



Chair's Introduction – Unfortunately Amanda Hack MP was unable to chair. We want to challenge and to shape the future. We want actions that can be put to Government, policy makers etc. Over half a century ago the Equal Pay Act was passed and yet there is a 13% difference in pay between men and women. As a father, wants to see change.

Labour had an Equal Pay Taskforce led by Frances O'Grady. That has vanished now that we are in Government. We would like to see it back. This is where change should happen: in Parliament. Making sure we do right by people is what we are about.

Present: Lee Barron MP, (Chair), Lord Lucas, Mims Davies MP.

Apologies: Baroness Stedman-Scott, Johanna Baxter MP, Amanda Hack MP, Joe Robertson MP

Speakers:

1. **Keith Rosser, Better Hiring Institute** – almost unique as a child to have his father picking him up from school.

Normal for him but realised that this was not normal for society. People thought he was a grandfather. Mother was a CEO and faced continuous battles.

Slide 4 – shows the stats around male / female employment. When are girls bossy but boys are leaders at school?

Slide 5 – Reflects last year's meeting on this topic.

Slide 6 – reflects the topics discussed at that meeting.

Slide 7 – BHI is here to make hiring fairer and that is what we are addressing now. We need to do this better for this generation and the next one.

2. **Rt Hon Dame Maria Miller** – focus our thoughts on policy changes over the last ten years such as shared parental leave, flexible working, more affordable child care but no real shifts in labour market inequalities in response to those changes. There is still a shortage of labour in the UK market.

Thanked Keith for his remarks and agrees that society is not ready to make full use of women's extraordinary talents. Room for improvement with careers and improvements in women's qualifications coming out of university. CBI says that 75% of business are impacted by labour shortages. Too much focus on Brexit and the Pandemic, both of this removed people from the labour market. Do not look selectively at the data. There are more women in the market because we all have to work for longer. Part time working amongst women is still a major factor. Most part time jobs pay significantly less than full-time jobs.

Gender pay gap is improving but not if you are a woman over 40, it is getting worse. Is there a pool of labour that is being kept out of the market? New Employment Bill talks about day one rights, step in the right direction, and about a Fair Work Agency that enforce the law. It will have a big task to handle. Need to tackle structural constraints like NDAs, workplace regulations and



issues around PPE (lacking in construction industry.). Construction industry needs 300k extra people, maybe a few more women?

3. Zelda Perkins, Can't buy my silence – Government is not ready, society is more ready! The invisible issue that effects women in the workplace is the use of NDAs.

Forced to sign an NDA in her 20s by Harvey Weinstein which deformed her career and shape of her life as she has spent 7 years to stop the mis-use of NDAs. Set up an organisation three years ago to ban NDAs.

The NDA which Zelda signed banned her from talking to friends, family, HMRC, media etc. Not a relict from the past, see same NDAs every week with unenforceable clauses. People do not have the ability though to challenge these in court. One of the most terrible discoveries was that NDAs are based on the exploitation of a young woman's ambition. Travesty that managers use NDAs to exploit women. Our statistics say that 77% of women in the City have encountered sexual harassment and bullying, 66% of those who report it end up leaving. One in three women in the US sign NDAs. These are tools which perpetuate discrimination etc against women.

Pregnant then screwed, an ally on this issue, have data that 430,000 mothers have been legally gagged. Being silenced has a catastrophic effect, 97% speak of mental health consequences and the NDA usually forbids you from talking to family and friends to explain why you left your last job. This makes you complicit to crimes as you cannot share that you have been assaulted in the workplace or seen it happen to a 3rd Party. Organisations lose good female staff so they suffer as well.

Not advocating for victims to relinquish confidentiality. Wants to have an equitable approach. Financial settlements should not be linked to gagging clauses. NDAs are at the root of so many scandals: Post Office, Al Fayed etc. People are learning that these NDAs are not enforceable, the risk of an employer coming after you when the facts are public is very low.

Legislative change:

In the US, 27 states have legislated against the use of NDAs. Settlement rates have gone up by 10 percent which shows that NDAs were a constraint. The Employment Equality bill in Ireland puts the power back into the victim's hands. NDAs have to be at the request of the employee. No willingness in the UK to do the same.

