

Commission on Women in Jewish Leadership

An initiative of the JLC

'Gender Imbalance – the status quo'

30/12/2011

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KEY FINDINGS

- The Jewish community has highly educated and high achieving women yet in June 2011 (our benchmark) women accounted for less than 25% of the leaders of our largest communal organisations and far fewer in voluntary roles.
- This imbalance matters as evidence suggests that organisations which are led only by men are less effective as well as being less representative and lacking in the basic requirement for equality.
- The main, well documented barriers which are preventing change and a truly inclusive model of leadership from emerging include:
 - A perception that women lack the skills needed for communal leadership especially in fund raising or indeed, in donating
 - The paradox of the Tough Stance – whereby powerful women are condemned; aggressive in success but weak in failure.
 - An expectation that Jewish women will put their family first – yet insufficient and ineffective support to enable them to balance their communal and family needs
 - The belief that there is an ‘old boys’ network’ approach to recruitment of lay positions effectively excluding many women from consideration.
 - A perception that many Jewish communal organisations are not really committed to change or to gender equality
- Change is slow and women are opting out leaving a talent exodus and few role models.
- A consultation is to be launched now to consider **practical** ways to drive change via the introduction of interventions including (but not limited to):
 - Training and skills development
 - Mentoring
 - Networks and support systems
 - More family friendly organisational policies
 - Quotas and Targets
 - Transparent and accountable recruitment systems
- The issue affects the whole community, not just women and the Commission calls upon everyone to actively engage with it and to help release the potential of all members of our community to leadership roles for the benefit of future generations.

1. Introduction and Statement of Purpose

1.1 The context

Jewish women have spoken out The voices you heard illustrate the perceived gulf between women's achievement and aspirations in secular life and their Jewish communal and spiritual experience. Women highlight the fact that we may have become complacent about what it means to be truly inclusive¹

In 2009, the report *Connection, Continuity and Community: British Jewish Women Speak out* illustrated women's dissatisfaction with the Jewish community. Whilst its focus was broad, the report highlighted feelings of exclusion amongst women both generally in the community and specifically from leadership roles. Indeed, it is hard to deny that there is *something* about the British Jewish community that does not make it easy for high achieving and well educated women, to take on leadership responsibilities within it.

It should be clear that the gender imbalance matters from an ideological and moral standpoint as well as a professional and strategic development perspective. For too long, women have been met with stumbling blocks as they try and advance in professional or lay leadership positions, both within secular society but also within the Jewish community. Unfortunately, evidence suggests that women are seen as either too weak or too pushy for leadership positions. A study in the States found that Jewish male lay leaders were quite open about their reticence to appoint female leaders and the Commission believes that a similar pattern exists in the UK².

Fundamentally, it is unacceptable that women are not better represented in senior leadership positions within the British Jewish Community. The Commission

¹ Aleksander, 2009. *Connection, Continuity and Community: British Jewish Women Speak Out*. London: Board of Deputies of British Jews.

² Cohen et al., 2004. *Creating Gender Equity and Organizational Effectiveness in the Jewish Federation System: A Research and Action Project*. Advancing Women Professionals. Pp. 8. Available online: <http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=2803>

calls on the community to publicly acknowledge this indefensible state of affairs, and to work together to encourage more women into leadership positions.

1.2 **The Commission**

The Jewish Leadership Council has established a Commission on Women in Leadership in the Jewish Community to try and address the gender imbalance in communal leadership and to consult with the wider Jewish community before recommending solutions to this problem.

Whilst leadership is a broad term, the remit of the Commission is specifically focussed on senior voluntary (lay) and professional leadership roles in communal organisations within the Jewish community. Clearly, the issues is broader (and the investigation could be much wider) but with the aim of affecting change the terms are tightly defined.

The Board of Deputies have played an active role in the research and the development of this document and the consultation has been a process of close collaboration.

