



Women and Equalities Committee

Oral evidence: Gender Pay Gap, HC 584

Tuesday 12 January 2016

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Written evidence from witnesses:

- [F1 Recruitment](#)
- [National Union of Teachers](#)
- [Close the Gap](#)
- [Age UK](#)
- [Trade Unions Congress](#)
- [Medical Women's Federation](#)

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Members present: Mrs Maria Miller (Chair); Ruth Cadbury; Maria Caulfield; Jo Churchill; Angela Crawley; Mims Davies; Mrs Flick Drummond; Ben Howlett; Jess Phillips; Mr Gavin Shaker

Questions 59–136

Witness[es]: **Amanda Brown**, Assistant General Secretary, NUT, **Dr Sally Davies**, President, Medical Women's Federation, **Amanda Fone**, CEO, F1 Recruitment and Search, **Audrey Williams**, Employment Lawyer and Partner, Fox Williams, **Anna Ritchie**, Project Manager, Close the Gap, **Christopher Brooks**, Policy Adviser, Age UK, **Scarlet Harris**, Head of Gender Equality, TUC, and **Mr Robert Stephenson-Padron**, Managing Director, Penrose Care, gave evidence.

Q59 Chair: Good morning and thank you very much for joining us here today for a further evidence session of the Women and Equalities Committee's gender pay gap review for women over 40. We are really grateful for you taking the time to come and give evidence to us today. We know you are very busy and it is a chunk out of your day, so we are incredibly grateful. Can I apologise in advance? Some Committee members need to leave for responsibilities they have elsewhere in the House, so please do not let that distract you; it is always part of Committee life. Before we start, can I just ask you to state your name and your organisation? We will then kick off with some questions.

Audrey Williams: I am Audrey Williams. I am a partner at a law firm in the City, Fox Williams.

Amanda Fone: I am Amanda Fone. I run my own recruitment and search business, specialising in marketing and communications, based in London.

Dr Davies: I am Sally Davies. I am President of the Medical Women's Federation.

Amanda Brown: I am Amanda Brown. I am Assistant General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers.

Q60 Chair: That is wonderful. Thank you very much. The acoustics in here are not great, so please try to project into your microphone for those of us whose ears are not as young as they used to be. We are going to kick off with some general questions around issues relating to the gender pay gap. Mims, do you want to start with your question?

Q61 Mims Davies: Good morning everyone. In terms of a starting point, we were interested in the area of direct discrimination. I was just wondering, in your respective fields, for women over 40, what evidence have you had of direct discrimination to women of that age group? Who would like to start?

Chair: Amanda, I can see you are chomping at the bit there.

Amanda Brown: In terms of women over 40, in particular, some of the evidence we have had does relate to women going through the menopause, who certainly feel that they have been discriminated against, their particular needs are not catered for and that they are picked on, essentially, for capability processes. Because of the anecdotal evidence coming through to us, we did a survey of our labour representatives in schools and local authorities, and at regional level, and found that the casework they deal with for women over 40 is much greater than for women of a lower age.

For younger women, we have also found that certainly they are being told, in terms of pay progression, that it can be related to maternity issues, so women are not being granted pay progression in a way that they ought to be under the guidance issued by the Government, if they are going on maternity leave and when they return from maternity leave. In some cases, cases are not even being put in for consideration for pay progression or for promotion as a result of maternity. Certainly we have anecdotal and casework evidence of various forms of direct discrimination.

Audrey Williams: There is a similar picture, but, of course, in the legal profession generally—and other professional organisations, such as accountancy—what we see is a very even pattern, usually from entry level onwards in terms of intake, with progress going quite well. Certainly some of the figures that I have seen—and the Law Society in Scotland and the Law Society in England have analysed this—show that from around the age of 38 is when the gap seems to start appearing, not just in terms of the pay but what informs your pay—progression. If you are at 60% intake for female solicitors, for example, but at 20% in terms of female partners, it is not just direct discrimination, I would suggest, in the sense of maternity, absence and work-life balance. There is probably more to the direct discrimination that is almost learnt. It is about unconscious bias and also the promotions process, which is highly competitive in terms of applying for partnership. It is about demonstrating what you can do and getting recognition for what you can do.

Culturally—this is a generalisation—that is harder for women to do. That is one of the key challenges. The unconscious bias, which I have done quite a lot of work on, both with clients and more generally, begins to impact more significantly as individuals are looking to get supported and get work opportunities, all of which leads to performance and promotion assessment.

Q62 Mims Davies: Moving on from that, in terms of the prevalence of discrimination, do you think it is generally decreasing as people are starting to understand it, or the communication is being brought forward to companies that perhaps realise now that perhaps they are discriminating unconsciously, in essence?

Audrey Williams: Both from the cases and the work that I do in this field, what I would describe as the overt discrimination—the very obvious offensive behaviours and overt attitudes—is decreasing, yes. Lots of organisations and employers recognise that and they can put in practices, policies and train people around that. However, the covert processes, more subjective assessments and the unconscious bias are issues that some organisations are trying to address and trying to get managers and senior people who take these decisions to recognise and appreciate, but it is probably still in the minority. We are still learning about the assumptions that we all bring, of course, because of our experiences and what has been the natural progression of things and people's attitudes. That is much harder to address.

Dr Davies: In the medical profession, we know that there is a gender pay gap. We know that it is still substantial for 40 and above, which is where either consultants or academics are looking for those more senior positions, which obviously carry increased remuneration. When we have looked at every other known factor, there is still a 40% gap that is totally unexplained. That is a combination of both direct and unconscious bias. It is whether or not you fit.

Amanda Fone: In the marketing and communications profession, we have another challenge, which is discrimination against women over 40 coming back into the workforce. We have lost a lot of women who graduated in the 1980s and 1990s, who are in their 40s now and they have chosen, for whatever reason, to take a gap of between three and five years. We ran a returnship programme in the autumn, and we were oversubscribed by three to five times. The big challenge we have is that some of these women have been applying for thousands of roles online and, because they had a gap, they could not even get an interview to get back in. These were for full-time roles as well as for roles that were advertised as flexible working. There is an unconscious bias and discrimination against people who have a gap on their CV.

We have the same challenge with career changes as well, but often that is easier to overcome for somebody who has taken a gap. It is often a short gap to raise a family, but it can be up to eight or 10 years. These were women who were contributing to this country for between 10 and 15 years, or sometimes longer, before they took time off and took time out to often raise a family. I do not think that men have that. They do not seem to be faced with the same barriers to come back in.

Q63 Mims Davies: Is it the gap that people are questioning or is it the new responsibilities that they will have—that they have children and families?

Amanda Fone: It is the gap. We run paid placements to get them back into the workforce, and it is so difficult to get businesses to agree to have them because they have to have budget sign-off. It is not straightforward. However, the leadership team might be brought into it. On the grassroots and the HR team, they have still got to get a budget to get a paid placement. Once the gap has been bridged and they have something on their CV that says they have worked in the last year then you overcome that particular challenge. It is not about them being able to do the job. There is a bit of under-confidence around digital and technology skills. The women who we have been back on the programme were not shy and were not under-confident; these were not women who had lost their confidence. They were losing their confidence because they were not getting through the first interview stage and were not being able to get on to shortlists.

Dr Davies: It is the same in the medical profession with GPs who have stepped out to raise a family finding it almost impossible to return because of a lack of suitable placements to allow them to find their feet.

Q64 Mims Davies: Moving on to an effective way of tackling this discrimination, is it an effective return to work policy? Is it Section 14 of the Equality Act, which it says here might help? Is it literally looking at different sectors with different answers or could it be one-size-fits-all? Who wants to grab that one?

Amanda Brown: It may be that there are different answers in different sectors. However, there is also a number of common issues that may apply across the board, which we have all been talking about, so it is access to work on return and access to pay at a level that is commensurate with the pay that you had beforehand. It is access to work in a way that is reasonably flexible and that, from my point of view, teachers can manage.

Although people think of teaching, in particular, as a very flexible profession, in fact, during term time, it is extremely inflexible. It is very difficult for women to get job shares or flexible working. Even when they do get job shares, they tend to be not very suitable. Many of our members are offered job shares, but only working every day a week in the mornings, which obviously makes it very difficult in terms of pay and childcare responsibilities; there is also the issue of access to tribunals as well, and the questionnaires procedures so that women can ask questions and can decide whether or not they think that any gap really is something they can do something about. Tribunal fees have made that more difficult. What we would like to see is that there would be pay audits, but once some sort of difference that is unexplained has been shown, there is an obligation on an employer—every employer, not just in the public sector—to look at that and do something about it, rather than require individual employees to take a case or to try to investigate it further—that there really is an obligation to do something.

Q65 Mims Davies: I have a quick question for Amanda on those 40-year-old returners: who are getting those roles? Who has been more preferable than someone who has had a lot of experience and who has been trained to that length? Who is being preferred?

Amanda Fone: Businesses would rather wait for somebody who is already in work. They would rather wait for somebody to apply for the job, who already has up to three months' notice to give, but who is coming from another permanent role than take a gamble, as they see it, on somebody who would probably want flexible working, which gives a headache to work around. They would rather wait. Those are the people who are getting the jobs.

They are people who are in employment. I do not see it as much discrimination at all about women who are already in work. There seems to be parity. It is the ones who choose to come out. Our message to women at the moment, who come to us in their mid-30s and are starting a family—and they are very often very open with us about all the challenges they are going through, because we are not the employer—is, “Do not stop work because you will not get back in.” That is the truth.

Q66 Chair: Sally, you might want to say something on that?

Dr Davies: I would agree with that. What we are finding is exactly the same. Junior doctors, particularly in their late 20s and early 30s, wishing and thinking of starting a family, looking for advice, do not want to ask their employers because they know exactly what they will be told. They are often making a decision based on their circumstances at that time without looking to the future and what it may mean.

Q67 Jo Churchill: Thinking around what Amanda said, and then what Amanda said, do women returners tend to go back in at a lower level in that, “We will take anything to get us the experience to get us back on the level” and, in point of fact, is what we have actually achieved that we then exacerbate the gender pay gap and we have written our own future, in effect, particularly in the professions?

Amanda Fone: Yes.

Q68 Jo Churchill: A lot of this is around facilitation and childcare, and lack of choice though. Because, particularly rurally, trying to go back into a profession in a small town or a rural GP practice, your childcare is often your biggest problem. You are wanting to go back in, particularly with four children or whatever, on a 0.6 or a 0.8; you do not necessarily want to go back in full-time.

Dr Davies: And think of all those wonderful skills you are bringing back in.

Q69 Ruth Cadbury: I would like to move on to the issue of the part-time penalty, both in terms of pay, even when it is prorated, and also the progression issues around part-time. First of all, is there a significant part-time pay penalty in your fields?

