



KIRSTEN GOODWIN
COACHING



FLEXIBLE WORKING PANEL DEBATE



HSBC Headquarters
15th May 2019



FLEXIBLE WORKING DEBATE - 15th MAY 2019

Nicola Pitt and Kirsten Goodwin organised a panel debate on the subject, **"Does Flexible Working Reinforce Gender Stereotypes?"**.

This was kindly *hosted by HSBC* at their global headquarters in Canary Wharf, on behalf of HSBC Flex, the bank's flexible working network for employees.

The evening opened with a *warm welcome* from SAMANTHA FEENEY, Co-Chair of HSBC Flex.

This was followed by an inspiring *keynote address* from ELYSIA MCCAFFREY, Deputy Head of the Government's Equality Office.

The Panel, *chaired* by ROSIE KINCHEN from the Sunday Times, then each presented their fascinating perspectives on the topic, and took questions from the floor.

The *panellists* were:

- HARINI IYENGAR Practising Barrister, Expert in Equality law and Spokesperson on Equal Representation for the Women's Equality Party
- TARA LEATHERS, Deputy CEO of The Prince's Trust
- WILL MCDONALD, Group Sustainability and Public Policy Director at Aviva plc (job share) and Chair of Trustees of the Fatherhood Institute. Part of the most senior all-male job share in the UK
- ASIF SADIQ MBE, Head of Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging at The Telegraph
- JENNY VARLEY, Global Head of Digital Communications & Employer Brand at HSBC.

The evening finishing with *closing remarks* from Kirsten Goodwin, on behalf of herself and Nicola Pitt.

General points

Flexible working can take many different forms, and can be used for many different reasons. For example, employees are now asking for flexible working for non-caring activities, such as writing a book or volunteering.

One form of flexible working is a job share. This had a lot of support among speakers, both as managers of job shares, and those participating in them. For a manager, you get two brains rather than one; for a job sharer, the work continues to be done during the days you are off.

In general, flexible working helps organisations use their full talent pool; retain quality staff; and save money in recruitment costs. It helps staff who have other priorities demonstrate that they have not left their ambition behind. Finally, it decreases occupational segregation.



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Personal stories

Sam Feeney said that she had always wanted to work flexibly, even before having children. Now she and her husband both work flexibly, and do what she called "home share" in their domestic life. She referred to her "work wife" Dee Gosney, with whom she job shares.

Elysia McCaffrey praised the job sharers in her team, describing the value she got from having two people in one job, including two sets of ideas, and easy cover for absences.

Harini Iyengar spoke about her experiences "coming out" as a mother. It was not accepted for barristers to ever discuss their domestic lives, and she kept the fact of her three children hidden for years. It is only recently that she has been able to acknowledge that part of her life. She also noted how the majority of those running representative groups to help support diversity in the workplace were volunteers.

Tara Leathers described that in the Prince's Trust, despite the female employees numbering 68%, they made up 91% of the flexible workers. So the balance isn't right yet. She also commented that the Prince's Trust's more entrepreneurial courses are more popular with women but the corporate ones with men. This might indicate that women feel that they will need more flexibility later on in their careers.

Will McDonald spoke of his intentions to be present for his kids while they were young, and then his realisation after a few years that he was working the traditional full-time career and his wife was full-time caring. This was the foundation of making changes that led to his job share. He talked of the "bath test": who do the kids want to get them out of the bath?

Asif Sadiq MBE talked of the difficult balance he and his wife had experienced between choosing to have children and having a career, and how more widely available free childcare would help.

Jenny Varley recounted how she used not to be a fan of flexible working, until she found herself suffering as a result of overwork. Since then, she did a complete about-turn, and now champions flexible working in her teams, including for non-caring reasons. In her view, it should be about productivity, not presenteeism.

Kirsten Goodwin summed up that, from the discussion this evening, although studies have suggested that flexible working can reinforce gender stereotypes, it also supports diversity and inclusion. It was clear that the picture for flexible working was still patchy. However, it was also evident that the only way is up. And it was vital the flexible working was not limited only to a privileged few.



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Some facts about flexible working

- 11.1% of jobs are advertised as flexible (Timewise, 2018).
- 87% of people demand flexibility in their roles (Timewise, 2018).
- News reporting in 2018 on the gender paygap was second only to the royal wedding.
- Millennials are more likely to ask for flexible working.
- Couples are 30% less likely to separate (for the whole of their relationship) if partner takes full 2/52 off when baby born.
- The Bar: large number of women leave 8-13 years after qualifying.
- HSBC: 49% of employees work flexibly, and more men than women work flexibly.

Policy recommendations

- Every job should be mandatorily advertised as flexible.
- There should be free universal childcare until school age, and the top rate pension tax relief abolished to pay for this childcare.
- There should be full pay for nine months of maternity leave.
- Introduce a concept of 'use it or lose it' 1 month paternity leave for men, as in Sweden: As a result of this policy change, women's earnings increase by 7% per month they've been back at work for the rest of their life.
- Everyone should have the right to request flexible working 26 weeks after starting.

Recommendations to organisations

- Introduce quality, objective exit interviews to discover the true reasons for loss of talent.
- Responsibility sits with diversity & inclusion lead to demonstrate the true changes the company are making.
- Companies & managers need to get over the idea of importance of presenteeism & look at output as the most important criteria.
- Introduce apprenticeships that are available working flexibly.
- Change the culture around flexible working: every job can be done flexibly, and flexible working is a long-term arrangement not just a short-term fix.

Recommendations regarding flexible working for men

- There are huge mental health benefits for men in spending time with their families. Therefore, effort should be made to normalise the conversation for men around flexible working. Men should be encouraged to talk openly about their family lives, and their flexible working choices: being "real models, not role models".
- Using paternity leave to bridge the "competency gap" in caring for children is vital. Without this, men can feel less able to care for their children (or perceived as so by their partners), and this can result in less sharing of childcare.

Many thanks to all attendees.

**To sign up for information about future events, please contact
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Nicola Pitt and Kirsten Goodwin are both highly-experienced coaches, who help professionals and organisations achieve career success and business effectiveness.

Kirsten and Nicola are both qualified Coaches, as well as Practitioners in Neuro-Linguistic Programming and Hypnotherapy. This enables them to tailor a personalised approach for their clients from a range of powerful tools and techniques, to get the best results. We offer 1:1 coaching, workshops and events, individually and jointly.

Nicola has over a decade of experience enabling people, individually and in teams, to fulfil their professional potential without becoming exhausted or ill.

A Chartered Physiotherapist by background, Nicola understands the physical impact of pressure and how it can slow success or stop careers altogether. Nicola uses a range of methodologies to bring out the best that individuals and teams can offer so they can operate at their best in all contexts. Nicola brings her medical expertise alongside years of supervising, mentoring and leading individuals to help everyone succeed.

Nicola Pitt



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Kirsten Goodwin



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For over a decade, Kirsten built a successful career in the Civil Service, negotiating for the UK in Brussels, and operating at the highest levels in some of the toughest roles - including teaching hard-bitten coppers how to do their jobs better at the National Crime Agency.

But she came close to burnout. Her body would shut down from her inability to handle stress, and she was regularly unable to leave her bed for days, sometimes weeks at a time. This went on for years. Luckily, she learned powerful “mind-body” tools and techniques that re-set her approach to stress, and helped her thrive. Now she uses her experience to help other ambitious professionals achieve their career goals with ease and balance.

Find us on LinkedIn or contact nicola@nicolapitt.co.uk / kirsten@kirstengoodwin.co.uk

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