



2021

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT



PREPARED BY

**THE BRISTOL WOMEN
IN BUSINESS CIC**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bristol Women in Business Charter brings together a group of ambitious commercial organisations. Employing over 27,000 people in Bristol and the surrounding areas, these organisations are all committed to making progress on gender equality in Bristol. This Impact Report shares the progress reported to us by Charter signatories between April 2019 and March 2021.

Substantial research shows that diversity brings many advantages to an organisation: increased profitability and creativity, stronger governance and better problem-solving abilities. Employees with diverse backgrounds bring their own perspectives, ideas and experiences. Diversity in the workforce helps to create organisations that are more resilient and effective, and as a result, outperform organisations that do not invest in diversity. We believe the benefits of equality, diversity and inclusion to businesses are beyond doubt, as is the impact that companies can have on the communities in which they operate. We commend all companies that want to promote inclusion, increase equality and diversity.

Companies that sign the Bristol Women in Business Charter commit to one or more of the seven goals of the Charter, setting their own business targets for the year. Our signatories fed back that the goals act as a useful framework for change. Helping to focus their work on gender equality. You can find out more about the Charter goals in our recent [blog](#). There is also lots of progress made by signatory companies in addition to their work towards these goals. Many of the signatories are part of sector-specific initiatives and local networks that support their work on diversity and inclusion.

In spite of the impact of Covid-19 on the working world, our Charter signatories have made significant progress in the last year. They have not lost focus, instead knuckled down to actively support all employees and ensure their comeback is inclusive. Signatories have continued to report on their Gender Pay Gap despite that not being mandated by the Government. They have responded to the Black Lives Matter movement and engaged with employees and members of the wider community who have experienced discrimination and exclusion. Ultimately making Bristol a better place to live and work. We celebrate their efforts and achievements.

The Charter is an effective long-term lever to support the move to gender equality. We aim to recognise, support and accelerate the progress businesses are making. We encourage employers of all sizes in Bristol and the surrounding area to sign the Charter and make progress on gender equality. By working together on this important issue, we will achieve our ambition to make Bristol the first gender equal city in the UK.



WHY WE'RE REPORTING

Purpose of this report

This Bristol Women in Business Charter annual impact report provides a summary of the impact the Charter has had in the two years since its launch. The second of which, has been whilst operating as a Community Interest Company (since April 2020). We acknowledge the significant progress that has been made by our signatories during a challenging time for businesses. We recognise their continual commitment towards creating a gender equal workforce. The report also provides an overview of our financial position and details of our future plans for the Charter.

Who we are and why we exist

The Charter was launched by the Women in Business Task Group, a group of volunteers and part of the Bristol Women's Commission in March 2019. As a Task Group, we wanted to ensure the charter would have longevity and be sustainable, as we each knew it would take time to achieve our aims and ambitions.

Therefore, a structure was needed to help accelerate the pace of change that would benefit women, the businesses they work in and the communities they live in. In 2020 we established the Community Interest Company (the Bristol Women in Business CIC) to operate the Charter. A not-for-profit, community-serving business. The founding directors of the CIC were Sandra Gordon and Jane Ginnever.

OUR PURPOSE & AMBITION

Our purpose and ambition - Charter and CIC

Our belief is that businesses cannot reach their full potential if they fail to recruit and retain a gender-balanced workforce. The Bristol Women in Business Charter aims to recognise and support businesses in Bristol and the surrounding areas that are progressing towards that aim. This will help accelerate the pace of change to the benefit for women, the businesses they work in and the communities they live in.

The Charter is an effective long-term lever to support the move to greater gender equality. The seven goals of the Charter are evidence-based and were carefully selected to act as a framework that would guide businesses to make progress and focus on the actions that will get results. You can find out more about why the goals were selected [here](#).

Only by working together on this important issue will we achieve our ambition to make Bristol the first gender equal city in the UK. We want to encourage businesses to sign the Charter and make steps toward gender equality.





DELIVERING OUR PURPOSE

**ALMOST 40
COMPANIES,
EMPLOYING OVER
27,000 PEOPLE, SIGN
UP TO THE CHARTER TO
DATE**

Despite the country finding itself in a national lockdown in March 2020, we were determined to continue with our plans to establish and create a community interest company (Bristol Women in Business CIC) to operate the Charter on the 1 April 2020.

Almost 40 companies, with over 27,000 people employed, have signed up to the Charter to date. The largest of these signatories is Rolls Royce, to the smaller organisations who only have a handful of employees. We will continue to welcome employers of all sizes based in Bristol and the surrounding area, aware of the huge number of people employed by small businesses in the UK.

The creation of the Charter in April also coincided with the anniversary of the first Charter signatories coming onboard. The initial reports we began to receive after the first 12 months of being part of the Charter community showed significant progression towards creating a gender balanced workforce by those signatories. We now have 4 Charter Ambassadors who are active advocates for the work of the Charter and help us to fly the flag and increase awareness of the Charter and its goals within the local business community.

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One of the key purposes of the Charter is to bring companies together. To share their experiences, knowledge and learn from each other through regular events. We have been able to host 4 online events. One of these was a successful public event focusing on the impact of Covid on gender equality.

WHY COMPANIES SELECTED THE GOALS THEY DID IN 2020

Both new applicants and those signatories reporting their progress are expected to set targets against one or more of the goals of the Charter. In addition, they are asked to explain why the goals they have chosen are important to their business. The answers demonstrate both the employers values and the importance of the issue of gender equality to the business. Here are some of the answers we received:

From new applicants:

“By more evenly representing women in our business, we can make inroads to the perception in younger women that jobs in tech are not for them.”

“We are growing our business and recognise the strengths that women have to help shape the culture and feel of the business.”

“We believe strongly that diversity will make our business better and allow us to deliver a better service to our clients.”



And from existing signatories...

“We have a moral obligation to ensure equality of opportunity for all and represent the communities in which we operate.”

“We believe having more women in decision-making positions will give a positive contribution to the bottom line and help us continue to be a great place to work.”

“These all continue to be relevant to us in attracting, retaining and progressing female talent, which is critical to our success as a business.”

“We need to be proactive, especially in leaner times, and ensure we live our values.”