Amanda Brown: Yes, there is a part-time penalty. There should not be in some ways, as we so often find when it comes to pay gap issues. There should not be because teachers should be paid pro-rata. However, there is often a sense that if you are not contributing further than you possibly can, if you are part-time, then you do not get pay progression.

There is also an issue around employment status and security that comes into this because it can be difficult to get part-time and therefore teachers are sometimes on sessional or supply rates. That also would be lower. Yes, there is a real issue around that. What we would like to see is much more, as I said, about part-time being a real option and the flexibility that you can have paid progression within that, and that you do not have to show that you are prepared to do additional hours in order to get that progression.

Dr Davies: I agree entirely. When you step down in medicine, whether you are in training, in a career role or a non-career role—i.e. somebody may have stepped down to be a staff associate specialist, or a salary GP—the minute you become part-time not only do you stop getting paid progression at the same rate, but it is implied that you are not interested

in progressing. I myself worked and trained part-time as I had four young children, and I used to introduce myself to people as “Dr Sally Davies, OPT” because so many males that I worked with had called me, “But, of course, you are ‘Only Part-Time’”.

Audrey Williams: It is a very similar picture with the legal profession as well. There is an assumption that if you have decided to work part-time—and I think the profession, in fairness, is moving to slightly more creative working patterns and more agile working, because there is always that pressure about it being a service industry—somehow your ambition has gone.

One of the useful and effective things that some firms are starting to do is to have a much more open discussion about an individual’s plans as they are taking a career break or maternity leave, and taking a much longer term view, not looking at any decisions around working flexibly or working part-time as a one-off decision—“Let’s think about what your longer-term plans might be; let’s revisit that.” There is a bit of a tension there because that takes some quite skilled and confident discussions. I know from work that I have done with ACAS and the Equality Commission that there is a real worry that you cannot ask those types of questions when someone is going off on maternity leave, or they are going to complain about pregnancy-related discrimination. There is a need to encourage that type of dialogue and, again, some firms have done it very effectively with detailed communication plans and checking in when someone comes back to work as well.

Q70 Ruth Cadbury: It is useful to have good ideas, particularly those that are working. One is thinking of ways of making part-time working less gendered. The Science Council suggested, as a sector, going to a four-day week. Have you any thoughts about ways of making part-time work less gendered?

Amanda Fone: One would expect, because of the agile working with technology, the world is slightly behind where we think it should be. Technology should have enabled everybody to have the opportunity to work remotely and more flexibly. Certainly in my world that is not the reality at the moment.

We would love to see more job shares happening. Some of these women are very imaginative and they will twin up. They can find their own other half. We have women who have found their other half, where they can work two and a half days each. Employers worry about, “We have to pay half a day to have a handover.” These women will do the handover in their spare time. They will do it in the evening once the kids have gone to bed; they are very flexible about that.

The other thing that businesses worry about is having to pay double the amount of benefits, so they have one role, and one role signed off by the Finance team, and then they have to double the amount of benefits they pay. That is a problem and there could be something done—I do not know what—around encouraging a business. If a client says to me, “It is too complicated to have two people in that job. We will have to pay double the amount of benefits. No,” I would say, “We have a really good solution for you here but you are just not listening, and these two women could come back. In the end, they could both be full-time employees in your business within the next five or 10 years when their kids grow up.”

Q71 Ruth Cadbury: I have not had a normal work career so I am a bit out of line perhaps, but if roles are more outcome orientated—and particularly with the use of new technology, presentism should not be so much of an issue as it used to be—

Amanda Fone: Absolutely.

Ruth Cadbury: How can that work in practice? How can employers change the way that we measure people's presentism?

Dr Davies: We have to think differently about part-time and things like job shares. If you are working within a team, what they do within the junior doctors' training is that they have slot shares. The money for one particular training slot may be given to two different people. They can be there the same days, so they are on the ground. The team can work differently. We do not have to be as rigid as we are in our thinking.

Q72 Ruth Cadbury: Are there good examples that you are aware of, or maybe we should hunt around and find some good examples?

Audrey Williams: We could do with some good examples actually, because looking at this not just from the legal profession but from client conversations that I have had across different sectors, they do have a real issue around job shares. It seems such a good solution and way of addressing concerns about part-time working, but there is an anxiety and a concern about the cost. Having some really great examples of where it has worked and worked successfully, and also communicating why it is such a great idea, is a good counter to the part-time concern that you come across.

Amanda Fone: We have reservations from businesses where they say that if you are in a senior role you have to be in the office because you are running a team. The team will not respect the person if they are not in the office all the time. If you are in a client-facing role, the client needs to know they can get hold of you. Well, you have a mobile phone. It does not add up as an excuse. It is an excuse, but it is because businesses do not want to reorganise the way they work.

Amanda Brown: That is a really key point, because, again, when we often try for job shares, there is a resistance at first but once people try it they often find that they can manage it and it can work very well. That is really important. The other thing is, maybe not so much now but certainly recently—and I think it is still continuing—people sometimes see part-time as the same as temporary, and those two things get mixed. In fact, part-time work can be very secure and should be very secure. It should not mean that you have to be on an insecure type of employment.

Q73 Ben Howlett: On that point, that is very interesting. I used to be a recruitment consultant myself and sometimes I felt that there was almost a culture of excuses. It is interesting you use that example. Do you feel that there is that culture of excuses as to why a woman would not be right for a job or why they should not be promoted? How do you think that should be tackled?

Amanda Fone: There was a really interesting article yesterday that I got an email about. Was it HR managers? Did you all read it? It was about HR managers. Absolutely, yes, I can have brilliant conversations with CEOs and line directors and then suddenly you get back down to HR. I will return to your point, but there is this brilliant example where we

were trying to get some of these women paid placements and I spoke to an HR team. I will not name the company, but they were really a progressive organisation, who were part of the programme. I spoke to the HR person and it was pushed down to the most junior person in the HR team: "I have two brilliant ladies who want to come back to bridge the gap back into work." "We have a couple of temp jobs but they are both secretarial roles. Do you think they will be interested in those?" "No, these are two highly skilled marketing people; they have 10 or 15 years' experience." "No, we cannot accommodate them. How much will it cost?" Then suddenly you are back down to the bottom denominator. It is excuses. Those were the reservations that we managed to overcome at the initial meeting promoting the programme, maybe three months before. I am afraid there are a lot of excuses going on at the moment.

Ben Howlett: I used to recruit for HR consultants myself so I know what you mean.

Amanda Fone: I do not think it is their fault. I do not think they are empowered.

Q74 Gavin Shuker: I am going to ask a few questions around flexible working and, for the sake of the Committee, it would be helpful for us to move through this fairly quickly. First of all, the right to request flexible working has been in place now for a short period of time. Have you any evidence that that right to request after 26 weeks is making a difference on this issue?

Amanda Brown: We certainly use it and we think it is making a difference. We think it could make more of a difference, first of all if it was available immediately. We do not really see the logic for 26 weeks and also do not see the logic for there being only one opportunity per year to make that request. Also, some of the reasoning around refusals can be challenged and we think, at the moment, that the opportunities to say no are probably too wide. We would like there to be, again, more obligation on the employer rather than relying on individual women to try to challenge all the time. It is about taking a more generalised approach and putting an onus on employers to do more, but we do think it is making a difference.

Audrey Williams: It is a very effective provision. In fact, it might be even better if it were flexible within itself. In other words, once you get a flexible working request agreed, it is a permanent change to the contract, and having the ability to say, "I want this flexible arrangement for one or two years with some stronger rights so I am not forced just down that path and then into another negotiation" would bear some thought and discussion.

I do have a concern. I know there has been some discussion about it being a day one right. My concern about that, again from the point of view of often advising organisations on these provisions, is that in 26 weeks they can get the measure of someone's abilities and make that assessment. My worry would be if it was a day one right that the explanation or response would be, "No, because we are not convinced it is going to work", and the individual would not have had the opportunity to demonstrate that they can make it work. Most organisations would be more reticent and more likely to refuse on that basis.

Gavin Shuker: Do you think—maybe Amanda Fone would be helpful on this—that people self-edit? In other words, they do not apply for jobs where they require flexibility, which appear quite rigid to start off with, because they are not confident that they will be able to get flexible working after 26 weeks?

Amanda Fone: It is really interesting because if you are in a role and you went to apply for flexible working after 26 weeks—you have just got through your probationary period—most businesses would be straight on the phone to me going, “I have been duped. I have taken someone that said full-time and now they want flexible. What was that all about? Why did you not tell me?” That is the reality that would happen. Is this person really looking for flexible working? I would like to see in job ads that you are not allowed to have flexible or full-time because, if you took that away, and if you go to most job boards and have a look, you will see there is a drop-down box and it says “full-time” or “part-time”. If you go into the “part-time”—and we will probably come on to this a bit later—there are very few part-time jobs over £30,000. If you go into most businesses—and I work in the private sector—and you look into their flexible working policy, they will all subscribe to flexible working. However, if I say, “Tell me about your flexible working policy”, not one business will say, “We do not have one”. They are going to say, “Yes, of course, we are a progressive employer.” “Right, okay, I will show you a shortlist. There are people on this shortlist who would like flexible working but I am not going to tell you which ones they are, because you are not going to discriminate against someone who wants flexible working, are you?” They will go, “Oh, right, no, obviously not.” That is the way we, at the moment, have to get people on to a shortlist who want flexible working. I am not sure about the 26-weeks thing. I would like to see, as I say, just not advertising; if you subscribe to flexible working and you embrace it as a business or organisation, then why do you need to advertise whether it is part-time or full-time, because presumably your business could accommodate a flexible worker?

Q75 Chair: Gavin, can I just point out to the panel that we have had evidence to suggest that there are more men working flexibly than women. How would you unpick that for us?

Amanda Fone: They call it agile working, do they not?

Chair: So women are looking for part-time work, but men just work flexibly.

Gavin Shuker: It sounds as though you might be suggesting that it is another way in which there is an inherent gender bias.

Amanda Fone: Absolutely. Change the language.

Gavin Shuker: Change the language to make it much more overtly masculine, testosterone—

Amanda Fone: Women have to change their own language too. It comes from the women themselves. There is a responsibility thing. They have to change their own language; otherwise it is self-inflicted.

Q76 Gavin Shuker: That is really helpful. Let me move on. At the moment, we tend to talk about jobs in terms of the number of hours people work. However, in many professional careers, as we all know, the number of hours in your contract and the number of hours you do really do not line up. Do you think there are better ways in which we could measure people’s presence and success in the job that perhaps are not related to the number of hours in the contract?

