

KSE REPORT

# How to Recruit, Retain, and Grow Talented Women in STEM

## Knowledge Sharing Event

Monday 25 September 2023  
Discovery Park, Kent



# How to Recruit, Retain, and Grow Talented Women in STEM

This Knowledge Sharing Event was hosted by Pfizer at The Discovery Park, a hub for STEM innovation in the Southeast of England. As well as WISE members, this event was open to representatives and staff from STEM businesses in the local area. The theme of this KSE was how best to recruit and grow talented women in STEM.

## Agenda

- 11:00 Registration – Refreshments & Networking on Arrival
- 11:30 Welcome, Jack Painter, WISE & Elizabeth Collins, Pfizer
- 11:40 Rebecca Jackson, Pfizer (Inclusive Recruitment)
- 11:55 Charlotte Atkinson, Philips 66 (Allyship)
- 12:10 Q&A
- 12:30 Networking & Light Lunch
- 13:30 Roundtable: How EDI Experts can Support your Diversity Goals
- 14:45 Close & Take-Aways
- 15:00 Finish



The event was kicked off with introductions by Jack Painter, Head of Products and Services (D&I), WISE, and Elizabeth Collins, Executive Director, Medicinal Sciences Category Lead, Pfizer.

# Speakers

## Rebecca Jackson, Pfizer

Rebecca Jackson PhD. MRSC is the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Lead at Pfizer, responsible for leading the development and implementation of strategies to close the gender pay gap in the UK.

Passionate about informed choice and equal opportunity, Rebecca recognises the importance of being a positive role model for aspiring female leaders and scientists and has 20 years' experience in the development, filing and approval of new medicines. She was part of the core team behind the 'Science in a Box' workshop materials that were created for use in schools across all age groups to promote interest in science and healthcare.

Rebecca is a long-standing mentor with the Social Mobility Foundation helping socially disadvantaged students pursue further education and is well-known in the office as a leading advocate for Pfizer's LGBTQ+ community.

Outside work, Rebecca enjoys weekly 5km Park Runs around the country and volunteers in the education sector.



## Charlotte Atkinson, Phillips 66

Charlotte is a Process Engineer and works at the Phillips 66 Limited Humber Refinery within the Operational Business Team at Phillips 66 Humber Refinery, working with multidiscipline teams on a daily basis.

Charlotte graduated from the University of Manchester in Chemical Engineering and with a passion for diversity works tirelessly with in the I&D team and women's network as well as supporting education outreach running a programme to build confidence within female students.

Charlotte also helped design and delivery refinery wide I&D strategy which includes the key pillars of Respect, Attract, Support with new demographic targets. She was key in the delivery of Humber's Allyship programme.



# Inclusive Recruitment

Rebecca Jackson, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager  
Pfizer

Rebecca's presentation gave an overview of Pfizer's Inclusive Recruitment journey. This presentation included details on what Pfizer has done to foster greater inclusion throughout the organisation – what has worked well and where the challenges have been.

## Transforming the Culture

When it comes to company values, Pfizer has four core values that shape the way that they approach the inclusion agenda. These are:

**courage, excellence, equity, joy**

This approach starts from the idea that difference is beneficial and valuable rather than harmful and disruptive.

Companies need to shift the frame of their thinking away from the notion of a 'cultural fit', and instead introduce the notion of a 'cultural add'. This subtle shift in language makes a big difference, by warmly asking what people from diverse backgrounds will contribute to the existing culture.

**Top Tip: Change the traditional narrative. Adopt inclusive language. Be positive about inclusion and diversity.**



## Colleague Resource Groups

Rebecca outlined how important “Colleague Resource Groups” have been for Pfizer for developing an engaged and inclusive workplace culture.

“Our Colleague Resource Groups offer a powerful way for colleagues to connect with one another and develop a shared sense of community.

Whilst each group has a unique focus, they all share a common goal to achieve equity and equality at Pfizer, ensuring that every colleague feels seen, heard and cared for.”

**There are currently 5 thriving colleague resource groups.**

1. **Ethnic diversity**
2. **Pfizer Women’s Resource group (PWR)**
3. **OPEN (LGBT)**
4. **Intergenerational mobility (IGM)** – this resource group acknowledges the diversity of age ranges of employees and their respective skills, career and life experiences
5. **Disability**

## Tracking Pfizer’s Gender Pay Gap (GPG) Data

Pfizer uses GPG data to monitor how well they are doing. Rebecca explained how, for Pfizer, this is a useful indicator of their overall EDI progress:

*“If we’re getting it right, when you slice through the organisation, we should see men and women evenly distributed throughout the organisation”.*

## What Is Being Done To Close The GPG At Pfizer?

1. Ensuring diversity and inclusion at the level of recruitment
2. Creating a trusting and flexible workplace culture, using a team-based approach
3. Family-friendly practices that are adaptable throughout the family life cycle
4. Career Support Programme
5. Long term absence returner support

## Pfizer's Advice For Reducing Gender Pay Gap (GPG)

Most importantly, make sure your company is **collecting, monitoring and tracking relevant data** to measure your EDI progress effectively.