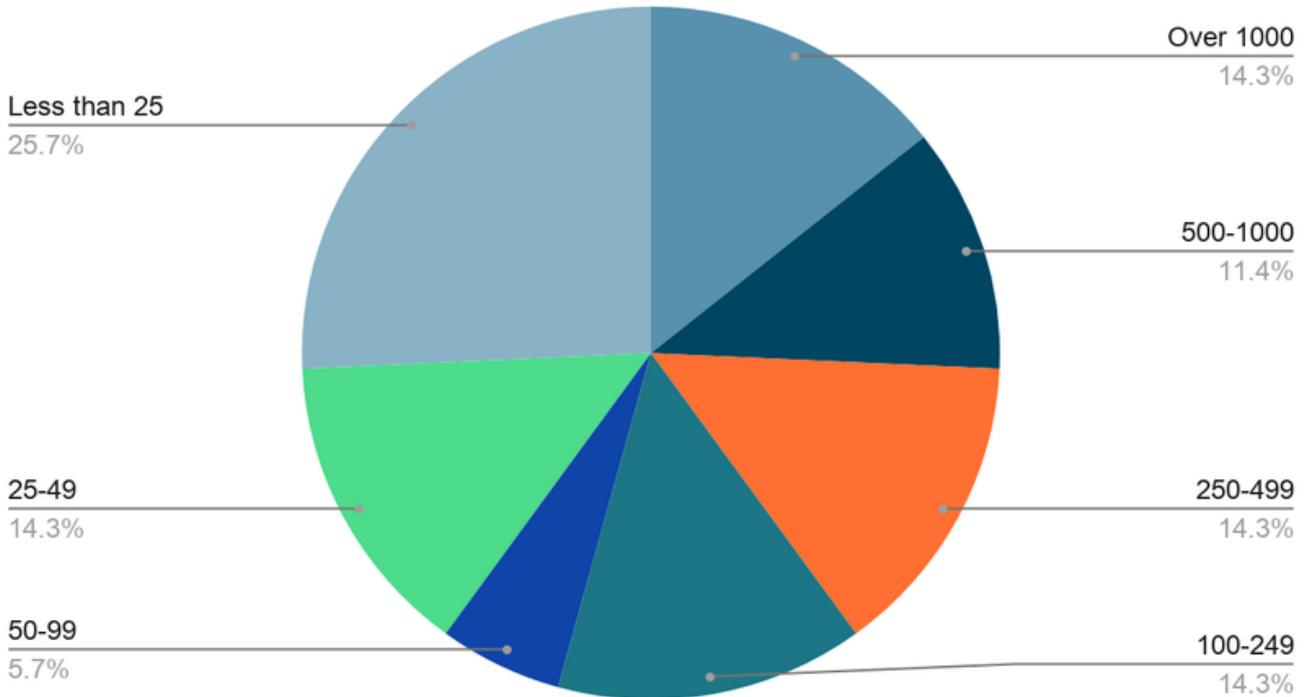
WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED



Number of people employed

The Charter's current signatory companies employ more than 27,000 in Bristol and the surrounding area. This chart shows the varying size of those companies. We welcome companies that employ 3 or more people.

How many employees do the Charter signatories have?





THE CHALLENGES BUSINESSES FACE WHEN TRYING TO MAKE PROGRESS ON EQUALITY

To continue as a member of the signatory community, one condition is that progress is made during the year, but as you'd expect there have been challenges, only some of which relate to the pandemic. A huge congratulations to all Charter signatories on making progress in spite of these challenges.

Here are some of the challenges signatories shared with us by as they reported their annual progress on gender equality:

The impact of Covid -19 on the business

Other changes in the company diverting focus away from equality

Lack of time and resources to support the work on diversity and inclusion

Historic sector challenges, especially in STEM and the legal profession

Pressure to fill roles quickly without having built a diverse pipeline of potential candidates

Ensuring that attention is paid to intersectionality and to other equality challenges as well as gender, particularly in light of the local impact of the BLM movement

Difficult to evidence progress in the short-term on some longer-term initiatives

PROGRESS MADE

The majority of the following analysis of signatories' annual progress reporting was kindly provided on our behalf by Heather Porch, a HRM Masters student at UWE.

For this section, we have looked at each goal individually and what progress was made against it. As signatories set their own targets for each goal they select, they can make progress regardless of where they start and proceed at their own pace to achieve their targets for the year.



OTHER PROGRESS MADE

Our signatories have continued to make progress on all aspects of gender equality, not just their selected goals for the last 12 months. We have been informed of many success stories, action signatories are taking and the progression they are making towards a gendered balanced workforce.

This includes getting board and cabinet approval for the organisation's alignment of their objectives and strategy around diversity and inclusion. Many businesses have undertaken ways to include voices from those underrepresented employees through staff led group provisions, and for those with those groups already established, reviewed how to provide a more influential space for those in the organisation.

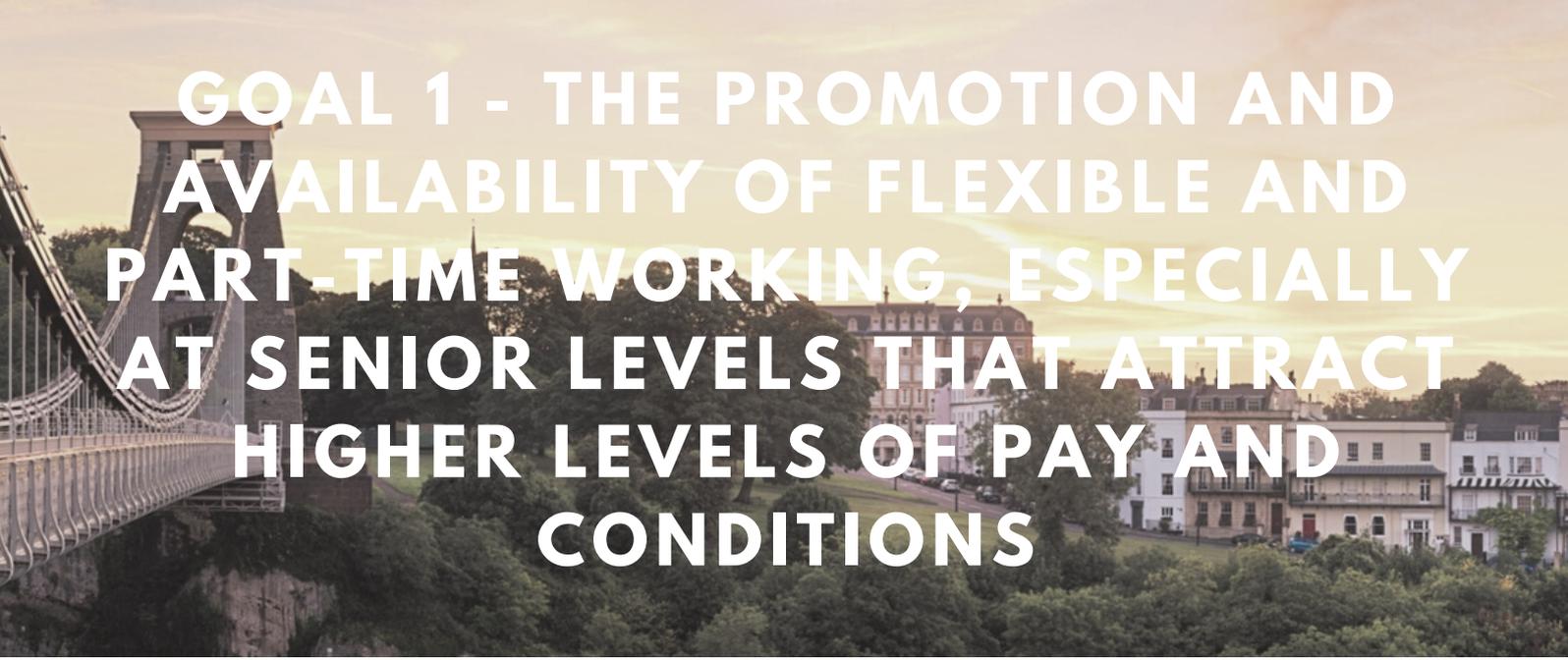
We have seen the introduction of peer networks to ensure these groups have a voice in shaping future strategic initiatives, and a peer network for the advancement of gender equality.