Amanda Fone: It is about measuring output. If businesses could do that, if organisations could measure output rather than input, it would be a much, much easier discussion—if we could find that solution, would you not agree, on how you measure output? Because then you would not need to be in the office and flexible working would be how much you can do. It is all about your output. If you can do your job brilliantly and beyond in less time, fantastic.

Q77 Gavin Shuker: Is that realistic in other professions, perhaps where—I am thinking about teaching, for example—kids are there, regardless of your output, right?

Amanda Brown: That is right. Teachers do enormous numbers of hours, but as well as individual contributions in terms of output, there are some jobs in some professions that are much more collective in a sense. We would say that pupils certainly do not progress in terms of their attainment in a linear fashion. We all know that children seem to stick at one place and then make jumps. So output in terms of pupil attainment can be difficult, but also it is a collective process. In different jobs, there will be more complex ways of trying to decide what pay levels should be.

One thing to deal with the pay gap that most commentators say is really important is to try to get away from negotiation and individual negotiation, because that is something, for good or ill, that women are not very good at and tend not to push themselves forward for. Anything that involves an application or an appeal or a negotiation tends to mean that women do not do so well out of it.

Q78 Gavin Shuker: Lastly, Sally, we have received some evidence that flexible working is working better in the medical profession, perhaps over some others. Would you be able to comment on that?

Dr Davies: It depends what you call it but yes, the entitlement to ask to work flexibly seems to be working quite well. People are prepared to make some adjustments. However, currently within junior doctor training—and it is ironic that I am here today in view of the fact of the first junior doctor industrial action for 40 years—it is actually being challenged by the new contract. Making the working day to 10.00 p.m. every night and Saturday as the routine hours is putting people off working both part-time and flexibly because it is going to be far more difficult. If you are working flexibly and you get a lot of very late shifts and weekend shifts, it is impossible to get childcare. Those times are not easy to work.

Q79 Gavin Shuker: Do you think the culture of individual NHS trusts and otherwise would look to try to accommodate that, even under the provisions of the new contract—in other words, trying to protect those with young children from working anti-social hours?

Dr Davies: A lot of them are undertaking best practice at the moment with crèches and other issues. Will the new contract make it easier for them? The answer is no.

Q80 Chair: Can I just ask one follow-up question, not particularly about the teaching and medical professions where you have to be in the certain place at a certain time, and it is very consumer-facing, but in other areas where 80% of your job is plannable and 20% is not? Why do employers not see the opportunity there to employ people on a flexible basis, where 80% of the time they know where their employee is and 20% it is maybe flexible but they are on

call at certain points to be able to respond to emergencies as they happen? Is that a way forward?

Audrey Williams: One of the things about the hours in the contract and the measure—and obviously with the legal profession it would be the chargeable hours—is that it is nice and easy. It is the lowest common denominator in some ways. The reality is, as we all know, that you can be contributing the hours but not delivering what you need to deliver on or not being very efficient. Yes, there are other ways of measuring it, which is around responsibilities for budgets and work areas, and delivering certain issues. There is still a concern, certainly in the legal profession, that again it is client and service driven, but that is about accessibility. As long as you are accessible and you are on the end of a telephone or email, and you can turn things around, it does not really matter where you are delivering that. Increasingly we are seeing that, but it is taking a long time to move away from the traditional approach, as it is seen.

Amanda Fone: I would say that businesses would have an issue with that 80:20 rule actually. Businesses feel more comfortable having people where they can see them still, and people work in teams. A lot of organisations work in teams. We have trialled this out in the business I run. We have found that a really good formula that works is 60:40: have 60% of what we call full-time people and 40% flexible workers. That formula works really, really well, because the people who are working flexibly, when they come in, give a fresh injection of energy, ideas and innovation on the days that they are in. The days they are not in, you still have a hub. That is what is so important when you are running a team. Most businesses run in teams and if you have a team of seven to 10 people, you cannot have 90% of that team not in the office, or people not knowing where they are. At least they can get hold of them, but it is not the same as having that physical presence. Human beings work their best in groups. A lot of your organisations would support that, do you not?

Audrey Williams: Yes.

Dr Davies: Some organisations, speaking for the medical profession, are actually anxious about promoting true flexibility as you suggested it—that it seems unfair, and that somebody will say, “You are letting her do that but you will not let us do it.” That is enough to frighten quite a lot of organisations off promoting it.

Q81 Jess Phillips: You have covered quite a lot of the topics about getting people to return to work. You have said quite a lot about that already, but I would like to go back to that and ask you what you know of both the Government’s policy and also policies between businesses, and how they are working, if they are working, to encourage people who do have career gaps to return to work?

Amanda Fone: I did not know anything about it all. I had to look it up. I went on to Timewise and had a little look over the weekend. I saw there were 120 jobs being advertised on there, which I thought was pretty pathetic after however many months it has been going for. Sorry. There were five in PR and marketing and four were in not-for-profit organisations. They were all paying less than £38,000. There were three in senior management and I noticed that they were both in businesses that I know are doing loads of great work in this area. One was with Credit Suisse, and one was Lloyds. EY—Ernst & Young—were up there as well. We all know that those are businesses that are doing a lot.

There are some great case studies out there. It is a pity that we do not all know more. I did not have a chance to speak to all the mum returners that I know and ask them if they were logged on to the site and actively looking for jobs. There are loads of women returner network groups anyway, but they really struggle to find jobs that are paying, pro-rata, more than £30,000.

Q82 Jess Phillips: So you would say that the effective thing is informal, grassroots, mum returner networks, and the sorts of things that have come from people, organised—

Amanda Fone: It is a great policy but it does not work.

Q83 Jess Phillips: Does the Government, for example, put a lot of effort into young people getting onto the employment ladder? Do you think there would be some merit in the businesses that you work in if the Government put similar levels of interest into high level internships or return to work schemes for people who have been out of the market?

Amanda Fone: Yes.

Jess Phillips: Also apprenticeships, and that sort of thing.

Amanda Fone: The most high-profile that I am aware of in the last few years has been the STEM subject awareness. There is a massive awareness for women who are coming through in their 20s now, who have maths and science. They are looking at and getting into our profession. Marketing is becoming much more data-orientated, so we actively look for people who have science and STEM subject backgrounds. That has been a very active campaign and that is being amplified extremely well across the education sector, but also into businesses as well. I have clients who will say to us now, “We actively want to find women with STEM subject backgrounds”.

Q84 Jess Phillips: In teaching, we were with a group last week in Bournemouth. Some of them were teachers and some of them were nurses. They expressed that there were no college schemes they could go into that were widely available and were around people who had been teachers for 20 years, had a gap of five years and wanted to get back into teaching or nursing. I just wonder whether Sally or Amanda wanted to say anything about that?

Amanda Brown: Certainly in teaching that is an issue. There is a real issue around the mixed messages. There are some very good messages. In practice, I am afraid to say that I have to take the opportunity to say that changes in the way teachers are paid has removed portability. In other words, if a teacher comes out of the teaching profession for a career break and then wants to re-enter they can now enter at a much lower level than they used to and will probably find that they are entering, because they will not have the same negotiating skills. Many of the unions—and we do as well—put on courses for returners to try and re-orientate and upskill themselves to come back. It is as much, as was mentioned earlier, a question of confidence as anything else. However, there is little from Government or employers around that. It is mainly coming from teacher organisations themselves.

Dr Davies: From my point of view, there used to be schemes to return people. There used to be the GP retainer scheme, which would centrally pay a general practitioner to do two or three sessions a week in a practice. So they were a bonus for the practice, kept their hand in and, within a couple of years, were able to increase their sessions. That has all

been removed because of a lack of money. We have run a campaign with Maureen Baker, the Chair of the RCGP, to get a return to general practice scheme, which has now become in place. It is incredibly difficult to get very busy practices, who literally can only just manage to do what they are meant to be doing, to suddenly take on somebody and supervise them with no input and that person will be working for nothing.

Jess Phillips: It is a bit like the nurses.

Dr Davies: It is much cheaper to bring them back.

Q85 Jess Phillips: Amanda Fone has already said this quite explicitly. Do you think that, at the moment, we should be discouraging women from taking a gap from work? I personally worked in a voluntary agency and I worked all the way through both of my maternities for free in order not to have a gap from work.

Chair: Could I encourage Amanda to just articulate her nodding of the head there, just so we can capture it for the record?

Amanda Fone: I nodded my head, yes. It is so difficult to get back in. I would love to see a situation where businesses had—not a scholarship; I do not know what you call them, but you have, like Audrey was saying, a proper conversation. Legislation has got in the way. People have to have honest, open conversations about their careers for women.

You sit down with your HR director or line manager and say, “I really love being in this business. I want to stay. I want to carve my career here, but I also want a family as well. My partner and I were thinking about starting a family and it might be next month, it might be next year; it might be three years’ time, but give me role models of people who have managed their careers all the way through. If I have a break for three years, am I going to be penalised? I do not want to be penalised. I might want to come back two days a week. I might want to come back four days a week. I might want to take a break for three years. Can the business somehow support me—not even financially support me through that time, but can I know that when I come back in I can get back to my career as long as I keep up? It is like an athlete. You cannot come back and expect to run 100 metres as fast as you did three years before. You have to keep your brain in gear. You have to keep training during the time you are out. Is there a way of enabling that conversation to happen more easily than it does at the moment?

Q86 Jess Phillips: Would you ever discourage a man, just out of interest? Would you ever discourage a man from taking a break?

Amanda Fone: Actually, I would at the moment. Yes, I would. If a man said to me, “I am going to take three years out”, I would say, “Be careful, because you are going to really struggle to get back in.” I do not think that bit is the gender thing. It is mostly the women who choose to do it.

Q87 Jess Phillips: That is fair. What practical policy does each person think would make a difference to returners?

Audrey Williams: We have to be practical and these breaks are the realities of life. There are two things I would encourage. I know we have moved to shared parental leave, but I am not convinced that that has changed the gender divide. I would quite like to see some

fathers' parental exclusive right to take some time out. That really focuses down on, as a man, "Am I going to take some time out?" The returnships are very successful. Some law firms are very effective in terms of having alumni programmes. We could consider making it an extension to alumni, so it is more focused on, "These are the business reasons to keep engaged with individuals." Some of the professional bodies—the Association of Women Solicitors—certainly do look at helping people return. There is perhaps more focus that could be given to those organisations as well.

Dr Davies: I would suggest almost a promise that they will be able to return, an acknowledgement that taking a break does not mean that you are no longer interested in your career and you are no longer able. You are very able and probably returning full of enthusiasm, as opposed to somebody who has worked all the way through.

