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www.gov.uk/dsit

Dame Chi Onwurah MP
Science, Innovation and Technology
Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

30 June 2026

Launch of the Women in Research Charter

Dear Dame Chi,

The UK's science and research strengths are central to our mission to drive economic growth, raise productivity and improve living standards across the country. To succeed, we must ensure that our research system attracts, retains and supports the very best talent. This must include providing greater support to women who continue to face avoidable barriers to success.

Women remain underrepresented in the research workforce with systemic factors like lack of support around childcare and other family caring responsibilities preventing academic career progression and at times, pushing women out of research careers all together.

That is why DSIT has been working with voices from across the UK R&D sector to craft a new Women in Research Charter, which will be published tomorrow, Wednesday 1st July. The Charter is a voluntary commitment to improve outcomes for women across the UK research system. It sets out clear commitments for research funders and research performing organisations, including universities who do both.

This Charter will only succeed if it builds on, and strengthens, the excellent work already underway across the sector. Universities, funders, learned societies and others have driven important progress, from Athena Swan to the excellent work of the Daphne Jackson Trust, as well as a wide range of discipline specific initiatives. We are clear that this Charter is not intended to replace or duplicate that activity.

The Charter's commitments are grouped around six outcomes for women in research, which signatories will take co-ordinated action on to deliver meaningful change:

1. **Improved support for parents and carers**, including at least matching the maternity and family leave and pay that UK Research and Innovation already provides to doctoral students
2. **Consistent data and transparency**, including designing a clear and limited set of comparable metrics
3. **Enabling more flexible working**, particularly for researchers with childcare responsibilities or wider caring responsibilities
4. **Eliminating bias from grant and job application processes**, including more equitable panel and assessment processes
5. **Ensuring an inclusive workplace culture with zero tolerance for bullying and harassment**, building trust in reporting mechanisms without fear of repercussions
6. **Sharing and implementing best practice across the research sector**, including improving transparency and evaluation.

More than 50 organisations have pledged their support as founding signatories demonstrating how government, research funders and research performing organisations are working together to drive meaningful change and ensure that women can thrive at every stage of their research career.

My officials will keep the Committee updated as this important initiative is implemented and would welcome your support for our ambition of improving outcomes for women across the UK research system.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liz Kendall', written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon Liz Kendall MP

Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology