



Government
Equalities Office

Putting equality at the heart of government

**Working towards
Equality**
Achieving equality
for women and men
at work

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Foreword

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Women make a huge contribution to the economy – that is a given. And it should likewise be a given that they are entitled to the same opportunities as men, yet the reality is that women face unacceptable disadvantage in the workplace.

On average, women are paid over 20 per cent less than men – and

44 per cent less in the financial services sector. It's estimated that over five million women are working below their potential because of the lack of the part-time jobs they need to balance their work and family lives. Only one in ten of FTSE100 board directors are women and 11 per cent of working mothers report that they have experienced unfair treatment because of their pregnancy.

This Government has done more than any other to ensure that women to have equal access to good quality work and fulfilling careers which enable them to balance their work and home life. And with the new Equality Bill going through Parliament, we are pushing ahead on critical issues such as pay transparency.

But we know that we need to do still more if we are to create a fair and family friendly labour market for both women and men. That's why we reconvened the Women and Work Commission earlier this year and asked them to look at how well their original recommendations, set out in 2006, had been delivered. A report of their conclusions was published in July 2009.

This document builds on these conclusions and outlines several areas where we need to make further progress, including widening access to childcare and training, enabling more women to reach the boardroom and breaking down the outdated assumption that real jobs can't be done on a flexible basis.

We are now engaging women, the business community, trade unions and other stakeholders on how best to take these issues forward. We will then come forward with a new strategy for strengthening gender equality in the workplace early in the new year.

This new strategy will build on our successes, complement the measures we are taking in the Equality Bill and help ensure that our labour market is structured so that women can participate on an equal basis.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maria Eagle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.

Maria Eagle MP
Minister of State at the Government Equalities Office
and Ministry of Justice

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vera Baird". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'V'.

Vera Baird QC MP
Solicitor General

Section 1: Inequality in the labour market: the problem

Why it matters

The UK has one of the highest employment rates in the world's major economies. This has resulted in increased economic independence and prosperity for many individuals and families. However, major inequalities still persist in the workplace. Over the last 25 years the number of women in employment has increased by nearly a third, a total today of just over 12.5m women. Girls and young women now out-perform boys and young men at school and in higher education, and are entering the job market with better skills and qualifications than ever before. Yet the pay gap between men and women remains at 22.6 per cent¹. Women still face barriers to gaining and using their skills to the full, particularly where they are combining work with significant caring responsibilities.

These inequalities matter:

- To individual women: who want a level playing field and opportunities to achieve their full potential at work.
- To families: where women still deliver the majority of care, and head up most lone parent households.
- To the economy: both during a recession and as we build a new, stronger economy, it is essential that employers are able to draw on the widest possible pool of talent and use everyone's skills to the full.

Women in today's labour market

Since the introduction of the first equal pay legislation in the 1970s Britain has made huge strides towards greater equality for women and men in the labour market. Employment rates have risen, and so have women's levels of skills and qualifications. Women now form almost 46 per cent of the total economically active population. The gender pay gap has fallen over time – although the latest figures show an unwelcome widening of the gap for the first time in seven years. And women in particular have benefited from measures to increase fairness in the workplace for all employees: two-thirds of low paid workers who benefited from the introduction of the National Minimum Wage were women.

¹ This is the overall average median hourly pay gap between women and men, including both full and part-time workers. There is a 12.8 per cent gap between women's full-time median hourly pay and men's.

However, there are significant differences in patterns of women's economic participation, compared with that of men. And women continue to face barriers to using their abilities in paid employment:

- Women are still the primary carers of children in our society, and 70 per cent of adult care is delivered by women. This means that many women find that reducing their hours at work is the only option available to help them balance their caring responsibilities with their job.
- Much of the part-time work currently available is low skilled and low paid, which means that over half of women working in these jobs are "working below their potential" i.e. they are not using either their skills, experience, or their qualifications in their current job.
- Women still have lower levels of skills and qualifications overall than men: The Women and Work Commission estimated that closing the gender skills gap could increase gross domestic product by between £15 and £23 billion a year.
- Women are more likely to have fragmented careers, and will often have a number of jobs at the same time, and can miss out on training or even workplace benefit opportunities.
- Women's perceptions of the discrimination they face within organisations, particularly in respect of progression, continue to be higher than men.
- Women's representation in senior positions of companies, on boards, and in public appointments, lags well behind men. In 2008 only 11.7 per cent of the FTSE 100 company directors were women, and women make up just over a third of public appointments.
- Women from ethnic minority groups face particular barriers to employment. There is a 17.3 per cent employment gap between ethnic minority women and white women. And within different ethnic groups, there is also a pronounced employment gap between women and men.