There has also been an increase in the support for women where they are under-represented, through mentoring and women's networks, including Parenting Network, Women in Tech Community, and a Women's Working Group to identify, priorities and execute ideas which are enablers for women at OVO.

Based on feedback via the Women's Network, improvements have been introduced to the support available to employees taking and returning from family leave. This included launching a programme of activity for maternity returners, guidance for line managers and a dedicated HR representative to support. Also, a review and changes to parental leave policies and enhanced pay for those taking leave regardless of gender.

We saw businesses looking at their policies especially ones impacting women directly and making changes. One organisation found that after review, their maternity pay policy was not competitive, which meant they ran the risk of losing female talent. Changes were made to the policy to mitigate this risk. Increasing pay from statutory pay to 18 weeks full pay, with the hope to retain women after maternity leave and making them feel valued.

Through a diverse recruiters scheme alongside partners, an awareness of the importance of greater diversity balance on recruitment panels. Ensuring future recruitment panels include members from under-represented groups in the workplace.



GOAL 1 - THE PROMOTION AND AVAILABILITY OF FLEXIBLE AND PART-TIME WORKING, ESPECIALLY AT SENIOR LEVELS THAT ATTRACT HIGHER LEVELS OF PAY AND CONDITIONS

Of the signatories choosing this goal, the progress reports found high levels of progress. With businesses using different methods to push for the promotion and availability of flexible and part-time working. The last 12 months has seen the case for flexible working brought to the forefront and organisations quickly embracing this as a variable way to run their businesses. We have seen many success stories from our signatories where they have been able to pivot and adapt. Not only to deliver on the changing needs of their business, but also to reflect the demands being experienced by their workforce as a result of the pandemic.

ADLIB found they were able to offer more flexible working due to COVID-19, which has seen a positive effect on the organisation and the workforce. Flipper Ltd disclosed that 33% of their staff are now flexibly working, Chickp have 4 flexibly working part-time employees and GCP Chartered Architects have 60% of their workforce working flexibly. Signatories have demonstrated changes to the way that jobs are advertised to ensure that organisations are recruiting from the widest pool of possible talent. By reviewing and offering all vacancies in the lens of both a part-time and full-time basis, they have increased the range of roles available. Including Bishops Fleming who has a working pattern of part-time/ term time for one of their partners and Burges Salmon introduced a flexible resourcing model.

Ian Williams Limited revised flexible working policies, which included “myth busting” resources being made available to all staff, and managers with guidance relating to flexible working. We also had Triodos review all vacancies to assess whether there was an opportunity to recruit on a part-time or full-time basis. 20% of vacancies for 2020 were recruited on a part-time basis.

Some signatories have stated that flexible working is core to their “return to the office” planning, and all flexible working requests are being accepted by default. Declined requests must first be authorised by the Managing Director. These alterations in policy and focus have been a real sea change in the way that flexible working is now being embraced and openly encouraged within businesses.

GOAL 2 - A COMMITMENT TO INCREASE THE NUMBERS OF WOMEN AT SENIOR LEVELS AND ON THE BOARD

We have seen a number of signatory companies that chose this goal make great progress in promoting more women into senior positions and on to their boards. This goal has shown a real commitment towards ensuring gender equality at the highest levels within their businesses.

Business West and ADLIB introduced two female executives to their Board. Burges Salmon reported that 50% of those promoted into senior positions were female. At the time of reporting, small business Flipper Ltd saw two women being appointed to senior roles in recent internal promotions, and GCP Chartered Architects have seen new additions into their senior management team, with 42% of these being women. TLT saw the representation of women within the Governance and Oversight Board increase from 40% to 60% and OVO Energy appointed their first female board member in April 2020.

Bishops Fleming's only promotion to partnership in the last 12 months (at the time of reporting) was a female partner who had a working pattern of part-time/term time working. Manor Community co-created tailored career plans for women wanting to move into senior positions in the company, and is working to develop senior positions that specifically match the skills, knowledge and goals of under-represented women. Clarke Willmott have 25% of Board positions filled by women and are promoting more women into senior positions to fulfil their 5 year commitment to increase this to 30% of Equity Members by 2023. We saw Redington make significant changes to improve diversity at board level, they now have 3 active female members of our board, and the chair of our board is female.





GOAL 3 - MAKING AT LEAST ONE MEMBER OF THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE TEAM RESPONSIBLE FOR REPORTING ON GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

This goal centres around signatories appointing senior board members to take responsibility for reporting on the topic of gender equality and inclusivity. There has been progress in this area for some of the Charter signatories and steps put in place to implement specific roles to ensure the necessary focus on this topic.

