

Government Response to the House of Lords Select Committee on Communications inquiry into Women in News and Current Affairs Broadcasting

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Government Response

The Government welcomes the Select Committee on Communications' report on Women in News and Current Affairs Broadcasting published on 16th January 2015. This inquiry and the resulting report has played a valuable role not only in gathering evidence and looking at solutions but also in raising awareness of where inequalities still persist. The report shows that making progress on this agenda will not only support women to fully utilise their skills and increase women's contribution to the UK economy but can also have a lasting impact on future generations of women and help to tackle outdated gender stereotypes. It is clear that this is not just about fairness.

We have seen great progress for women under this Government, especially in the workplace. We now have more women working than ever before and women's pay has also risen steadily for both full time and part time work. We also now have more women working at the highest levels of the UK's most successful companies. However, we know there is still a lot more work to be done and the evidence gathered by this Committee demonstrates that in the Broadcasting industry, as in many others, despite the actions already being taken by many, progress overall has been too slow.

The Government agrees with the Committee's view that action needs to be taken now by broadcasters themselves, by Government, regulators and other key stakeholders.

We fully respect the independence of the media and we have been working hard over the past few years to support broadcasters in making progress on this agenda. We firmly believe that inequalities in this sector cannot be solved overnight and a culture change needs to take place which has to be industry led.

We do however believe there is a role for Government. For instance, we do ensure that broadcasters in particular are subject to a strong legal framework designed to promote gender balance – both on air, and off (an example of this is the Communications Act 2003). We are also helping to modernise workplace culture so both men and women can better balance work and family life by extending the right for all to request flexible working, as well as introducing a system of shared parental leave, and supporting working families with childcare costs.

Government is also working with key stakeholders with expertise in this area to establish a firmer base of evidence surrounding this agenda and also to look at what further actions can be taken by all stakeholders to speed up progress. We also agree with the Committee that transparency is key here. Our Think, Act, Report initiative is playing an important role in helping employers to 'Think' about gender equality in the workplace by collecting and reviewing data on issues like recruitment, retention, promotion and pay, encouraging them to 'Act' on any issues identified by this analysis and 'Report' publicly on steps taken to improve gender equality. Government will be contacting media companies in the FTSE 350 encouraging them to sign up.

We have also written to Ofcom, highlighting the long lasting, positive impact transparency can have in relation to women's economic empowerment. We are keen to see more media companies in particular being more open about how many women they employ and the jobs they do, and we have asked Ofcom what more can be done around data transparency for this sector and for Ofcom themselves as an employer and influencer. We are also keen to see more transparency around the complaints process which we believe could also lead to changes in how gender stereotypes are portrayed in the media.

We will also be supporting the development of a database, being set up by the 30% Club, of women with media training available for op-ed's and opinion pieces within the media. This database we believe will help to increase women's visibility and 'voice' within broadcasting and demonstrate the huge talent pool of women out there qualified and suitable to speak on key issues of the day. Other work we are doing with the Women's Business Council, Lord Davies and many other stakeholders also demonstrate that Government take this issue very seriously.

We have looked in detail at the Committee's report and the 27 recommendations. Although the majority of the recommendations are directed at Ofcom and industry itself our response sets out where we are taking action and where we feel further efforts need to be made. Ofcom will be responding separately on recommendations which fall directly to them.

The topic of this inquiry goes beyond the scope of those women who are of working age today. The media as a whole plays an important role in perpetuating or challenging cultural and societal norms so it is important that this industry is more representative of today's society. We need to see more women both on camera, and behind the scenes demonstrating that this industry is able to utilise the talents and skills of all. Having more women in visible positions within the media will help to provide more positive role models for future generations.

We would therefore like to thank the Committee for ensuring such an important topic gets the consideration and high profile it deserves.

Rt Hon. Nicky Morgan

Government responses to the recommendations

1. We agree with witnesses that the reach of news and current affairs broadcasting and its propensity to shape social norms mean that there is a particular responsibility on news and current affairs broadcasters to reflect society. The involvement of women in newsgathering roles on and off air is central to achieving this, through offering a balanced perspective.

3. The BBC receives funding from a universal licence fee, paid by public households that watch live TV. The other Public Service Broadcasters (PSBs) receive certain statutory benefits. Therefore, the BBC and other PSBs have a responsibility to reflect society by setting the standard in ensuring gender balance. We consider that, because news and current affairs has such scope to inform society, all broadcasters have a particular duty of responsibility in this area.

