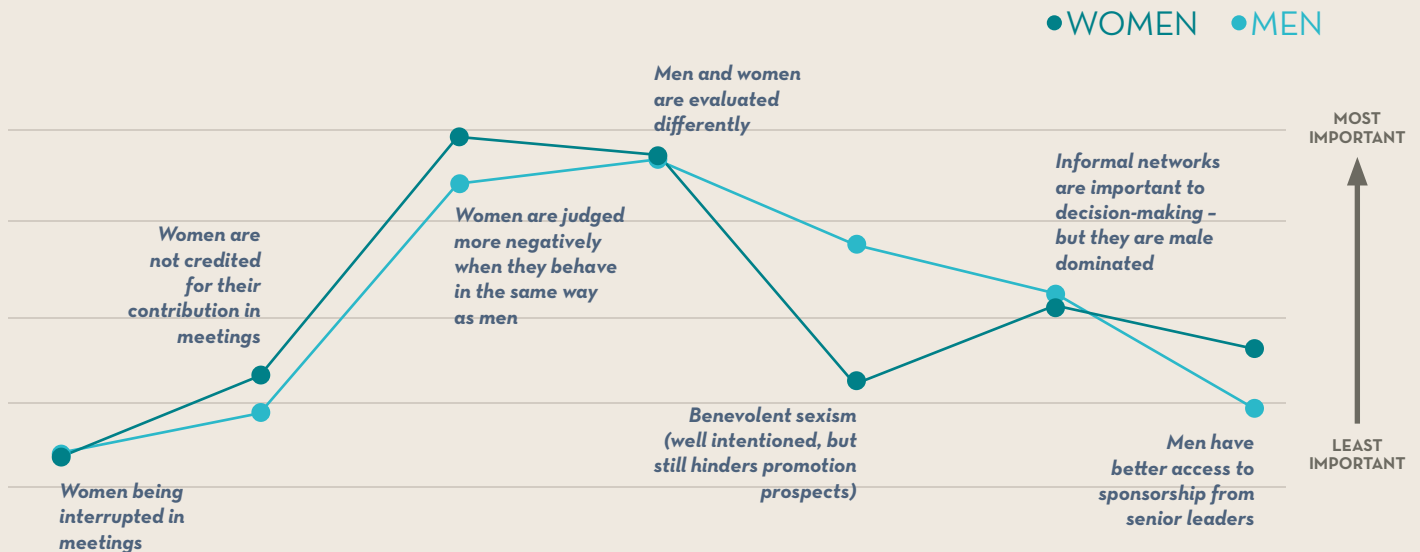
Our research confirms a substantial gender gap in perceptions of unintentional gender bias and how it operates in workplace culture and everyday practices. This section summarises the findings from a gender-balanced sample of almost 7,000 organisations across different sectors.

In the diagram below we present the seven manifestations of the impact of gender bias measured by the survey.

**“Our research found it is possible to have a supportive boss - man or woman - and yet still experience gender biased behaviour.”**

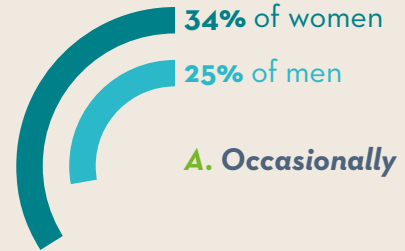
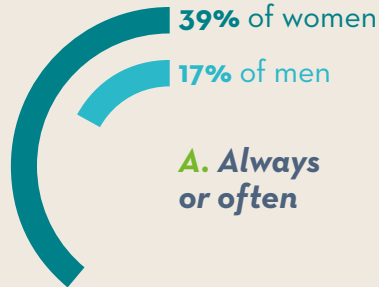
DR JILL ARMSTRONG,  
LEAD RESEARCHER,  
COLLABORATING WITH MEN,  
MURRAY EDWARDS COLLEGE

## Priorities for action selected by men and women.



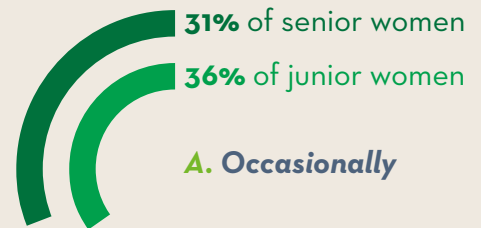
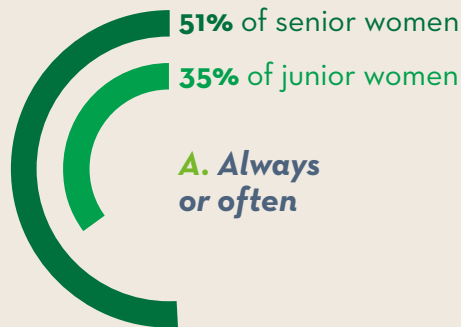
## Q. Do you think that the culture in your workplace overall might lead to women encountering more challenges than men in advancing their careers?

▶▶ Women are more likely than men to think that workplace culture is more challenging for women



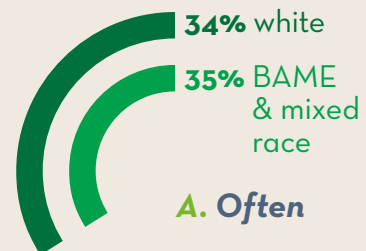
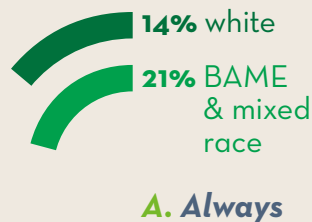
n. 6134 (men and women)

▶▶ Experience hardens women's views



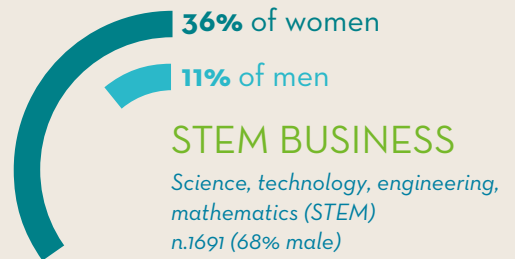
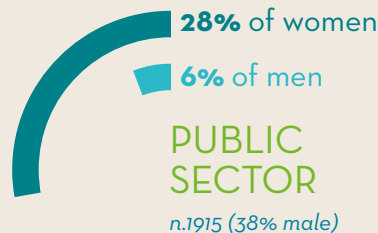
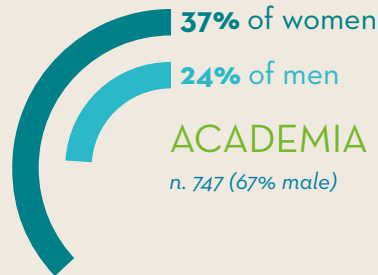
n. 2861 (junior and senior women)

▶▶ Women of colour report greater barriers



n.698 of whom 127 described themselves as BAME or mixed race

►► *By sector - gender differences in those reporting that women face more challenges always or often*



## Observations

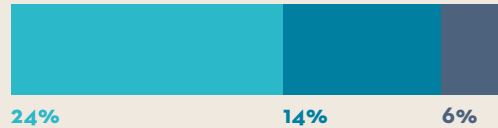
A greater proportion of women than men reporting they face more challenges to career advancement was common to four key sectors of the UK workplace landscape. We found a higher proportion of women in professional services who think that women face more challenges than men. This may be because of the combination of long working hours and traditional organisational structures.

A low proportion of men, in comparison to women, in the public sector perceive that women face more challenges. Women tend to be better represented in senior positions in the public sector than they are in the private sector, which may lie behind men's views. However, better representation of women does not necessarily lead to more inclusive workplace cultures because both men and women practice gender bias.

**Q. The same behaviour can be judged more negatively if you are a woman. How often have you noticed this happening?**

Respondents agreeing always, often or occasionally. n.6466 that this has happened in their workplace in the last 12 months.