Research on the causes of the gender pay gap show how these differences in women's labour market experience underpin the continuing disparity between men and women's pay. The Women and Work Commission found that the causes of the gender pay gap were the same in 2009 as they were when they first reported in 2006. These are:

- Women's need to take time out of the labour market to look after children or elderly relatives

- Lack of quality part-time and flexible work, especially for women returning from maternity leave, which restricts opportunities
- Historical, cultural and gender stereotyping
- Occupational segregation – working women are “crowded” into a limited range of, predominantly low-paid, sectors
- Different skill and education patterns for men and women
- Other factors, including outdated work practices and discriminatory treatment of women in work

More recently, the Ministers for Women and Equality hosted a roundtable discussion at No 11 Downing Street in March 2009 to explore the challenges for women in the labour market from the current economic crisis, and to consider what action is needed to enable Britain to weather the tough times and build a stronger new economy that makes full use of women’s talents.

Participants at the event emphasised the need to guard against women becoming more vulnerable to discrimination in the current climate, as well as the crucial role of good quality affordable childcare, and the importance of women to be able to access training and re-skilling programmes as we look towards recovery and building an economy in which everyone has real opportunities to flourish.

The Government’s Approach

Our work to promote gender equality in the workplace is a key part of our strategy to promote gender equality in society. This is underpinned in the public sector by the gender equality duty, which places a duty on public sector bodies to have regard to addressing discrimination and promoting gender equality across everything they do.

Building on this foundation we are working with partners to tackle issues facing women at work in five main ways:

- Helping women and men to balance work and family life
- Improving advice, support and training to address the gender skills gap and occupational segregation
- Supporting women’s enterprise

- Increasing transparency, so that inequality in the workplace is more visible and to drive organisations to take action
- Encouraging the use of positive action and good practice in the workplace

This short document outlines what the Government has done to date to improve equality between women and men in the labour market, how the Equality Bill will contribute to this, and how we will be taking forward this agenda to build – in the words of the communiqué from the recent London Summit – “a fair and family friendly labour market for both women and men” as we tackle the challenges of the current financial crisis and look forward to recovery.

Section 2: Equality in the Workplace: what we are doing

1. Helping women and men to balance work and family life

Support for working parents

Families are the bedrock of our society. But bringing up children, while it brings huge rewards, also brings challenges for parents, particularly those who are balancing caring roles with paid work. In 21st century Britain 68 per cent of mothers work outside the home, yet women still, overwhelmingly, take primary responsibility for looking after the home and children. Women also head 91 per cent of lone parent households.

This Government believes that supporting men and women to balance paid work with caring commitments will help to tackle inequality at work and could help to reduce the gender pay gap.

Our approach aims to:

- Provide families with practical support to help them make real choices about how they live their lives
- Ensure that women who take time out for labour market to have children do not suffer discrimination and disadvantage, and are supported to return to work if and when they want to do so
- Facilitate a more equal sharing of caring roles between women and men, recognising that many men say they want to play a bigger part in bringing up their children.

What we have done

- Increased financial support for working parents: Tax Credits are providing around £40m a day in support for working families. All families with children who are earning less than £58,000 a year are eligible for tax credit support. As of April 2009, 5.7 million families with children, containing 10.1 million children, were receiving tax credits. The childcare element of the Working Tax Credit helps with families' childcare costs. It covers up to 80 per cent of childcare costs, providing families with support up to a maximum of £140 a week for one child and £240 a week for two or more children.