This report supports, and provides rationale for, the questions in the consultation document. In essence these relate to the main issues;

- 1) **The nature of Gender Imbalance:** How great is the gender imbalance, what causes it and is it improving?
- 2) **Implications:** What adverse consequences for the Jewish communal environment ensue from this gender imbalance?
- 3) **Interventions:** what strategies can successfully address [the] gender imbalance?³

³ These questions are taken from similar research conducted in the United States by the organisation Advancing Women Professionals, entitled *Creating Gender Equity and Organizational Effectiveness in the Jewish Federation System: a Research-and-Action Project* (2004:3).

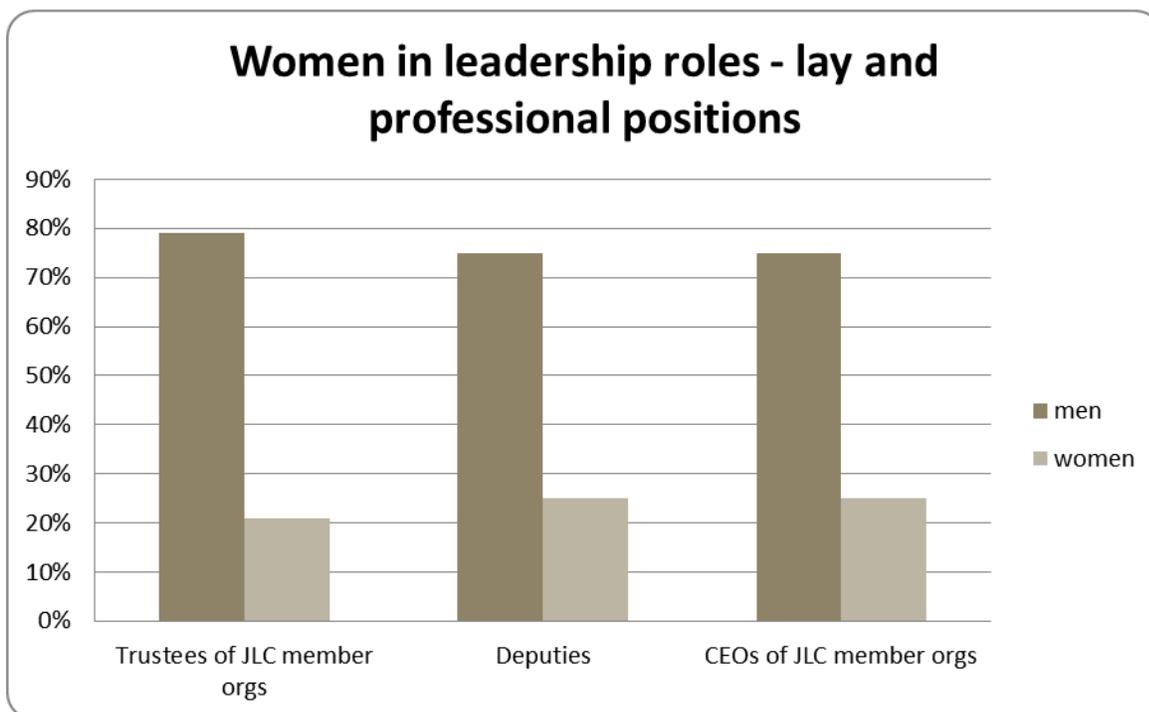
2. Gender Imbalance

2.1 The nature of Gender Imbalance

2.1.1 Statistics: Women in Leadership positions within the British Jewish community

British Jewish women are high educational achievers. The 2001 Census found that 80% of Jewish women in the UK have some form of higher education qualification, as opposed to 68% of the general female population in England and Wales. More importantly:

The extraordinary economic success of Jews in Britain at the end of the twentieth century is highlighted with the achievements of Jewish women in the workplace are compared with those of men in the British Jewish population at large...[I]n the top occupational categories, Jewish women matched and in most cases proportionally out-represented, men in the general population⁴.



⁴ Graham. Schmool and Waterman (2007). *Jews in Britain: a snapshot from the 2001 Census*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

This contrasts with the Jewish communal world. Only 21% of the trustee seats of JLC member organisations were held by women⁵ in June 2011 and 25% of deputies at the Board of Deputies of British Jews were women (and none of the elected Honorary Officers). A similar picture was observed in the most senior staff of Jewish organisations. Of the 16 JLC member organisations with CEOs or equivalent, only four were women. Note that several boards have actually increased their female membership since June though in one case, without full trustee status.