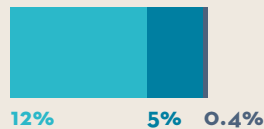
Women reporting this has happened to them



Women noticing this happening to other women



Men noticing this happening to women



■ OCCASIONALLY  
■ OFTEN  
■ ALWAYS

**Women are judged more negatively when they behave in the same way as men - and men notice this less than women.**

***“This is an aggressive working environment and the workplace is predominantly male. It feels that the louder and more aggressive you are the more likely you are to progress. Whilst this appears to be acceptable for a man, if a woman behaves in the same manner you are considered a bully or hormonal depending upon your seniority in the workplace.”***

WOMAN IN STEM BUSINESS

***“Some women with strong personalities can be judged negatively and managed poorly by their male line manager. We still have a male dominated culture with a resurgence of the ‘let boys be boys’ type of reaction.”***

MAN IN PUBLIC SECTOR

## **Q. Do female bosses judge women differently?**

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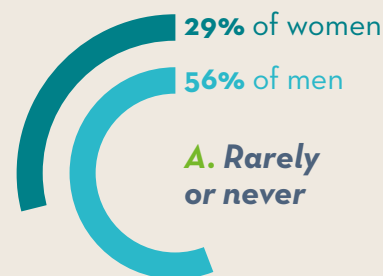
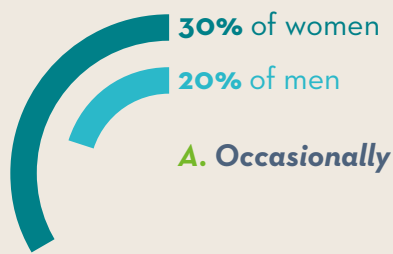
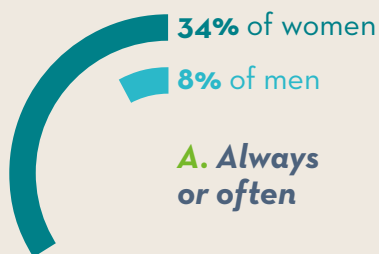
Only 24% of women say they’ve never experienced female bosses judging the same behaviour differently due to gender.

31% of women and 41% of men think female bosses do this as much or more than men.

**Women  
judge women  
differently too.**

**Q. Do you think that traits that women are thought more likely to possess, such as building good relationships, attention to detail and strong skills in administration lead to them being perceived in your workplace as good managers rather than good potential leaders?**

n. 6651 49% men,  
51% women.  
NB. Don't knows not presented.



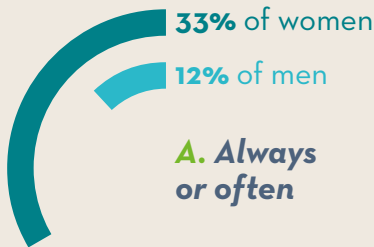
Women's career progress suffers from stereotypical views about male and female traits

*"A strong male leader is often regarded as a 'good guy'. A strong female is more likely to be seen as sharp, aggressive or in more derogatory terms. Many women respond to this by ensuring that when they do their jobs they come across as 'nice'. This opens the door for their contributions not to be acknowledged, or for being talked over in meetings because they are not seen as forceful. We need to address that."*



**Q. Do you think that traits that men are thought more likely to possess, such as ambition, single-minded commitment to work and risk-taking are more highly valued in your workplace?**

n. 6651 49% men, 51% women.  
NB. Don't knows not presented.



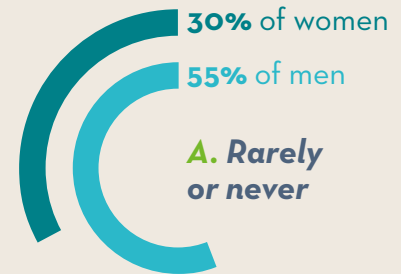
*“What we have come to believe is that strong leadership skills are often more typically male skills because of the way society is set up, not because those are inherently better leadership skills. If that thinking persists, other measures make no difference. I’d start with more awareness training at all levels.”*

WOMAN IN STEM



*“Male partners evaluate based on what they recognise as strengths... characteristics they value in the men around them. For example, women are said not to be ‘hungry’ enough to succeed.”*

MAN IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES



*“My experience of this is not a difference between men and women, rather that anyone showing the male characteristics are favoured and progress faster. Quiet excellence is less likely to be rewarded.”*

WOMAN IN PUBLIC SECTOR

## Q. What is your experience of the partner, manager, or more senior colleague with whom you work most often?

n. 9403

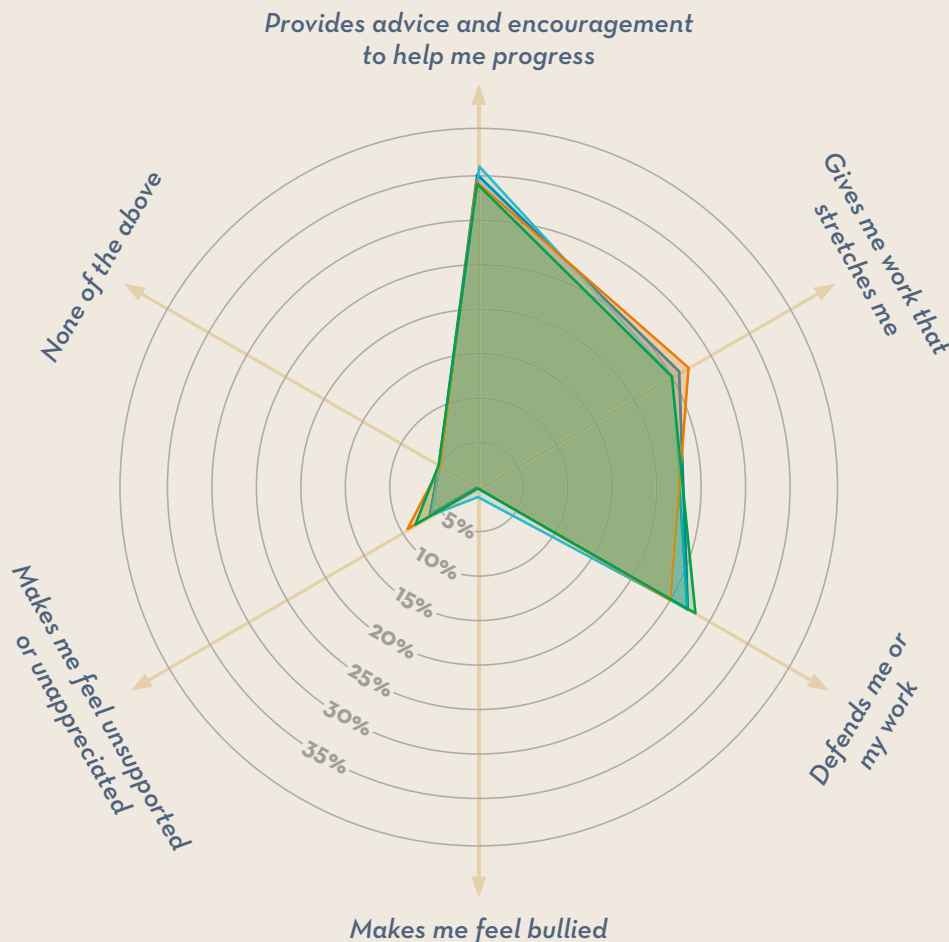
►► Views about career challenges are not explained by the gender of the boss

■ WOMEN WITH FEMALE MANAGER, OR MORE SENIOR COLLEAGUE  
n. 1630

■ WOMEN WITH MALE MANAGER, OR MORE SENIOR COLLEAGUE  
n. 2714

■ MEN WITH FEMALE MANAGER, OR MORE SENIOR COLLEAGUE  
n. 1205

■ MEN WITH MALE MANAGER, OR MORE SENIOR COLLEAGUE  
n. 3854



### Observations

Regardless of whether they have a male or female manager, employees report an almost identical experience of the support they receive. This is shown in the graph above by the overlap in attitudes irrespective

of the gender of the respondent or their boss. We hypothesise that those who know you less well than your close colleagues are more likely to resort to more gender stereotypical judgements.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE SURVEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Being more aware of our personal biases is a great start. But it is only a start. We know, for example, there is no clear evidence that unconscious bias training leads to change.<sup>33</sup> People create culture and people, individually and collaboratively, can change culture by creating a work environment which facilitates opportunities to succeed for diverse groups who have traditionally found it more challenging to progress. Inclusive cultures will not simply arrive on their own.