- Strengthened protection against discrimination for pregnant women and women on maternity leave. This includes special measures against redundancy, such as the right to be offered any suitable available vacancy and the right to written reasons for dismissal.
- Increased Statutory Maternity Leave to 52 weeks, so that mothers are able to take longer periods of maternity leave while still being entitled to return to the same employer, extended Statutory Maternity Pay and Maternity Allowance to 39 weeks, and increased payment to £123.06 per week (2009/10 figures). 88 per cent of mothers take their full entitlement to paid maternity leave and the proportion of mums who changed their employer when returning to work has dropped dramatically from 41 per cent in 2002 to 14 per cent in 2007.
- Introduced 'Keeping in Touch' days, which facilitate voluntary arrangements between women on maternity leave and their employers so that new mums can go into work for up to 10 days during their leave to stay in touch with developments at work, without losing their right to maternity leave or payment of Statutory Maternity Pay or Maternity Allowance.
- Introduced Statutory Adoption Leave and Pay. This means that adopting parents now have the right to take 52 weeks of adoption leave, 39 weeks of which are payable at £123.06 per week.
- Introduced Parental Leave. Mothers and fathers who have completed one year's service with their employers are entitled to 13 weeks' unpaid parental leave each to care for their child. Parental leave can usually be taken up to 5 years from the date of birth or in cases of adoption five years from the date of placement (or the child's 18th birthday, if that is sooner). Parents of disabled children are entitled to 18 weeks' parental leave up to the child's 18th birthday.
- Introduced Paid Paternity Leave – a new entitlement for fathers to take two weeks' leave paid at same standard rate as Statutory Maternity Pay. Paternity leave provides parents with more choice, and gives fathers a greater opportunity to be involved in the upbringing of their child.
- Recognised the vital contribution that fathers play in supporting families through the 'Think Fathers' campaign. This campaign brought together employers, children's services and the voluntary sector to look at what more can be done to give fathers the support they need.

Future measures

- To give families greater choice and flexibility in how they look after their children, from April 2011 fathers will be able to take up to six months leave once the mother has returned to work. Some of the leave will be paid if taken during the mother's 39 week maternity pay period. This would be paid at the same rate as Statutory Maternity Pay (currently £123.06/wk). The Government is consulting on the legal and technical aspects of implementing this measure.
- Changes in the Pensions Act 2007 will narrow the gender pensions gap, deliver fair outcomes to women and carers and significantly improve women's State Pension coverage. Reducing the number of years needed to build up a full basic State Pension and providing for credited contributions for caring to be recognised equally with contributions for work will better enable parents and carers who take time out of work to build up State Pension entitlement. Further reforms in the Pensions Act 2008 will provide equality of opportunity for male and female employees to build up a private pension.
- We will evaluate the impact of the Work and Families Act in assisting new parents, and publish the results in summer 2010.
- Proposals on maternity and parental rights are also currently being considered at a European level. When this has been completed, we will consult on how to implement.
- As recommended by the Women and Work Commission we will look at what further action should be taken to promote 'quality' part time and flexible working.

Helping parents into work

Over 90% of lone parents are women. The majority are working or want to work, but often need extra support to be able to take up the opportunities to develop skills and move into work.

What we have done

- Offering tailored support and advice on preparing for and finding work through Jobcentre Plus. This includes advice on childcare as each Jobcentre district now has a Childcare Partnership Manager.

- Supporting lone parents with older children, who can work, to move from Income Support to Jobseeker's Allowance so they take up the support that is available to them to help them move into paid work.
- Introducing a support package of pre- and in-work advice and financial support measures to help lone parents move into paid work, make work pay and help sustainability and progression in work. This includes In Work Credit – a weekly payment of £40 (£60 in London) for 12 months to eligible lone parents who return to work of 16 hours or more per week.
- From 6th April 2009, parents on Jobseeker's Allowance for six months or more can access an expanded range of work, training and volunteering opportunities. This includes incentives of up to £2500 for employers to recruit and train unemployed people. Eligible jobseekers who wish to become self-employed also have access to practical advice and financial support to start a business.
- Non-working parents in a single income family can receive support from Jobcentre Plus through its New Deal for Partners programme, providing the working partner is in receipt of Working Tax Credits.