Also, mentorship: we know that women coming back in do benefit from somebody supporting them, talking to them, having these conversations. Women may not want to put in an abstract for an international conference because they have a young baby, and there could be somebody saying, "It would be quite good if you did and you could manage it." It is just that "Yes, you can do it."

Amanda Brown: I would agree with those, in particularly that to encourage men to take breaks, we really need to have decently paid paternity leave, because it is still the case, for the reasons that we are talking about, that men will very much look at how much they are going to lose if they are out of the workforce. We have already flagged up training and encouragement to return, and to return at the same pay level and on the same basis, as close as possible to what you were doing before but with the opportunity for some flexibility.

Dr Davies: Can I make one further point, which is what happens a lot in medicine—I am not sure whether it happens in teaching or law—is taking a side-step? Out of getting into the running to be a GP partner or a consultant, you take a non-career grade post and just sit in it. There is no progression there.

Q88 Chair: Before we move on to our last area of questioning, can I just ask a very direct question: how long in your various areas do you think women can take out of the work place before it starts to really hit their future progression? Starting with Audrey, in your experience—just anecdotal.

Audrey Williams: Anecdotally, I would say anything from nine to 12 months begins to impact. Just aligned to that, there is a point that we just made about, "When I return, actually I should be coming back to the same role." There is an anchoring issue here, which is, "When I return, it is not just about where I was when I left and where I left off, but what about my peer group and where they have got to?" There almost needs to be a second cross-check to make sure that I am anchored in comparison to them.

Q89 Chair: Okay, so you said nine months?

Audrey Williams: I would say nine, yes. Nine to 12 months.

Amanda Fone: The same—nine to 12 months.

Dr Davies: 12 months.

Amanda Brown: It is changing in teaching, but I would say 12-months-plus.

Q90 Chair: So anything more than 12 months is a detriment.

Dr Davies: Because you will not be looked at in quite the same way, sadly, when you return.

Q91 Jo Churchill: I want to move on to promotion and progression. From a lot of the conversation, we have almost framed it in large companies. A lot of the GP practices run very much as small businesses. They offer different dynamics, and there is often a degree of moral proximity that goes on—a bit like small teams in large firms—that allows for better working practices. I wonder whether you can slightly address how you might see that good practice being firmed up as well. On promotion and progression, excluding the issues we have already discussed, what other barriers can you think of that women over 40 may well face to promotion and progression?

Dr Davies: Over 40, they often will not apply for a more senior role, not necessarily because they are lacking in confidence, but women, we know, will look at all the essential criteria and will not apply for something that they do not fulfil. That is where the mentorship comes in. Somebody says, “Are you going for that?” and you can address the issue.

Q92 Jo Churchill: Would you not say that is confidence?

Dr Davies: It is not confidence. I cannot put a finger on it. It is almost everywhere where you see women, particularly when it is a big step up.

Amanda Fone: We encourage to go for a role if you can only do 70% of it. Men will go for jobs if they can do 20% of it, but women will not until they can do 100% of it. I have pushed so many women into, “You can do this job” “But I have not done that. I cannot evidence it.” “Don’t worry, just go for it. You are good enough.” I agree that it is not really confidence, because they are perfectly confident when you interview them. It is just that they are more compliant, maybe.

Amanda Brown: There is another issue to add to that in some jobs, and I think teaching is one, where women fear that promotion will mean extra workload and working hours. So if you are already working 60 hours per week and fear that if you look for promotion you will have additional responsibilities and therefore will be working more than 60 hours per week, then that is likely to put you off, particularly if you have a family at home. If you are already giving up weekends then you do not feel that you can do anymore if promotion is linked to number of hours.

Q93 Jo Churchill: So stepping up, doing those tasks, and finishing things, all those extra things that might just push you up that ladder, become more problematic because of the culture?

Amanda Fone: It is quite an interesting subject, is it not? Promotion is around expertise as well. There is the 10,000-hour rule; the more you do something the better you get, the more efficient you get with your time to do it. Therefore, it does not necessarily stack up that promotion means longer hours. Maybe there is a perception thing there. People should be more open about it being a promotion, because there is an expertise in there, is there

not, that you would expect? To be promoted, you are demonstrating that you have an expertise and you have increased that expertise; therefore that is one of the reasons you are going to be promoted.

Amanda Brown: Can I just clarify? I was not suggesting that is right. I am suggesting that women sometimes fear that if they are already working to their capacity in terms of their number of hours, it is assumed, particularly in teaching, that if you go through the threshold to get into the upper pay scale or have a leadership role, then that is an additional responsibility so therefore you will be working more. I am not saying that is right; I am just saying that could put people off from seeking to do that.

Amanda Fone: I wonder how much there is a ceiling going on inside that.

Amanda Brown: It is the case but it should not be.

Jo Churchill: So much of this it should not be.

Chair: Did Audrey just want to come in?

Audrey Williams: I just have an observation. Yes, it is about men applying because they see the potential as opposed to the women applying on the basis of ability rather than potential. I do think sometimes it is the assessors on the promotions panel that fall into that trap as well. It is also about opportunities. The expertise sits alongside being given the opportunities. There is that middle-manager, marzipan layer, where we need to be making sure the opportunities are provided so that you are fit for promotion, as many firms would describe it. That is where not just mentoring but sponsorships become very important and can be very effective. It is not just about me taking the opportunities but actually having someone who is supporting and encouraging me as well.

Q94 Jo Churchill: Positive giving. So, moving that on, who should the Committee be directing its recommendations at to improve training and promotion opportunities for women, within the age that most of us in this room fall into? Is it employers, Government, regulatory bodies, trade organisations?

Chair: Except Jo.

Jo Churchill: I withdraw that comment. Who should we be particularly targeting—employers, Government, trade unions, trade organisations? Somebody brought this comment up earlier, did they not? Where should we target?

Dr Davies: I think it should be targeted at all. My great concern, and MWF's, is the disconnect between Government and trade unions. We know that there is a lower gender pay gap when the organisation is unionised. It is very difficult to understand why we are having this Select Committee today about the gender pay gap, when there are other things being done that are widening it.

Q95 Jo Churchill: Which practical recommendations would be most effective, then, in improving women's training or promotion organisation? Because caveating what you just said, there are also many areas of our society that are not unionised, where we have to look at other bodies that we can help ameliorate some of these differences and help to educate and inform. Much of this stuff goes back as early as how we start to educate and inform both our

young women and our young men as they come through. What practical recommendations would be most effective in improving women's training and promotion? We have covered a lot of them—mentorships, sponsorships and so on, but anything else you can perhaps offer us?

Audrey Williams: This goes back to the previous question because the practical measures should also be directed at the professional associations and the trade ones, because there is a real pressure point and peer pressure around particular sectors, where they might be addressing or struggling with the same thing, and then you can make much more effective use of best practice and case studies because it is something that an organisation sees translates to their work area and operational area. That is a very effective route for things like good examples, case studies, and joining up the ideas and working through. There is a lot of information at the moment around why it makes good business sense but the how to do it and the sorts of things you should be thinking about, and where it has worked for organisations are the areas where it needs joining up better.

Amanda Fone: One comment I would just like to make is that there is a lot of hype in the media about flexible working at the moment. The media is cherry-picking what businesses want them to hear, which is that there is a proportion of their roles that are agile working and flexible working. The reality is that these are not new roles that have been created. These are roles where women and some men are asking for flexible working on the back of maternity leave. On the new roles that are being created—we take on between 16 and 20 new roles every single week—we ask every single company, “Presumably, you would look at a flexible worker?” The feedback at the moment is, “No, it is not a flexible working job.”

The one thing businesses are concerned about is that the Finance Director gives you the okay to go and hire a full-time person on £50,000; you then put a part-time person up or a flexible worker and it is a pro-rata salary, which it is—say £30,000 for three days a week or whatever it is. Immediately that HR person will say, “No, because we will lose our budget. That team will lose their budget.” So there is a challenge.

It is the new roles that are being created. I do not like quotas; I really do not, but I think there is a push-pull thing. The recruitment industry is huge. There is APSCo and REC. I agree with what you are saying about trade associations needing to get involved as well. They can be amazingly influential. A lot of the businesses inside the recruitment industry are run by owners or managers who feel very passionately about the sector that they work in and they can influence the leaders inside the businesses that they are working with. If there was something to help us say, “Here is a role. We have three flexible workers for it”, because at the moment it is a bloc completely with excuses. We need something that could help us say, “That is fine, yes, absolutely. We would like to see your three flexible workers as well,” because there is a need out there. Whenever we put a job ad up we are flooded with really capable women, but we cannot get them back in unless they have this work placement to bridge the gap back.

Q96 Angela Crawley: I am interested in just picking up the point that was made about flexible working and how perhaps managers change around flexible working. The key point I want to ask is: is there potential that it would be open to misuse or exploitation and it will become the new zero hours' contract or part-time work rather than what it was intended for? That is open to anyone who wants to answer.

Dr Davies: A very useful recommendation would be to have a champion—somebody who is seen as leading on this and taking it forward—a bit like Lord Davies with boards. The other thing would be to look into what is being done. My namesake Dame Sally Davies, when she stated that all universities in STEM had to achieve the female SWAN silver mark to receive research money, really caused tremendous upset. However, it is working. People are looking at their practices and realising that they are not very good at doing that. Good practice is good for all; bad practice affects women.

Amanda Brown: There is a danger that there could be unintended consequences around flexibility, but that is why we would say that it is really important that those jobs are secure and it is a choice. It is a woman saying, “This is what I want on the basis of my retained security, but I would like to change hours.” There is a danger and that has happened before.

Q97 Jo Churchill: This is fascinating for me, in that two of these areas—law and medicine, in particular—have entry rates where women have predominated for some time now. Are we looking at, as much as anything, leadership issues? The irony is that if there were less of a gender pay gap out there, there would be more choice for men and women to make a decision over who stayed in the role or followed the career path because it would be a more equitable choice that we are making. In both professions, it is interesting that the movement forward in a female predominant area has not been more forthcoming.

Dr Davies: The pipeline alone is not changing things.

Q98 Ben Howlett: Based on your answers to Jo’s earlier question as to who is responsible for closing down the gender pay gap, it is quite clear that all of you have agreed that the employer has a strong responsibility in order to help close the pay gap. Have you identified how big the gender pay gap is in each of your organisations internally and what measures are you putting in to help close that?

Amanda Fone: In the marketing and comms profession, there is no gender pay gap between women and men.

Ben Howlett: I mean within your own—

Amanda Fone: We do not have any gender pay difference. We have flexible working. We have always had flexible working. We are 60:40. We use that rule inside our own business and it works brilliantly. One of the flexible workers is a woman who works down in the West Country. She comes into the office once every three weeks and she is one of the highest performers and the second highest paid person in the business. She has two children under the age of three.

