

## **A BLUEPRINT FOR BALANCE.**

**Unlocking the six  
key areas to  
achieving gender  
balance.**

CMI's research charts employers' current approaches to achieving gender balance and showcases the best-in-class practices that are starting to achieve real change. From our survey of managers, in-depth interviews and employer best practices conversations, it's clear that organisations have much more to do to close the gap between rhetoric and reality.

**For the full report and recommendations on  
CMI Women's Blueprint for Balance,  
visit [www.managers.org.uk/brokenwindows](http://www.managers.org.uk/brokenwindows)  
[@cmi\\_managers](https://twitter.com/cmi_managers) and [#CMIWomen](https://twitter.com/CMIWomen)**

# LEADERSHIP EQUALITY AND MANAGEMENT CULTURE

**Businesses focusing on balance in the boardroom are starting to achieve results. But longer term progress will continue to be undermined if employers fail to tackle bias in their cultures by fixing the “broken windows”.**

## **A picture of progress**

At the most senior levels of many of the UK’s leading organisations, there is now clear evidence of progress towards greater gender balance, including many of those we interviewed. RBS now has 35% women in its top three senior layers, and its pipeline top 5,000 roles are 44% female, reflecting 6% and 12% improvements since the company began its focus. At Sky, which has a 50/50 target, 39% of top leaders and 35% of all employees are female. The BBC workforce is 48% female with women now comprising 41% of leadership roles. Female representation at partner level for Deloitte has risen from 14% in 2014 to 19% in 2017.

For FTSE-listed businesses, there is also evidence of change. The Female FTSE Index, recorded a rise in the percentage of women on FTSE 100 boards to 27.7% in 2017. The proportion of new appointments going to women had reached the target of at least 1:3, meaning that “we could be within reach of 33% women on FTSE

100 boards by 2020 as long as the momentum is maintained”.<sup>17</sup> And in the FTSE 250, women now hold 22.8% of board roles.

However, challenges remain. For one, the proportion of women holding executive roles, as opposed to non-executive positions, is much lower: 9.8% in the FTSE 100 and 7.7% in the FTSE 250. This represents a critical challenge.

Beyond the FTSE, the picture remains similarly challenging. As shown on page 10, CMI/XpertHR analysis in 2017 found that only 26% of director level roles are held by women. The higher the management level, the lower the proportion of roles held by women.

The management pipeline remains broken. Fixing it in order to achieve change in leadership roles will, to a great extent, come about as a result of success in the other areas explored in this report: improved recruitment practices, support for skills and career progression, and effective mentoring and sponsorship.

But it also demands focused leadership, and a concerted effort to address culture and behaviour.

## **Gender is a business issue, not a women’s issue**

One of the themes to emerge from our interviews was that where organisations are having demonstrable success on gender balance, leaders had typically made it a business issue – core to how the organisation is managed – rather than an HR issue which might be too easily sidelined in the face of competing priorities.

That means a shift in focus. One organisation to have changed its approach is RBS. Marjorie Strachan, Global Head of Inclusion at the bank, exemplifies the change in mindset. “My background is in change management, not really in diversity or inclusion”, she told us. “RBS considers improving our diversity and creating a more inclusive bank to be a mainstream business issue; not negotiable and essential if we are to create a great place to work and serve our customers well. This can’t be done authentically without well defined outcomes and a robust plan to achieve them. Clear accountabilities and persistence is key.

For Sky too, a business approach means pulling together the factors needed for real change. “Business change happens when you have passionate business champions, budget and you work hand in hand with HR,” says Sky’s Director for Women in Leadership, Anna Cook.

<sup>17</sup> The Female FTSE Board Report 2017: Women on Boards: Back on Track? (2017) <https://www.cranfield.ac.uk/som/expertise/changing-world-of-work/gender-and-leadership/female-ftse-index>

To make sure gender is treated as a business issue requires a willingness to dig deep into organisational structure and culture. Organisations need to understand the sticking points where high-level strategies are not being executed. Metrics and targets must be set that enjoy the same level of organisational commitment as revenue, market share and customer satisfaction. Organisations should understand their internal data in detail, getting clear on what patterns are emerging that contribute to gender imbalance whilst making data visible at all levels, utilising transparency to encourage social accountability and mutual responsibility for gender balance.

