

The Women's Business Council work programme

Over the coming months the Women's Business Council will be examining the full range of issues affecting women's economic participation – in education, in work and in entrepreneurship – both from the perspective of women and the choices they face and importantly from the perspective of businesses.

In July the Council will consider an evidence paper around women's economic participation organised around three key life stages. These are

- Starting out – looking at the choices girls and young women make about which subjects to study, qualifications to pursue, and when and how to move into employment or set up a business.
- Getting on, branching out and consolidating – examining the distinction between a 'career' and a 'job', recognising how this may change over time, and the choices women and their partners make about whether and when to start a family, how to balance work and caring, the role of childcare and the experiences of women returning to work following absences to care for their children.
- Staying on – considering the choices older women face around how best to capitalise on their experience, balance their caring responsibilities and prolong their working lives.

Each of these themes will then be explored in greater detail at successive meetings. At each meeting, the Council will consider evidence papers produced by government and others, and will hear directly from people with expertise and experience in these issues.

- In September, the Council will look in more detail at the choices girls and young women make about education, employment, enterprise and careers. It will examine how businesses both here and abroad engage with girls, young women, schools and colleges to ensure there is a wide and diverse talent pool which meets their needs as employers.
- In November, the Council will turn its focus to the middle stage of women's lives and look at career progression, career breaks and returning to work. It will consider how businesses can attract and keep the best talent, how they can ensure the talent pipeline works effectively, how continued skills development is encouraged and how they can use their supply chains to support their diversity goals.
- In January, the Council will consider the most experienced group of women, looking at stereotypes around age and gender, how caring and wellbeing issues or preparing for retirement may result in changing working patterns. It will explore how business can capitalise on this experience, ensure successful knowledge transfer and succession planning, and support employee wellbeing.

Following these meetings, the Council will meet to consider its conclusions and to produce its final report, outlining a series of practical steps Government, businesses and others can take to support both women and the economy. This report will be presented to Ministers in Spring 2013.