

## Submission - Leah Kerley

This is an email following on from attending the Prosperity sponsored Gender Pay Gap panel on Wednesday 24th Oct. I would like to share some of *my own personal* views on why we currently see a gap.

### Supporting Parents share an equal responsibility:

- Maternity - maternity is aimed at women, with very limited (paternity) options for men to share the role of support as a parent to their newborn child. Parents have a 50/50 shared equal responsibility for the life of their child yet are not given the same rights in employment. This has critical implications; The mother is always immediately seen as the primary care giver and a stereotype is formed, the child grows up with a view of his parents having 'traditional' roles within the family, that are not equal. Many men do not take their paternity even if offered for fear of how this will 'look' to their employer, as if they are not committed to their work and career, maternity should, after all be a role for the mother, no? We need to challenge this deeply traditional view, men should have exactly the same rights as women on this front, or be entitled to share this role. In my example I did not feel there was a choice, I was the mother therefore I had to take maternity, and I had to deal with the emotional challenges going back to work brought, the worry of the impact to MY career, I had to bear that burden on my own.
- Flexible working - whilst many firms in Jersey are now introducing flexible working - this is again very much limited to mothers returning to work post maternity, mothers therefore often feel that their options are limited in terms of career having to juggle child care with work. The school playgrounds reflect the uneven balance of women to men when it comes to doing 'drop offs and pick ups' women often either are forced into giving up their work or reducing their hours, affecting their pay. Men are either reluctant or refuse to raise the question of flexible working for themselves owing to the way this will be perceived by their firm and potential negative implications for their own career. This is something I am resentful for, feeling like I have to bear the majority share of the burden of the children whilst also trying to succeed professionally and balance my work responsibilities - which proves extremely challenging when needing to leave at 2pm four days a week to collect children. In the first few years of my children's lives my wages suffered as I reduced my hours to have more of a balance, though financially I could not cope, so have had to increase my hours to that of full time. My wages are now equal to that of my husband, yet I am still one that runs out of the office four days a week to collect the children, I sacrifice attendance at key meetings and fear that this will ultimately impact my ability to progress in my career at the pace I would like it to. An equal share is all I am asking, and for companies to promote an equal view and accept that parents for a short period of their lives need to be supported, and supported equally, understanding that some men, like my husband WANT to be their for their children, WANT to collect them from school, but feel like organisation culture/business culture is not accepting or willing to allow this.
- Childcare costs - parents should be better supported through subsidies for childcare, the cost of nursery is absurd and many parents simply cannot afford these costs on top of the already high cost of living in Jersey, women, in the main are therefore forced in many cases to give up work after having children. Traditionally grandparents could help with childcare, though with the more women wanting to put their careers first and having children later in life, the age of grandparents is increasing with less being able to support their grandchildren. We are therefore

forced to put our children into nurseries or hire nannies, childminders, for most this is cost prohibitive.

- After school clubs - my child attends JCG prep - there is inadequate after school provision for children and parents suffer, and it is more likely the women who has to make work sacrifices to collect children. This is something I am personally frustrated by and request that the states of jersey acknowledge the need to support parents with more after school care to meet the need and demand acknowledging too, that it impacts women more than men, which in turn contributes to the gender pay gap.

### **Society and Culture –**

- Schools/Education play a big part - Women's achievements through history are rarely celebrated - focus is on men and what they have done, school books are mostly traditional - men appearing as doctors etc. and mothers stay at home 'Tiger that came to tea' as an example. More women should give more talks at schools, career fayres etc and be involved in demonstrating what women CAN achieve allowing young girls to have role models and understand their options are the **SAME** as men. Historical and political iconography is biased to men, girls grow up thinking that men shaped history, and that their role was not as valuable. Gender separation at a young age - again, JCG prep as an example. Boys and girls are mixed in classrooms, though they wear different colour uniforms and their book bags go in different boxes in the classroom - what reason would their be for this at the age of 5?! Children are brought up to see that girls and boys are different – thus unconscious bias begins.
- There are MANY male dominated director level companies in Jersey - I have worked in a company where the majority of the senior leadership team and directors are male, the lack of female presence made women feel less valued and included in company direction and decisions a women's voice is not perceived as valuable to their male counterpart. In circumstances like this women may struggle with the very masculine tone and behaviours, which undoubtedly impacts the organizations culture and women simply stop trying or leave such companies - again risking a back step in their career. To the women, it feels as though through being male there is more of an 'entitlement' to a senior role, simply by virtue of gender. Again what is needed here is a cultural shift where organisations see the value of inclusivity, promoting equality in order to achieve increased productivity, efficiency and greater overall success.
- There is an argument that many women 'choose' an occupation that offers less financial reward, this notion I fear is ridiculous and exists only because of the options women have presented to them, or feel are available to them OR that they have been forced to sacrifice a higher paid role to balance the duties of childcare. If men and women shared an equal role in raising children, supporting children then this would, in my opinion not be the case, especially since girls out perform boys in school education...

We need to promote a cultural shift, celebrate and promote equality, and bring our young girls up supporting their belief that they are of equal worth and importance, growing their confidence, understanding their contribution historically and in the future, to the future of Jersey - **is valued equally to that of men and that their opportunities are the same as man.**

Kind Regards,

Leah Kerley