At Pfizer, this is done by collecting data on:

- Awareness (measured through internal communication channels)
- Engagement (measured via hits and likes on social media posts)
- Training (measured by tracking EDI trainings delivered)
- Recruitment (measured by tracking job applications by women)

## Reducing GPG Is An Ongoing And Long-term Project

As a result of the combination of listed strategies aimed at reducing the GPG, Pfizer managed to halve its GPG from 15.9% in 2017, to 7.5% in 2021.

However, in 2021, the GPG then rose to 11.3%. This was attributed to the closure of one of their manufacturing sites where the operatives employed in lower paid positions were predominately men.

Rebecca candidly shared this example to show that sometimes factors outside of our control will impact the GPG score. It can feel frustrating but it's important to acknowledge why and where this change has happened.

**Remember: Progress may not always be linear, but that's why it's important to track data carefully and to focus on achieving incremental gains.**



# Allyship

Charlotte Atkinson, Process Engineer

Phillips 66

Charlotte's presentation focused on the Allyship programme that was rolled out by Phillips 66 at their Humber Refinery in 2022.

As the presentation explored, there are challenges to implementing any new programme and Allyship is no different, and there can sometimes be initial resistance to allyship from people who are unfamiliar with the terminology. However, this is why it's so vital to take everybody along on the journey.

## What is an Ally?

*An ally is someone who actively works to support and advocate for/with a marginalised group that they are not personally a part of.*

## The Institute of Engineering and Technology, Sept 2022

Charlotte's presentation began by sharing some shocking statistics that clearly outline why allyship programmes are urgently needed within the STEM sector:

## Why Do We Need To Promote Allyship In STEM?

- Women make up 24% of the UK STEM workforce, just 14.5% of all engineers and 7.4% of apprentices
- 35% of UK students in core STEM subjects are female. Engineering & Technology and Computer Sciences have the worst ratios (19%).
- Globally, only 2% of all professional engineers are women of colour
- 70% of women with STEM qualifications are working in non-STEM related industries
- 57% of female engineers leave STEM roles by the age of 35, compared to just 17% for men
- Globally, women represent just 21% of senior leadership roles in STEM companies
- 40% of women have felt passed over when a promotion has been offered to a less qualified male

\*Figures collated from Imperial College/STEM Women/Industry

## Overview: The Humber Refinery Allyship Program

In December 2022, the Humber Allyship Program kicked off. The programme was motivated by a desire to improve the culture and diversity on site.

The workforce at the Humber Refinery is heavily male dominated. Charlotte explained how, from the start, this initiative set out to be fully inclusive – it needed to ensure that everyone felt part of the allyship journey and male Allies were as, if not more important, to engage on the journey.

## Adapting The 'Safety Moment' For Allyship

Since ideas of safety and reliability are already integral to all staff at the refinery, the allyship programme was framed as an extension of this responsibility: To ensure that everyone feels safe at work and to promote a culture of looking out for the safety of others.

A 'Safety Moment' is a short discussion or presentation on an aspect of health and safety in the workplace. The purpose is to reinforce safety practices and to create awareness among workers about the importance of safety. These briefings only last a few minutes – they are often conducted at the beginning of a meeting, shift, or workday. By making safety moments a routine part of every discussion, businesses can foster a strong safety culture; ensuring safety is at the forefront of everyone's minds as they do their jobs.

Humber's Allyship Program learned from the success of the 'safety moment' format, to introduce the concept of an 'I&D moment'. Charlotte described how the biggest challenge with the Allyship Programme was getting people talking about equity and inclusion. By introducing the idea of an 'I&D moment' into every meeting, it normalised talking and thinking about the topic openly.

**Breaking the barrier of silence was a big part of the problem!**



## Programme Of Allyship Programme Activities

For Phillips 66, creating a widespread awareness was a real challenge - people didn't know where to turn if they had problems. Multiple methods were used to reach as many people as possible.

- Initiative roll-out in December 2022 with Gate-handout of Allyship badges, stickers, leaflets and posters
- Launch of I&D 'Conversation Starter Cards'
- Turnaround Drop-in sessions
- Allyship Training Workshops
- I&D focussed discussions with Operations & Maintenance groups
- Creation of an Allyship page on the I&D SharePoint platform with useful links to websites and videos
- Creation of a Women's Network, open to both men and women
- 'I&D Moments' are introduced into Humber Refinery's Monthly Key Messages and internal Newsletters
- Other I&D led activities included a PRIDE bake sale and the creation of a new multi-faith room

## Impact

Culture is not going to change overnight but there has been definite progress. The allyship logo is now widely recognised on site. Humber Refinery now has an Allyship Committee, which has developed a strategy: Respect, Support, Attract.

The Leadership Team has undersigned their support of this strategy, which has helped to keep up the momentum.