Future measures

- From the end of 2009 Jobcentre Plus users will be able to search for flexibilities in job vacancies more easily. This will help people, such as carers and lone parents, search for vacancies with flexible working hours.
- The Jobcentre Plus Support Contract which goes live in December 2009 will offer tailored flexible support to New Deal for Lone Parent and New Deal for Partners participants.

Support for grandparents

The Government recognises the important role that close relatives play in supporting children in their family.

- A measure was announced in the 2009 Budget to enable grandparents looking after grandchildren, and other adult family members caring for children, to gain National Insurance credits to the basic State Pension from April 2011.

- The intention is that these credits will be available to adult family members who care for children aged up to 12, for 20 hours a week or more.
- This measure will ensure that grandparents and other adult members of the family do not have to forego pension entitlement when performing a vital childcare role in the family.
- This builds on other reforms in the Pensions Act 2007 which will extend coverage of the State Pension.

Flexible working and Childcare

Opportunities to work flexibly have expanded the options for parents to combine work and care. Research has shown that 47 per cent of new mothers work flexitime compared to just 17 per cent in 2002, and almost triple the number of new fathers now work flexibly.

Alongside flexible working, accessible, affordable and good-quality childcare is vital to support working parents.

What we have done

- Extended the right to request flexible working for employees with parental responsibility for children aged 16 and under from 6 April 2009. Previously the right to request applied to parents of children under six or under 18 where the child is disabled, and carers of certain adults. The law places a statutory duty on employers to seriously consider all requests, and only reject them where there is a good business reason for doing so. Over 10 million employees are now eligible to request flexible working. We are actively promoting the right to request, focusing primarily on employers, carers and parents.
- Invested over £25 billion in early years and childcare services as part of an unprecedented expansion of support for young children and families. The number of registered childcare places in England has more than doubled from 638,000 in March 1997 to 1.5 million.
- Guaranteed all 3 and 4 year olds a minimum of 12.5 hours of free early education for 38 weeks per year for two years before reaching compulsory school age. 95 per cent of 3 and 4 year olds in this country take up this entitlement.

- Established Sure Start Children's Centres to support children under the age of five and their families, providing easy access to health services, parenting and family support, advice and support for parents including drop in sessions, outreach services, integrated early education and childcare, and links to training and employment opportunities. Over 3,000 Sure Start Children's Centres have already been established, offering services to over 2.4 million young children and their families. These services are integral for parents to balance work and caring responsibilities.
- Provided help with childcare costs while learning or training, through Care to Learn and the Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work Scheme. Care to Learn can help with the cost of your childcare if you're under 20 and have one or more children. You can receive up to £160 per child per week, or £175 per child per week in London for childcare and associated travel costs. The Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work Scheme is aimed at out-of-work parents aged 20 or over with a partner who is in work. It offers up to £175 per child per week, or £215 per child per week in London, to qualifying parents.
- Jobcentre Plus provides help with childcare expenses in the week before a parent participating in New Deal for Lone Parents and New Deal for Partners takes up employment. This enables parents to prepare for starting work.
- Ensured the civil service is working hard to spread best practice. For example, in May 2009 the civil service job-share board was launched, providing all civil servants with guidance on job sharing and help to anyone who wishes to job share to find a potential partner.

Future measures

We have firm commitments to deliver by 2010:

- A Children's Centre for every community, 3,500 in all. In May 2009 we opened the 3,000th centre.
- Every school offering access to core extended services between 8am and 6pm.
- All 3 year olds guaranteed to 15 free hours of early education for 38 weeks per year for two years before reaching compulsory school age, to be delivered more flexibly to better meet parents' needs. This will be extended to 4 year olds from autumn 2011.

- A place in school or to fund full time early learning in a childcare setting, for all children from the September after their fourth birthday.
- We are committed to extending the free early education entitlement provision, stage by stage, to all 2 year olds – an offer to 15 per cent of the most disadvantaged children in every local authority began in September 2009. By the end of the next Parliament, we will give the parents of a quarter of a million two-year-olds free childcare for the first time.
- We are committed to having every full daycare setting led by a graduate by 2015, and to have all those working with children in the sector qualified to at least Level 3 by 2015.
- London has a particularly low rate of part time employment, which leads to fewer mothers entering and staying in employment and higher levels of child poverty in the capital: 27 per cent of children in Inner London are living in poverty. The London Child Poverty Delivery Group has therefore set a target to increase maternal part time employment by 2013. The group is undertaking a range of work to increase the supply of quality part time vacancies and to support mothers to take up employment opportunities.