4. We recommend that broadcasters should have distinct policies which differentiate between gender equality and diversity.

Government agree with these comments.

We want to see all sectors benefit from the skills and experience of women. Female under-representation, and especially in senior roles, is a concern for the broadcasting industry as with other sectors. Positive role models can challenge the gap between the reality of women's and men's lives and their portrayal in the media. By transcending gender stereotypes (for example those that portray women as solely carers or victims) female role models can give women and girls the confidence to overcome the barriers that stop them reaching their full potential.

The Government believes it is for the media industry itself, including broadcasters, producers, media organisations and others, to take the lead and promote equality amongst their employers. Our role is to ensure that there is a strong legal framework that promotes equality of opportunity for men and women.

That strong legal framework includes the Communications Act 2003 which places duties on Ofcom to promote training and equality of opportunity for providers of TV and radio services. It also ensures that, as a condition of the licences for Channels 3, 4 and 5, they promote equality of opportunity between men and women with respect to employment. The BBC Framework Agreement imposes the same equality of opportunity duty on the BBC Executive Board.

In addition, the BBC, S4C and Channel 4 are also required to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (s149 of the Equality Act 2010) which imposes a duty to:-

- a). eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b). advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- c). foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (including gender) and persons who do not share it.

2. Broadcasters should ensure a gender balance in their wider workforce to facilitate coverage of issues which affect both men and women in varied ways.

This recommendation is for individual broadcasters to consider themselves, however, we agree that action needs to be taken here. This is not just an equalities issue. It also makes good business sense. For instance, we know that women are more likely to consume news through the television¹ so broadcasters need to be reacting to this and reflecting their customer base. We welcome all the efforts already being made by broadcasters to address this issue.

5. Greater transparency is needed around broadcasters' recruitment and progression processes, and around pay and reward to ensure that, all other factors being equal, women are given the opportunities to enter and progress at the same pace as their male colleagues, and receive equal pay for equal work

Government agree with this comment.

All employers need to create the working practices and cultures that ensure they draw on the best talents available, both men and women. Openly promoting equality for men and women in the workplace, and being transparent about their progress, should become the norm for all modern businesses. Lord Davies² highlighted that businesses needed to be more transparent to ensure that more women are brought into the recruitment process. This principle applies to any sector, including broadcasting.

Government is working with businesses to provide the tools to enable them to become more transparent. There are now two disclosure requirements for FTSE-listed companies (which include for example BskyB and ITV) on gender diversity at Board and senior management level. As of 1 October 2013, quoted companies in the UK are required to disclose the numbers of men and women on boards, in senior management and in the business as a whole. In addition to this the UK Corporate Governance Code requires companies to explain their policy on boardroom diversity. These requirements came into force on 1 October 2012.

Over 275 companies covering over 2.5 million employees have now signed up Think, Act, Report (TAR), our key initiative to promote gender equality and transparency across business. TAR is a voluntary initiative which asks employers to 'Think' about gender equality in the workplace by collecting and reviewing data on issues like recruitment, retention, promotion and pay, 'Act' on any issues identified and 'Report' publically on progress in improving gender equality. Government will be contacting media companies in the FTSE 350 encouraging them to sign up. However, we would encourage all media companies to sign up and set measurable targets.

We have also written to Ofcom highlighting the long lasting, positive impact transparency can have in relation to women's economic empowerment. We are keen to see more media companies in particular being more open about how many women they employ and the jobs they do, and we have asked Ofcom what more can be done around data transparency for this sector and for Ofcom themselves as an employer and influencer. We are also keen to see more transparency around the complaints process which we believe could also lead to changes in how gender stereotypes are portrayed in the media.

On 11 March, the House of Lords accepted amendments to the Small Business Bill that will implement section 78 of the Equality Act 2010. The amendments require the introduction of mandatory gender pay reporting for larger companies. We will be conducting a wide-ranging consultation before the necessary Regulations are made. Businesses will be at the heart of

¹ <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/other/tv-research/news-2014/>

² Lord Davies, Women on Boards, 2011

that consultation process. Greater transparency around the gender pay gap will encourage employers to address the underlying factors and share best practice.

We are promoting new guidance that will help women check if they are being paid fairly. In addition, new EU software to help UK employers analyse their pay data can now be downloaded for free. The software enables companies to identify gender pay inequalities and find the causes if a gap does exist.