Jamie Broderick, head of UK wealth management at UBS until his retirement at the end of 2017, articulated some of the challenges: “Gender advocacy is often not operational enough, so it’s hard actually to get traction. This is an ideological, social, and political problem, for sure, but it is also a business problem. I was tired of quick fixes for a long-term business problem, so I wanted to introduce a dimension that we could get traction on. I recalled a colleague’s comment in 2007, that if we’d started ten years ago, we’d be there by now. So we built a ten-year plan that gave us a real, tangible view on how many women we would have to hire, retain and promote, and in which departments, with whose accountability, over the course of the full ten years. And we stress-tested the plans so that we felt we knew what could derail the aspiration over those ten years.”

The team specifically wanted to better understand the “missing middle” phenomenon. “You can hire in senior women and improve the optics, create role models, but that just papers over the problem,” says Broderick. “The problem is that you need a culture that’s congenial to women, where they have career plans when we bring them in, so we’re looking longer term to build an environment where women can progress their careers.”

### Getting culture right means fixing the “broken windows”

Underpinning these leadership approaches is a focus on workplace culture and what is deemed acceptable behaviour, themes that ran through the majority of our interviews.

What we heard was that many women continue to feel excluded by day-to-day exchanges in the workplace, whether from their line manager or among colleagues. These behaviours were often low-level, and taken in isolation, might not seem to mean too much. But repeated again and again – as became clear in our interviews – they can systematically undermine efforts to create balance. Where small infractions remain unchallenged, invisible or minimised, an organisation can unwittingly perpetuate a culture that is not inclusive.

We compare these small, low-level infractions to the “broken windows” theory in policing: that failing to deal with petty misdemeanours undermines attempts to tackle what appear to be the bigger, higher-priority problems.

In gender balance terms, this sums up what we found in interview after

interview. Well-meaning leadership rhetoric collides with reality. Policies designed to create change fall short. Women continue to confront barriers to their progression. Why? Because of the failure to address the “broken windows”.

Interviewees told us of the invisible or unspoken expectations of gender stereotypes that made them aware of a gender imbalance in their organisations. One senior female interviewee in HR bluntly told us: “The advice I was given was, ‘don’t be the office bitch.’ There’s an assumption you’ll dial the call, get coffee, etc., and the men will let you do it.”

One survey respondent, a female junior manager in a large manufacturing organisation, simply told us that “women are still viewed as ‘admin’ in my organisation”.

Many women continued to be excluded from connecting with more senior men. “Every Tuesday in our team huddle, the most senior men will talk and there will be in-jokes and banter amongst the leaders. It tends to be quite masculine and excludes people who aren’t in that group,” shared a female senior leader.



### The RAF’s Face It, Fix It

The Royal Air Force recognises that retaining and advancing women requires more than policies to ensure regulatory compliance – it means changing the organisational culture. One key component was a foundational education programme called Face It, Fix It, specifically tailored to reflect the types of people and scenarios relevant in the RAF.

The programme, which is mandatory across the RAF, focused on how to create an inclusive work environment and address inappropriate behaviour, immediately and effectively. This served as a strong platform for clarity and mutual understanding about what constitutes unacceptable behaviour, which helps make it easier to spot and call out.

## How far do managers confront broken windows behaviour?

CMI research in 2017 found that 81% of managers had witnessed “broken windows” types of behaviours, from men talking over women in meetings, to taking credit for their work, to inappropriate comments.

Our latest survey found that while 46% say that managers ensure men and women receive equal ‘air time’ in meetings, only 25% said that managers actively champion gender initiatives. Only 23% visibly celebrate the achievements of women in the organisation. Barely more than one in ten – 13% – report that managers actively seek out and advocate for women for key projects, roles or promotions.