Finally, the Council of Membership of the Jewish Leadership Council, which is made up of lay-heads of the major UK Jewish organisations - of the 19 members, three were women in June 2011 (and one of these women was the chair of a women's organisation)

2.1.2 Comparisons with the British Third Sector

It is impossible to view the under-representation of women in Jewish leadership roles as entirely separate from its contexts in the UK as a whole, most especially in relation to the Third (voluntary/non-profit) Sector. There is a mixed picture across the UK Third Sector.⁶ According to 2010 research by the Third Sector Research Centre⁷ women make up approximately 46% of CEOs and 50% of all senior management positions vs 25% of JLC organisations.

Data collected by The Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO) in their Commission of Inquiry 2007 showed that 45% of trustees in small organisations were female and only 29% in large organizations (p 36). Whilst their definitions are unclear, this compares to the 21-22% in our snapshot view of the Jewish community as shown above.

Although the problem of under-representation of women applies to the entirety of British society, Jewish women are still much less evident in communal leadership than might be expected. Our own community should not replicate the inequalities in wider society.

⁵ As of June 2011 –JLC figures

⁶ We must be careful not to overstate the equality of women in leadership positions outside of the Jewish community. For example, Alison Benjamin claimed in 2008 that 74% of trustee chairs of charities in the UK are men

(<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/joepublic/2008/nov/13/voluntary-sector-pay-equality>).

Additionally, there is a clear imbalance between male and female MPs, which is arguably the 'highest' leadership position in the UK. While such statistics are disheartening, this Commission has been set up to specifically address issues within the UK Jewish community and will thus limit the purview of its work to within the bounds of this community.

⁷ Briefing Paper 40: "Women's leadership, employment and participation in the third sector and social enterprises", Simon Teasdale, Stephen McKay, Jenny Phillimore and Nina Teasdale, TSRC 2010.

2.1.3 Causes of the imbalance

Many reasons have been offered for the imbalance; that women lack specific skills and aspirations to lead the community, (a specific skill being fund raising and giving) and that Jewish organisations are failing to recognise women's value and appoint or elect them.

Additionally, research from the United States found that women regarded the way in which Jewish communal organisations operate as "incompatible with family life" because organisations require a "24/7 lifestyle"⁸. Women felt that the structure of communal organisations exclude them, as it requires asking them to sacrifice many of their family responsibilities. Women also spoke about feeling that their work within the Jewish community was 'derailed' when they took time out to start a family. This issue is noted within the UK on a colloquial basis.

Furthermore, this research highlights the paradox of the tough stance generally perceived to be the necessary style of leadership, stating "an aggressive leadership style is seen as a positive attribute in men, while an aggressive approach is perceived as a negative attribute in women". The paradox exists because the absence of female leaders is partly attributed to the notion that women are not 'tough' or 'forceful' enough to deliver.

Finally, in conversations, the women of this Commission have all heard stories of women being made to feel that they are trying to infiltrate old boys clubs.

All these factors could be true. We know that Jewish women are highly educated, well qualified, affluent and are represented at the top of their professions outside the community. We need to pinpoint the barriers and try to break them down. To date, no systematic work has been conducted in the UK Jewish community to consider how to challenge the status quo in gender imbalance.

2.1.4 The Pace of Change

There is very little evidence to show that the representation of women in Jewish leadership roles has substantially improved over the last decade or two. Indeed, as far back as 1994 the report *Women in the Jewish Community* recommended that a Standing Committee of Women's Issues be established⁹; yet to our knowledge, such a committee has never existed.

There is also little evidence of change amongst a younger generation of British Jews and leadership positions. There appear to have been only 3 female chairs of the UJS in the past thirty years. Our youth movements have a predominance

⁸ AWP 2004: 12.