Started a voluntary pledge for Universities to stop using NDAs. 60% of universities signed up within a year and in 14 months converted it into legislation. Labour rescinded it but it has come back in and protects academic staff / students from NDAs being used to silence them for bullying etc. The rest of the workforce has not protections. Minister Madders has made it clear that the Government has not interest in putting this into the Employment Rights Bill. The Victim and Prisoners Bill voids an NDA if it hides a criminal act. The onus is on the victim to know and understand their rights. Employers have a duty to stop sexual harassment in the workplace which is very hard to enforce. If you take away the NDA then it stops people from acting.

Asks the meeting to sign up to the business pledge. Encouraged the meeting to write to your MP on this issue.



Thanked by Lee Baron who will contact Zelda outside the meeting. Stays on the consciousness of politicians, get MPs to sign the pledge as employers.

4. **Anne Barnett, Paragon Bank** – real importance to employers about what we have to do in the workplace. Will look at what Paragon Bank is doing.

Slide 13 covers the recommendations from the BHI. Asked are we doing enough as a large West Midlands employer.

Slide 14 – what we have done. Looked at the diversity strategy to focus on gender along with ethnicity and sexual orientation. Business results show how enacting these matters helps the business, share price going up etc. Paragon's careers website is more interactive and looks for skills and behaviours as well as experience.

Brought policies to life through the Employee Code of Conduct which looked to educate staff as to what behaviours were wanted. Put in a feature based around people telling their stories to raise awareness of issues affecting under-represented groups including females. Our whistleblowing policy focuses on going further to create the right "speaking up" culture. Need to hear if things are not right.

Striven hard to put tangible metrics in place. Paragon's gender pay gap is because there are not enough women in senior positions. These are the best paid roles. There are no equal pay issues. Our focus is on creating more opportunities for females to progress their careers.

Slide 15 – looks at Paragon's progress to date. Still a lot more to do. Looking at term time or out of normal hours contracts and job share opportunities. Many women will take themselves out of applying for roles before giving themselves a chance.

Looking at how sickness policies support female challenges eg menopause. Majority of Paragon's workforce is located around Birmingham and we are focusing on engaging with the local community to promote job opportunities based on skills. Need to look at what we do with education at an early age, we know we need more IT developers, more creatives, more financial analysts but these roles are not populated by females traditionally. All this has to be done alongside the day job, has a positive effect on business results and is the right thing to do for people.

Role models, advocacy and celebrating successes are key.

5. **Mandy Hickson, Former RAF Fast Jet pilot** – (Slides 17 – 37) has spent 30 years in aviation, 17 in the RAF.

Mandy was one of the first women to fly the tornado GR4 in combat. Failed twice to be accepted for fighter training. Unconscious bias in the process meant that 3/4s of female applicants would fail. Mandy became a test case and forced a re-assessment of the process. Sexist comments were endemic but at RAF Valley her male colleagues during training were supportive and rallied round to stop these comments. In general the RAF had no idea how to cope with female pilots,



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Celebrating International Women's Day, Women in Work

politics had changed but policies had not. In the end took a job which stymied her promotional prospects in order to care for her children. Left in 2012.

Slide 29 – Mandy has worked to change mindsets and gender stereotypes.

Slides 30 – 33 look at gender stereotypes and children's views on which sex does which type of job. Slide 34 concludes that there has been little change over time in the recruitment of female airline pilots. Stereotypes are embedded at a very young age.

Slide 35 - Works with an RAF charity to encourage youngsters into STEM subjects to create the engineers of the future.

In sum, encourages women to be role models.

6. **Mims Davies MP** – juggles job as a single parent and being an MP is a small business owner type role. Why have things not changed in last 30 years?

The first woman Party leader was elected 50 years ago and was instrumental in getting women into work. Proud of doing this as a DWP Minister, particularly for single parents. 2.4m women into work over last 14 years mainly due to improved childcare.

Out of hours childcare needs to be dealt with. A structured workplace with childcare or hours that suit childcare centres is fine and wants to see childcare can be claimed back via the DWP especially for those who have to work non-standard hours. Can also end up as a sandwich carer, need to ensure that the workplace works better for us. On average with have 6 to 7 jobs in a life time, how do you balance this against job snobbery, what is seeing as a “good” job. We do not talk about the positives enough.