## Is gender becoming invisible?

Our interviews also revealed a sense among some women that gender is – despite the high profile business and media debates in recent months – becoming less, not more visible in their organisations. There may be several forces at work here. One female leader told us of the dismissive attitude of one male senior executive when talking about gender balance in their company: “Well, don’t you think we’ve done enough?”

Others reported managers proclaim that they ‘do not see gender, only people’. Others may feel the emphasis on gender has gone too far. As a senior female in a financial services firm said: “A lot of men feel there’s too much emphasis on doing things to help women – e.g. work from home, female leadership programmes, women’s networks. Every time something new for women comes up, it raises a wry smile,” she says.

According to one female managing director in financial services who reports to a C-suite level manager, “I can’t tell where my boss is on this. I’m involved with the diversity and inclusion council and during my performance review he asked ‘how is that going? That thing you do? What’s that thing you’re on?’ There’s zero interest.”



## Deloitte leaders delve deep

Professional services firm Deloitte is pursuing an action plan to tackle inappropriate behaviour and working practices around gender. This is underpinned by a tailored programme on inclusive leadership. “People were unaware of the impact of the seemingly innocent comments and banter that can create a climate that may not feel inclusive,” said Emma Codd, Deloitte’s managing partner for talent. “We were good at dealing with any formal issues and situations that were breaching employment contracts but we weren’t hearing about the constant undermining that can occur.”

The firm developed a Respect & Inclusion action plan and created a film called “Ask Yourself”, a thought-provoking video that brings to life the issues that the firm wanted to highlight. The leadership sessions included a series of

examples of the unintentional comments and insensitive banter that undermines women and other minorities.

Deloitte ran 90 leadership sessions for partners, requiring the executive team to go through the process first to signal this as an important priority. To date, more than 6,000 leaders have gone through this programme. “We have a model called the Deloitte Leader, which is about being the leader our people need us to be. There are seven principles that state who we are. Our view is, if this is not you, then this firm’s not for you,” explains Emma. There is a clear line and the firm will act against inappropriate behaviour. “We don’t want to let this fester, so we deal with it early. We’ve demoted and excited people because of their behaviour. People now feel protected to raise issues that are concerning them.”

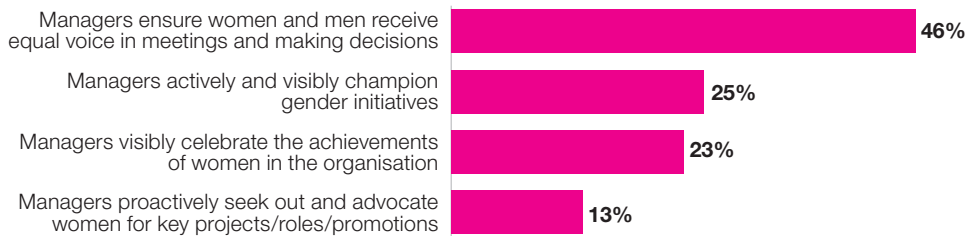


Figure 1: Perceptions of managers’ engagement with practices that encourage gender balance

## Keeping out of the limelight

We also found substantial doubts among individuals about their personal role in gender change. Many women are reluctant to be in a position where people might suspect tokenism. “I don’t want people to look at me and think I’m here because they needed to address the gender balance,” says one female sales manager. She wasn’t alone. A number of women did not want to identify with what they saw as ‘women’s initiatives’.

When establishing the Women’s Inspirational Network Group (WINGS)

in the RAF, Wing Commander Sarah Maskell heard a similar message: “Women were telling me, ‘we’ve spent all these years trying to blend in, so don’t make us stand out by setting up a women’s network.’”

Maskell worked around this and the geographic spread of women by setting up a virtual community group on social media. It now has more than 2,600 female members with a common bond of RAF service. “It’s a platform which is always open for women to discuss issues that are stopping them from progressing, as

well as to celebrate successes and showcase examples of talented women as role models.” Some women still resist participation, she says, “but I tell them ‘if you’re not at the table, you can’t hear what is going on or have your voice heard.’”