***We ALL have to DO something differently.***

Motivated individuals working together in communities of interest can achieve a lot. Communities of interest share ideas and thoughts about how to positively influence outcomes for a particular group such as disabled or LGBT staff. However, there are often a few highly motivated people who take too heavy a load on inclusion. This in itself can limit the time spent on the work that gives someone the profile and experience for promotion.

An organisation wanting to attract, retain and advance women must reflect on the consequences of these biased behaviours and actively initiate and support collective action to change them. ●

***“The gender gap in awareness of these challenges shows how important it is for women and men to discuss, understand and address the issues of gender bias in workplace culture which affect us all”.***

DR JILL ARMSTRONG, LEAD RESEARCHER,  
COLLABORATING WITH MEN,  
MURRAY EDWARDS COLLEGE

▶▶ Good ideas about what individuals can do and how organisations can support change come next.



The following sections present practical actions and case studies drawn from research participants and organisations.

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# HOW TO DELIVER EVERYDAY GENDER INCLUSION

**Practical actions suggested for  
individuals, managers and organisations.**

# 7 ACTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL GENDER ALLIES

Organisations are at many different stages of debate and action on diversity and inclusion. We intend the aims and impacts of actions described here to be a useful stimulus to your thinking about how they can be adapted to your workplace and your role.

## 1. HOW TO SHAPE GENDER NETWORKS

Consider the strategy for your gender networks.

- Are there good reasons to have female and/or male only spaces in addition to a joint network?
- Does the name of the joint network include men?
- Are the topics to be discussed communicated in a way that includes men?
- Extend personal invitations for men to join.
- Share diversity and inclusion business case examples of relevance to your organisation.
- Devise and communicate a few key pledges on specific actions.

- Consider separating caring responsibilities from gender inclusion based networks. Caring for elderly relatives is affecting many.

## 2. HOW TO RECRUIT MEN INTO GENDER NETWORKS

- Ask women to bring a man, and then ask men to bring other men.
- Make the topics relevant, for example by tackling masculine gender stereotypes.
- Frank and open discussions with groups of men about the issues they face because of their gender.
- Tackle examples of gender stereotyping that negatively affect men such as accessing parental leave for longer periods or mental health issues associated with the expectation that men put work first.
- Talk about wellbeing and the compatibility of flexible work with ambition.
- Raise the point that men who don't act can be seen as complicit with everyday sexist behaviour. ►



## CASE STUDY

# Tackling male gender stereotyping

***“Recognising gender equality requires analysis on limiting factors for all genders, not only women.”***

**Stuart McNulty**  
UK CEO of Alpha FMC



Diversity and inclusion is instrumental to our foundation as a business. The Gender Equality stream is crucial in encouraging focus on the challenges affecting our business and the wider industry, to ensure we continue to attract and retain the best talent.

Recognising gender equality requires analysis on limiting factors for all genders, not only women. Financial markets consulting is a challenging industry in which to maintain gender balance. However, we recognise it is not just women that suffer from gender discrimination. As well as remaining conscious of this during our female-focused discussions, we dedicate a

month each year to International Men’s Day to focus on issues such as men’s mental health, expected behaviour from male stereotypes and paternal familial roles.

Alpha expects employees to challenge, define, and lead diversity and inclusion policies. They are supported in this by substantial funding for initiatives including training, networking and benchmarking. At Alpha, all staff members contribute to, and own, core components of the growth strategy, including diversity and inclusion. Year-end reviews take this action into account ensuring proactivity in this area can be a factor for success within the firm. ●



### ▶ 3. HOW TO SHOW COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION

Openly talk about what you are doing to create a more inclusive culture. If you are a manager/team leader set the tone:

- Make sure the language in all communications is gender neutral.
- Check whether any panel or conference you are invited to address is gender-balanced. Make your participation contingent on this.
- Ensure that teams for pitches and projects are gender balanced.
- Ask your female colleagues about their experiences – and give women an opportunity to share their experiences with other women in single gender spaces because women underestimate these challenges and don't necessarily know that issues they experience are common to others too. Ask how you can help.

- Lobby or put your hand up for inclusion initiatives offered in your organisation.

- Actively encourage men and women to feel able to ask to work flexibly and take the parental leave to which they are entitled.

### 4. GIVE BETTER FEEDBACK ▶▶

- Consider team training on how to give and receive feedback in a constructive way. So much of unintentional gender bias is about poor communication – so this will benefit everyone.

### 5. WAYS TO SHARE THE 'OFFICE HOUSEKEEPING'

- Notice who tends to take on these tasks and actively do your share. A short survey may help, listing these kinds of tasks and the amount of time people spend on them. ▶

## LANGUAGE COMMONLY INTERPRETED IN A GENDER BIASED WAY<sup>34</sup>

Whilst few of these words/phrases are innately pejorative, they are commonly used to describe only one gender.

#### TO DESCRIBE WOMEN

**Good team-player // Conscientious**  
**// Good attention to detail // Helpful**  
**// Modest // Lucky // Pleasant //**  
**Passive // Emotional // Prima Donna**  
**// Difficult // Chip on the shoulder**

#### TO DESCRIBE MEN

**Rising star // Flexible // Not a details guy //**  
**Doesn't volunteer // Good at self-promotion**  
**// Skilled // Charming/charismatic //**  
**Assertive // Passionate // Gets the job done**  
**// Maverick // Ambitious**

**EXPERT  
ADVICE**

## Talking to men about gender neutral feedback



**Tunde Olanrewaju**  
Senior Partner,  
McKinsey and Company

We asked Tunde Olanrewaju what tips he could pass on to help other men tackle some common problems caused by gender bias. He discussed noticing and calling out differences in language used about men and women. This is important to ensuring equality of opportunity in career progression.

“For instance, I’m always very mindful if I’m giving feedback about a woman to a review committee to make sure I don’t inadvertently use words that because of the way some people hear things might lead to a different interpretation of

what I’m saying. So if I describe her style and how she works with clients, I may take care to say “I think she is appropriately forceful” rather than “She’s very assertive”. Similarly when I’m getting feedback about a woman from a man during reviews I will often ask “would you say the same thing if they were a man?” to get people to really think back on whether their feedback is gender-neutral. I think there are lots of little tools like this that would make people just a lot more conscious of their behaviour and how they’re reading situations.” ●

*“When I’m getting feedback about a woman from a man during reviews I will often ask ‘would you say the same thing if they were a man?’ to get people to really think back on whether their feedback is gender-neutral.”*

Jason Ghaboos, Gender Equality Network Co-chair and researcher on the Collaborating with Men project seconded from the public sector shares his CONVENE model for making meetings more inclusive.

# CONVENE

## Conduct

*It should be clear who is 'chair'. The 'chair' should provide all attendees with an opportunity to contribute and control those contributions where conflict arises.*

- Establish terms of engagement/behaviours – phones off, laptops for note-taking only. Start every meeting by saying something like 'we are going to treat each other with respect and make sure everyone gets the opportunity to be heard'.
- Equal opportunity to contribute – invite contribution by eye contact whilst saying, 'who else would like to make their point/ask a question?'. Seek the contribution of introverts and reflective thinkers in advance or afterwards.
- Consciously intervene when people have been interrupted and invite them to finish their point. Intervene too when you notice an idea has been ignored or misappropriated.
- Manage dominant contributors effectively (e.g. repeating their main point so they feel acknowledged and then explicitly inviting others to contribute; ask the long-winded to summarise their main point).
- Research says more women contribute when invited to contribute first. Consider rotating the chairing responsibilities to women.