Audrey Williams: I have a female chairman in my organisation and a partnership board that is 50:50 in terms of women and lots of senior partners. There is a department where we have five female partners and two male partners, so skewed, if anything, the other way. As a profession, the Law Society in Scotland last year identified a 42% gender pay gap. In England and Wales the previous year it was 30%, so that probably illustrates how much work we have to do.

Dr Davies: My MWF organisation is only women. In the organisation where I work in Wales, I do not know whether it has been calculated and advertised. You know the work

of Dr Alison Parken working with the health boards in Wales. The last figures I have show that overall the pay gap is around 30% to 40%, particularly at senior levels—that is senior professors who are male and female, and senior consultants who are male and female. Most of that is intangible; we cannot work out why.

Amanda Brown: We have had fixed pay scales and pay transparency. We also have more women at leadership level. I have not checked what the figures are but we probably do not have much of a pay gap in terms of the way that that works with maternity leave, flexible working and job shares as well.

Q99 Ben Howlett: What about in the wider sector?

Amanda Brown: In the wider sector, in terms of teaching in general, yes, women form about 76% of the teaching profession. In primary teaching, they are about 86% of the profession. Also one in 10 men is working part-time and one in two to three women are working part-time, so there is a big difference there. That means, because it is a profession of largely women, anything that affects teachers' pay will therefore affect the pay of women. We would say that pay has been depressed over the last five to 10 years, and longer.

Chair: I cannot thank you enough for the time that you have given us today. It has been an incredibly thought-provoking session. It was very helpful to our evidence gathering. On behalf of the Committee, can I thank you for your time and apologise for overrunning slightly? Thank you.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Anna Ritchie**, Project Manager, Close the Gap, **Christopher Brooks**, Policy Adviser, Age UK, **Scarlet Harris**, Head of Gender Equality, TUC, and **Mr Robert Stephenson-Padron**, Managing Director, Penrose Care, gave evidence.

Q100 Chair: Thank you very much, and thank you also that most of you were in for the first session as well. Thank you for that time. On behalf of the Committee and other members who will be re-joining us—I think they are just catching up on various things—thank you so much for coming in to give evidence today. We are conscious of the fact that you are incredibly busy people, and to give up this time is very generous of you. We really value these sessions and it is such an important inquiry, so thank you again. You will have seen from the previous session that members have various questions to ask you, and we will attempt to keep better to time this time. Before we do that, would I be able to ask you to each state your name and where you come from, starting with Anna?

Anna Ritchie Allan: I am Anna Ritchie Allan, from Close the Gap. We work in Scotland on women's participation in the labour market, and we work with employers, employees, unions and policy-makers to address the causes of the pay gap.

Chair: Sorry about the interference at the moment, but we will try to soldier on through.

Christopher Brooks: I am Christopher Brooks. I work for Age UK. We are the national charity for older people.

Scarlet Harris: I am Scarlet Harris. I am the women's equality officer at the TUC.

Robert Stephenson-Padron: I am Robert Stephenson-Padron. I am the Managing Director of Penrose Care, an ethical homecare provider.

Q101 Maria Caulfield: In this session we want to look at the low paid sector and see whether the gender pay gap is the same or worse for low paid workers. I want to start off by asking you what the pay levels are like in highly feminised sectors such as healthcare and cleaning. Do you think there is a gender pay gap and, if so, what percentage would you say is the gap? It is open to all of you.

Anna Ritchie Allan: There is a gap in every sector. What we know about female-dominant sectors is that the sectors themselves are undervalued as are the jobs that are in the sector, because it is women who are doing them. In terms of percentages, I do not have that detail but someone else on the panel might.

Scarlet Harris: Just to come in on what Anna said, I completely support that. That is very much the TUC's view: that it is because it is women doing the work that it is undervalued. Low pay tends to follow where women work. Where men come into traditionally feminised sectors, the pay tends to go up; where women move into sectors where they have not been before the pay tends to go down. In those very feminised sectors, which were already mentioned, like cleaning, the pay is incredibly low. We have done some research, particularly around low pay and part-time work, which has found that women part-timers, in many areas, were being paid less than the living wage. We did it by constituency and found that in 130 constituencies women part-timers were being paid less than the living wage, including lots of constituencies in London. There are real issues around very low pay in those sectors.

Christopher Brooks: There are also issues around progression, so perhaps for occupations like cleaning or social care, the next level up even does not deliver a particularly substantial increase in pay. Beyond that, there is probably nowhere to go for a lot of people working in those areas.

Robert Stephenson-Padron: Within social care specifically, I would say yes, it is a macro-level of undervaluing. In social care, which covers about 1.5 million workers in England, about 82% of those are female. The frontline wage is £7.10 an hour, so that is for a frontline care worker. A big issue, though, is in homecare, which is the sector Penrose Care specifically operates in, where there are about 650,000 workers in England, about 86% of them are women, and a large number of them are not paid the minimum wage. Whereas the headline wage may be £7.10 an hour, for a variety of reasons we can speak about later on, many of them have an effective median wage power of £5.75 an hour, and that is predominantly due to the non-payment of travelling between clients' homes. As you probably know, that is significantly below the national minimum wage, which is £6.70 an hour for people 21 years and over.

Q102 Maria Caulfield: Just a couple more questions: what is your experience of men who work in those sectors? Are they paid the same as fellow female workers? Are they paid slightly more even though they are in the same sector?

Robert Stephenson-Padron: In homecare I would not say that the gender gap is material within the sector, but there are a large number of female workers in the country—I think if my statistics are right, you have about 12 million female workers in England and about 1.2

million female workers in social care—so if a large number of them have very poor working conditions their poor working conditions feed into the national gender pay gap. It is a female-dominated sector so many managers are also female. Looking specifically within this sector, you do not have a material gender pay gap, but it does contribute to the wider gender pay gap in the country.

Scarlet Harris: There are other low paid feminised sectors, like retail, where you would see a gender pay gap because lots of the managers are men. Working in a supermarket, you are more likely to have men at supervisory or managerial levels and more of the women on the lower skilled and lower paid levels.

Q103 Maria Caulfield: What I am really trying to identify is whether those sectors are low paid and seem to attract women, or whether they are low paid because it is women in those sectors?

Anna Ritchie Allan: The latter.

Q104 Chair: Do you want to expand on that, Anna?

Anna Ritchie Allan: Yes, when we look at the types of work that are female-dominated, low paid and undervalued, they are centred on work that has been done traditionally by women in the home. It is because those skills are undervalued—caring, cooking, cleaning and clerical work—because they are done by women that they result in low pay.

Q105 Maria Caulfield: Do you all agree with that?

Scarlet Harris: Yes, I would absolutely agree with that. There is a huge undervaluing of women's work across society—women's paid and unpaid work. As Anna said, there is a view about lots of the attributes that might go along with some of these feminised sectors, particularly around care. Care is really crucial to what we are talking about in terms of women's low pay. There is an issue there about a perception that this is just what women do. Women care. That is something that women can and should do and it is not something that is massively valued by society.

Q106 Jess Phillips: Specifically in the care sector, I just wonder if, for example, you had a young woman who came in to work for you, as she did more qualifications, an NVQ level—I do not know what your entry level is, 3 or 4 or whatever—in health and social care, would her pay increase because of those qualifications? Because I understand what you are saying about static; the idea of progression is rare in these things. There is not enough opportunity to progress. Lots of people do not want to progress. We should not think or sit here with a middle class idea that everybody wants to get to the very top of their game. My husband certainly wants to punch a card and go home at the end of the day. However, always, when he got more qualifications in his work, although his job did not change, his finances did.

Robert Stephenson-Padron: I would say, historically, in social care that was the case. If you did get more qualifications, your pay went up. Clearly if you became a manager, so that is gaining a level 5 diploma, your pay goes up significantly, if you can get that. The issue is that the sector as a whole is financially unstable. It has been in the news quite a lot. I have to get references from other care managers, and what I have found over the past few years is that their terms and conditions have deteriorated. It is often hard to get hold of

care managers because their hours have been cut to part-time. Who is running these organisations now? You do not know.

I would say from a level 2 to a level 5, yes, there is a jump. However, going from, say, a level 2, which is not mandatory—that is typically a qualification a frontline worker can get optionally—to a level 3, level 3 typically being for a worker who manages about 25 employees, usually their pay would go up; now, it is not certain. It completely depends on the financial health of the specific organisation.

Q107 Maria Caulfield: Robert, I have read that you pay your employees the London living wage and yet when the new living wage was introduced, one of the key things I noticed was how many social care organisations lobbied me about how difficult it would be to pay the new living wage. Yet you pay the London living wage. How are you able to do that when other care providers are not able to do that? Why are they so reluctant to do that?

Robert Stephenson-Padron: At Penrose Care we have been quite fortunate because it was our decision to be an ethical provider from the beginning. We built our business model to do that, which means that we have to gear our users of services towards people who can pay a higher rate, so self-payers, who are willing to pay a higher rate. Some self-payers are not willing to pay a higher rate. We can then also have some users who receive direct payments and we can charge a discount. The sector as a whole cannot do that because 80% of the market is funded by the state. I have the figures, of course, which are from the professional association, the UK Homecare Association. It estimates a local council needs to pay—just for providers to pay the minimum wage—£16.17 an hour. The last data that they showed showed only four councils in the country paid a rate at which providers can meet the minimum wage.

When you speak about not increasing the rates that providers receive from, say, 80% of their customers and increasing those costs you will have a lot of issues because they already cannot pay the minimum wage. If you increase the minimum wage, you have to do something to improve the financial viability of the providers first.

Q108 Maria Caulfield: I have one final quick question: do you think gender pay gap reporting for organisations would help improve pay for women in low paid sectors?

Christopher Brooks: It sends out a signal that it is a really important issue for everybody, regardless of occupation. It might start a debate about the relevance of different skillsets that people have and hopefully push a bit more positive direction towards the caring and cleaning types of skills that are more associated with women. It is also worth noting with the care sector that because the care sector is so chronically underfunded, it does push more caring responsibilities towards informal carers, which in turn has a greater impact on women, particularly 50-plus women in the workplace, who are more likely to care. Again, it is another issue which I think is really crucial to the gender pay gap.

Q109 Mrs Drummond: My question is very similar to what Maria was saying. I know it is female dominated but, within that, are men and women paid the same? Is there a gender pay gap? Also is there an age thing? You said that there were more men being managers in retail, but do you think that is beginning to change? Is it just carrying on like that?

Scarlet Harris: There are lots of sectors you could point to where the trend is that the bulk of the lower paid, lower skilled work within that sector is done by women, and managerial positions—

Q110 Mrs Drummond: But are men and women being paid the same at that low level or are they progressing faster? Is this an age thing?