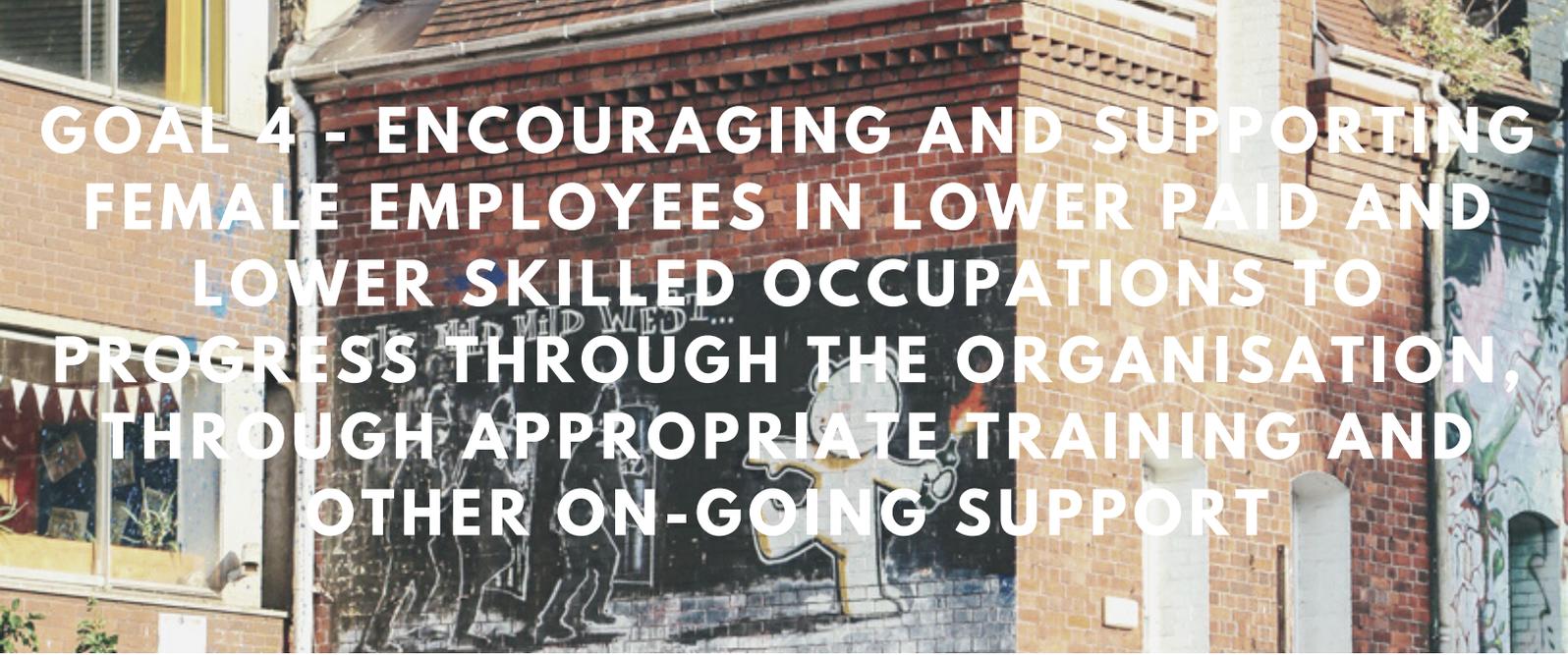
Forward-thinking companies should be looking for ways to employ and empower more women at work – not just as a moral obligation, but also as a sound business strategy. McKinsey's most recent Delivering Through Diversity report found that corporations that embrace gender diversity on their executive teams were more competitive and 21% more likely to experience above-average profitability. They also had a 27% likelihood of outperforming their peers on longer-term value creation.

We have seen during the reporting period successes with Burges Salmon having three members of their staff in designated roles in relation to diversity and inclusion, all these staff members are in senior roles.

Of the two new female executives on the board of Business West, one is responsible for reviewing the gender pay gap. Their Managing Director is given responsibility to report on gender equality and inclusion.

The National Composites Centre reported that one of their female directors is now responsible for reporting on gender equality and inclusion.

At UWE, the Deputy Vice Chancellor reports to the Board of Governors on equality and inclusion at every meeting. A new Pro-Vice Chancellor for Equalities and Civic Engagement has also appointed and task forces, led by Pro-Vice Chancellor and the Executive Deans for each faculty, receive data showing inequalities and areas for focus within each area.



GOAL 4 - ENCOURAGING AND SUPPORTING FEMALE EMPLOYEES IN LOWER PAID AND LOWER SKILLED OCCUPATIONS TO PROGRESS THROUGH THE ORGANISATION, THROUGH APPROPRIATE TRAINING AND OTHER ON-GOING SUPPORT

The majority of our signatories have undertaken activities towards developing and supporting their female employees' progression within their organisations. We found that many organisations undertook activities towards progressing this goal, although they didn't select it as one of their chosen goals. It demonstrated an overall commitment by organisations towards the upskilling and continual development of their workforce.

We have seen Bristol City Council increase career development opportunities within their organisation and implement the "Future Bright" programme, which supports career progression. As a result of their work on this issue, Burges Salmon saw 76% of promotions from lower-level jobs were women.

Since October 2019, TLT saw 39 employees qualify as lawyers through the non-traditional route of CILEx to gain a professional qualification while working full time and 77% of these employees were female.

Manor Community and Ian Williams Ltd worked towards this goal by improving employment opportunities to those in lower skilled positions and implementing additional programmes and policies. Manor Community has also implemented career plans which are tailored for everyone who aims to progress into senior roles, and Ian Williams Ltd has set targets relating to female career progression.

Sister companies Flipper Ltd and Water2business launched the #LetsMoveMore programme. Promoting internal moves and career progression via a management job swap across both organisations to challenge traditional job stereotypes and support managers in developing wider business knowledge.

Bishop Fleming consolidated grades and established pay ranges for every role. This has provided them with a framework for identifying future talent, along with ensuring they meet equal pay requirements. In addition Bishop Fleming has an established women's network, whereby junior female employees are mentored by female partners.



GOAL 5 - A COMMITMENT TO CLOSE THE GENDER PAY GAP

In the UK it is law that organisations with over 250 employees must publish their Gender Pay Gap (although it was temporarily suspended in 2020). The Gender Pay Gap is the difference in average gross hourly earnings between women and men. In its 2019 release, the Office of National Statistics found the following:

- The gender pay gap among full-time employees stands at 8.9%, little changed from 2018, and a decline of only 0.6% since 2012.
- One of the reasons for differences in the gender pay gap between age groups is that women over 40 are more likely to work in lower-paid occupations and, when compared with younger women, are less likely to work as managers, directors or senior officials. (ONS, 2019)

With this in mind, the progress reported by Charter signatories highlight a significant effort to close the gender pay gap in Bristol. Many many signatories formally reported their Gender Pay Gap even though it was not mandated by the Government this year. Bristol City Council reported a reduction in their gender and race pay gap, and Burges Salmon found a reduction of their mean and median gender pay gap. Similarly, TLT reported a small improvement in their gender pay gap.