## Note

*Listen and summarise the discussion and decisions for each agenda/action point. Note key points made and any decisions taken.*

- Assign roles as needed, for example recording attendance and taking minutes. Ask a man as often as a woman to take the notes!

## Objectives

*Set and state the objectives of the meeting in advance so people are clear whether and why they are needed.*

### Prior to the meeting:

- Consider whether the objectives of the meeting could be achieved by other means.

### During the meeting:

- Welcome and make everyone feel comfortable.
- Clearly explain the purpose and desired outcome(s) at the start.
- Try not to allow the AOB to take over the meeting!

## Value

*Value the time invested in the meeting and the people in it by getting the most out of both. Start on time and finish when planned.*

- Try not to stifle valuable contributions by sticking too tightly to the agenda. It's a balance.
- Any useful discussions that arise outside the agenda should be noted. Clearly state how they will be taken forward.

## Evaluate

*Review whether the outcomes of the meeting met the intended purpose and objectives. Don't be afraid to ask for feedback.*

- Ask attendees for their insight by asking what went well and what areas could be improved upon next time.
- Consider inviting an independent party to observe, critique and feedback on your role as chair. Tell the attendees in advance this is going to happen.

## Notify

*For formal and large meetings communicate the objectives, purpose and intended outcomes ahead of the meeting, in writing. Circulate a clear, concise agenda.*

- Agendas should be transparent and self-explanatory.

## Environment

*Check the equipment required is working, the facilities are fit for purpose and the meeting date and time suits as many people as possible.*

- Will the meeting location and access arrangements work for all attendees?
- Try to avoid school pick up or drop off times and optimise the opportunity for colleagues working part-time to attend.

***“The debate needs to be far more open and honest. A lot of men are too afraid to express their views for fear of being labelled sexist and as such I don’t think women understand the way the men think and therefore the men don’t hear the women’s reaction”***

MALE IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

- ▶ ● Take turns to make the drinks in meetings, take the notes, circulate the meeting details, organise the cards for colleagues’ birthdays, and so on.

## 6. HOW TO DEAL WITH INTERRUPTIONS AND NOT BEING HEARD IN MEETINGS

In face-to-face and virtual meetings, women and men are interrupted by men and women. However, research shows that in mixed groups men tend to dominate the conversation. When women speak, their opinions often go unheard; they are frequently interrupted and ideas they express are commonly repeated by, and then attributed to, a man.<sup>35</sup>

When men are told that men tend not to hear women, men often think that women don’t speak up. Yes, there are men and women who prefer not to speak up in public or without reflecting. However, there are strategies that help such as asking individuals in advance for their comments and asking for responses and thoughts on action points the morning after a meeting. ▶

**If you are not the meeting chair or a senior leader, it’s helpful to pair up in advance to intervene on behalf of a colleague. It’s much easier to do this for someone else than catch and address it yourself. Advance planning also means you have permission to act as an ally.**

## INTERVENTIONS AND LANGUAGE TO USE IN THE MOMENT TO DISRUPT INTERRUPTIONS

Verbally acknowledge a point that goes unheard by saying things like: *“Liz’s point [repeat it] is well taken because...”*.

When someone gets credit for a contribution made by someone else, first say something like: *“thanks David, that builds on something Fiona was saying earlier; Fiona would you like to say more? or: “thanks for bringing Fiona’s good point back up”*.

When someone’s point is misunderstood, intervene and say: *“what I understood by Sam’s point was...” or: “it seems like we have different views on the implications or aims of Sam’s point”*.

- When someone is interrupted, say something like: *“Sam, it sounded like you had more to say, please continue” or: “this is Sam’s area, would you like to say more?”*.

- If you are the meeting chair or have a senior position say something like: *“Can I stop you there? I’ll come back to you later. Mahmood, you were saying...?”*.

► However, the issue for many women and some men is that when they do speak up they are not heard and therefore they are not credited for their contribution. For ideas on what to say, see the box on the left.

Our survey of gender bias showed that 39% of women and 29% of men thought they were not credited for their contributions in meetings.

### 7. HOW TO CALL OUT UNINTENTIONAL GENDER BIAS AND HOW TO BE CALLED OUT ►►

- Start from the position that it’s difficult and emotionally tiring for the person who is raising the issue – it’s your responsibility to find a solution.
- Work out and share what to say when you notice people using gender double standards.
- Share language that will be helpful for those who are called out.
- Talk about ‘fairness’ rather than bias.
- Being able to call things out does need leaders to make this safe – especially for people calling out someone higher up the career ladder. ●

# USEFUL LANGUAGE FOR 'CALLING OUT' EVERYDAY GENDER BIAS<sup>36</sup>

## IN PRIVATE

### Ask permission to give a bit of feedback on the issue in question

- Use 'I' statements: Talk about *your* understanding, how *you* feel.
- Use phrases like:

*'I'm not sure whether you realised'... 'I know you were being funny when you said X... but this is how [repeat comment verbatim] made me feel'... 'This is what I understood by [repeat comment verbatim]'*

*"I think we've come to different conclusions about this. Can you please take me through your thinking?"*

*'What do you mean by xx [repeat comment verbatim]?'*

## IN PUBLIC

### Be specific; use humour if it comes naturally to you

- Ask if the language used in that situation/assessment would have been the same if you had been talking to/about a man/someone white etc.?
- Check in when you hear something you find problematic. Say something like, *"Can I just stop you there. What I understand by what you just said is..."*
- Implicitly ask for permission to follow up on the issue by saying: *'I'm uncomfortable with that...'* or *'I'm not sure how I feel about that...'* *'I'm going to have a think about it and come back to this later'.*

# USEFUL LANGUAGE TO USE WHEN YOU ARE CALLED OUT

## DO SAY

- *'I'm sorry, that was not my intention. It's clear I've got some work to do. I want to try and make this right. If you have the time, and want to, can you suggest what I should have said/done instead?'*
- *'I'm listening. I really appreciate you bringing this up'.*
- *'I'm going to reflect on what you've said and come back to you'.*
- *'I'm sorry. I intend to do better'.*

## DON'T SAY

- *'You must have misunderstood'.*
- *'No you must have imagined that'.*
- *'Oh it was just a joke'.*
- *'I don't know why you are so upset'.*
- *'You are being over-sensitive'.*
- *'That's just me being myself'.*

# HOW ORGANISATIONS CAN SUPPORT INDIVIDUAL ACTION

Our research and that of others shows that men, and many women, are often unaware of the challenges faced mainly by female colleagues.<sup>37</sup> A career is an individual thing so it's not always clear how common are experiences of unintentional (and sometimes deliberate) gender bias.

People often need time and space to access and talk about 'what it's like for me working here'. Several organisations have shared their approaches to helping people understand experiences of unintentional gender bias. In each instance:

- The aim is not only to build understanding of challenges but importantly, also to arrive at solutions people have an appetite to enact.
- The case studies focus on men and women working together to change workplace culture to be more gender inclusive.
- These initiatives are just one example of the many ways in which the contributing organisations are addressing the complex problem of attracting, developing and retaining women at all levels.

## CASE STUDY



**Kirsty Peacock**  
HR Director, Dentons UK  
& Middle East LLP

## Workplace Culture Workshops

### Aims of Dentons' Workplace Culture Workshops

A smaller proportion of female lawyers, in comparison to men, rise into partnership positions. This initiative aims to get under the skin of women's day-to-day experiences at the firm in order to ensure talented women are not being overlooked or discouraged from aspiring to take on more responsibility. This is one way in which the firm is working to meet the target of 30% partners being female by 2020.