Support for Carers of disabled and older people

Every day 6,000 people take on new caring responsibilities, providing crucial support and care to family and friends. Of the 4.3 million working age carers in Great Britain, two-thirds combine paid work and care. However, over half of those who are not working say they want to do so. If carers are to have opportunities to participate in society and to have a life outside caring, then we must remove the barriers they face in employment.

What we have done

- Launched the 10 year National Carers Strategy in June 2008. We will invest an additional £255 million to increase the number of breaks for adults (respite care), provide more support to carers' entering/re-entering the job market and increase the support offered to young carers.
- Extended the right to request flexible working to carers of adults, and we are now working with employers, trade unions and the voluntary sector to promote the value of flexible working and the importance of quality part-time work.
- Worked with training providers to ensure that skills development can be offered in a flexible way that reflects the multiple commitments of many carers, both in and out of the workplace.

Future measures

- We will introduce a carer-specific programme at Jobcentre Plus, including putting in place District Care Partnership Managers by autumn 2009, extending voluntary access to training opportunities to carers, and funding replacement care arrangements for carers who are involved in approved learning and training activities.
- The Equality Bill will strengthen the law, protecting carers from discrimination when they are associated with someone who is covered by discrimination law for example, on grounds of age or disability.
- The Government is supporting the work of the Employers for Carers membership forum. The forum provides advice and support for employers seeking to develop carer friendly policy and practice and retain skilled workers, and to identify and promote the business benefits of supporting carers in the workplace.
- The Government will be piloting on a limited basis in 2009/10, through skills accounts, a training allowance of up to £500 for those who have been caring for a dependent (whether a child or adult) for five or more years and therefore been out of the workplace, and wish to return to work.
- The Work and Families Act 2006 extended the right to request flexible working to carers of adults where the person cared for is a relative or lives at the same address. This definition covers approximately 80 per cent of carers. Government will review the definition of carer in relation to flexible working as part of the Carers Strategy.

2. Advice, Support and Training

Improving skill levels and pathways to careers

Girls and young women now out-perform boys and young men at school and in higher education, and are entering the job market with better skills and qualifications than ever before. However, problems persist:

- The Women and Work Commission reported that gender stereotyping in the education system (particularly for those under 14) is a contributing factor to occupational segregation and can result in lower earnings in the longer term for women.

- Although apprenticeships are a great opportunity for young people to gain skills in the workplace, 2007 research shows that average pay varies by gender with male apprentices receiving £186 per week and female apprentices £147 per week.
- Older women still have relatively lower skills levels than men, which means they may face disadvantages in competing in the labour market, particularly after taking breaks for caring.
- Men and women have different education and skills development patterns as their careers progress. Women are often not able to take advantage of work based learning opportunities because of their caring commitments or because they work part-time.

The Government is investing in improving skills, and increasing the flexibility of training and education courses to make them more accessible to everyone.

What we have done

- Introduced the Skills for Life programme, which offers a range of free learning opportunities focusing on the skills used in everyday life, such as reading, writing and maths. These are available in the classroom or at home. Women make up 53 per cent of Skills for Life learners.
- Updating the Careers Service which now provides phone and on-line help covering training, careers advice, and advice on childcare. There is a section on its website aimed specifically at mums looking to return to work.
- Provided Career Development Loans which allow someone to borrow anything between £300 and £8,000 to help fund up to two years of learning (or up to three years if the course includes one year of relevant practical work experience). Since July 2009, students have been able to apply for Professional and Career Development Loans. Built on the successful Career Development Loans programme, these offer more generous terms for students with loans up to £10,000 and lower interest rates.
- Introduced the Adult Learning Grant which provides up to £30 per week during term time to qualifying adults taking a full-time course (at least 12 hours a week) – that's around £1,000 a year. The ALG can be used to study for a wide range of qualifications, including BTECs, NVQs, GCSEs and A-levels.

