

Written evidence from Universal Music UK [MiM0048]

As we have outlined, at Universal Music UK we have taken a range of steps to prevent and tackle misogyny and have put in place initiatives to further enhance the experience and opportunities for women in the sector, both as artists and executives.

We recognise of course there is always more which can be done, but we would also like to take this opportunity to highlight that our industry is very fragmented, with many parts completely outside of the control of labels, despite our outsized perception. Labels are just one part of a wide network, from the live business to artist management companies, much of it independent and with a high proportion of freelancers (72%).

For this reason, alongside the work we are doing through our own internal initiatives and procedures, we are fully committed to the proposed Creative Industries Independent Standards Authority (CIISA).

We are proud at Universal Music UK that so many of our frontline divisions are run by women – from our biggest label EMI – recent winner of *Music Week's* Record Company of the Year title – through to the legendary Abbey Road Studios – but despite having lots of incredible role models there are still some areas of the business which remain male-dominated.

To address this we have a number of initiatives already in place. For example:

Women In A&R

Our unique programme offers women from any department the opportunity to apply to move across to A&R – A&R stands for “artists and repertoire” and this is the team which goes out to find new talent. Supported by bespoke training and mentoring, the scheme is now up and running. We will be exploring further “lane-switching” programmes to facilitate the progression of women in our business, with a focus on areas of our business where women are under-represented and also those which are traditionally pipelines to the most senior positions in the company.

Mentoring and Training

We recognise that we need to progress and support female talent in every division and at every level. We offer coaches for executive development which has great take up amongst our senior women.

Anti-harassment/“Bystander to Upstander” training

This is undertaken by every employee, from CEO to entry level. Amongst a range of topics, this covers the myriad biases that women experience inside and outside of working life, and explains how to address and challenge them.

Personalised support around fertility, pregnancy and early parenthood

We offer coaches to all staff taking maternity and paternity, as well as “keep in touch” days, and there is a strong take-up of both initiatives.

In 2023, our updated Family Matters policy now additionally includes partners leave. This policy, which means that all new parents – irrespective of gender or how they became a parent - are eligible for 12 months of parental leave, should they wish to take it, with six months at full pay. This important change addresses outdated perceptions of parental norms and wider issues of gender inequality. We believe the benefits of equal parental leave will be seen and felt right across our business.

Menopause support

We now provide expert support for menopause as an addition to our standard employee medical benefits. Training on menopause is being rolled out across the company, and we provide regular support forums where women can connect with each other and speak directly with medical menopause experts.

Our Women's Network

Supporting and championing female employees, this is one of the most active of our growing number of internal community groups.

As well as supporting our women executives, we are determined to encourage women artists at a grassroots level, with the [Abbey Road Equalise Festival](#) being a high-profile example of our commitment. There are some brilliant women artists who are alumni of the Brit School and we are seeing the same from East London Arts and Music (ELAM), the Ofsted-outstanding free sixth form in Tower Hamlets. We are founding partners and make a significant financial contribution to the school, but crucially we support on everything from curriculum to hosting showcases. Every year we have 40 young people from ELAM come for two weeks work experience. This is part of addressing the pipeline issue, making sure we are encouraging girls who want to get into music.

The other part is supporting women when they are signed artists and that's why for the past three years we have had an artist counselling service. Working in tandem with our Artist Relations team, the service is led by a fully trained practitioner who before training as a counsellor spent years working in the industry with high profile artists, many of them women. It takes a preventative approach to supporting artists' mental health, working with professionals across the wellbeing and mental health sector, from therapists to specialist practitioners, to offer the most effective support to artists at all stages of their careers.

Turning to your specific questions, we looked at our current roster of 231 artists though the lens of gender diversity and the breakdown is 52% male (121), 25% female (57), 15% male group (34), 6% mixed gender group (15), 1% female group (2) and 1% non-binary (2).

This data is not something that we currently request from our artists and therefore have had to use judgement to create these categories. We would need to ask permission from each of our artists to give this information and we are mindful of GDPR alongside the danger of misgendering so unfortunately not able to supply our roster for publication in the form requested. Equally we do not have access to this gender-specific data historically but we are now monitoring it.

Senior Management Diversity

Within our leadership team we have 50% women and 50% men. There are 20 executives on this team and of those two are women of colour and one is a Black woman.

Exit interviews

The company has carried out exit interviews for many years, however with a change in our People Inclusion and Culture team structure recently it was identified that the process should be refined and that there should be broader responsibility for exit interviews. The new process since January 2023 includes quarterly meetings with the Senior People team leaders to discuss feedback from the exit interviews with the hope of identifying any themes and/or areas of the business that need addressing.

Complaints

As discussed in the session we have looked at our complaints process and have concluded that in the last five years there were a total of five complaints in the UK business which included inappropriate conduct of the nature discussed at the Committee. All five of those cases led to a form of disciplinary action, which included three of the accused exiting the business.

While we have put in place bi-monthly meetings with our people, inclusion and culture leaders, compliance department and Director of Diversity & Inclusion to discuss any complaints relating to harassment, discrimination and/or any of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act, we do acknowledge that we must continue to make our staff aware of the anonymous hotline. Since the session our Chairman has emailed the entire company with the attached note, which also raises awareness of your inquiry.

Natasha also spoke with Jackie Doyle-Price after the session to ask if the committee would be forwarding on our Universal Music hotline information to the relevant participants of the inquiry which we hope everyone agrees would be helpful to encourage reporting by victims of sexual harassment.

Historically women have faced misogyny in virtually every industry and the music industry is no different. But there has been a real shift in recent years and we are mindful of not putting women off from joining our industry - the opposite of what we need and want to happen. While there is always more to do, we are proud of the work Universal Music UK does and would be very happy to welcome you or any members of the committee to our HQ in King's Cross to discuss the topic further.

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