### Workplace Culture Survey and Workshop

Dentons participated in the Murray Edwards College survey and workshop programme. The survey findings, highlighting gender differences in perceptions of everyday gender challenges in workplace culture, are followed by single gender and then a mixed gender workshop to discuss the survey findings and identify action to be taken. Following a train-the-trainer session with



Murray Edwards College, Kirsty's team has run 12 workshops to date with the Board and across the firm.

### **Impact - awareness, engagement and action**

For the individuals participating, the impact has been in opening eyes to the hidden everyday challenges faced particularly by women. Participants have reported they arrive at the workshops with one view and leave with another as a result of hearing about specific day-to-day experiences and the gulf in the perceptions of male and female colleagues. Things that went unnoticed before the workshops are much more visible afterwards. This opens the door to defining and enacting behavioural change and firm level initiatives aimed at ensuring equality of opportunity. As Kirsty reports: "I've tried many gender equality initiatives, and this is the first one that's started the conversation in a constructive way. Staff fill in a survey beforehand and the workshop begins by sharing the results. Being confronted by your own colleagues' experiences is really powerful and the anonymity reduces the emotion that often comes with this subject. It's moved the conversations we're having away from blame and defensiveness towards a positive dialogue, with everyone creating the solutions together. We already have great gender equality policies and processes, but this is enabling us to think about our culture on a deeper level."

### **Advice to others**

- Keep the data presentation short, focused and clear.
- Persist. There are many reasons why people don't

### **大成 DENTONS**

Dentons is the world's largest law firm, offering clients more services in more locations than any other legal services provider.

*"I've tried many gender equality initiatives, and this is the first one that's started the conversation in a constructive way... It's moved the conversations we're having away from blame and defensiveness towards a positive dialogue, with everyone creating the solutions together."*

want to come to a diversity and inclusion workshop. Invite a few supportive people to the first sessions. Make the first sessions mandatory for those in leadership roles. Ask line managers to ring round just before the sessions to encourage attendance.

- Our experience is that the first participants got a lot from the sessions and then encouraged others in their teams to attend.
- Mix the generations within the same sessions. The more senior members of the firm, of both genders, tend to be most surprised about the difference in experience and depth of feeling around workplace culture. Give them an opportunity to listen to the views of younger people. Younger people are often more attuned to challenges in how things get done and more engaged with the benefits of diversity and inclusion.
- Don't expect to get support from everyone. There is usually a small core of individuals who are tuned into behaving in inclusive ways. There's also a big group of people who are in favour of equality of opportunity yet underestimate the depth and complexity of the problem and don't know what they can do to help. This is a population well worth working with. ●

## CASE STUDY

# Gender Intelligence



**Philip Aiken**  
Managing Director, Head of  
Regulated and Unregulated  
Lending, Barclays UK Legal

### Ask who thrives in the culture of this workplace?

- Research with staff in the Barclay's legal function showed that perceived 'fit' with the dominant culture is an important factor driving career advancement. The perceived dominant culture in financial services tends to be somewhat homogeneous and privileges stereotypical masculine traits such as single-minded commitment to work, ambition and competitive behaviour.
- It is fairly unusual – yet very useful – for organisations to hold up a mirror to the culture of their workplace and address why some people thrive whereas others perceive difficulties and a lack of fit with their communication styles and strengths. Those who thrive are often unaware there is a dominant culture.

### Gender Intelligence Programme

- Lawyers tend to progress because of their individual subject expertise rather than their skills as line managers. The Emotional Quotient (EQ) skills that are also required to be a good lawyer and are vital to good line management are not often as valued or facilitated.

- There is patchy awareness of the scale and impact of gender challenges faced because workplace culture reflects the way society has historically been organised. Gender Intelligence (GQ) is also a valuable skill.
- The Gender Intelligence programme addresses emotional quotient EQ and gender intelligence GQ by examining language and behaviours used in everyday interactions and also in appraisals and job specs.
- Workshop sessions are now being piloted and aim to identify tangible actions individuals can take to build a more gender inclusive workplace culture.

This programme is unusual in directly addressing what it feels like to work here. It is pioneering in its ambition to scrutinise workplace culture through the eyes of those who instinctively thrive, those who thrive because they work at fitting in and those who perceive a big gap between who they are and the behaviours they are assessed on.

- The programme works with line managers who hold different views on the value of diversity and inclusion. Views range between people who are passionate supporters through to people who are sceptical about the benefits to them, or to the organisation. As Philip comments: “It is my belief that a lot of realisations will come after people have left the training room and see everyday interactions, and the cues that come from the media and the way the world is organised, through fresh eyes.” ●

## ADVICE TO OTHERS

*“If you approach inclusion through the lens of workplace culture, rather than focusing on groups who face more challenges to advancement then you have a much better chance of recruiting, retaining and developing a diverse workforce.”*

In partnership with  
 **BARCLAYS**

Barclays is one of the largest banks in the UK, operating in over 40 countries with over 80,000 employees globally.

Philip is also the  
Global Accountable  
Executive for  
Diversity & Inclusion  
for the Legal  
Function at Barclays.

## CASE STUDY

# Reverse Mentoring



**Shelley Caton**  
Head of Culture and Diversity.  
BAM Nuttall Limited

### What is reverse mentoring?

In reverse mentoring, a senior person is mentored by someone more junior in the organisation. It is a useful tool for senior people to gain depth of insight into the everyday experiences, perceptions and challenges facing junior colleagues of a different background, including gender, experience and ethnicity. Reverse mentoring is well-suited to gaining insight into the experience of the culture of the workplace from the point of view of people who represent a minority. It provides a platform to identify good practices, remedy problems and improve communication.

### Aims of the Reverse Mentoring Programme

Reverse Mentoring at BAM Nuttall is positioned as an innovative way to encourage learning and facilitate cross-generational relationships, supporting the acquisition of diversity where this doesn't exist in the senior management team. The mentor-mentee relationship will influence personal and professional growth for both parties. The programme has a clear role to play in shaping policies and practices around gender equality in our changing world.

The programme is driven by the mentor who will control the content and the topics for discussion. The BAM Nuttall programme was initially run in conjunction with KPMG who organised the pairings and facilitated

training days that set expectations and taught skills that are helpful to the process. A broad range of discussion points are suggested to oil the wheels of the first conversations. A minimum number of meetings are advised and the mentor/mentee teams take it from there. One pair met 12 times over the year and more than a few of their conversations were for longer than two hours.

### Impact - awareness, engagement and action

BAM Nuttall is now in the second year of this initiative. Feedback from the first year was strong so mentors were selected by written application and interview. 25 pairs are participating in the 2019 programme. 13 of the mentors are men and 12 are women with an average age of 24. Part of the reason for involving men as mentors is because the company recognises the importance of men talking to other men about gender and other diversity issues. Success stories and learning from the first programme were shared and eight people are re-pairing to champion the process (see Irosha's comments, far right).

In recognition of the value differing perspectives can bring to the business and individual development and growth, BAM Nuttall utilised the opportunity to embrace the Young BAM initiative.

The Young BAM initiative connects 'young' and

diverse professionals across the Royal BAM network of businesses, in a programme established to learn and share ideas with peers, and form a direct link to the management boards.

### Advice to others

- Be persistent. It takes a few meetings for the relationship to get established.
- Mentees need to be aware of slipping into a coaching role, especially when there is a large gap in seniority. This will limit the success of the programme in connecting you with the experiences and ideas of the mentors. Build reviews into the programme and explicitly discuss whether this is happening and how to reset.
- It's more than a chat. Preparation, planning and just enough structure are key to successful interactions.
- Have a clear end point. Help participants summarise their key learning and suggestions for action points from each meeting, and for the end of the year of review.
- Beware of mission creep. Having regular meetings with senior people in the business is obviously valuable and this can invite pushback from people not selected as mentors. When more people from minority groups are selected, people outside these groups can feel excluded. It is important the objectives of the initiative are clear, widely communicated and linked by senior people to the company's strategy on inclusion. These aren't easy conversations but not having them can mean the initiative stops serving the stated aims.
- Build in flexibility. Some relationships will not gel. Common problems are scepticism about the value of the initiative, volume or location of work getting in the way or mis-matched personalities. Those leading the initiative need to be in a position to recalibrate or change mentor/mentees partnerships. ●



### Irosha Gunatunga Section Engineer, describes her experience as a mentor

I developed a really good relationship with my mentee. We got to know and trust each other. We talk about the bigger picture, about the direction the company is going in and what it is like to work here. It's given me a broader view of my job. It's also given me more confidence and taught me skills especially about the way I communicate.