- Increased funding for Train to Gain which gives employers access to a wide range of opportunities for improving the skills of their employees and the productivity of their business.

Future measures

- To increase the number of women taking up and completing apprenticeships, the Government is working with the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the Learning Skills Council and sector bodies to improve information, broaden choice and explore more flexible apprenticeship learning opportunities.
- To help reduce the gender pay gap between apprentices, we increased the minimum weekly earnings for all apprentices in England from £80 per week to £95 per week from August 2009. As the lowest paid apprenticeships, such as hairdressing and care, are still predominantly taken by women, it is women who will benefit most from this increase.
- Through the new National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), young people will be given strong advice on comparative wages in the apprenticeships and sectors that they are considering going into before they begin their apprenticeships.

Supporting women into non-traditional careers

The Women and Work Commission found that “women are crowded into a narrow range of lower-paying occupations, mainly those available part-time, that do not make the best use of their skills.” Women are also under-represented in a number of sectors where there are skills shortages, and where qualified women could fill crucial gaps in the workforce. For example there are about half a million women currently living in the UK who are qualified in science, engineering and technology (SET), but as of 2007 only 151,000 were currently working in the SET sectors – amounting to only 18.5 per cent of the SET workforce.

The Government’s approach will:

- Tackle gender stereotyping at all stages from early years support, through schooling and into higher education

- Ensure girls have effective careers advice and support to enable them to make informed choices about their future options
- Engage with partners to increase the number of women in sectors where they are presently under-represented.

What we have done

- The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework for children 0 to 5 requires that providers provide positive images that challenge children's thinking and help them to embrace differences in gender, ethnicity, language, religion, culture, special educational needs and disabilities.
- Allocated £5 million a year until March 2011 to the Women and Work Sector Pathways Initiative to encourage women into sectors where they are under-represented. Run by the Sector Skills Councils the scheme has helped over 11,500 women so far. Sectors engaged with the project include: automotive; construction; energy & utility; environment & land-based; fashion & textile; science, engineering & technology; property; housing facilities management; cleaning & car parking industries; passenger transport; financial services; accountancy and finance; hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism; and justice.
- Funded the UK Resource Centre for Women in Science Engineering and Technology, which provides gender equality policy and practice for employers in industry and academia and has a range of products and services to help employers implement change. The Centre also provides practical advice, training, grants, bursaries, mentoring and networking for women looking to enter into science, engineering and technology (SET) employment or education, to return after a career break or for those already in the sector to progress their careers. So far, some 1700 women have been helped in their careers. The centre has worked with more than 700 companies.
- Supported WISE (Women Into Science, Engineering and Construction) which promotes SET and construction as suitable career choices among girls and women across the UK, through brochures, posters, websites, a video, a DVD, hands-on courses and presentations. The WISE Campaign works with girls and women, parents, teachers, careers advisers, employers, politicians and the media.

- Provided funding for the Science and Engineering Ambassadors (SEAs) programme, which has around 20,000 individuals from Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) companies or academia working as role models in schools across the UK. 40 per cent of SEAs are women, and well over 1 million children have been reached by this scheme so far.

Future measures

- We will be running pilots to provide a ‘critical mass’ of learners in non-traditional occupations. The National Apprenticeship Service has commissioned research by the Institute of Employment Studies, which will help determine the most severe areas of under-representation and what lessons can be learnt from existing projects aiming to address inequality. Creating a ‘critical mass’ of a certain type of Apprentice is intended to make that sector more accessible in the long-term, to begin a step change in common expectations about the types of persons that might be suitable to work in each sector.

3. Supporting Women’s Enterprise

Only 16 per cent of the 4.7 million UK enterprises are majority women-led. Yet research shows that setting up a business can be one way that both women and men feel they can improve the balance between work and family life as it can offer a more flexible work pattern. And wider participation by women in enterprise means their skills and talents will be used to the benefit of the wider economy. There are encouraging signs that many more new entrepreneurs are women – 32 per cent of the newly self-employed are women compared to 28 per cent of those currently self-employed, but there is still much more to do.