6. All appointments and promotions should be advertised either internally or externally, and awarded on the basis of fair and open competition. Public Service Broadcasters (PSBs) should be required to provide a statement annually confirming this, which should be monitored by Ofcom (or in the case of the BBC, by the BBC Trust). Where appointments are made on the basis of an interview panel, in accordance with best practice, it should be a mixed gender panel.

There is an existing duty to publish annual statements on actions taken to promote equality. The current conditions set out under Section 337 of the Communications Act (2003) include the requirement for the licence holder to make arrangements for promoting equality of opportunity between men and women and between persons of different racial groups. Under the terms of Section 337, they must also publish their observations on the current operation and effectiveness of their arrangements at least annually.

We are committed to increasing the diversity of public appointments (this includes Board appointments to the BBC Trust) and have established the Centre for Public Appointments in the Cabinet Office. The Centre is working with colleagues across Whitehall, as well as with the private sector, to modernise recruitment practices and to attract a more diverse field of candidates to these important roles. This includes making the process of applying for public appointments more transparent and improving access to/coverage of vacancies and looking at job specifications to ensure that the language and tone are concise, simple and as accessible as possible. We believe however that these areas of best practice should be taken up by all broadcasters, not just PSBs.

Ofcom will respond directly to the Committee on this recommendation.

7. Public Service Broadcasters should consider adopting a policy which promotes (but does not mandate) the use of positive action in favour of women for all relevant recruitment and promotion opportunities in broadcasting.

The positive action provisions in the Equality Act (2010) outline how PSBs and other employers can take positive action under the Act.

In addition, the Broadcasting Industry is discussing with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) developing guidance on using positive action to assist broadcasters in recruiting under-represented groups currently not employed within the industry. This proposal will be considered by the EHRC Board in due course.

8. Women are more likely than men to have caring responsibilities. The challenges faced by those seeking to combine caring responsibilities with a career are particularly acute in news and current affairs broadcasting. The dynamic nature of news means that employees are often required to work hours that are incompatible with caring responsibilities. Broadcasters should ensure they have in place policies on flexible working practices which encourage women to have fulfilling careers alongside caring responsibilities.

This recommendation is for broadcasters themselves, however we firmly agree with what is being proposed.

The Government recognises that achieving a work life balance can be difficult. That's why we've extended the right to request flexible working to all and are introducing a system of shared parental leave from 2015, as well as providing more help with the costs of childcare.

By extending the right to request flexible working to all employees, we intend to create a cultural change that means that flexible working is standard working practice.

Flexible working is a win-win for employers and employees. Employers benefit from a more productive and motivated workforce, lower staff turnover and reduced sickness absence. Employees are better able to balance their work with other commitments.

9. A widespread view that women will be "side-lined" after having children persists. To address this perception, efforts should be made to ensure that women who return from maternity leave receive appropriate training. Employers should also consider using other flexible solutions such as allowing women to choose to continue working on an ad hoc basis during an extended period of maternity leave.

This recommendation is for broadcasters to respond to but we agree that this is an area where more can be done. Women's career paths can often be very different to men's as a result of taking time out of the workforce because of family commitments. Employers can provide support for women making that transition back into the workplace. For instance employees can work up to 10 days during their maternity leave without losing maternity pay or benefits, or ending the period of maternity leave. These are called 'keeping in touch' days and can be hugely beneficial to both employer and employee.

We also believe that the introduction of Shared Parental Leave and Pay for employed parents (which comes into effect for babies born on or after 5 April, or adoptions where the child is matched or placed on or after 5 April) will enable both parents to retain a strong link with the labour market; allow fathers to play a greater role in raising their child whilst also helping mothers to return to work at a time that's right for them.

10. Broadcasters should make every effort to ensure support for childcare arrangements, both culturally and financially. Support mechanisms such as childcare vouchers, childcare advisers, and crèches to accommodate women with young children working usual hours are examples of good practice.

This recommendation is for individual broadcasters to consider themselves.

Childcare is crucial in supporting many women to get into work, and stay on in work. We know many employers run their own independent schemes/practices to support childcare arrangements. Government is also playing a key role here. We have increased free early education hours for three and four year olds, up to 15 hours a week from 12.5 hours in 2010; we are extending free early learning places to 40% of the most disadvantaged two year-olds; and almost 2 million families could benefit from new tax free childcare scheme from autumn 2015, worth up to £2,000 per child.