I've been able to talk to my mentor about my views on diversity and gender differences and pick up on things I hear. It's good to see that some of the things that have happened recently are because of the conversations mentors and mentees are having.

Being able to challenge and being open to challenge was a hot-spot for mentors and mentees. It was helpful to have some training in the language and tone to use when challenging or being challenged. I no longer feel I have to hold back my comments because I'm worried about the reaction I will get.



BAM Nuttall is a market-leading civil engineering contractor creating a sustainable future by bringing engineering to life. Creating sustainable environments to enhance people's lives.

## CASE STUDY

# Inclusion Advocates



**David Harkness**  
Partner, Clifford Chance LLP

### **Aim of the Inclusion Advocate Network**

One thing that came out of Collaborating with Men survey and workshops was that some women, especially junior ones, were unclear – or perhaps afraid – about what to do if they observed or experienced behaviour they perceived to be inappropriate or gender biased.

This was something of a surprise given our comprehensive anti-bullying and harassment policy and detailed HR procedures to back it up. Something was obviously missing especially in relation to inappropriate behaviour that did not cause physical harm.

The network of Inclusion Advocates aims to bridge this gap. The advocates are intended as people to whom those who experience or observe inappropriate comments or behaviour (such as bullying or harassment) can turn. The advocates are not meant to intervene and solve a problem, but rather to give advice and guidance. This could be as simple as giving the affected individual the confidence to challenge inappropriate behaviour themselves, or as detailed as guidance on how to make a formal complaint.

### **Impact and benefits**

The main direct benefit is support for junior employees who are in need of guidance. It is still early days, but the signs are encouraging.

We have also definitely secured some indirect benefits. For example, announcing this through items on our intranet and a poster campaign by the coffee machines on each floor gave us the chance to get people talking about what is and isn't inappropriate behaviour. This has been well received. Simply making that statement seems to have had a positive outcome and encouraged more people to call out inappropriate behaviour.

Another unintended benefit has been the training of the advocates as informal ambassadors. This has provided an (admittedly small) pool of advocates who are sensitised to the sort of things that may be of concern. Often these things are about an imbalance of power and the advocates have the mandate to raise this. This is winning others over.

*“The main direct benefit is support for junior employees who are in need of guidance. It is still early days, but the signs are encouraging.”*

#### Advice for others

- Good quality training for the advocates.
- We have struggled with finding quality help to train for unconscious bias and other inclusion issues. Part of the success of this initiative was that we had some really brilliant help from a small charity called Tender who designed and ran the training for us. Their background is in educating young people on domestic violence but the perspective they brought was valuable and they are also now helping us with other initiatives. ●

**C L I F F O R D**  
**C H A N C E**

Clifford Chance is one of the world's pre-eminent law firms, with significant depth and range of resources across five continents.



**Lynette Williams**  
Global Head of Client and Market Development discusses her role as an Inclusion Advocate.

I wanted to be an Inclusion Advocate because I think having an inclusive culture is ensuring everyone has a voice. We need to listen to our people, support them, and to do what we can to steer them in the right direction.

In a large organisation, it can be difficult for people to know where to go if they need help. Whether people want to talk to someone who will understand a specific situation, or they can't yet articulate a problem beyond a feeling of unease, it's important that our people see that the members of the senior team care about colleagues as complex human beings, not just as staff members. I manage a large team, so listening to people is one of the biggest and most important parts of my role and something I encourage in all of my managers too.

Inclusion is a broader issue than gender. We know that our differences enrich us as a firm, but if we don't listen to each other, and engage in a constructive dialogue, we'll never make the changes that matter to our people. We're having that dialogue more and more, and that's progress.





# IDEAS FOR MANAGERS LEADING CHANGE

**Challenges faced by leaders focused on inclusion, not just diversity. Case studies on ways to accelerate change.**

Many organisations have started with diversity objectives that are focused on representation. We have argued throughout our *Collaborating with Men* research programme for action to be taken to change workplace cultures to be more inclusive. Work on gender inclusion can also inform initiatives that address inclusion for all groups who are seen as ‘different’. Without a focus on inclusion, the diverse populations you recruit will not stay the course. Learning from the *Collaborating with Men* workshops shows that it is hard to sustain change without active leadership from each layer of management within each organisation.

## Competing tensions

Diversity and inclusion (D&I) offers opportunities to promote engagement, build cohesion and improve innovation and delivery. Yet many D&I initiatives fail to deliver their desired outcomes<sup>38</sup>. In our many conversations with senior leaders, the main reason given for this is that D&I tends to be attached to tactical initiatives that fight with the core priorities and strategy of the organisation. This is linked to the backlash most are now experiencing, particularly on gender inclusion.

As Jason Ghaboos, Researcher on *Collaborating with Men*, comments: “There is no doubt the loud campaigns for gender equality have had an unintended consequence of making some men feel excluded. This backlash is related to the fact diversity and inclusion has mainly been actuated initiative by initiative. It’s hard for managers to defend why men are not getting access

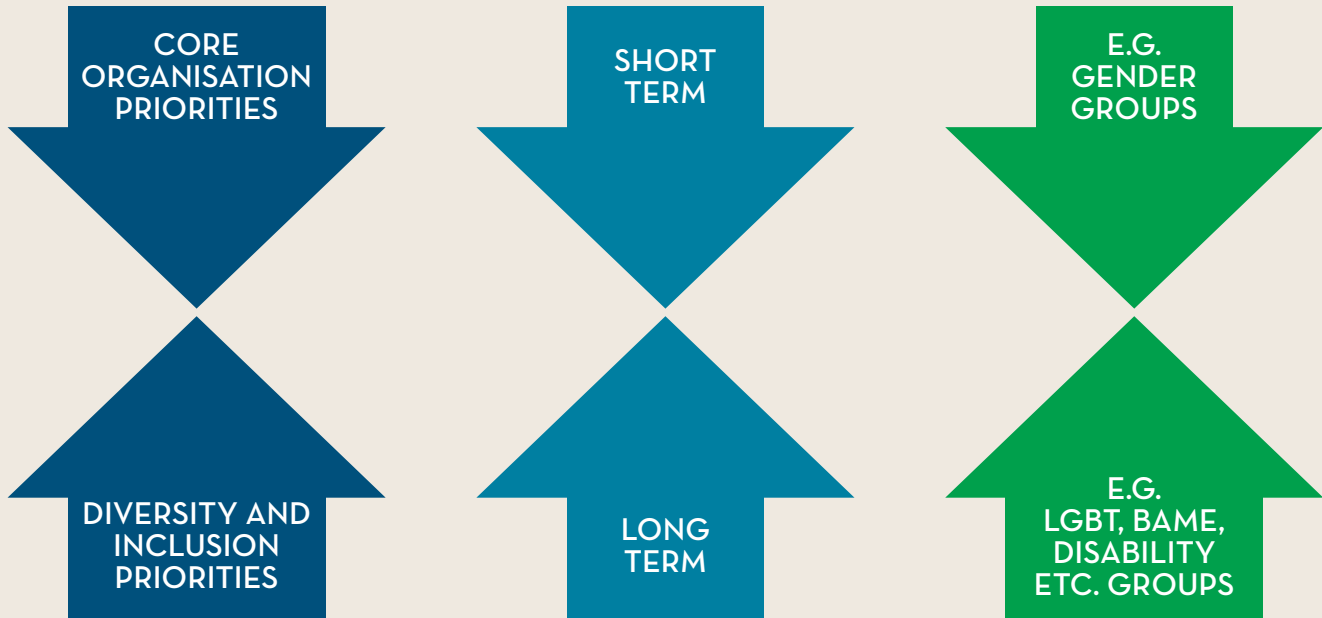
**“There is no doubt the loud campaigns for gender equality have had an unintended consequence of making some men feel excluded. This backlash is related to the fact diversity and inclusion has mainly been actuated initiative by initiative.”**

JASON GHABOOS, RESEARCHER ON  
COLLABORATING WITH MEN

to, for example, reverse mentoring programmes unless the initiatives are presented as a whole and related to the objectives and purpose of each organisation. Senior leaders need to acknowledge and tackle this problem because it causes ‘mission creep’ away from the original inclusion objectives.”