What we have done

- Developed an Enterprise Strategy that is designed to unlock the nation’s entrepreneurial talents; boost enterprise skills and knowledge; help new and existing business get funding to start up and grow; and ease the burden of regulation – particularly on small firms which feel its impacts most.

- Established the Women's Enterprise Task Force (WETF) in 2006 to accelerate the levels of female entrepreneurship in the UK. Its work focussed around five pillars: gender disaggregated business data; business support; financial and technical education; supplier diversity and procurement; and strategic influencing & awareness raising.
- Supported women's enterprise by piloting women's business centres, and creating *The Aspire Fund* providing a £25 million co-investment fund to invest primarily in women-led businesses.
- Implemented a programme of activities to assist budding and existing entrepreneurs, including women, to understand the finance options available and how they can obtain them. This is being done in partnership with the British Bankers Association, a number of High Street banks, Regional Development Agencies and their business support partners.

Future measures

- The Government will be responding to the Women's Enterprise Task Force's final report in November 2009.
- Monitoring the success of the measures set out in the Enterprise Strategy, and considering what future action is necessary, particularly in the light of current economic circumstances.

4. Increasing transparency

The Government has set a national target to reduce the gender pay gap, but inequality cannot be tackled if problems cannot be seen. The Government believes that greater transparency on equality issues in the workplace will highlight areas where progress is needed, and drive improvements.

What we have done

- Established the Equality and Human Rights Commission with clear powers to instigate investigations in sectors where there is evidence of systematic inequality. The EHRC has recently carried out a formal inquiry into the financial services sector which found that there is a 60 per cent gender pay gap for annual gross earnings and a pay gap of 80 per cent in terms of performance-related pay. Findings also show that although women make up roughly half of employees in the financial services sector, they make up only 11 per cent of senior managers. The report of the Inquiry into the Financial Services Sector was published on 7 September 2009, and the Government will be considering future steps forward.

- Introduced the gender equality duty on public sector bodies, which requires public sector organisations to promote gender equality in relation to their functions, including their role as an employer, and to publish information relating to this.
- Set targets for increased representation of women in the Senior Civil Service and published information on progress.
- Published guidance (from the Office of Government Commerce) for public sector bodies on how they can use procurement to drive progress on equality, working with public sector suppliers.

Future measures

- The Equality Bill contains a number of new measures that aim to improve transparency including:
 - Banning secrecy clauses that stop employees disclosing their pay to colleagues. According to research carried out by the former equal opportunities commission in 2004, 20 per cent of employers did not permit employees to share information with their colleagues, and women were more likely than men to be in the dark about colleagues pay.
 - Powers to require public authorities to report on equality issues. We are consulting on the use of these powers, and have proposed that public bodies with 150 or more employees should be required to publish annual details of their gender pay gap alongside other equality measures.
 - A power to require publishing on the gender pay gap by private sector employers with 250 or more employees. However, the government is committed to working with business to secure progress in publishing on a voluntary basis and will not use this power before 2013, and only then if insufficient progress has been made.
- The Equality and Human Rights Commission will work with business, unions and others to develop a set of metrics for gender pay publishing. The Commission will monitor progress on publishing within the private sector annually.
- The Equality Bill makes clear in the context of the new single equality duty that public bodies can use public procurement to drive equality, and we are consulting on specific duties on contracting authorities to underpin the new duty.

5. Positive action and good practice in the workplace

Inequality for women is deeply entrenched within the world of work, and despite significant progress in some areas deep-seated problems persist. The 2008 Female FTSE 100 report found that only 11.7 per cent of FTSE board directors are women, and 22 boards have no women on them at all. Women make up just over a third of all public appointments.

To tackle these systemic problems it is sometimes necessary to take positive action to address long-standing disadvantage as well as to tackle discrimination. The Government is committed to actively using and extending positive action opportunities within the workplace. Alongside this we will work with business and trade unions partners to identify, celebrate and disseminate good practice in promoting gender equality at work.