Scarlet Harris: There are several different issues. If we are looking at equal pay, it is not necessarily about comparing like-for-like jobs. It is about work of equal value. If you are looking at a local authority, it may not be comparing that female care worker to a male care worker, if there are very few male care workers; it may also be looking at other jobs done by men within that local authority that are comparable. We have already talked about how those skills that those women have, which actually are incredibly important and valuable skills, are often not properly valued and not measured correctly.

Therefore, some of the emotional burden, as well as the physical burden of doing physical work, is often undervalued. There is an issue there about equal pay and the gender pay gap reporting is not the same as an equal pay audit. It is not going as far as we would like. The TUC still calls for equal pay audits.

There is also an issue—you have mentioned progression and where people move on—I would highlight, which is that where men are in low paid jobs and low paid sectors they tend not to stay as long as women. In the previous session, you talked a bit about women getting stuck in those jobs and part-time work. That is really crucial to this: that where men may be in low paid jobs for a while, they often move up or move on quite quickly, whereas women do not.

Mrs Drummond: Thank you for that. That answers my rather badly put question.

Q111 Chair: We are going to move on to talk about part-time working but, before we do that, I have a question for Scarlet. Scarlet, you were just talking about comparing different jobs in a local authority. If you took a local authority workforce in the care sector, what percentage of those women, predominantly, would be unionised or members of a union?

Scarlet Harris: I do not have the figures off the top of my head, unfortunately. Unions do organise in the care sector. It is increasingly difficult because lots of those women are working for agencies, are on zero hours' contracts and are moving around. It makes it much harder for them to be a member of a union and be well organised within a union. Obviously the GMB and others organise in the care sector.

Q112 Chair: Would you be able to provide us with some information on that, particularly the trends over time in terms of union membership of people who are in those sorts of sectors, particularly the cleaning sector and the care sector, because it would be useful for us to be aware of that?

Scarlet Harris: Yes, definitely.

Anna Ritchie Allan: Following on from what Scarlet said, the move towards transferring female-dominated staff in from local authorities and other public sector bodies out to arm's-length external organisations, trusts and other bodies, that in itself is putting pressure on female-dominated sectors' terms and conditions. We see cleaning staff,

certainly in Scotland, and care workers put out to trusts and put out to ALEOs, as they are called, and we see an enforced reduction in hours, reductions in flexible working requests and downward pressures on pay and other terms and conditions. When it comes to the Scottish public sector organisations, which already have to report the gender pay gap and have done for a few years, it means that they do not have to count those female workers who are low paid in their gender pay gap figures.

Scarlet Harris: Just to support that, Unison has done some really good commissioned work. It is excellent academic research on the impact of commissioning out on women's pay in particular. I do not have the figures to hand but the answer was that it had a very detrimental effect on women's pay. So where women were moving from local government into arm's-length organisations and the private sector it was very, very bad for their pay.

Q113 Chair: We have heard in other evidence sessions that part-time working can have a penalty attached to it in terms of pay and can help drive some of the gender pay gap issues that we are talking about. What proportion of women in the sorts of jobs we are talking about here today are working part-time? Can you give us an idea of whether that is due to their choice or it is the way those jobs are designed? Scarlett, do you want to start?

Scarlet Harris: In retail, for example, part-time is the norm. It is not just part-time; it is short hours' contracts, which is similar to zero hours' contracts but it may be that you are contracted for six hours a week, but your employer can call you up at very short notice and say, "Actually we need you to come in for another day." It is not just about part-time; it is about different types of contracts, which are very difficult for women with caring responsibilities in particular to manage their lives. Anyone who has tried to organise childcare will know it is very difficult to tell the nursery that you need them for another day when you are not booked for another day because your employer has decided that you need to come into work that day. In some sectors it is about part-time being the norm. In some, it is more about other kinds of flexibility, but on the part of the employer rather than the employee being the norm.

With regards to the question of choice, I sometimes think that talking about choice in this is not particularly helpful; it slightly confuses the issue. It is impossible to know what choices people make and how constrained those choices are. Yes, a woman with caring responsibilities may choose to work part-time but that is not necessarily because she desperately wants to spend more time at home and wants to work part-time. Certainly there is evidence that lots of women who are working part-time would like more hours but they cannot get them or they cannot find childcare, or other forms of care, to fit in around their work, so they are constrained to do that work. In addition to that, it is not about whether the women are choosing to work part-time; it is whether they are choosing to work in a low paid part-time job with no progression. The answer to that is almost universally no. They are choosing to take the only part-time work that is on offer to them, which is often low paid with few progression prospects.

Q114 Chair: Robert, as an employer, are there any incentives—perverse or otherwise—for you to design a job to be part-time rather than full-time?

Robert Stephenson-Padron: In homecare there is an incentive to use part-time and flexible working depending on the mix of your users. If you are a social care provider where most of your users are a series of short visits, then having these part-time contracts

or flexible working contracts could be very useful. If you are heavily geared towards palliative care then of course flexible contracts could be useful as well, because your clients die often, and that way you do not have to pay for the staff time when you have no work.

If the sector was more financially healthy, there is also an advantage to have an inventory of staff time, which is easier to have when the workers know that they are going to have work because then they do not go and find another job. If you do have an inventory of staff time, as a grocery store has an inventory of groceries, when you have new users come to you, you can take them.

As you have probably heard as well, another big topic at the moment here in England is bed-blocking. This has resulted from the social care sector not having capacity, not being able to take dischargees in a timely manner. For us it has been quite horrifying because we are based in north London. I had a call from a borough way out towards Heathrow one day saying that they could not find a single social care provider to take on a dischargee. This was before the winter, so I can only imagine how bad it is now.

Q115 Chair: Particularly in terms of things like national insurance rules, that does not encourage you to design more part-time jobs? Is it literally that you are more driven by what your customers need?

Robert Stephenson-Padron: When you look at social care, a great summary of social care is what Dr Davies said in the last presentation. She said good practice affects all; bad practice affects women. When you look at the policy framework towards social care, you also have to look at what policies are working when you ask that question. A big problem in social care—we do not have the data on it because it is not a widely known issue, like the minimum wage violation—is you do have many cases of misclassification of employees as independent contractors to avoid paying employers' NI altogether. I have also interviewed new workers for us where they have been classified as employees and their employers pay them under the table, so there is no NI. They do not pay them holiday pay. When you ask that question for our sector, you also have to first ask, "Are people paying employers' NI to begin with?" I do not think it is necessarily an incentive to change the job structure, because many providers are not paying it anyway.

Q116 Chair: Anna, in your experience, looking at this market, do you see part-time working being the norm through choice or necessity?

Anna Ritchie Allan: I would agree with what Scarlet said: that we need to think about choice and consider fully what the constraints are on those choices in terms of women's disproportionate share of caring responsibilities; the choice also of what sectors they go into and looking back earlier at schools, looking at gender norms and gender stereotyping, expectations and attitudes about how girls and boys should behave, and what they should be interested in, and how that filters through the education system and results in young men and young women in stereotypical occupations, such as the female-dominated, undervalued sectors we are talking about today, such as cooking, cleaning and so on. Our experience of working with employers—and perhaps this is more relevant to some other sectors as well—is that employers seem to view part-time working as an accommodation to encourage retention where they are in favour of that, rather than it being a positive action that can encourage different types of people to come and work for their companies.

Q117 Chair: To what extent do you think the benefit system is encouraging people to work part-time?

Anna Ritchie Allan: Do you mean the 16-hour rule? The benefit system is so massively complex just now. What we know is that women who do work part-time just now and then have to go through a very detailed process in trying to get working tax credits and trying to top up their pay often have to take other types of part-time work. That is not quality work or quality life at all, in working for very low pay and then having to be subjected to a benefits process that often devalues people and the lives that they are living.

Q118 Chair: You would support a simplification of the benefit system to help change that.

Anna Ritchie Allan: I think a simplification of a complicated process would be welcome, yes.

Q119 Chair: Christopher, you are interested in looking at the issues facing people who have caring responsibilities. What opportunities do you think women have to move in and out of part-time working? Because those caring responsibilities may not be there forever, and part-time working can be something you need to do in the short term, but not necessarily in the long term.

Christopher Brooks: Yes, and what the evidence on this shows is that it is particularly women and older people who get stuck in part-time work and cannot progress out of it. The shock of having to leave work, if you are in your 50s and you develop a caring responsibility, a huge number of people—it is about 300,000 people a year—are forced out of work because of a caring responsibility, and it can be very difficult to get back in. We heard in the earlier session about some of the length of time that it is feasible to have a gap in your CV, but it is similar for lower-skilled roles as well. If you are unemployed for six-months-plus, it can become very difficult to move back in. Even if you were in a higher-skilled professional role before, if you have to stop work completely to care, then to move back in you are much more likely to eventually get a part-time role in a lower-skilled sector. It can have a really long lasting impact.

Q120 Chair: Are there particular things that you would advocate happening to help address that particular problem?

Christopher Brooks: With caring responsibilities, similar to maternity, not leaving work is really important, so it is about any measures that can help people to stay in work. We have just been doing some research into carers at the moment and we will be publishing a report on it in the next few months. We are looking at things like carer's leave and how that might work. You may have a statutory right to a set number of either paid or unpaid carer's leave per year. Even unpaid leave can be helpful, because it gives you some job security and a bit of flexibility, and you know that you can go back to it, so rather than having an argument with your employer and then you subsequently either get made redundant immediately or end up at the top of the redundancy list, you do have some right of reply to them on that, ideally, with pay, but obviously there might be more limited scope for that. Things like that are really important to bridge the gap.

Linking with the health and care system as well, we ran a couple of focus groups just before Christmas, and we heard repeatedly about, particularly for people who were caring

with people with dementia or complex needs, the length of time it can take to get a diagnosis and so the care becomes eligible for support. By the time that has all been resolved it is often far too late for people. If it takes five or six months, then by that time they are out of work and it is too late.

Q121 Angela Crawley: I just wanted to cover the concepts of caring and childcare, and it may be directed at Anna and Christopher in particular. How significant are caring responsibilities, including childcare, as a barrier to better paid work for them?

Christopher Brooks: Because about 60% of 50-plus carers are women, and it is about a 60:40 split, the burden does fall disproportionately on women. Women are more likely to feel the effects in the labour market as well. There is a social expectation that it should be women who cut back from work or stop working altogether to care. It is a really substantial barrier, and it is likely to get worse as well. There was a think tank that reported about the care gap. I forget exactly what they called it but the idea was that by 2017 there would be more informal care needs than informal carers to provide it. In a sense, that could be good for gender equality as the burden might fall more on to men. It is a huge problem.