11. There is currently insufficient data on the gender of freelancers, and whether women are adversely affected by the widespread use of freelance contracts in the industry. Given the prevalence of freelancers in the news media, we consider that

Ofcom should use its power under section 337 of the Communications Act 2003 to require broadcasters to collect data on the age and gender of the freelance workers they employ. This data should be used to review the processes by which broadcasters appoint freelance workers, to ensure that women, particularly those with children, are not disadvantaged by freelance contracts.

Ofcom will respond directly to the Committee on this recommendation.

See Government comments/response under recommendation 20.

12. The number of older women in news and current affairs broadcasting is too low. Evidence we have received suggests there is an informal culture of discrimination against older women within the BBC and other broadcasting organisations. We conclude that this culture is contributing to the lack of women in news and current affairs broadcasting.

Government agree with this comment. Just as gender shouldn't be a barrier to senior roles neither should age. We know that women can sometimes struggle against both of these barriers at the same time and this has been a particular issue in relation to broadcasting. Following a number of high-profile age discrimination cases, we believe the industry has woken up to this issue and we hope they are now taking steps to ensure that women of all ages are featured prominently throughout broadcasters' schedules.

Making progress here will increase the number of positive role models we have to inspire future generations of women. In addition to this, there is also a strong economic case for industry taking action here. For instance:-

- Women are the largest and fastest growing group of purchasers and investors in the world today - these women are vital for the success of the future labour market;
- A third more women than men expect to work beyond the state pension age – this is an essential talent pool;
- Women have rich and diverse skills and experience to offer;
- If we were talking about the corporate world we would highlight that 70% of purchasing decisions are made by women so ensuring businesses have women represented equally throughout their business means they can connect with their female customer base. The same principle applies to the broadcasting industry. How can they tap into and attract a large section of their customers if they are not reflected/portrayed equally on screen?
- If industries continue to recruit individuals who share the same backgrounds and experiences they run the risk of constantly falling foul of 'group-think' – where faulty decisions are made because there are no new, fresh, different perspectives, and they will be unable to 'stay ahead of the game'; and,
- Broadcasters need to ensure they are adapting to a modern society as much as any business should.

Although we believe any actions here need to be industry led, we are also playing a role; the Equality Act 2010 protects employees of all businesses, including broadcasting, from discrimination on a number of grounds, including sex and age. The Act provides considerable scope for companies to take lawful positive action to broaden the talent pool from which candidates can be selected on merit. Companies can use positive measures permitted under equality law to encourage older women to apply for jobs and to address other causes of under-representation of women at various levels in the organisation.

In addition to this the Government, through the work of the Women's Business Council (WBC), is addressing the disadvantages that older women face in the workplace and is encouraging companies to recognise the skills/experience of older workers. The WBC recommended the appointment of an 'Older Workers' Employment Champion. Steve Webb, Minister for Pensions, subsequently appointed Dr Ros Altmann who has been tasked with making the case for older workers within the business community and challenging outdated perceptions. Her recent report, 'A New Vision for Older Workers: Retain, Retrain, Recruit', urges visual media companies to utilise the skills of older female presenters and highlights that tapping into the huge talent pool of older workers will not only benefit individuals but business too as well as the economy.

13. In the context of gender balance and older women, a number of people presented us with private evidence that Public Service Broadcasters had unfairly discriminated against older women and improperly used confidentiality clauses in settlement agreements to prevent this being disclosed to the public. We have not been able to test fully all of these allegations. However we think it would be inappropriate for the BBC, funded by the licence fee, or other PSBs, to use confidentiality clauses in such agreements to shield bad practice such as coercion or bullying of former employees. We recommend that PSBs should be required to disclose figures to Ofcom on the number of settlement agreements issued annually.

14. We have heard evidence to suggest that some of the issues related to the underrepresentation of women in news and current affairs broadcasting stem from the culture in the industry, where sexist attitudes and gender-based bullying persist. We condemn such behaviour and we urge broadcasters, especially the BBC, to take further steps to eradicate bullying in the workplace.

15. We also urge broadcasters to ensure that their Human Resources departments take responsibility for supporting employees to identify gender-based bullying at work, so that it can be directly addressed. Allocating a 'women's champion' to advise women being bullied at work might be a helpful solution.

We believe Public Service Broadcasters, and their Human Resources departments, should manage employee relations within the framework of existing employment legislation. It would be inappropriate for Government to intervene further in this nor would it be appropriate for Ofcom to seek this information.