Furthermore, tensions can sometimes be found between the competing interests of communities of motivated individuals, such as groups focused on mental health or LGBT issues. Organisations cannot do without the commitment of these individuals but these tensions often lead to D&I initiatives appearing to shift from issue to issue, being tactical, short term and under invested.

# COMPETING TENSIONS



## Implications for leaders

- Invest in understanding and measuring gender inclusion - understanding people's qualitative everyday experience is powerful and tends to be under-explored.
- Motivate individuals to change their behaviour by ensuring people understand the alignment between the core purpose of the organisation and diversity and, especially, inclusion objectives.
- Build governance and structure into D&I to deliver bottom up as well as top down.
- Reinforce and reward inclusive ways of working and challenge behaviours that challenge the intended culture.

- Support individual behavioural change by building capability using organisational resource and initiatives.
- Manage competing D&I priorities.
- Investment in D&I is long term and requires permanent campaigning. That said, specific campaigns and celebrations of wins are important to keep the momentum going.
- There is no one established way of measuring the success of inclusion. A summary of good practice is offered by think tank New Financial<sup>59</sup>.

The following case study is an example of 'joining the dots' by integrating an inclusive culture with the core purpose of the business.



CASE  
STUDY

## Creating a 'Unifying Culture'



**Chris Grove**  
Corporate Finance  
Partner, BDO UK

BDO is a people-led business. Its core business is accountancy but the reputation of the business and reason employees want to work for BDO is encapsulated by the core purpose: 'Helping You Succeed'. This crystallised the thoughts expressed by some 150 partners in the business in year-long workshops. **"The 'you' means ourselves, each other, our clients and also broader society"**.

A common understanding of this core purpose is the foundation that underpins the culture, the strategic framework and all the decisions taken in a complex matrix organisation where autonomy of action is important to meeting clients' needs. A 'Unifying Culture' brings BDO people together irrespective of their location and business stream. Over 30 people currently act as Core Purpose Champions to reinforce and keep communicating this purpose around the business. People are encouraged to take on this role for a short time so the population of ambassadors grows.

The strategy for a 'Unifying Culture' includes:

- Encouraging people to be themselves and fostering respect of each other's voices and opinions.
- Designing career plans around personality and skills to inspire and challenge.
- Collaborative sharing of knowledge and ideas.
- Helping you define, achieve and celebrate success.

The people board (known internally as the U Board) enables community groups organised around issues and activities that motivate individuals, with training, funds and feedback. BDO partner, Iain Nettleton, talks about his involvement in a group that sits under 'Being Yourself' working for gender equality; BDO Inspire:

*"The reasons I have been involved in BDO Inspire is that I believe the business case for greater gender equality in leadership is overwhelming. It is partly about ensuring we retain the most talented people and best ideas - but also ensuring that as a firm, we reflect the makeup of*

*“Be authentic. The reason we’ve had success in building an inclusive culture is because we’ve tapped into seams of real passion. We’ve supported it but it’s self-driven from the bottom up. You can’t drive a culture sitting in a boardroom. What you can do is empower, support and help steer.”*



**Zoe Bailey**  
Chief Strategy Officer,  
BDO UK

*our clients and indeed society. We set up BDO Inspire to help shape a Gender Balance strategy which is now reflected in “BE INSPIRED”. Moving forward, we hope BDO Inspire can be a vehicle for events and dialogue which address the practical things we can do to support the next generation of female leaders.”*

**Advice to others – delivering a ‘Unifying Culture’**

- Make inclusion part of the fabric of your firm rather than relying on a series of interventions.
- Design the culture you want to create into the structure.

- Core purpose needs to be authentic and also simple – to be easy to understand, communicate and encourage people to engage.
- Persevere – gender equality of opportunity, to take just one example, is a long term challenge that requires scrutiny of when and why women are lost from the business, and needs to be tackled in many ways. Quotas and targets cause backlash if this is your main lever to stimulate change.
- Nurture motivated community groups who have an authentic passion for action on specific topics. ●



## ► Policies designed to disrupt gender stereotypes and benefit men and women

Culture change requires a policy framework that facilitates gender equality of opportunity. Gender equality also gives men freedom from restrictive masculine stereotypes and greater choice about combining work with life. Policies that ensure men have equal access to parental leave, and flexible or agile working, act in many ways to involve men in delivering equality of opportunity and tackle unintended bias.

Leaders can ensure that gender bias is ‘designed out’ out of key people policies and inclusion is ‘designed in’. Ensuring universal access – for men as well as women – to flexible working and parental/carers’ leave shifts gendered assumptions about men and women’s participation in careers and family life.

***“For me, the single biggest challenge we face is making successful careers compatible with parenthood. It’s an issue than affects men as well as women.”***

***“The concept of an actively involved father who wants to support the career of his wife, but is still highly dedicated to his own career does not seem to be understood here. Flexible working being offered equally and without suspicion or punishment is probably the most effective way forward.”***

MALE IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

The two case studies that follow examine leading-edge thinking and policies on designing jobs to be flexible and Equal Parental Leave. These policies are of critical importance in delivering inclusion through culture change in a way that benefits and engages women and men.

What stands out for us is how these policies have the power to cause widespread reappraisal of the experience of gender bias, tackling two key tasks in engaging men that we have highlighted: UNDERSTANDING and RELEVANCE. ●

## EXPERT ADVICE

# Designing flexible, inclusive jobs



**Dr Zoë Young**  
Consulting sociologist  
of Half the Sky, expert  
on flexible work in  
professional and  
managerial roles and  
author of *Women's Work*.

Demand for flexibility in working hours and patterns is high and rising in the UK. Survey data shows that 87% of us want more flexibility in our jobs and career paths<sup>40</sup>. Many organisations have established flexible working policies and programmes and yet academic research shows flexible working often poses substantial challenges to career satisfaction and promotion prospects<sup>41</sup>. This often happens because an individual's working pattern changes but very little else changes around them. One person's part-time becomes another's overtime, which might be fine if you get paid, not if you don't, but it feels fragile and can be perceived as unfair in teams.

Zoë proposes seven actions for employers that seek to make flexible working options, realistic and rewarding ways of working in organisations.

### 1. Flip the default

The default job design is full-time, 9-5, 5 days a week, at employers' premises. In a 24/7 globally connected working world, organisations should 'flip the default'. Instead of expecting the individual to make the case as to why their reduced hours or home-working won't negatively impact the business, ask instead 'why can't a job be done flexibly right now?' and then take responsibility for doing something about the answers.

*“One person's part-time becomes another's overtime, which might be fine if you get paid, not if you don't, but it feels fragile and can be perceived as unfair in teams.”*

► **2. Flexibility is more than 'part-time'**

The flexibility that people want and need in their working lives is more than adjusted hours. Flexibility is also about when, and where people work, and how tasks are teamed and shared. So thinking in multiple dimensions about time, location and team flexibility gives you many more ways to meet the work-life needs of an increasingly diverse workforce.