We see a lot about it being very difficult to raise caring with your employer. It is often reported to us as being completely different to childcare, where a bit of flexibility and a bit of understanding around childcare is a lot more normal in workplaces. Caring for older people can become very, very tricky to raise with managers who simply do not want to know, and it can often drag up a whole host of other issues.

Anna Ritchie Allan: I would agree that childcare is the most immediate barrier for women participating equally in the labour market. Childcare is unaffordable and inaccessible in many places. Childcare costs in the UK are among the highest in the world and are a significant barrier to women going back to work after they have had children.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission published research last year on pregnancy and maternity discrimination. As well as the general findings, which were that pregnancy and maternity discrimination has doubled in the past 10 years, also an interesting point was that although most women who were part of the research had had their flexible working request met, about half of them had experienced negative effects as a consequence of working flexibly. So, going back and then having to work flexibly to accommodate childcare had some negative consequences.

I would also point out that because women do move into part-time work to accommodate these caring responsibilities, and childcare is often very complicated and runs with military precision for lots of parents, and if they are in a part-time job—which is very often the case in these low paid, undervalued sectors—it is quite a stressful process. If you are earning such a low amount and you are paying this amount out in childcare, they begin to say, “I am just getting this money to pay for childcare, so is it worth my while or shall I just let my partner work and I will take time out?” The research shows that the scarring, negative effect of taking a complete career break out for unpaid family work, is twice as bad for that as it is for working part-time in itself. These sorts of actions, decisions or the constraints on women’s choices in terms of childcare and balancing work with life are compounded and are cumulative.

Scarlet Harris: I support everything that Anna has just said, but just to add to that, some groups of mothers are particularly disadvantaged by the higher costs of childcare and the types of provisions available. For mothers of disabled children, there are particular issues around the types of childcare provision that are available and not having the suitable childcare available. Again, single mothers find it particularly difficult to find childcare that is affordable and fits with their working hours.

It is worth noting that there are these particular groups. There are also women with multiple caring responsibilities. It is really important that we do not just see these as separate issues; we have childcare over here, we have elder care over here, but actually all of us are probably going to need care at some time in our lives, and are probably going to care for someone in our lives, whether it is our children and/or our parents or partners. The employers need to see it in that way as well: that people are going to move in and out of having caring responsibilities and, at some times in their working careers, women in particular are likely to bear multiple caring responsibilities and still have school-aged children and possibly an elderly or sick parent or a disabled partner. There are some additional barriers for some women.

Q122 Angela Crawley: I am really grateful for the points you have made on the barriers, but I suppose the outcomes and what policy measures could be taken to address those concerns would be really helpful as well, so perhaps we could have some recommendations on policy measures within those areas.

Robert Stephenson-Padron: Penrose Care belongs to a network run by Carers UK called Employers for Carers, which is a network of mainly corporate employers and government organisations trying to work out ways to accommodate elder care responsibilities, because, as Christopher said, they are becoming much more common and they are going to become more common going forward. The idea was discussed in 2014—it has not gone anywhere since then—of what kinds of incentives the Government can provide to organisations to provide in their optional benefits elder care benefits. Many organisations have optional benefits included in your compensation. Having elder care vouchers, say, to purchase formal care when needed, in addition to childcare vouchers, is something that needs to be done. It does not just need to be done because it is a good idea; it needs to be done because the public sector has not been able to fund the need, which means that all of society needs to fund the need, because it is there. Any types of incentive to corporates to help foot the bill of our aging society is a good idea, I would say.

Q123 Chair: Have you come across any case studies of where that is happening?

Robert Stephenson-Padron: I have not. There was an article published by the BBC in March 2014. It is in this small report that I wrote for the Committee. I will pass it to you guys afterwards.

Scarlet Harris: It is such a huge issue. There are lots of different ways of looking at this and different ways of attacking it. In terms of the cost of childcare, it is not going to be free. There has to be greater investment in childcare. There has to be greater Government investment. I know no one wants to hear about investing more money, but investment in what the Women's Budget Group calls social infrastructure and the whole of our caring infrastructure, whether that is care for the elderly or care for the children, from the supply side, not just giving money to parents, but giving money to nurseries, which would also

help with the pay of the women working in those sectors and help with their training and progression. That kind of investment on the supply side into the care sector is really crucial and there is no way round that.

One thing that is not talked about enough is the role of employers investing in that. We have just heard about employers investing in care for the elderly. In other countries the model is parents pay into childcare, the Government pay into childcare and employers pay into childcare, because they massively benefit from women being able to come to work and leave their children in childcare. There is a model there in Europe. That is what happens in France and some other countries, but it is never talked about here. We can talk about levies for employers on apprenticeships; why can we not talk about levies for employers on childcare? This is particularly for larger employers who rely on a predominantly female workforce working on very low pay and variable hours, such as in retail. Would it not be possible for them to make some kind of contribution towards that?

There is also something about the culture and making this not just a women's problem. We have been talking a lot about this in terms of it being a women's problem. I know you talked about this a bit in the previous session, but there needs to be more to ensure that fathers are getting involved in childcare too and that employers are not just seeing women as the ones who are going to take time off or want to work part-time, or have unreasonable requests around childcare. It needs to start right at the beginning; there needs to be earnings-related paternity pay for fathers so it makes it affordable for them to take time off right at the beginning to start getting involved in childcare, and for there to be more of an incentive for dads to do that. That is the only way that we will move towards a more shared parenting culture.

Christopher Brooks: I have already mentioned carer's leave, but we have also looked a lot at flexible working. It is really clear that flexible working is a lot less available to people working in lower-skilled roles. If you are a professional, it is a lot easier to access it. That has a detrimental impact on women. The removal of the 26-week period for the right to request would be really helpful. It would allow people, at the point of recruitment, to make a formal request. The right to request has been very successful, and employers buy into it. It is quite empowering for individuals, more than anything. Ideally we would like to go even beyond that and a step beyond the right to request, and have a system of what we have called flexible by default, which would really be the idea that you can assume you can work flexibly. You would be able to pitch an idea to your employer, who would then be able to reject it on the same business reasons as currently exist—if it is not workable for them. It is really an attitudinal change more than anything, more than a legal change. It is just empowering for individuals, and allowing people to have open conversations in the workplace and build a trusting environment, which ultimately, across a whole range of issues, is what can make the biggest difference.

I do not know whether you want me to give you another policy recommendation around training. Particularly for part-time work you are a lot less likely to get investment from your employer in training you. The skills system at the moment has obviously been cut back hugely over the last few years and employer investment has also decreased. Therefore, we need measures to try to fill the gap there. We need to look very carefully about how to reinvigorate investment in training for everybody. Looking at measures like

lifetime learning accounts, which have come up in the past, is the way we need to think about going with training, just to try to make it more accessible.

Q124 Angela Crawley: Anna, I know you have the toughest task because everyone has already covered quite a lot.

Anna Ritchie Allan: Is there anything left to say? I agree with what everyone else has said about increasing the availability of flexible working and improving the quality of part-time work available. I particularly agree with what Scarlet said about employers' responsibilities and how we can work to encourage them to provide childcare allowance and childcare vouchers. However, that is not to detract from the fact that free or significantly subsidised universal childcare would have a transformative effect on the women's labour market participation. There is also infrastructure; the way that public investment works, the focus that is traditionally on capital investment disproportionately benefits men. Looking at childcare as infrastructure, you would also have a significant impact in terms of seeing how childcare functions in society and how it allows women and men to participate in the labour market, to grow local economies and to grow the national economy. What would be required with that is raising of standards, pay and terms and conditions in the workforce where women predominate and in low paid jobs.

Chair: Ben, I think you had a question.

Q125 Ben Howlett: It follows on from a point you were just making, which relates to productivity. Obviously productivity is the question of the day at the moment—the topic of hot debate here. How much recognition is there within employers that employing more women would increase their productivity? Because the stats seem to speak for themselves but there seems to be not much narrative coming out amongst employers, whether that is the private or public sector.

Christopher Brooks: I do not think there is much recognition. We deal mainly with the over 50s. There is a really strong stereotype that older workers are less productive, and particularly that older female workers are less productive. That is one of the most glaring errors. If you look at the research, there is absolutely minimal evidence to suggest that that is at all correct. In fact, for individual productivity, if anything, older workers are at least as productive as everybody else and also employers can do more to help themselves by looking at things like reasonable adjustments, whether that is flexible working or physical adjustments for older workers who might have a health condition or for people with disabilities. Those kinds of measures can really raise productivity. All too often, it is the short-term, easier solution that seems to prevail. It is often, sadly, based on stereotypes. That is why we need to change attitudes generally across a whole range of these issues.

Q126 Mrs Drummond: We have covered a lot of this already, particularly in the last session, which a lot of you heard, but what barriers do women face in returning to the labour market in this particular sector? Is there an issue of the length of the break, which is what we heard in the last session too—that they had been away for more than 12 months? Can I start with Robert, please?

Robert Stephenson-Padron: With our sector it is a bit unusual because staff turnover is so high. Whether you have just left for a short period of time or for a long period of time, it does not make a huge difference, especially because management structures are probably

flatter in social care than they are in other places as well. The staff turnover rate in social care, on the frontline end, in England is about 30%, so you would expect that maybe if you come back in five years there might be a whole set of different people. If you lowered the staff turnover in social care, which is the goal for everyone, then you would start to have these issues that you have in other sectors. At the moment, this sector is too much in a horrific state for that to be an issue.

Q127 Mrs Drummond: Why have you large turnovers? How are you going to correct that?

Robert Stephenson-Padron: One of the primary ways to lower the staff turnover rates is, number one, to start paying at least the minimum wage and, as fast as we can, to get to the living wage. Care is something that people like to do, from a vocational basis, but if you are in a situation where you cannot live, or you can do a similar or easier job for higher pay, you are going to go and do that. At the moment the pay is so low in the sector that until you fix that staff turnover is going to remain high.

Q128 Mrs Drummond: When they are leaving, are they finding better jobs because they are just using it—they have gone out the market for a bit, they have gone and got a job, as we heard from the previous session, they are working for two or three months, that is going to make a massive difference, and then they can get a better paid job?

Robert Stephenson-Padron: I was speaking to someone from Skills for Care, which is our sector's skills council last month about this issue. She said the reality is that because the data we have on this issue is so poor, we do not know. We do not know where people are going. She did say by intuition they are generally going to other care providers for slightly higher pay or exiting the sector altogether. However, she said that because the data on this is coming from the employers, the employers do not necessarily know at a macro-level where the people are going.

Q129 Mrs Drummond: You pay the living wage, so what is your turnover like in your company?