### Men as change agents

Working with men as change agents is a key plank of CMI Women’s strategy. It was also a recurrent theme in our interviews for this report. After all, given the gender imbalance in senior roles, the leaders with the power to accelerate progress are predominantly men.

The evidence suggests that many male managers (at least among CMI members) are receptive to this. Previous CMI research found that three quarters of male managers believe men have a responsibility to support women’s career development, while 70% say they actively champion gender balance.<sup>18</sup>

Men are also of course affected by gender issues themselves. “I made a career change and had to convince the organisation to take a chance on me,” said a male executive in financial services. “I was hired by women and the department I joined was run by women in a primarily male-dominated industry. I would not have been hired in a conventional all-male format. It made me think there is something about recognising talent in diverse formats that was really instructive.” This experience was the foundation of his personal commitment to gender balance and he is now one of his firm’s leading executives actively recruiting, developing and promoting women.

### Making it personal

Personal commitment and passion for equality was a common theme throughout our interview, for men and women alike. As Sky’s Anna Cook put it, “It’s the passion of people in the organisation that makes it happen.”

One man, also working in financial services, shared a personal motivation to serve on his firm’s diversity council. “I come from a matriarchal family and

was brought up by strong female role models.” As a father of two daughters, he is also motivated to drive change for them. “As far as my girls are concerned, they can do anything. I want to make sure they are ready for work and that nothing is happening there that they can’t do.” He is now rolling out Dads for Daughters Day, inspired by the UN’s HeforShe campaign, asking his peers to join him in pledging themselves to achieving greater gender equality in the workplace.

The potential positive impact of male role models sharing their personal commitments was reflected in a comment from a female senior manager in financial services, who noticed, “If a CEO has a daughter, then the gender pay gap closes.”

It was not only men who identified personal experience as the source of their motivation. “I grew up in a family where my mum worked and I always saw my mum as a professional woman and I was very proud of her. Mum brought me up to believe everyone is equal,” shared Rachael Hanley-Browne. For another female executive in financial services, juggling maintaining a successful professional career with raising a family led to her increased awareness of the restraints on women, both internally and externally imposed, and a desire to work on gender balance. “I have two daughters and I look at the future for them and the kind of lives they want and that’s reinforced my desire to help create a world around us that’s more balanced, where daughters and sons have equal opportunities.”

The leaders who had this personal connection were also the most effective at bringing along others with them and in generating impactful results that improved gender balance in their organisations. Culture is set from the top, so leveraging executives with personal motivations to promoting the gender agenda is necessary, though not sufficient, for creating change. Research confirms that middle managers can be effective change agents if they are clear on the intent from the top, and are

emotionally committed.<sup>19</sup> Leadership motivations need to be transparent and demonstrable to effectively engage middle managers.

<sup>18</sup> Creating Balanced Workplaces, CMI (2017) <https://www.managers.org.uk/~/-/media/Appius/Submissions/Creating-Balanced-Workplaces-Infographic.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Balogun, J. (2003) From Blaming the Middle to Harnessing its Potential: Creating Change Intermediaries

<sup>20</sup> Rouleau, L. (2005) Micro-Practices of Strategic Sensemaking and Sensegiving: How Middle Managers Interpret and Sell Change Every Day

<sup>21</sup> Huy, Q. (2002) Emotional Balancing of Organizational Continuity and Radical Change: The Contribution of Middle Managers. *Administrative Science Quarterly*



*The RAF's intentional focus on advancing women has seen RAF board membership evolve to 40% female representation.*



## Engaging men in change: the RAF

The RAF made a strategic decision to engage men in its gender balance strategies. Rather than appointing a 'Women's Advocate', the RAF opted for a 'Gender Advocate'. Wing Commander Sarah Maskell, the RAF's diversity and inclusion lead, said she was determined that this vital advocate role was delivered by a senior male leader who would also recognise the intersectionality of their people. "Initially I had some push-back, particularly from women, who said 'oh, now we've lost another leadership position."