⁹ Goodkin and Citron, 1994. *Women in the Jewish Community: Review and Recommendations*. London: Office of the Chief Rabbi. p. 6

of male mazkirim and whilst there is change, there is no clear indication that the mould has been broken by our younger members.

Finally, Jewish community organisations seem to suffer from a 'leaky pipeline' for women; for decades, there have been many women who are active leaders in charity committees; however, these women are not becoming the next generation's Board members. It does not appear that we can 'wait' for the next generation to address the imbalance.

2.1.5 Women's dissatisfaction with the status quo

The 2009 Report *Connection, Continuity and Community: British Jewish Women Speak Out* makes clear that women are not satisfied with the status-quo relating to women in leadership positions. The report states "Unless women are offered opportunities to lead the community on an equal footing with men the gap between their secular and their communal lives will become unbridgeable. Young women have no desire to sustain another generation of tea-makers"¹⁰. Clearly there are specific barriers in orthodox communities as all religious roles are restricted to men but currently there are some lay leadership roles which are withheld from women which we hope would be challenged both by this project and by other women's groups.

It is noted however, that women are also under-represented on the boards of the progressive synagogue movements as well as the communal organisations.

¹⁰ 2009: 11.

2.2 The implications of Gender Imbalance

2.2.1 The need for equality

Our start point is a basic equal opportunities argument (which is strong enough on its own). There can be no rationale or justification for failing to engage such a large section of the British Jewish community in its most important communal roles. We are long past the days when it is necessary to 'prove' that women should be in leadership roles. But there are additional reasons why female leadership matters:

2.2.2. Under representation and lack of diversity

Without women leaders, half the community is potentially unrepresented on the communal boards. Quite simply, more diverse boards will better understand the range of people they exist to serve and visa versa.

2.2.3 Less effective governance

Recent evidence points towards the importance of female influence at the highest level. The current Government commissioned the Davies Report, an inquiry into women on company boards; this Report noted

Women take their non-executive director roles more seriously, preparing more conscientiously for meetings. Women ask the awkward questions more often, decisions are less likely to be nodded through and so are likely to be better. Boards are often criticised for having similar board members, with similar backgrounds, education and networks. Such homogeneity among directors is more likely to produce 'group-think'. Women bring different perspectives and voices to the table, to the debate and to the decisions. Studies...have shown that three women are required to change boardroom dynamics, allowing them to become more vocal and their voices to be heard. Further studies have shown that the environment for women in senior roles improves once about a third of leaders at that level are female, and that a 'critical mass' of 30% or more women at board level or in senior management produces the best financial results¹¹.

A 2008 quantitative study by academics at LSE and Queensland University¹² also found that gender-diverse corporate boards were more effective and provided more oversight.

Whilst not directly comparable to a communal organisation, the point surrounding the value of women is clear. It is beyond a doubt that the appointment or election of women to senior communal positions will only be of benefit to the British Jewish community.

¹¹ The Davies Report is available online: <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/business-law/docs/w/11-745-women-on-boards.pdf> Page 8

¹² "Women in the Boardroom and Their Impact on Governance and Performance", Adams, Renee B. and Ferreira, Daniel, 2008 <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1107721>.

The report *Creating Gender Equity and Organizational Effectiveness in the Jewish Federation System: a Research-and-Action report* from the United States found that models for increasing female leadership used within corporate or business environments are useful for the Jewish third sector – specifically in professional roles. This report demonstrated that

The proper commitment and investment can create workplaces that provide equitable opportunity for career advancement,...efforts to structure work in ways that support the full spectrum of employees' responsibilities on the job and at home generate improvements in the organizations' overall effectiveness (2004: 17).

2.2.4 Communal reputation

Women should be represented more fully in leadership roles for the reputation of the British Jewish community at large. As a dynamic, educated and active community in the UK, the Jewish community should be leading the way on gender equality providing an inspirational model not only for our own youth but also for the wider society in which we reside.