The National Composites Centre reported that their median gender pay gap has improved. Expanding that the gap that remains is primarily due to inequalities in STEM, an issue which is industry-wide and will require long-term sustained action to overcome entirely.

To work towards goal 5, Manor Community created an equality lead role in their organisations to carry out gender pay gap work. Over the 12 months they reported that they conducted product and focus groups based on gender pay gap analysis.

GOAL 6 - A FOCUS ON IMPLEMENTING RECRUITMENT, APPRAISAL, PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION PROCESSES THAT ARE NON-DISCRIMINATORY TOWARDS WOMEN AND ARE FREE FROM UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

Of all the goals, goal 6 saw the highest participation and feedback from the signatories was generally very extensive. With a similar pattern of success towards this goal across the organisations.

Bristol Airport identified their previous recruitment system could be improved to increase inclusivity. They took action and now the updated system supports diversity reporting. Bristol Airport also updated their marketing campaign to remove gender bias. This has seen an increase in applicants for fire team vacancies which was a challenging area for them to recruit women.

Recruitment processes were also changed within Bristol City Council and Burges Salmon, with the organisations adopting greater diversity balance on recruitment panels and blind recruitment processes, respectively. The latter also implemented a “Career Focus Training Programme” to improve transparency of career development opportunities. Clarke Willmott has recently made equality and diversity training mandatory for all employees.

Flipper Ltd focused on the entire recruitment process, ensuring gender bias was removed from recruitment advertisements and job descriptions to attract a higher number of applicants, especially women. Ian Williams Ltd implemented an inclusive recruitment roadmap, ensuring inclusivity at all stages in the recruitment process. Hargreaves Lansdown has now mandated female representation on all interview panels for senior level assessment centres and has joined an Association of British Insurers’ initiative to publish family friendly policies.



GOAL 7 - SUPPORTING WOMEN WHERE THEY ARE UNDERREPRESENTED, THROUGH MENTORING AND WOMEN'S NETWORKS



Feedback for goal 7 was the most significant across the progress report. Many organisations reported on the progress they have made over the last 12 months in relation to this goal. Even signatories who did not choose this goal initially had implemented mentoring schemes to help achieve gender equality this year.

Bristol City Council implemented an Organisational Improvement Plan in January 2019 which is set to take 5 years. Despite this, they have been successful in implementing staff led groups representing BAME, LGBT+, disabled and young people, and have successfully filled 50 places on their BAME “Stepping Up” partnership programme.

Alongside their other chosen goals, Manor Community has joined networks and carried out innovative research and policy work in relation to this.

Pelican Business Services disclosed how all managers attended an informative session on menopause, to ensure support to women and their partners going through that life stage. This was coupled with additional e-learning for managers to be able to support team members. Their Managing Director is part of the business’ Working Parents Network, supporting parents with children of all ages. Sister company, water2business, highlighted that all team members have the option of being part of the internal mentoring scheme, where 56% of the mentors are women.

One Big Circle Ltd disclosed how they have been supporting the ‘She Means Business’ programme through mentoring, to encourage women into more senior positions. Similarly, OVO Energy has implemented mentoring schemes and networks to support women such as the Parenting Network, the Women in Tech Community and the Women’s Working Group. Simitive took an applied mentoring scheme which paired women in senior positions with junior staff.

TLT reported back on the contied progress of TLT’s Women’s Network, which has continued hosting events with successful turnouts from members of the organisation. Their last event centred on empowering women and 94% of attendees said they would react differently to difficult situations as a result of attending the masterclass. TLT’s Women’s Network has also used their platform to encourage employee’s involvement in other professional women’s groups, i.e. Women in Business & Finance, Women in Planning and Women in Property.



WHAT WE'VE HEARD FROM OUR CHARTER COMMUNITY

It is important that we continue to listen to the needs and suggestions from our Charter community to help to improve the value of being a signatory and ultimately towards achieving the aims of the charter. We value all the recommendations we have received, and these will help to inform future planning and decision making for how the CIC will be run.

Our signatories have found our events enjoyable and very useful over the last 12 months and would like to find ways to build on the way they collectively share best practice and in turn gain the most value from the charter group. The creation of an online repository/databank and/or forum which signatories could use to refer back or draw on discussion points covered previously, ask questions, and share successes would be beneficial and would help create a sense of community for signatories. Facilitating the opportunity for them to get in touch with each other outside of formal events. One of our signatories stated, 'sharing this information is invaluable as it will enable us to consider points which we may not be aware of'.

Also publicising where the strengths and weaknesses lie as a cohort, so collectively they can improve performance. They requested support to help them find and build external networks that we can work collaboratively with and share ideas, success stories (case studies) and learn.

As well as understanding what other organisations are doing and how this feeds into their wider D&I agenda, our signatories expressed they would value connecting more regularly with the WIB group, specifically on particular initiatives they are working on. They would also benefit from a half-yearly check-in with the Charter team and/or wider Charter community, so they can discuss how they are progressing against their goals and objective(s) and allow for greater cross-sector sharing.

Other suggestions from our signatories included more online / remotely accessed events or training. Help to identify agencies, groups or networks that can provide expertise in various areas.

Our smaller businesses feel that there should be a separate focus for big companies and small companies. The challenges and resources are very different. Whilst it is brilliant to hear the progress that these large enterprises are making, their approach, budgets and resources are so much greater than an SMB. They have suggested that there needs to be specifically targeted initiatives and support to enable SMBs to make the hope for progress.

We thank all our signatories for these great suggestions and positive feedback on the work we are doing.

HOW WE WORK WITH STAKEHOLDERS (AND WHO THEY ARE)

The Charter was created and launched by the Women in Business Task Group, part of the Bristol Women's Commission. They are our key stakeholders, as are the signatories of the Charter.

One of our Directors, Sandra Gordon, continues to hold a seat on the Task Group. We contribute into the Women's Commission's annual report to Bristol City Council on progress on gender equality.

We have increased our dialogue with Charter signatories through the reporting process since April and look forward to having ongoing communication through the online platform we will develop. We have found real value in the conversations we are having with signatories about their progress against the goals they've chosen and their future plans.