"Engaging men in driving forward our gender agenda is critical," says Maskell. "As a progressive employer we wanted to move away from the connotation that gender means women. Men have a gender, too." As a senior male leader who can model inclusive leadership and proactive advocacy of women, it helps advance both women and men. "Air Vice-Marshal Warren 'Bunny' James was the best candidate to do this."

Air Vice-Marshal James took on the role of gender advocate, alongside his full-time job, because he recognised it would take a senior

leader to get over the internal barriers to calling out inappropriate behaviours. "Setting a top-down example can make a difference," he says. "We have some very good role models and champions at different levels and ranks. I don't need to sell to them why we need women in service. Now is the time to walk the talk."

And the RAF is seeing progress, with its Diversity Team winning a European Diversity Award in 2016, for example. Its intentional focus on advancing women has seen RAF board membership evolve to 40% female representation. This is recent and deliberate, according to James. "We've adopted a conscious policy to advance and retain women where possible," he said.

He's aware of the future challenges. "We're seeing a problem with the pipeline for replacing these women at the higher levels. We have direct experience of the 'missing middle'. We have people leave in the middle of their careers due to the nature of services – it's a liability that you can be sent anywhere anytime. When it comes to stereotypes of having kids or caring for parents, we still see more women than men leave."

*Gender relations in the workplace can create inequalities and enable dominant groups to exercise power when it comes to defining the cultural and structural 'norms'.*

## SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS



## PROMOTING LEADERSHIP EQUALITY

- Keep up momentum at senior levels by applying best practices and sustaining the focus on the talent pipeline.
- Target 50/50 balance. Why settle for less?
- Focus on culture by tackling broken windows, engaging men as agents of change, and making it personal.

## EXPERT VIEW

### To get balance, you must see gender in a new light: the expert view

By Dr Jane Dennehy, Gender Hub

What is your gender? This frequently asked question has for many a simple answer – male or female. But biological identifiers do not address the complexities of the phenomenon that is gender.

Gender is a process that begins when we are born. The children's toys to which we assign masculine and feminine values are often where the social process first becomes obvious.

The constant drip of messages about how we should conform to certain assigned social roles can follow from the toy box to the workplace. Is there a connection between boys and tools that leads them towards engineering and building? Similarly, is there a connection between girls, dolls and kitchens that tells them domestic responsibilities will be their domain?

In the workplace occupational segregation, both vertically and horizontally is exemplified by the evidence which finds women dominating the three 'C' sectors – care (82%), clerking (77%) and cashiering (63%). In contrast men dominate skilled trades (90%) machine operatives (89%) and senior managers (77%). Apprenticeships are also supporting a gendered structure with girls dominating hairdressing (91%), health and social care (83%) and boys doing in construction (98%), IT and telecoms (90%).<sup>20</sup>

Gender relations in the workplace can

create inequalities and enable dominant groups to exercise power when it comes to defining the cultural and structural 'norms'.

Stepping away from the individual and focusing on gender relations can be a productive way of exploring how gender identities are formed and function. This can be a useful process for managers for the following reasons:

- It encourages people to think about different relationships at work, home and in wider society.
- It recognises everyone has a gender formed through lived experiences.
- It challenges us to recognise gender based stereotypes and their influence on maintaining certain patterns of inequality.

Within organisations, gendering processes can be instrumental in supporting a male-dominated culture that can talk about gender equality, but not take the active step to engage with the lived experiences of gender. Cultural change will stagnate unless we identify and call out the scripts that communicate a dress standard, language and set of behaviours, where masculine means manager and feminine means administration, where working long hours and being present is the only way to show commitment, and when silence and invisibility on gender inequalities is the informal approach to gender relations.

Seeing gender is a fundamental step in identifying and resolving inequalities. But by seeing and understanding gender, we can build a deeper knowledge of the intersectional of all the social constructions influencing an individual's identity at work and in life.

<sup>22</sup> Women in the Labour Market, ONS (2013) <http://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/womeninthelabourmarket/2013-09-25>, and FE data library: apprenticeships, Data Service (2014). <http://www.thedataservice.org>