

Office, that “women on boards, or the lack of them” are “a barometer for what is going on deeper down in business.”²⁴⁰

129. Witnesses insisted that changing this picture meant changing the attitudes and cultures of men at the top of corporate hierarchies.²⁴¹ Importantly, though, it also called for efforts to change the perceptions of women and build confidence. Sapphire Partners asserted that “part of the challenge historically has been that women have not been putting their hands up”.²⁴² It noted that “women are much less likely to put themselves forward unless they have 120 per cent of the qualifications”.²⁴³

130. There have already been positive efforts on both fronts. In the United Kingdom, the business and executive search communities have taken the lead, with initiatives in place to develop female candidates by providing opportunities to gain visibility, exposure and confidence. One aspect of this is mentoring—“a big issue” for Lord Davies of Abersoch.²⁴⁴ The most prominent such scheme is the *FTSE 100 Cross-Company Mentoring Scheme*.²⁴⁵

This matches Chairmen and Chief Executives of FTSE 100 companies, or their equivalents in the public sector, with appropriate candidates for mentoring. There have been 94 participants in the programme since 2003. In the last two years alone, 14 were appointed as non-executive directors, and there are plans to expand its reach more widely.²⁴⁶ Training is linked to this work: Spencer Stuart referenced a “thriving, very effective industry out there, which trains ‘newbie’ board directors”.²⁴⁷

131. We also heard of efforts to develop networks to support talented women. The 30% Club has worked to set up a number of sub-groups and sectorspecific infrastructures, such as a Partnership Pipeline Initiative for accountancy, law and consultancy firms.²⁴⁸ Best practice for board appointments is exchanged through schemes such as the Professional Boards Forum.²⁴⁹ Supporting these efforts, the Cranfield School of Management maintains a database of talented women²⁵⁰ and the Government has established the Women’s Business Council to suggest and take forward additional work programmes.²⁵¹ It is worth noting here too the efforts made by individual businesses, such as PWC, Aviva and Accenture, to address issues of gender diversity more effectively.²⁵²

²⁴⁰ Q36

²⁴¹ Brook Graham, IDDAS, Fawcett Society, Elin Hurvenes

²⁴² Q174 (Kate Grussing)

²⁴³ *ibid.* See also Q191 (Lesley Brook, Brook Graham)

²⁴⁴ Q75. See also Q160 (Sir Michael Rake)

²⁴⁵ The Mentoring Foundation

²⁴⁶ *ibid.*

²⁴⁷ Q191 (Will Dawkins). See also Q191 (Michael Reyner, MWM Consulting)

²⁴⁸ 30% Club, IMA

²⁴⁹ Professional Boards Forum

²⁵⁰ Cranfield University School of Management, International Centre for Women Leaders, *Female FTSE Board Report 2012, 100 women to watch*, 2012:

<http://www.som.cranfield.ac.uk/som/dinamic-content/media/Research/Research%20Centres/CICWL/100W2Wsupplement2012.pdf>

²⁵¹ Q36 (Helene Reardon-Bond, GEO)

²⁵² PWC, Aviva, Elin Hurvenes

levels of management, where there are such stark imbalances at present, and to improving gender diversity in the boardroom on a sustainable basis.

144. The development of this supply should be led by the business community. This ensures that businesses are engaged and able to see the benefits of the work, furthering their commitment to the agenda.

The Government should use their influence to support the expansion of the best initiatives that emerge, such as the *FTSE 100 Cross-Company Mentoring Programme*, filling gaps in funding where appropriate. They should also work with the Cranfield School of Management to expand its database of talented women to encompass a wider span of female managers and sectors. We do not propose a particular form.

145. The Commission should respect this voluntary approach and focus on highlighting best practice. The best vehicle for these efforts is through its existing, excellent work on women in economic decision-making.

The Commission's role would be enhanced if this work was expanded, as we recommend elsewhere (see paragraph 87). In particular, the Commission should use its influence to develop initiatives that operate on a pan-European basis, such as the European Roundtable of Industrialists' database of female talent.

146. Developing a sustainable supply of female talent may also require broader cultural reform of working practices. A detailed consideration of such changes is beyond our remit. Nevertheless, we welcome the broad focus at both national and European level on these important issues, as part of a sustained effort to deliver a more equal and effective world of business.