Similarly, although we agree that broadcasters should address the issues of gender bullying at work, it is for the organisation themselves to decide on the appropriateness of a woman's champion or any other ways of supporting employees.

On the matter of BBC confidentiality clauses, the BBC published on 2 May 2013 "Respect at Work", its own internal review examining questions of respect, behaviour and culture. This review was commissioned by the BBC Executive, using external advisers. At the same time, the Corporation also confirmed that it was removing derogatory statement restrictions also known as 'gagging clauses' from future BBC contracts and compromise agreements.

Ofcom will respond separately to the Select Committee on this recommendation.

16. As we discuss in more detail in Chapter 5, it is our view that standardised monitoring and reporting is urgently needed.

See responses under recommendations 5 and 20.

17. We recognise the problems of using mandatory quotas. Given the dangers quotas could pose to editorial content, we do not recommend the use of mandatory quotas for female experts in broadcast news and current affairs at this time. If no progress is made in this regard the issue of quotas should be revisited. Broadcasters should create internal databases to ensure they have enough female experts represented in news and current affairs programmes. Where internal databases prove inadequate, they should be supplemented by external databases.

We agree with the Committee's views that quotas are not appropriate here.

Business and business structures, regardless of sector/industry type, need to retain a flexibility which allows them to respond to changing circumstances and the varying needs of the sector, size and type of business. This is why the Government does not support quotas/mandatory measures.

If real culture change is to happen it has to be driven by business led targets and objectives. We know this approach can work as has been demonstrated by the progress Lord Davies has made in working with business to increase the number of women on the boards of FTSE 100 companies. When he first reported in 2011 he set what was then a very challenging objective of 25% women on boards in 2015 (it was 12.5% when he first reported). Now, if momentum continues, this figure is in reach.

We believe appointments must always be made on merit and businesses need to recruit the best person for the job if they are going to compete in today's economy.

The recommendation on databases is for individual broadcasters to consider. We do, however, feel there is merit in both internal and external databases. Cranfield's annual 100 Women to Watch report shines a light on 100 talented women suitable for Board roles, and has proven to be a useful tool for search firms and nominations committees. Government also has a database of talented women suitable for public sector board roles, which has been hugely beneficial in helping Government work towards its target of 50% of all new appointments going to women by the end of this Parliament.

We will also be supporting the development of a database, being set up by the 30% Club, of women with media training available for op-ed's and opinion pieces within the media. This database we believe will help to increase women's visibility and 'voice' within broadcasting and demonstrate the huge talent pool of women out there qualified and suitable to speak on key issues of the day.

18. We do not consider an increase in the number of women featured in news and current affairs broadcasting enough. Broadcasters have a responsibility to ensure that women receive parity of treatment.

This recommendation is for individual broadcasters to consider themselves, however Government agrees with these comments.

19. We commend the Wales Today scheme to monitor female portrayal and would like to see it rolled out further.

The BBC has recently started monitoring female portrayal and representation on its Wales Today programme with the aim of ensuring that audiences are more fairly reflected. This was one of the commitments within the BBC Wales diversity action plan which stated:

"Wales Today will keep a daily record of key diversity characteristics of its on-air contributors, such as gender, ethnicity, age and location. By April 2015, Wales Today will use this information to bring in measures so that its contributors better reflect the population"

This is an operational issue for the BBC to consider.

20. An industry-wide standard is urgently needed in order to monitor properly the rate of change in the industry. Current monitoring of the gender balance within news and current affairs broadcasting is unsatisfactory. We welcome the work being undertaken through the Creative Diversity Network (CDN), to bring about a standardised set of data. We recognise that this has yet to report, and we look to it to provide data on this area as soon as possible. However, we keep in mind that such voluntary initiatives have proved unsuccessful in the past.

There are two disclosure requirements for FTSE listed companies (which include for example BSkyB and ITV) on gender diversity at Board and senior management level. Firstly, as of 1 October 2013, quoted companies in the UK are required to disclose the numbers of men and women on boards, in senior management and in the business as a whole.

Secondly, in addition to this the UK Corporate Governance Code requires companies to explain their policy on boardroom diversity. These requirements came into force on 1 October 2012.

Government is also continuing to encourage more companies to sign up to *Think, Act, Report* (TAR) to promote gender equality and transparency across business. TAR asks employers to think about equality between men and women in their workforces, and collect and review data on issues like recruitment, retention, promotion and pay. TAR is a voluntary initiative and is now supported by over 275 organisations, collectively covering over 2.5 million employees, or nearly 20% of the entire UK workforce in medium-sized and large organisations.