In addition, we have recently appointed 4 Charter Ambassadors, business leaders who support the aims of the Charter and can support us to achieve them. Our ambassadors are already having an impact on the way we run the Charter and our reach to more businesses to achieve ongoing progress.



AMBASSADOR'S ROLE



Since the start of the Charter we have recognised that we are not the only organisation that is supporting the work towards greater gender equality in Bristol. There are many organisations and individuals who work alongside us and are supportive of the work we are doing.

We have invited four members of that wider network to support the Charter in the role of Ambassador. They are active advocates for the work of the Charter and for gender equality in Bristol. They help us to fly the flag and increase awareness of the Charter and its goals within the local business community. We value their expertise, passion, and commitment, both as business people and in the work they do, within the wider community to create greater inclusion and equity of opportunity for all women and girls.

THE WOMEN IN BUSINESS CHARTER OFFERS BUSINESSES A REAL OPPORTUNITY TO WORK COLLECTIVELY TOWARDS SHARING BEST PRACTICE AND NETWORKING ON A WIDER LEVEL.



OUR AMBASSADORS

Annie Budd

Is a professional recruiter, with a wealth of experience recruiting across UK, USA and Asia. She was until recently MD of her own successful business based in Bristol and she has a huge passion for diversity within the recruitment industry. Currently at Sharkfin, Annie's role focuses not only on working with clients to recruit great talent but also how to improve their Diversity and Inclusion practices and ensure that they are able to provide an environment that marries the right people and businesses together.



Traci Lewis

Who supports purpose-led women and businesses to be sustainable and successful. She has set-up Sustain-Live Consulting Ltd, a sustainable development change agency, helping purpose-led businesses thrive. In 2016 she co-founded Catalyse Change CIC to inspire, empower and skill girls and young women as sustainability leaders and changemakers. Through learning and mentoring programmes, both on & offline. Traci is also the Bristol hub lead for Women in Sustainability (WINS).

Serrie Chapman

The co-founder of Women's Tech Hub which was set up to encourage local women in tech and find ways that they can develop their careers. She is currently the principal Safety Engineer at Fusion processing working on a cutting-edge autonomous Bus project and has 20 years of experience working across the automotive and rail domain in semiconductors, product management, requirements engineering, safety and model based systems engineering.



Kristal McNamara

With a corporate background as a senior business leader, is qualified and experienced in Change and Programme Management. Kristal now leads WorkWell, a HR Change consultancy, to create work that works for Businesses of all sizes. The WorkWell team have worked on large and complex projects Implementing flexible working across organisations, as well as short projects to help create strategy and business cases for People change.

EVENTS



One of the benefits of being a Charter signatory is creating the opportunity to bring those companies together to share their experience and knowledge and learn from each other through regular events. Prior to Covid 19, these were conducted in face to face events which included a chance to mingle and network in between the formal presentations. We were very keen to ensure that these opportunities would still continue, albeit via the new world of the online platform.

On the 10th June 2020, we premiered our first online event: Women, Work and Covid-19: Building a fairer future for Bristol. Discussing the impact COVID-19 has had on gender equality and more importantly, how we can build up stronger. Women have been impacted differently to men by the measures put in place to manage Covid-19. The two sectors hardest hit have been hospitality and retail, which both employ significant numbers of female workers. What is more, only 1 in 10 of low earners have been able to work from home, and we know that 69% of low earners are women.

Our expert speakers included, Sandra Gordon, Annabel Smith, and Diane Bunyan.

On the 6th August, focusing on our 3rd Charter goal. Making at least one member of the senior executive team responsible for reporting on gender equality and inclusion. Expert speakers, Fiona Hathorn CEO of Women on Boards and Helen Hodgkinson, Human Resources Director at TLT LLP spoke to our signatories. There were some useful tips from Fiona on how to engage your executive team. As well as understanding the culture of your organisation, getting to the root of the problem that needs to be addressed and how to shift the dial on diversity and inclusion. Following our expert talks, we broke out into virtual rooms with our signatories to discuss their challenges, successes, and thoughts on the events' headline goal.



All our events are available to view online at www.bristolwomeninbusinesscharter.org.

On the 25 November, we invited our signatories to discuss the progress they have made for gender equality over the past year in a mid-term review of the charter goals. All sharing numerous examples of good practices that are making a difference to gender equality in Bristol businesses. We also shared highlights of the previous events that took place over the summer and introduced our new Ambassadors. Marina Traversari was our guest headline speaker. Marina heads up the Telecom Infrastructure Projects (TIP) Ecosystem Acceleration, is Chair of BoD for Gapsquare, on the Advisory Board for TechCentres (TEAC) globally, SPARK & TEDx Bristol, alongside so many more achievements. An insightful speaker for this event.



The following month, we welcomed our signatories together again for an exclusive event to discuss the power of women on Boards and at senior levels in business. We had two excellent speakers- Kalpna Woolf, founded BeOnBoard, a groundbreaking initiative to increase BAME and women's representation in C-Suite and board roles. Anna Langdon, who joined Hargreaves Lansdown (one of our signatories) in November 2019 as Inclusion and Diversity lead and Senior Talent Manager. Anna is responsible for outlining the Talent Management strategy for the organisation. This includes creating steps to build an inclusive culture and increasing diverse representation. Discussions took place around the advantages of diversity of boards. Themes included investment confidence, the credibility of your organisation and brand, enhanced market knowledge and reputation. Introducing board skill matrix and the rejection of non-diverse shortlisting from recruitment agencies.



To kick off the new year, we invited our signatories together on 4 February 2021. The focus for this event was to discuss how to support women in lower paid and lower skilled occupations to progress. Camilla Rigby CEO and co-founder of The Women's Work Lab CIC which supports unemployed mums aged 25+ to become work ready. Alongside speaker, Robert Halton Chief People Officer at Burges Salmon spoke to our signatories.

Robert talked about how Burges Salmon approach gender balance when moving women into partnership level, managing the pipeline and creating opportunities. Camilla reminded signatories that women are hugely ambitious, regardless of their employment situation. But women do not always have the confidence, skills or contacts to make the most of what they have. Once you start to work with them to recognise their strength and the value they can offer to an employee, you see them grow. They both shared the great work being undertaken in this area, and what employers can do to support their employees as they progress through their organisations.



FUTURE PLANS

A community platform for signatory companies: One of the main ways that the Charter is having an impact is through the development of an identifiable community of businesses that are looking to become gender equal. We want to build on the potential for shared learning and good practice already demonstrated through our events and develop an online platform to continue the conversation between signatories throughout the year. We will be seeking input from the current signatories about their views and priorities for the new platform, and we are currently trialling a private group on Meetup.com. If you're a signatory, then you can join the group [here](#).

