

Submission by the Daphne Jackson Trust to the House of Commons Science & Technology Committee: My Science enquiry

The Daphne Jackson Trust is the UK's leading organisation dedicated to realising the potential of returners to research careers following a career break of two years or more taken for a family, caring or health reason. The Trust was established in 1992 in memory of Professor Daphne Jackson – the UK's first female Professor of Physics.

The Trust offers Fellowships across all fields of research in universities, research institutions and industry across the UK and Republic of Ireland. It has supported over 450 individuals return to research careers. Up to 25 new Fellowships are awarded each year, and over 60 are currently in place with our partner institutions. Without the Trust's Fellowship scheme, significant volumes of knowledge, talent and experience would be lost from the sector.

The research workforce is crucial to delivering the Government's goal of the UK as a "science superpower". The environment in which researchers work must be supportive of the diverse workforce and different working patterns that exist.

Much has been done with regard to EDI and looking at minority groups, both in isolation and when they intersect. A natural progression is to look at the intersectionality of work life balance and health related issues, such as caring responsibilities, the menopause, shared parenting, mental health, part time working patterns. The intersectionality of these barriers to progression and retention is a critical issue.

The pandemic shone a light on the reality of what work life balance really means and how it is possible to be productive as long as the right support is in place. As we emerge from the pandemic, working out what the 'new normal' will be in workplaces, there is an opportunity for the Committee to scrutinise what is currently in place and effectively have a 'reset' of legislation, policy and practices to ensure equality of opportunity for everyone in STEM research.

Currently those who experience work life balance issues face challenges that lead to many leaving the profession entirely.