Robert Stephenson-Padron: I can supply the exact data afterwards. It is much lower than the average, I would say.

Q130 Mrs Drummond: Have you any other comments on that? You have talked about childcare; are there any other barriers that you think are stopping people from coming back to work? What length, again, do you think is acceptable to go out of work and come back again?

Christopher Brooks: Possibly the unemployment support system is mixed; that is the fairest way of expressing it and people's experience of it. Jobcentre Plus is not always sensitive enough to the needs of people with additional caring responsibilities or health conditions. There is scope for improvement there as well, just making it a bit more receptive and helping people find jobs that are more suitable, providing a more bespoke service, with a bit more intensive support where needed a bit more quickly and those kinds of things.

Q131 Mrs Drummond: Do you agree with the issue about if you are out of work for more than 12 months, or do you think in this sector you can cope with people who have been out for longer?

Christopher Brooks: Across the whole economy, if you are out of work for about six to eight months—that kind of period—while you are out of work, it becomes increasingly hard to get back in, at least to the same level as before. Once you hit about six to eight months, it makes less difference whether you are then out of work for two years; it becomes very difficult to get back in at that point.

Anna Ritchie Allan: As Robert was saying, the nature of the high turnover means that there is so much churn in the sector and these jobs. Because they often have poor terms and conditions, low pay, poor working practices, the length of time that you have out of a job is not as problematic as you have in other sectors, I would suggest, particularly in professional sectors, where women with higher levels of education are less likely to take prolonged periods—career breaks—out to do unpaid family care. It is more likely in lower paid sectors.

Chair: Can I gently move us on to the last area of questioning, because I am conscious of the time? I am sorry; I feel like I am slightly curtailing the discussion.

Q132 Jo Churchill: This is talking about progression and performance again. What opportunities do women have to make progression and also what evidence is there that they are looking for progression? What often strikes me is that there this is this multi-factorial pull that they may want more hours but they cannot get the childcare or they cannot get the transport, or whatever of those different things. How much progression are they looking for and how much is it possible to achieve?

Scarlet Harris: That goes back to the question of job design and what jobs need to look like. That is working on the assumption that in order to move up a step or in order to take the next step up the career ladder, you must be working X number more hours and you must be available on call all the time. You would not possibly ever be able to see your children. There must be a way for employers to design jobs more intelligently and to think more about, “Does this job need to be full-time? Could all of our jobs be advertised on a flexible basis?” Working Families have a “Happy to talk flexible working” strapline or kitemark on job adverts. We need to think about encouraging those discussion about flexible working at all levels and model good practice of flexible working, high quality part-time opportunities across organisations, not just part-time jobs at the bottom of the organisation, and for it not to be seen as either you choose to work on low pay, low skills in a part-time position that might suit your caring requirements, or you choose to never see your children and work full-time in an incredibly highly pressured job. There are lots of jobs where there is no reason in the world why you could not do them as a job share or on a flexible basis, or perhaps working from home sometimes. It is about making that accessible.

We have already talked about—perhaps it was in the last session—the current requirements for the right to request flexible working and the 26-week eligibility criteria, and that is a huge barrier for lots of women, or anyone with caring responsibilities. If you have those responsibilities, it is not a question of trying to dupe an employer; it is a question of not being able to work for 26 weeks or of being able to ask your employer for a more flexible arrangement, not knowing whether your employer will grant it or not, because not all requests are granted. Therefore, it is about being able to have those

conversations upfront, particularly within an organisation where the employer might already know you have caring requirements.

Anna Ritchie Allan: Just to add to that and to provide an example as well, if you look at admin workers, the majority of whom are women, it is often a low paid job. There are a lot of issues around gender and training. They were picked up earlier on in terms of low paid, part-time female workers being the least likely to receive any type of training. There is the issue of availability of training and whether or not it is held within the hours that a part-time worker is working, but particularly looking at admin, it is very, very unusual to find a clear progression pathway from an admin job into a non-admin job, so in a development or programme role, for example. With the increasing pressure on budgets for employers in terms of training, what that means is that it results often in a freeze on non-essential training. Admin workers, for example, need that type of training to make the move across, so if they are only allowed to do training that is directly related to their role, there is no development there, there are no opportunities to progress in another way and that is why there often seems to be a second glass ceiling that is above the senior admin grades in an organisation.

Robert Stephenson-Padron: Within homecare, with respect to progression, it is useful to look at nursing. Even though it is a social care role, it is similar to healthcare in the fact that there is huge benefit in keeping your best people on the frontline. That is where a lot of the care workers want to be. That is where the action happens. I spend a lot of time in hospitals, when our users go to hospital, and some of the best nurses, who are older, are still on the frontline and they are excellent. What we need to do in social care, and this is something we were working with the UK Commission for Employment and Skills to try to develop was to explore what kind of additional training you can give to social care workers to develop new premier markets for people who pay extra, where social care workers can gravitate towards and then they would progress in terms of pay, but they would also still be on the frontline doing care work.

It is also the case that I am a care manager, and it is so different to being a care worker. I would question whether many people would want to be a care manager, which is 180 degrees different from being a care worker.

Q133 Jo Churchill: It is that transition which slightly backs up your comments, Anna, that it is about the appropriateness of training in order to make the marketplace more skilled but more fluid as well. It is meeting those needs. Christopher, did you want to add anything?

Christopher Brooks: Yes, I would just add about mid-life career reviews at this point, as a way of helping people progress through the workplace and to set out their ambitions and then work out what they need to do to meet them. Mid-life career reviews were piloted by BIS a couple of years ago and the TUC were very heavily involved in them through Unionlearn. They proved to be a very effective way of engaging people—and very low cost as well, crucially—in thinking about what they want to achieve through the later part of their working life. It was aimed at people around the age of 50 and it gave people the chance to sit down with a trained adviser, either a union rep or the National Careers Service was involved with it too. Non-unionised workplaces train people as well.

It proved to be very, very effective at helping people plan their later working life, and it is still run by some of the organisations that were involved with it, like Unionlearn and the

National Careers Service, even though they are no longer paid for it. Finding a way of rolling that out to both people in and out of work on a larger scale can be a really effective intervention for people. It can help people plan what they want to do and what training they might need to do it and also how to talk to employers and that kind of thing about achieving what they want to.

Q134 Jo Churchill: That would be, in part, an answer to the final question, which is: what can be done to facilitate greater opportunities? That really is an honest conversation about people's needs, is it not? You have just described a mid-life appraisal about where they want to go, what they might need to support them in order to keep them working. An issue here is the fact that with an older working population caring for older and older generations who are surviving longer and having children later, you have an extrapolation of all these things over a much longer timeline. Who should the recommendations be directed at and what can be done to facilitate greater opportunities?

Scarlet Harris: Can I slightly build on what Christopher was saying? I completely support, obviously, the recommendation on mid-life career reviews. In addition to that, it is really important that we think about, if the point of a mid-life career review is to signpost someone towards training they might want to do in order to progress, ensuring that those training opportunities are there. Cuts to the further education sector and adult education sector have been hugely detrimental, particularly to women in low paid jobs. Cuts to funding for, for example, English as a second language have presented massive barriers to women wanting to get into the labour market who do not have the required English skills. We have seen the impact of some of those policy decisions. For example, the TUC did some work a couple of years ago on equality and apprenticeships and mapped out the growth in apprenticeships against various policy interventions and the point at which Train to Gain funding was removed. Apprenticeships went through the roof and we have seen that, while the TUC completely support the focus on apprenticeships and getting more young people into training and tackling NEETs, a lot of that funding has ended up being used by employers as a replacement for other funding that they had to do on-the-job training.

Arguably, large employers should be paying for some of that training themselves. If you are training retail staff to do what they need to do in a shop, you should probably pay for that yourself rather than take apprenticeship funding to do it. However, it is a roundabout way of saying that lots of this has a really direct impact on older women, women over 40, in the workplace, who currently do not have anywhere to go in order to get that training. If they decide that they do not want to be stuck in retail, or whatever it is they are doing, and they want to progress, or they are currently on a career break and have taken several years out after having children, they want to go back doing something similar or doing something different, there is nowhere for them to go unless they have the means to fund themselves to do vocational training or to get on to those kinds of schemes.

Q135 Chair: Can I ask a supplementary on that, because obviously we are dealing with women over 40 who still endure a massive pay gap, whereas for women under 40 that has been all but eliminated for those in full-time work particularly? Going back to what happened in the past, which is sort of what you are advocating, does not feel that attractive to me, given we are currently trying to deal with a problem that has been inherited. What would you do differently that would mean that we would not just repeat the situation that we have now?

Scarlet Harris: I am not suggesting going back to the past because I completely understand that that is not the focus of this Committee. We are looking at what we can do for those women now and I am advocating funding for FE. These are very recent cuts to FE funding and adult education funding.

Q136 Chair: Could I argue that we are in the situation that we are now, even though in the past those women did have access to that funding? What would be different now that would mean that we would not just be repeating the same mistakes we made in the past?

Scarlet Harris: Sorry, I do not quite understand the question.

Chair: The cohort of women who we are dealing with now, particularly 50-plus, perhaps did have opportunities to have mid-career reviews and, your argument would be, more access to further education, but they are still in that position where they are suffering an enormous pay gap. Those changes are relatively recent.

Scarlet Harris: They are relatively recent changes but if we are talking about a cohort of women who are currently in their 40s working in retail, possibly have taken some time out, were possibly not in retail before having children but are doing a job in a relatively low paid sector because they took a career break and were unable to get into the sector they were in before, actually having adult education and FE training courses available to them would enable them to make a change—the kinds of change that the mid-life career review might suggest or signpost them towards training that they could then undertake in order to do a different job.

Christopher Brooks: It is not just about saying that we need more government funding; it is about trying to find new ways of allowing the training to exist that meets people's needs. The apprenticeship programme is a good example of where, because there has been so much emphasis on it, it does to an extent do that. With older people particularly, there is a big gap and we need to look at how employers can contribute to training for on-the-job and, as Anna mentioned earlier, for progression as well. There needs to be some kind of way of reinvigorating investment in training, which has fallen off from all sides in the past decade or so. That will help meet a lot of needs. The labour market has changed so much over the last 20 or 30 years and now people frequently move jobs. Therefore, people frequently need to retrain. It becomes increasingly important that people can update their skills and it is not done on the basis of any kind of stereotypes about people wanting to keep working or to progress in work.

Chair: I feel we have run out of time, which is a shame, because we could have continued our conversation well into the afternoon. Can I thank you, on behalf of all of the Committee, for coming along today and also for all of the evidence that you have already submitted to us in writing? It was an incredibly helpful session. Thank you very much for your time.