2.2.5 Talent Exodus

The organization Advancing Women Professionals and the Jewish Community (AWP) in the United States found that the lack of female representation poses a “significant threat” to the future health of Jewish organisations; younger women may interpret the lack of female leadership as hostility and look elsewhere for more accepting positions. Accordingly, the gender imbalance might promote what AWP calls a “talent exodus” and might also lead to an increasingly elderly leadership and donor base (if younger women do not find the organizations friendly or attractive to them). This reflects the work of the 2009 Commission in the UK.

2.3 Intervention – strategies for change

Various strategies have been used to tackle the under-representation of women across the world in a variety of sectors. The major approaches are summarised below¹³.

¹³ The Commission will be consulting on which particular ideas and projects will be suitable for increasing the number of women in leadership roles in the Jewish community.

2.3.1 Supporting Women into leadership roles

Networking

Networking has been shown to be crucial for professional success, both in business and beyond. Besides creating a space for people to share challenges and solutions, the simple act of sharing contacts and information is vital for promotion. It is widely used in business and traditionally men excel at informal networking from which women may be excluded.

Across the business world, many successful 'women only' networks have emerged. A number of active women's networks exist in the British Jewish community though few, it seems, for the explicit purpose of networking or leadership training and promotion.

Mentoring

Mentoring is one-to-one and vertical. Some mentoring schemes match women with other women who can share their experiences, while others involve linking women with men specifically in leadership positions.

The Institute of Directors, for example, responded to the Davies report by supporting greater mentoring and networking for women in leadership¹⁴. However, some feel that mentoring is not enough; a 2010 Catalyst study¹⁵ found that men tended to benefit more from professional mentoring programmes than women because more often, women specific mentoring schemes are based on 'hand holding' and link women to people in less senior positions (whereas men tend to be linked with a more senior manager when in a mentoring scheme).

Evidence suggests that 'sponsorship' programmes are more effective at closing gender related gaps in promotion and pay. A September 2010 Harvard Business Review¹⁶ argued for sponsorship, where the mentor is always in a senior position and takes on the role of advocating for their protégée, going well beyond the traditional role of providing feedback and advice. This study found that sponsorship should be encouraged over and above more traditional mentoring schemes.

¹⁴ "Women on Boards – IoD response to Government consultation" 30th November 2011
<http://press.iod.com/2010/11/30/women-on-boards-%E2%80%93-iod-response-to-government-consultation/>

¹⁵ "Mentoring: Necessary But Insufficient for Advancement" Nancy M. Carter, Ph.D. and Christine Silva, Catalyst 2010
http://www.catalyst.org/file/415/mentoring_necessary_but_insufficient_for_advancement_final_120610.pdf

¹⁶ Ibarra, Carter and Silva, 2010. *Why men still get more promotions than women*. Harvard Business Review. Available online: <http://hbr.org/2010/09/why-men-still-get-more-promotions-than-women/ar/pr>.

In the British Jewish community, there is some mentoring— for example, there are mentoring schemes for youth movement workers. There are also mentoring schemes linking younger Jews with professional Jewish mentors. However, to our knowledge there are no specific 'sponsorship' programmes aimed at sponsoring women into communal leadership roles.

Skills training

It is effortless for an organisation which is not appointing or advancing women to leadership roles to say "there weren't any suitable/confident/willing women for the job". Ensuring that women have the specific skills to take Jewish leadership roles could eradicate this barrier. Leadership training focused on women can ensure that there is a large pool of trained, committed and capable women ready to fill leadership roles.

2.3.2 Encouraging Jewish organisations to recruit more women

Whilst women may need to adapt, so can communal organisations if they are serious about attracting women leaders. Some ideas are discussed here:

Work/Life Balance

Flexible work patterns benefit both men and women but clearly women with families have very specific needs if they are to contribute voluntarily or professionally. With more women working, pressure on their time is intense. Practical measures can make a real difference.

Quotas

Quotas are an increasingly common way to enact immediate change on a large scale and at the most senior levels. Spain, Norway and Iceland have all introduced 40% quotas for women on large corporate boards. European Commission rules on banking governance were expected to include a 30% quota of women for the boards of European banks.