Events: We will continue to run our events online for the foreseeable future. Not only have we found better attendance at our online events. It's easier to engage and onboard in demand speakers. Speakers who have useful information to share with signatories, but may struggle to attend an event in person.

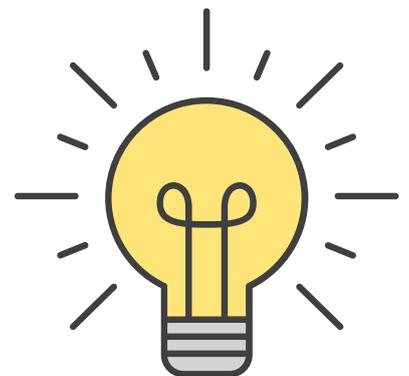
We will continue to hold our valuable quarterly events for signatories, focusing each time on one of the goals of the Charter. Opportunities to share learning, meet and connect with other signatories has been fed back as a key benefit of signing up to the Charter.

Future dates are:

5 May 2021: Promotion and availability of flexible and part-time working

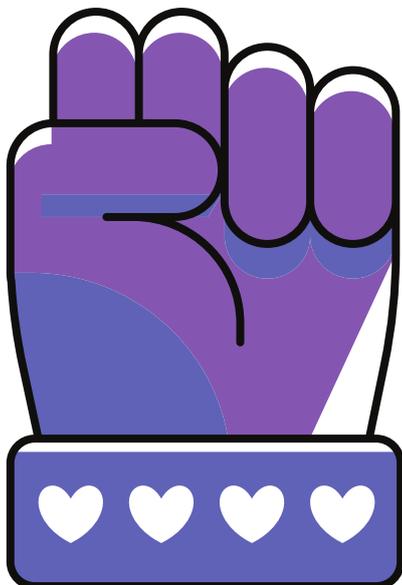
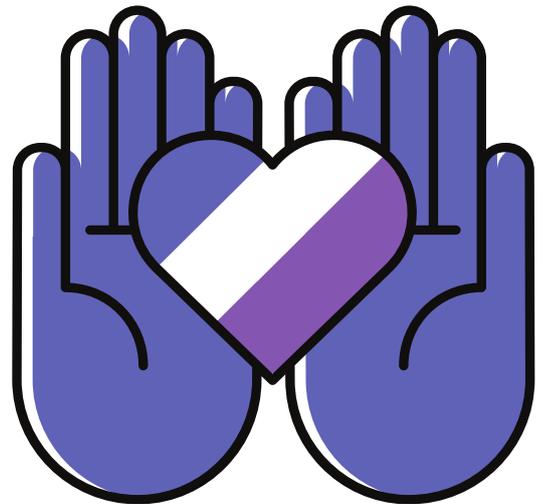
3 August 2021: Supporting women where they are under-represented, through women's networks

October 2021 (date tbc) : We will hold another public event to present our interim impact report.



MORE PLANS

Engagement with stakeholders (as group): We established the Women in Business CIC to operate the Charter with the intention to engage with all of our stakeholders. We will be establishing ways of doing that over the coming months. We aim to work openly and be accessible. We welcome contact and feedback from stakeholders.



Requesting mid year feedback and conversations with Charter signatories: We want to engage with all of our signatories, hear about their progress on gender equality and find out what matters to them. Going forward we're going to begin reaching out to signatories at the mid-point between annual progress reports (or 6 months after certification for new signatories). We hope that this will enable signatories to take full advantage of the benefits to being part of this progressive community.

THE CHARTER THROUGH THE LENS OF INTERSECTIONALITY

We have been very conscious to ensure that the goals of the Charter continue to fully represent the inequalities of all women. As a result of this, we have pondered with the idea of an additional 8th goal that would focus exclusively on this area and incorporate the protected characteristics identified by law. Therefore, trying to ensure that the charter goals are seen through the lens of intersectionality.

What's intersectionality?

Put simply, intersectionality is the concept that all oppression is linked. More explicitly, the Oxford Dictionary defines intersectionality as “the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage”. Intersectionality is the acknowledgment that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression and we must consider everything and anything that can marginalise people, gender, race, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, etc.

In a nutshell, intersectionality is the idea that people have more than one identity, and those identities are inherently combined.

The history of the term

Discussions of intersectionality are happening more often in the workplace right now. But the word itself is not new. Kimberlé Crenshaw, a professor of law at Columbia University and UCLA, coined the term almost 30 years ago in the context of social justice. Intersectionality was added to the Oxford Dictionary in 2015 with its importance increasingly being recognised in the world of women's rights.

Intersectionality in the workplace

Understanding intersectionality in the workplace is crucial to any kind of inclusion program. To support all your employees effectively, your inclusion efforts need to be intersectional. Many HR approaches to building equality tend to focus on one type of discrimination at a time, but people themselves are not one-dimensional. As Crenshaw has pointed out, it is not as simple as adding up the barriers. Having a separate inclusion program for each of these identities, on its own, is not enough.

So, what happens if a company does not prioritise intersectionality in its inclusion efforts?

It risks building an inclusion program that is actually counterproductive. The bottom line is that your workplace inclusion efforts will not be successful and could even be harmful if you do not take intersectionality into account.

How can the Charter be an advocate?

In some recent research conducted for the CIC, which aimed to find out how the Charter could be more of an advocate for intersectionality. Some interviewees believe that intersectionality should be mentioned more as a topic alongside gender equality, rather than as two separate topics. One signatory believed that an eighth goal surrounding intersectionality would be beneficial as it would encourage the signatories to look at it as an issue within their organisation, and further put initiatives in place to tackle it.

The literature surrounding this view discussed how women and minorities are commonly discussed as two separate topics, of which can hinder the progression of certain intersections of women (Shields, 2008) Bowleg (2012) highlights that the importance of identifying minorities within women has routes in privilege and oppression, and it is crucial for these problems to be acknowledged to reduce career pay and progression discrepancies between women.

All signatories were asked whether they believed intersectionality should be a topic spoken about alongside gender equality, with one signatory stating:

"I'd just like to know more about it, and whether there are any specific initiatives that are working well within other organisations which would be relevant to us".

Some signatories were unfamiliar with the term intersectionality, however, when the interviewer defined it to them it was clear that this term is something that they have a vast understanding of. When asked about the potential of an 8th goal to focus on intersectionality, some felt goal setting is a beneficial way of highlighting issues and starting conversations around them.

