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| 16 December 2013 |

 | news release |

**Women’s Business Council six months on**

**Bigger role for women leads to better results for business**

Business leaders can do more to ensure the barriers to female success and aspiration disappear, that’s the message from the Women’s Business Council (WBC) as they publish their six month review today.

Set up in 2012, the WBC has been advising business and Government on what can be done to make sure women are not held back and get the same opportunities in their careers as men. The Council have been engaging with business sectors to discuss innovative solutions, promote best practices and offer advice.

Today they have published a new booklet of inspiring case studies that clearly demonstrate the business benefits of a diverse workforce.

Chair of the WBC, Ruby McGregor-Smith said:

“Now is the time for business leaders across the country to set the pace of change. If we want to improve the UK’s competitiveness in a global economy we need to be nurturing and applying the talents of everyone.”

Also published today is a guide to help employers enable their staff to fulfil their potential. The booklet offers steps to raise the aspirations of young women, develop the talent of staff at all levels within their organisations and improve opportunities for women at all stages of their careers.

This review builds on the Government’s action plan to improve opportunities for women and calls on business to adopt the recommendations made by the WBC because of the overwhelming business case for doing so.

Minister for Women and Equalities Maria Miller said:

“Confronting barriers in the workplace that hold women back is simply good business sense.

“The Government is committed to tackling this issue and is playing its part by introducing flexible working, shared parental leave, and helping with childcare costs, but what is needed is a culture shift. That is why we want to support and encourage employers to put the right measures in place to create more inclusive work places, nurture talent and be more transparent about pay.”

The WBC’s priorities in the next 6 months will be:

* Working with business and the Government to raise girls aspirations, by providing better careers advice, more work experience opportunities and promoting more role models;
* Closely monitoring the impact of the changes to childcare in the UK and highlighting this as key to women’s participation; and
* Champion the benefits of an agile workplace and a culture change to increase flexible working.

**Notes to editors**

1. The Women’s Business Council is an independent group that was set up by Government in 2012 with the aim of ensuring real action by Government, business and others to maximise women’s contribution to economic growth: <http://womensbusinesscouncil.dcms.gov.uk/>
2. Its members are all business people working in a range of sectors – including advertising, recruitment, enterprise, retail, legal, financial and pharmaceutical – biographies of all members are available at: <http://womensbusinesscouncil.dcms.gov.uk/about-the-wbc/>
3. The Women’s Business Council report and a series of case studies are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/policy-advisory-groups/womens-business-council>
4. The full Government response is available at: <http://womensbusinesscouncil.dcms.gov.uk/about-the-wbc/>
5. One of the key WBC recommendations was to encourage more companies to support *Think, Act, Report* – a joint Government-business initiative to promote gender equality in the workplace. Around 150 leading companies have signed up to support this, including M&S, IBM, Tesco, and Barclays Bank. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/over-140-uk-businesses-commit-to-improving-gender-equality-at-work>