Balance about home working is like living at work. Feels like one never gets away from work. For some it can be hugely miserable. How do young people learn if they are not at work and learning from staff. The working from home environment can be sub-optimal for many, we need to think about this.

Disability confidence is important, not to be forgotten. Worked with Helen Tomlinson UK's first Menopause ambassador. Worried that women's health strategy appears to have vanished. With AI, if you do not have the ability to use digital tools you can be excluded. Kick start programme was set up under Mims to “speed date” employees and employers. People grow into roles and need that first opportunity.

At Primary schools children tend to think widely about future jobs. Narrows down as we go through the school system. No-one wants to be set up to fail. Go to the people whom you did not hire, ask yourself did you overlook something and what roles did they end up in?

Questions and comments:

Alice Arkwright TUC, the majority of TU members are women. Lack of flexible working is key, home working has grown and we know that many women find this beneficial as carers. Employers need to think how other roles can be made flexible, esp. with front line roles. Too many flexible working requests are rejected.



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Zero hours contracts – TUC has released new data on integral work. Women are over-represented amongst those on zero hours contracts. Hard to plan caring responsibilities around zero hours contracts. Women are more likely than men to have been on a zero hours contract and earn £10 per hour less than a man not on a zero hours contract. Positive about Employment Rights Bill and pleased to see amendment laid yesterday re. agency workers.

Fair pay agreements will set a floor for women which the TUC supports. What is the enforcement around this?

Alexandra Williams, Women's Aid, APPG Sec Domestic Violence and Abuse. There are additional barriers for woman in the workplace. 1 in 4 women experience abuse and 1 in 5 of women in employment do as well. This means that most workplaces will have at least one woman in the workplace who has suffered abuse. Like to see domestic abuse leave and workplace support to be included in the Bill.

Claire Reindorp – champions young women on low pay. Insecure work and low pay go together and women tend to be more in this category. Will shortly publish research on this. The Bill needs to include provision so that:

- 1) people need to know their rights;
- 2) there are well -funded enforcement systems.

Georgina Halford-Hall – whistleblowing legislation is failing everyone and particularly women. Just over 50% of people who register in employment tribunals are women, most of them are not represented by lawyers. To support the banning of NDAs, applauds Maria's work, speaking to the Ministers they seem to have forgotten their previous support. UK needs proper whistleblowing laws.

Stephanie Leung, KareHero – UK has overlooked the ageing population. Women are more likely to quit their job to care for their / husband's parents. 2.83m people of working age have carers looking after them most of whom are women. Tends to be women over 40. In Japan one has 93 days off as carer's leave per year. All of us will go down this track.

Karen Geddes, we live in the shade, missing an intersectional conversation about race. How will the conversation happen to include race? Spent many years in policing, understands Mandy's story.

Jennifer Elworthy – impact of fertility challenges was missing today and not just a women's issues. Many women take unplanned sick leave due to fertility challenges.

Yuri, Generate (a dyslexic challenge) – there is no disability support for women in the workplace. Waiting lists for assessments are growing, creates workplace bullying.

Prof Irena Grugulis – uses her title with an initial on communications and this gets a faster response than those with her full name. The pay gap is lower at the lower end and has not narrowed at the higher end. Is concerned that a DEI backlash will send things in the wrong direction.



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Conclusion Lee Barron MP – this APPG is not a talking shop, we will do a report to shape policy in the future. Has taken notes. These social justice issues are everyone's to campaign about, our issues and we need to put them right.

Non- Parliamentarians present

Andrew Henderson, Secretariat

Keith Rosser, Corinne Peart, George Warrington, Kiran Herkanaidu: Reed

Rt Hon Dame Maria Miller

Zelda Perkins, Can't buy my silence

Anne Barnett, Paragon Bank

Mandy Hickson

Claire Reindorp

Georgina Halford-Hall

Alice Arkwright, TUC

Martin Traynor, BHI,

Stephanie Leung, KareHero

Karen Geddes

Jennifer Elworthy

Prof Irena Grugulis, Leeds University

Prof Chris Warhurst, Warwick University

Cordelia Osewa-Ediae