

Submission by the Daphne Jackson Trust to the Women's Health Strategy: Call for Evidence.

This submission focuses specifically on theme 4: Maximising women's health in the workplace.

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 400 individuals to return to research careers. Up to 25 new Fellowships are awarded each year, over 60 are currently in place with our partner institutions.

## Summary

Maximising women's health in the workplace is an economic, social and moral imperative to ensure the success of the workforce. Despite mitigation over recent years, inequities still exist that can have devastating consequences on women's careers, their health, and wellbeing. Research, predominantly in higher education settings, is one such example where women experience inequitable treatment and consequently, are less likely to reach their full potential. The Daphne Jackson Trust's submission focuses on this setting.

## Women, non-work commitments and career breaks

Evidence demonstrates that women are more likely to shoulder non-work commitments than men<sup>1,2</sup>. These disparities have been further amplified by the Covid-19 pandemic<sup>3</sup>. Such non-work commitments can often necessitate a career break, a situation often compounded by other factors such as relocation, changes to a partner's employment circumstances and the availability and affordability of childcare or eldercare.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14860>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/658190/IPOL\\_STU\(2020\)658190\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/658190/IPOL_STU(2020)658190_EN.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=f1d5b1c3-d5e0-4497-8078-1bad6ca4eb5a>

In academia, – as in other sectors, career breaks are more likely to happen to women than men (96% of Daphne Jackson Fellows are women<sup>4</sup>). They occur for a variety of reasons – the most common of which are family, caring and health reasons. Career breaks in research are potentially devastating for an individual's career. Many are unable to secure subsequent employment due to a lack of recent research outputs, being perceived as 'behind the curve' in knowledge and technical skill and a lack of self-confidence. This leads to many researchers leaving their preferred profession entirely or forced to take jobs outside their area of expertise and skill level. This is a huge monetary, skill and knowledge loss to the sector and the wider economy, at a time when the UK needs to do more to attract and retain scientific skills. The economic benefit of addressing the professional women career break penalty alone is calculated as providing an additional £1.7bn to the country's economic output<sup>5</sup>.

What can be done?

Although returning individuals to research careers is complex, it can be achieved. Schemes such as Daphne Jackson Fellowships re-immers individuals in research areas at the forefront of their fields. Training to refresh and develop existing technical and transferable skills is provided as well as hands-on support from a dedicated advisor to guide individuals back to their research careers. Daphne Jackson Fellowships offer a vital route for women – and indeed all researchers – to return to their chosen profession after a career break. Without schemes such as this, the inequity returners face would be further exacerbated, and the majority would be lost to the sector.

The Daphne Jackson Trust has achieved much but cannot shoulder this responsibility alone. Additional support is needed to prevent a damaging exodus of knowledge, skills and experience from the sector. The convergence of overarching issues such as the post-Brexit focus of the UK economy, the R&D sector recovery post Covid-19, the goals of the Government's Industrial Strategy and the wider appetite for culture change offers a uniquely opportune moment for Government to identify mechanisms to leverage and scale up initiatives that return more women to research careers.

The Daphne Jackson Trust recommends that specific consideration could be given to the following:

- Increased Government funding and support for existing research returners schemes, with the appropriate Minister(s) and Department(s) championing the cause of returners, codifying best practice, promoting initiatives that encourage sustained change, awarding success and identifying high profile champions.
- Bring forward legislation to promote flexible working, as recommended by the Women and Work All Party Parliamentary Group<sup>6</sup>. This should be developed with

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<sup>4</sup> <https://daphnejackson.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Leading-the-way-for-returners-A-survey-of-former-Daphne-Jackson-Fellows-2015.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.pwc.co.uk/economic-services/women-returners/pwc-research-women-returners-nov-2016.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://connectpa.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Women-and-work-Annual-report-2020.pdf>

employees in mind whilst not compromising the level and quality of the individual role that a flexible arrangement might involve.

- Specifically support for those who are less likely to be in employment. These include women from minoritized backgrounds, women with children and single parents (particularly single mothers) who are the most under-represented in employment<sup>7</sup>. This is not just about bringing these groups back to paid work, rather, it is also about rethinking the unpaid care work they do and recalibrating how such work is valued.
- Family leave, in all its different configurations such as length, level of pay, eligibility and flexibility can both facilitate and hinder parents' – and more specifically mothers' – employment. Appropriately compensated and non-transferable parental leave increases uptake from fathers, thereby improving employment outcomes for mothers<sup>8</sup>. Policy makers should clarify their expectations around family leave. There should also be a system of monitoring and reporting for employers to ensure uptake is fair and equitable.
- Publicly provided or subsidised early childhood education and care is a key facilitator of parents' employment, particularly for mothers. The accessibility and cost of these services is crucial, particularly for low income families. Government should do far more to provide services such as these and compensate parents through voucher schemes to increase the affordability to more families.
- Close the gender and ethnicity pay (salary and bonuses) and pensions gap. Government should continue to publish data on gender pay gap reporting, but also extend this to ethnicity pay gaps. The fact that women and minority ethnic groups are in some cases paid less than white men has no place in any sector of the modern workforce.
- Kite marks for commitment to equality to be established within all employment sectors along the lines of Advance HE's Athena SWAN charter.
- Making it easier to diversify career pathways and increase opportunities for researchers outside of academia. Greater collaboration and cohesion with industry and the charity sector, with researchers interchanging roles between them, should be seen as normal and complement the explicitly stated goals of the Government's Research and Development Roadmap.

Finally, the impact of global drivers on employment - technological change, the green economy, digital skills, the aging population, climate change – coupled with the allied impetus for greater international and interdisciplinary collaboration, must create new workplace opportunities that treat women more fairly. All of us within the research sector have an opportunity to work together, with Government, to ensure everyone benefits from such prospects.

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/658190/IPOL\\_STU\(2020\)658190\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/658190/IPOL_STU(2020)658190_EN.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/139328/MenCare-Parental-Leave-Platform-Background-Paper-EU-Parliament-21.02.18.pdf>