However, quotas are controversial, with many arguing that quotas necessarily mean choosing women over men regardless of suitability for a position. The Davies Report, for example, chose not to recommend quotas initially. UK equality law allows positive action in circumstances where a particular group is under-represented. Note that quotas do not necessarily lead to less well qualified appointees.

Variations of quotas can also be applied in elections. Some do this by reserving 'women's places' in elections, such as seats specifically for women. This may be considered patronising but is transparent. Alternatively, women's places can be

reserved through technical constraints in a block election - an election where a given percentage must go to women even if they do not receive enough votes. This gives women the chance to compete with men with a reassurance of winning some seats.

Targets

France legislated for a legally-mandated target of 40% women in boardrooms by 2017. Similarly, the Davies Report suggested that every FTSE-350 company set a target percentage of women for their boards by 2015, with a minimum of 25%.

Targets and the process of setting them can help an organisation think about its internal barriers and can ensure that the issue of women's representation is in the minds of the leaders of the organisation.

Accountability and Recruitment Transparency

One way in which targets can be measured and met is through public disclosure of the number of women in senior roles and how this number has changed. The Davies report says companies should "be required to disclose each year the proportion of women on the board, women in Senior Executive positions and female employees in the whole organisation" and report on certain other measures in their annual reports. The Equality Act 2010 includes provisions, for example, which would require large companies to measure and publish data on their gender pay gap¹⁷. Public exposure of this data is expected to lead to public pressure on organisations to improve.

Whilst communal organisations provide a different context, the point about accountability and the best practice argument remain.

Another sort of disclosure is openness about recruitment. For lay board positions, certainly in the Jewish world, it is not always obvious how people are chosen and appointed. Responding to the Davies Report, the UKRC noted that "a lack of transparency in recruitment ... can act as barriers to capable women trying to find a route into their first board position"¹⁸.

Open recruitment processes for senior staff and board members, and measuring candidate against an identified skill set can significantly improve gender balance in organisations.

¹⁷ 2010 c15 Equality Act, c3, s78.

¹⁸ "The UKRC responds to the Davies Report recommendations" 2003
<http://www.theukrc.org/news/2011/03/the-ukrc-responds-to-the-davies-report-recommendations>

3 Conclusions

In the Jewish community we are blessed with our women. They account for over half of our population, are highly educated, articulate and generally very active in communal activities. However, they are hugely under represented at leadership level – both voluntary and paid, which is a missed opportunity not just for women but for the entire community.

There is little evidence of change with leadership of our youth organisations still largely male.

The situation is a real predicament as gender equality should now be the norm. Even more compelling however is evidence which suggests that organisations are actually more effective with better gender balanced leadership.

Women in the community seem to feel disenfranchised and disconnected and they therefore choose not to get involved. We also believe that the current routes to the top are ridden with barriers, rather than full of incentives, for women. The resultant lack of female role models perpetuates the problem.

Tokenism is not an option. We know, based on the research cited earlier, that 30% of women at board level or senior management is a minimum for real impact in a business setting. The goal must be for women to obtain not just a share of titles but rather, of real power.

The Jewish community is small, ageing and decreasing. We can ill afford to lose our talented young women to communal engagement and we need to harness the abilities of our experienced women who could take on leadership roles now. We need to ensure that women are ready and able to take leadership roles; we must also put some of the onus on organisations themselves and ensure that they are actively working to recruit women for senior positions.

The potential is immeasurable; for wider representation of course, but also for a larger supply of prospective leaders, for greater effectiveness of our organisations, for retention of more people within the community and for the inspiration of our daughters (and sons!) Finally, the Jewish community could, potentially lead the way on this issue demonstrating the benefits of gender equality to the wider world.

The next step of the Commission is to set up Working Parties to develop some tried and tested strategies, to consult with key stake holders about how effective, tolerable and 'implementable' each of them may be and to make clear recommendations. The Commission invites the Jewish Community to take

up the challenge, initially through the consultation and then through long-term engagement in supporting progress and change.

This is a community issue, not a women's issue. We, as a community, need to face it and deal with it.