**3. Make it universal**

For flexible working to live and breathe in the organisation it needs to be universal. Access to flexible work adjustments should be reason-neutral and gender-neutral. Informal flexibility is important to everyone. Think about what your universal offer is. Can anyone take a couple of hours off at any point to attend to a personal matter, no questions asked? Not all flexibility needs a contractual adjustment.

**4. Experiment with flexible job designs**

There are hundreds of ways to work flexibly by combining different hours, schedule, and location options, and people need those different combinations at different life stages and sets of circumstances. Not every combination will work in every job (just yet) – the home-working paramedic or school teacher may

*“Women with children make up the majority of part-time and flexible workers. Men have children too and more men than women occupy leadership positions in big organisations.”*

be a little way off – but there will be scope to experiment, to involve teams in the design, to trial, and to make a case for investment in the technology or skills support to make a broader set of flexible job designs a reality for all.

**5. Build flex management capability**

Flexible working policy is brought to life by individuals in interaction with their line managers. Flexible working in practice is brought to life by individuals working in teams. Managers and leaders of teams need clarity and capability to design, deploy and manage individual flexibility and flexible working teams. They need training, support, and recognition for their efforts.

**6. Flexible career paths**

It might be achievable now to work flexibly in a job, what tends to be much more difficult is progressing to another more senior job and retaining a flexible work

arrangement. When we think about job design for flexibility, we need also to think about flexible career paths. Ladders need to lead to somewhere other than full-time, all-the-time jobs otherwise there will be only one type of person in one set of personal circumstances climbing them.

**7. Men, leave loudly!**

More men need to work flexibly and encourage flexible working in their teams otherwise flexible working and those who do it are inevitably marginalised. Women with children make up the majority of part-time and flexible workers. Men have children too and more men than women occupy leadership positions in big organisations. This means men are in a unique position to role model flexibility. Through their own actions and public explanations for leaving on time (e.g. to collect their children or attend a school event), they can show that ‘leaving loudly’ is not only possible, it is desirable. ●



## CASE STUDY

# Equal Parental Leave at Aviva



**Anthony Fitzpatrick**  
Employee Relations and  
Global Policy Lead, Aviva  
describes the nature  
and impact of Aviva's  
approach to Equal  
Parental Leave.

### **Aim of Aviva's Equal Parental Leave ('EPL')**

Since November 2017, parents employed by Aviva are eligible for the same amount of paid and unpaid time off, regardless of gender, sexual orientation or how they became a parent (birth, adoption or surrogacy). Under the policy, all UK employees are able to take 12 months of leave when a new child arrives, including 26 weeks at full basic pay.

This is only part of the story. Aviva seeks to deliver EPL in a way that is linked to the values

and culture of the company. EPL is designed to be open and transparent in line with Aviva's aim to 'kill complexity'. It is also designed to promote inclusion by breaking down gender stereotypes and removing barriers to career progress that are related to having a family. For this reason, the policy is called 'Equal', not the more common 'Shared' Parental Leave. This links directly to the aim to build a culture that cares more and creates a legacy. EPL works with the aspirations of all genders to

*“Offering 26 weeks paid leave is one thing. Feeling that you can take this leave without risk or penalty is a bigger challenge. EPL works for Aviva because it is spearheaded by strong leadership, which embeds the policy in the values the organisation wants to live by.”*



- take joint responsibility for parenting. People are encouraged to take the leave, irrespective of their gender or role within the company in two key ways:
- Sending a clear message from the senior leadership to catalyse take-up using internal publicity and testimonials.
  - Linking leave to the strategy for talent management. Back-filling roles during extended leave gives opportunities to extend the breadth of experience of other team members. Managers are encouraged to identify people who are looking for stretch assignments. And to offer opportunities to people, such as women and people of colour, who would benefit from

them but may not have asked for them, or come first into the minds of their managers.

### Impact by the numbers

- 840 people have taken up EPL so far of whom 47% are men.
- Average length of EPL taken for women is 45 weeks and for men 21 weeks. Before the change in policy men took an average of 2 weeks parental leave.
- 22% of men taking up EPL have leadership roles.<sup>42</sup>
- These figures buck the trend. The UK government introduced paid Shared Parental Leave in 2015 and take-up is reported to be less than 10%.<sup>43</sup> Possibly as low as 2% according to the Department of Business in 2018.<sup>44</sup> ●



**Fahad Sayood**  
Group Head of Financial Risk,  
Aviva powerfully describes his  
experience of EPL.

### *Do you think Equal Parental Leave can make men more empathetic to the particular career challenges experienced by women for so long?*

- Aviva launched its EPL policy a couple of weeks after we found out we were expecting our son. The first feeling was sheer joy that I'd get to spend that time with my family because I'd been worrying about how we'd handle the jump from one child to two. But almost immediately the worries returned. What would this mean for my job? What would it do to my career? How would it change people's perceptions of me? And it was only in the shock of that moment that I truly appreciated what it is that women go through, the agonising decisions they face at a time when they are already overwhelmed with challenges.

***“Aviva believes that the well-being of the family has a huge impact on any employee. Taking leave when you have a child often causes worry about the financial stability of the family. Equal Parental Leave is designed to address this and help employees thrive. Ultimately, the winners are our customers. A highly motivated, engaged workforce provides better quality of service.”***

*“I have always considered myself a feminist. However, when my daughter was born four years ago, it opened my eyes to the biases that pervade our society, and it pushed me to be a better person and a stronger ally. The experience of going through paternity leave has absolutely strengthened my resolve.”*

- Having been one of the first people to go through this at Aviva, I've been keen to be someone others in the organisation can bounce their thoughts off when they go through the process. I've counselled a few other fathers going through this and their questions and concerns are exactly the same. They are also the same questions and concerns that women face.
- It's easy to say you empathise from the outside but it never became real to me until I was forced to face it for myself.

### **Does EPL lead men to become more active allies?**

- I have always considered myself a feminist. However, when my daughter was born four years ago, it opened my eyes to the biases that pervade our society,

and it pushed me to be a better person and a stronger ally. The experience of going through paternity leave has absolutely strengthened my resolve.

- We cannot make the changes to support a fairer workplace fast enough and it's only through pushing for radical change that it will happen. I don't think before facing this experience, I would have felt like an agitator for change, an agent for reform. Aviva's parental policy has empowered me to try and be that.

### **Does EPL shift the myth that involved parenthood and ambition/commitment to the organisation are incompatible?**

- Has having a child impacted what I aspire to at work? Absolutely. Has it made me less

ambitious? Quite the opposite; I'm more driven now than I've ever been. Is my commitment to Aviva weakened? It could have been if the company had reacted badly to the news of my impending parenthood but in embracing me for who I am, my engagement and commitment to Aviva have never been higher.

- Myths mutate from germs of truth but are nourished by darkness. In launching a fair leave policy, Aviva has enabled us to shine a light on the challenges women face and created a conversation that never would have happened before. I hope that as we shine a light on these assumptions and empower open conversations on parental leave, these myths will slowly wither and die. ●



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# APPENDIX

## Research Methodology

An online survey collected the data anonymously from almost 7,000 employees. The gender binary is used because we are examining the implications of gender stereotypical thinking. Some questions were tailored to reflect existing academic research showing that men and women experience gender bias differently.

The seven main issues researched usually result from unconscious bias - so are hard to recognise. This survey therefore raised awareness of the above issues by giving research-based examples - and then asking if participants have personally experienced these issues or noticed others experiencing them. We recognise workplace culture problems can be fostered by as well as experienced by men and women - and the survey allowed that to be recorded.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our thanks to everyone who shared their experience and advice with us all.

Additional photographs: Martin Bond Photography

Design: [www.georgiakingdesign.com](http://www.georgiakingdesign.com)

Print: [www.langhampress.co.uk](http://www.langhampress.co.uk)



This brochure is produced with vegetable-based inks and made of material from well-managed FSC®-certified forests and from recycled materials.

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