What we have done

- Set new targets for government departments to increase the number of women in public appointments, alongside targets relating to race and disability, and announced a support package to drive progress.
- Provided additional funding to the TUC for its Trade Union Equality Representatives project, which was originally funded by Round Two of the Union Modernisation Fund. An evaluation of the project is due in November 2009.
- DWP recently ran some pilot outreach programmes, specifically aimed at Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Somali women, which showed that outreach can provide benefits for these communities. Although the evaluation is not yet complete, we are recommending this type of approach to Working Neighbourhoods Fund areas and City Strategy Pathfinders.
- The Government Equalities Office, in partnership with Opportunity Now, has identified over 100 Exemplar Employers who are doing innovative work to address occupational segregation, equal pay and opportunities for women in the workplace. These Exemplar Employers have all committed to sharing their best practice with other organisations.

Future measures

- The Equality Bill includes measures which will allow employers to be able to take a broader range of positive action measures in order to address under-representation or disadvantage within the workforce, in particular at the recruitment stage, while not breaching the merit principle.
- We are exploring options with EHRC and business for development of some form of accredited “equality standard” which recognise good performance on equality.


Section 3: Next Steps

The measures outlined above represent a substantial programme of legislative and non-legislative change. However, we know that more needs to be done if we are to be confident of maintaining, and accelerating, progress towards full equality between women and men in the workplace. We will build on the progress and learning to date, and on the measures in the Equality Bill in a number of ways:

- Firstly, we will ensure that the support strategies which we have already put in place to help people through the current economic downturn, and to prepare for recovery, take full account of the different ways in which women are affected, and tailored to meet their needs. The Department for Work and Pensions, the Government Equalities Office and the Equality Human Rights Commission have undertaken work to monitor the effects of the recession on different groups, and have published a report in June 2009. We will also look at whether and how working patterns are changing as a result of the current recession, and what lessons may be learned for the future.
- Secondly, we will consider carefully the recommendations of the Women and Work Commission² who have set out proposals for further action to be taken across government to reduce the gender pay and opportunities gap including in areas such as education and in balancing work and family life.
- Thirdly, we will undertake further work in consultation with stakeholders to look at the options for strengthening our approach in a number of key areas:
 - Quality part-time work: if women are to have real opportunities to use their skills to the full that means opening up more possibilities for women to work flexibly at all levels of work. The Quality Part-Time Work Fund was set up to explore different approaches to addressing this issue. The outcome of this work is now being assessed. Going forward we will explore options for encouraging and supporting managers to develop the supply of quality part-time posts and also look at ways to better promote quality part-time and flexible work as recommended by the Women and Work Commission.

² Women and Work Commission, Shaping a Fairer Future: A review of the recommendations of the Women and Work Commission three years on (July 2009).

- Skills and occupational segregation: the expansion in adult apprenticeships and the development of the new Adult Advancement and Careers Service offer opportunities for women to gain new skills that will help them progress at work.
- Women in the Boardroom: the GEO commissioned Cranfield University School of Management to look at the reasons why some groups are under-represented on boards and what is being done to address boardroom diversity internationally. The findings from Part I of this research were published in October 2009. The GEO will continue to examine the evidence relating to the benefits of diverse boardrooms and will be exploring what more can be done to increase representation of women and other groups on both public and private sector boards.
- Childcare: as “Building Britain’s Future: new industry, new jobs” recognised, the childcare sector is crucial to enabling women to participate in a fair and family friendly labour market. We need to address both the skills requirements of this market for the future, and to consider whether further measures are needed to ensure a strong and responsive sector is maintained during current economic conditions.
- Support for working parents: Parents consistently say they want more choice and control over whether to stay at home with their baby in the first year of its life. We will be offering families more choice, by introducing new choice and flexibility for working parents from April 2011, and the Government’s goal is to further extend maternity pay from nine to 12 months. We will also look at how else we can achieve a better balance of caring responsibilities and work opportunities between women and men.
- Flexible working: We need to look at the impact that the current economic climate is having on working hours and take account of any evidence that might inform our understanding of working patterns in UK workplaces in the future.
- Finally, we will set out a new strategy which will bring together all of these points, to complement the measures we are taking in the Equality Bill and to further promote equality between women and men in the workplace.



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