On the contrary, one signatory believed an eighth goal centered around intersectionality would be a hindrance to the Charter:

"Putting a separate goal for intersectionality may start pigeonholing people, which I think would be counterproductive."

Another signatory also felt *"Because I feel that's highlighting a group of people, whereas you shouldn't. You should put everyone into one group. Everything should be equitable and fair between everybody. But you should highlight within the Charter what the signatories are doing, and the board is doing in order to reach different communities."*

Without an intersectional lens, our efforts to tackle inequalities and injustice towards women are likely to just end up perpetuating systems of inequalities. Feminist writer Zoe Samudzi reminds us that "intersectionality is such a vital framework for understanding systems of power, because 'woman' is not a catchall category that alone defines all our relationships to power".

The Charter's intention to view our goals through an intersectional lens.

We recognise that it is the voices of the most marginalised that are often silenced. It is therefore critical that the work of the charter considers issues of intersectionality, that includes a range of diverse women, their needs, and priorities to inform our work.

It is important that the charter supports the progression towards a gender balanced workplace for everyone who identifies as a woman. This explicitly includes women who are also classified from one of the protected characteristics. We do not feel that the Charter should include an additional goal that incorporates the diversity of women who work within businesses, as this only adds to the segregation and othering of those women. We will be working with all our signatories during the coming year, to understand how best to achieve this aim.

We strive for an inclusive, gender workplace where all women are involved in all their diversities and we are seeing the whole person.

FINANCES

Having launched and run the Charter through the Women in Business Task Group on a voluntary basis until April 2020 we decided to establish a Community Interest Company (CIC). The purpose of the CIC is to support the Women in Business Charter's long-term future and accelerate the achievement of its aims.

From 1 April 2020, we have charged signatory companies an annual fee. Depending on the number of people employed (based on the Full-Time Equivalent) this is between £50 and £750. We decided to charge on this basis to ensure businesses of all sizes could afford to sign up to the Charter and be supported in their progress towards gender equality. We opted to base the fee on the FTE, rather than the headcount, to ensure companies that had lots of part-time roles available were not penalised.

We have grown a small paid team to run the CIC and operate the Charter. The CIC is not for profit and any surplus income will be used to support the Charter's goals.

We aim to work transparently and are happy to evidence full details of how we have spent the income received through signatories annual fees paid between April 2020-February 2021. The annual fee will be reviewed on a yearly basis and revised as necessary. This will ensure the CIC covers its costs but does not generate an excessive surplus.

Revenue	£6,699
Renewal fees	£5,699
New applicants	£1,000
Expenditure	£6,595
Salaries (including PAYE)	£5,947
Software	£185
Bank fees	£9
Companies House set up fee	£27
Professional fees (payroll, accountants)	£216
ICO registration	£35
Website & domain name	£100
Equipment (roller banner for events)	£76



IMPACT OF COVID19

We have seen that Covid-19 is a global public health crisis and an economic crisis which impacts on different groups including women, Black and Brown communities and disabled people, differently.

Therefore, any response to this crisis needs to take these specific gendered and other equality impacts into account.

The covid pandemic is having a devastating effect on gender equality and could set women back decades. On the eve of the 50th anniversary of the Equal Pay Act, experts have said:

“We’re looking at the prospect of a two-tier workplace where men go back, and women stay home. It’s taken us 20 years to get this far on female participation in the workforce, but it could take only months to unravel.”

The Institute for Fiscal Studies and the UCL Institute of Education stated that mothers were 47% more likely to have permanently lost their job or quit, and 14% were more likely to have been furloughed since the start of the crisis.

“Women started this crisis from a position of economic disadvantage,” reiterated the Head of Research and Policy at the UK Women’s Budget Group. “We’re worried the impact on women’s earnings and employment prospects will widen existing gender inequalities, not least the gender wage gap.”

The coronavirus crisis led the government to exempt companies from having to file gender pay gap data last year. As a result only half of companies reported, Business in the Community shared that “It is hugely disappointing to see so many opted out when the legal requirement was lifted, and a worrying sign of attitudes towards gender equality during the crisis,” Charlotte Woodworth, a gender equality campaign director, expressed her view,

Analysis of companies that produced data last year suggested it will take almost 200 years to close the gender pay gap. The Executive Director of the Equality Trust expressed that “Undoubtedly women are bearing the brunt of this, as they did in austerity when 86% of cuts fell on women,” she said. “There is a cumulative effect which consistently pushes progress back.”

One of the largest barriers to women’s progression in the workplace continues to arise from a conflict between current ways of organising work and caring responsibilities. This has of course been highlighted by Covid-19 and the measures taken to attempt to manage it. Long-hours cultures, expectations of constant availability and a lack of progression for part-time workers, most of whom are women, are enduring features of modern workplaces. Alongside policies to support work-life balance should come efforts to reform the deeper structures and workplace processes which encourage long hours. The stigma associated with part-time and flexible work is likely to persist so long as these ways of working continue to be associated with women, while men are still assumed able and willing to work long hours.

The other main barrier to women’s progression can come from organisational norms and processes that allow gender bias to creep into decision making. When there is a lack of clarity around the standards for recruitment, promotion or pay negotiation decisions are more likely to be made in ways that disadvantage women, whether because people in power seek those who are like them or because who you know is more important than what you know.

Organisations should ensure that they have clear standards for promotion and advancement and create mechanisms for organisational oversight of these processes. In March 2019, the Government Equalities Office published this Action Note to provide guidance to employers looking to make progress: [Government Equalities Office – Women’s Progression in the Workplace Action Note](#)

It is vital we continue our focus on gender equality and support Charter signatories to do the same.



Thank you for taking the time to read our Impact report.

SIGNATORIES



ADLIB
Avon & Somerset Police
Bishop Fleming
Bristol Airport
Bristol City Council
Burgess Salmon
Business West



Centre for Modelling & Simulation
City of Bristol College
Clarke Willmott LLP



Flipper
GCP Chartered Architects
Ghyston



Hargreaves Lansdown
Ian Williams Ltd
Manor Community

Moon Executive Search
National Composites Centre
One Big Circle
OVO Energy

Pelican Business Services
Premier Employer Solutions (PES)



Rolls Royce
Redington



Signature Recruitment
Simitive

SR2 Socially Responsible Recruitment
Stride Treglown
TLT LLP



Triodos Bank
Tech Talent Academy
University of West of England
water2business
Western Global





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