As the report recognises, the Creative Diversity Network (CDN) is creating a new diversity monitoring system called Diamond. Diamond will standardise and benchmark all their members' data collection on diversity. It will enable all broadcasters to capture on and off screen data about representation by gender (as well as by other protected groups) and will include freelance workers. All the major PSBs have now published action plans to increase diversity in their organisations and Diamond will enable them to evaluate their success.

In addition, we regularly ask Creative Skillset - the Skills Council for the creative sector - to collate and publish data on diversity in the different creative sectors, including media and broadcasting.

Our response to recommendation 17 sets out our views on quotas and how voluntary initiatives, such as Lord Davies' work to increase the number of women on boards, can work.

21. We therefore recommend that Ofcom uses its power under section 337 of the

Communications Act 2003 to require broadcasters, through the Creative Diversity Network (CDN) or otherwise, to record annually the gender balance within their organisations, in line with an industry-wide standard. This data should include information on rates of pay, age, promotion, and should be categorised by role and genre. As recommended in Chapter 3, paragraph 104, this data should include figures for freelance workers, who make up a large proportion of the workforce. The data should be made public.

See responses under recommendations 6, 20 and 23

22. Current voluntary initiatives conflate gender equality and diversity. We recommend that broadcasters distinguish between gender equality and diversity in their voluntary initiatives. Gender equality is concerned with the proper representation of women, who form the majority of the population. Diversity is concerned with ensuring better representation of minority groups. Gender equality and diversity often require different solutions and, therefore, should be dealt with as separate issues.

This recommendation is for individual broadcasters to consider themselves.

23. The Government should make clear to Ofcom that it no longer wishes to remove the power Ofcom has to ensure gender equality under section 337 of the Communications Act 2003 and that Ofcom should not hesitate to use this power.

Agree.

We have no plans currently to remove Ofcom's duty to promote development opportunities for training and equality of opportunity under the Communications Act.

See also Government comments/response under recommendation 20

Ofcom will respond directly to the Committee on this recommendation.

24. It is imperative that Ofcom gives greater priority to its duties to monitor gender balance. Ofcom, through an enhancement to its existing monitoring system, should collect and publish information on the broadcasters' progress towards greater gender equality. This should be reviewed after a period of one year. If it does not prove to be successful in changing behaviours, we would recommend that Ofcom should reinstate a body focused on monitoring gender equality, such as the Broadcast Equality and Training Regulator (BETR) without its earlier training role.

See responses under recommendations 20 and 23

25. The fast-paced nature of news and current affairs broadcasting means that mandatory quotas for women in news and current affairs broadcasting could prove to be unworkable. It seems to us, however, that non-binding targets represent a realistic alternative, and would help focus broadcasters on achieving a better gender balance for expert commentators and employees.

See response to recommendation 17 for Government's view on quotas and how voluntary initiatives, such as Lord Davies' work to increase the number of women on boards, can work.

26. We recommend Ofcom (or a body similar to the Broadcast Equality and Training Regulator (BETR)) should use its power under the Communications Act 2003 to require public service broadcasters to set their own short term, medium term and long term targets for gender balance of expert commentators and employees. Ofcom should also encourage commercial broadcasters to set targets in this area, given the key role of news and current affairs in shaping social norms. Ofcom should exercise the power it has to levy sanctions, if appropriate, where a broadcaster is not making sufficient progress.

This recommendation is for Ofcom to respond to.

27. In Chapter 2 we outlined that Public Service Broadcasters (PSBs) are making increased use of independent broadcasting companies. We encourage broadcasters to consider, before signing contracts with independent production companies, whether obligations relating to recruitment and promotion policies should be incorporated into their contracts.

This recommendation is for individual broadcasters to consider themselves. However, we do know that many broadcasters are already taking action.

DCMS ministers have hosted three roundtables with a broad cross-section of people from the creative industries to make the case for greater diversity. These discussions have involved a number of commercial broadcasters as well as the PSBs.

The BBC, BSkyB, ITV and Channel 4 have all recently announced initiatives to increase diversity: the BBC announced new targets in June last year; BSkyB announced in August new targets to improve diversity both on and off screen; ITV launched an initiative called Working in Partnership in November; and in January this year Channel 4 launched a diversity charter, which sets out commissioning diversity guidelines which include on- and off-screen diversity targets for all new Channel 4 commissions.