

Post #metoo – what has really changed?

Thursday 9 September 2021, 1.00 – 2.00 pm BST

What has the impact of the #MeToo movement been?

- **Positive steps:** Sexual harassment is increasingly being taken more seriously since the movement began. A shift in how organisations deal with complaints and how people raise them has been noted.
- **Backlash:** [The Harvard Business Review](#), found that 27% of men avoid 1:1 meetings with female colleagues because of this movement. It also highlighted concerns men had with hiring female colleagues where they will work in close contact, suggesting an unintended response to #MeToo.
- **Data** can be very useful. #MeToo gives us a prime opportunity to focus on statistics and look at hiring data, salary figures and retention data.
- One of the positive responses of #MeToo has been **domestic violence policies** signed up to the Domestic Abuse Employers Initiative, meaning that an organisation will then update its internal policies in line with it.
- In the film and TV production industry, **intimacy co-ordinators** are now involved in the filming of intimate scenes or those of a sexualised or violent nature. Just as experts are called in when an actor is at risk of harm from, for example, a stunt, it is only right that experts are called in when someone is at risk of this type of physical or mental harm. Does the same instant acceptance of the need for protection apply to women's safety in the workplace as it does to wider physical health and safety?

There is still work to be done: encouraging a speak-up culture is a key starting point

- Since the movement began, there have been swathes of high profile cases and **new cases continue to emerge**.
- A continuing and disturbing trend is that when people speak up it is **not always fully addressed**.
- **Some institutions remain ineffective** in creating a speak-up culture or one in which issues are thoroughly and appropriately handled.
- **Speak-out culture extends to allyship.** Senior leaders in particular have a responsibility to call out behaviour as it happens and be active allies. This must be a top-down approach with leadership calling out behaviour and turning policies into true company culture.
- **Organisations must encourage a speak-up culture**, and action must then follow by giving employees time and space to share and for employers and colleagues to listen.
- **Visible women of seniority** is important in encouraging a speak-up culture. It is commonly accepted that the more people you see at work who look like you, the more comfortable you feel bringing these complaints. Given the stats on the proportion of women who have suffered sexual harassment, if you see a woman in a leadership role, you may feel more inclined to raise your concern, to speak up and be listened to.
- **Other important actions:**
 - Supporting local organisations and charities campaigning for change.
 - From a societal angle, educating our youth on what behaviour is and is not acceptable is key, particularly in a hypersexualised society.

We have a collective responsibility in bringing about change

- We shouldn't see this issue simply as something which affects women - **it affects us all**, and we should deal with this collectively.
- This is not just about the workplace or work, there are **wider societal issues** at play.

Raising awareness is not enough - we must ensure appropriate outcomes

- When women choose and are brave enough to disclose their experiences, **how that disclosure is handled is critical**.
- **Intersectionality:** Other aspects of a person's identity including their ethnicity, class or sexuality can impact a person's willingness to speak up and this must be taken into account.
- #MeToo and the subsequent employee speak-out culture has increased awareness, **but it is now critical to ensure justice**. That requires women having faith in the criminal justice system.

More means of speaking out does not necessarily mean someone is able to speak out

- Social media and online platforms allow for new means of speaking out, but employers should be mindful that as we have shifted to more remote working, **many people now find it harder to speak out**. Key resources such as GPs and specialist groups have moved to phone calls. If you live with the perpetrator, this makes it very difficult to speak out safely.
- The ability to speak to someone in person on a confidential basis has been removed or impacted. Employers and organisations should be conscious of this and **look at ways to create safe spaces** for people to speak out.

These conversations are not easy and they are uncomfortable. That does not mean we should shy away from them.

- It is down to organisations to ensure there is enough **trust and transparency** to allow people to come forward. There is an expectation now that organisations have appropriate policies and responses in place. Organisations know, or should know, that they must do more.
- There must be continued **dedicated training** i.e. in unconscious bias, micro-aggression. It should never be a tick-box exercise alongside other mandatory training. In person training can be more effective and engaging than online training.
- Employers and organisations must **challenge collective by-standing inertia**.
- We have a **collective responsibility** to listen to and address these issues and take action.

Chaired by:



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Our Panelists:



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