## Phillips 66's Top Tips for Implementing Allyship Programmes

- 'Allyship isn't just for Christmas. It's something that evolves and needs to be nurtured'.
- By sharing an 'I&D moment' in monthly newsletters or internal communications, it becomes an opportunity to share which EDI achievements have been reached.
- I&D Conversation "Starter Cards" are used in every meeting - these cards help keep the momentum going by acting as conversation starters.
- There was initial pushback from some workers. However, this often came from misunderstandings about the project (some male workers saw the project as an accusation – many didn't want to have to "prove" they were allies to women by wearing a badge on their uniform). This was successfully tackled by EDI staff working in a one-to-one capacity with some of the groups onsite. Getting feedback from people and learning directly from the ground is key.
- Education. Education. Education.





## Break-out Group Discussions

The second part of the KSE featured breakout group discussion between all participants, focused on organisational challenges related to the recruitment, retention, and growth of women within their businesses. Attendees were split into three groups and moved between three stations, each facilitated by WISE staff. We focused on three key themes:

**Attraction & Recruitment**

**Retention**

**Growth & Development**

# Attraction & Recruitment

## Biggest challenges/barriers

- Getting women to apply to roles in the first place. Women may deselect themselves before they even apply
- Visibility & awareness of women role models: "You cannot be if you cannot see"
- Unlike men, women will tend not re-apply for a role they have once been rejected for - unless explicitly encouraged to do so
- Women often have a lower self-belief in their capacity. More frequently than men, they may feel they are "not good enough" for an advertised role. This tendency is compounded among women of colour
- For women, not fitting into the "lad" culture at work can make them feel like an outsider
- Companies are not aware of the importance of transferable skills
- Advertising vacancies on the right platforms – so they are seen by a diverse range of people
- Smaller STEM businesses suffer from having a lack of benefits to attract the most qualified candidates
- Tight recruitment timelines and small talent pool

## What do businesses need help with?

- Help with job description writing.
- Unconscious Bias training.
- Building the capacity of recruitment teams to recognise and hire diverse talent. We especially need to educate HR for more physical and on-site jobs.
- Making the most of data. Having more data on where women actually look for job postings.
- Visibility of unusual engineering career pathways for women.
- Developing more outreach events within STEM community.

## WHAT HAS HELPED?



**Blind CVs**



**Warm, inclusive language on job applications**



**STEM Outreach**



**Gender decoding software for job adverts**



**Regularly share best-practice**



**External jobs board**

**TOP TIP:** Interview panels should always include both women and men. If this is difficult for your company, try including staff from with differing levels of experience and seniority on interview panels. This will create a wider and more diverse pool of people for interview panels – and, an added benefit, it will help develop the skills of lower levels of staff.

# Growth & Development

## Biggest challenges/barriers

- A big issue is getting “stuck” within an organisation waiting for a promotion that never arrives. Participants have seen this happen. This is a big problem – and leads to attrition of talent
- Overly big salary bands. For example, 35 to 80k. This creates a lack of transparency around pay. This may disadvantage some women disproportionately. Take the game of negotiation off the table

## WHAT HAS HELPED?



Considering how gendered language may appear in work-based feedback. For example, women might hear ‘you are passionate about your job’, whilst men might be more likely to hear ‘you’re very driven’. However, these distinct phrasings perpetuate gender stereotypes.



Managers and team leaders should positively incentivise staff to spend time with their other work colleagues – allow staff time during work hours to engage in such and such activity because it is a good growth and developmental opportunity for them at the same time.



The younger generation are more ambitious when it comes to demanding that their working lives accommodate their personal lives. They are voting with their feet, and this is driving flexible working conditions.



Make more senior full time jobs part time – this helps to retain women throughout their careers. Making all jobs flexible working.



As a company, actively highlighting the Gender Pay Gap has helped to educate more people and create increased sense of staff engagement and ownership.



Growth Opportunities. Ring-fencing 30% of somebody's time within their existing role for professional development (for example, shadowing, getting experience in another department).



Drop-in centre for women in mainly men-dominated companies providing focused skills workshops. For example: interview techniques

## What do businesses need help with?

- Collecting and tracking data for EDI to support the development and growth of women.
- Mentoring and development programmes.

**TOP TIP:** It's important to remember that taking on EDI work as an employee can sometimes feel like an extra job, especially if you always feel like you are pushing against resistance, or that your efforts are not being valued and recognised by the Senior Leadership team. Employees can feel frustrated (“And I'm still having to do the same work that my colleagues are doing”). For this reason, it's important for companies to recognise and reward the EDI efforts of their staff.

# Retention

## Biggest challenges/barriers

- Retaining employees for on-site work in remote or undesirable locations
- Limited internal professional opportunities
- Women leaving companies after a career break

## WHAT HAS HELPED?



**Having female role models at senior levels**



**Female engineers in social media campaigns**



**When designing job adverts, make it possible to list experience in years and only include requirements if they are required**



**Making part-time and flexible working the default**



**Making it clear what, as a company, you are doing to support inclusion.**

## What do businesses need help with?

- Training and guidance for line managers to better support women returners
- Family-friendly policies
- Changing the culture around part time and flexible working (part time hours = less dedication and investment)

**TOP TIP:** Research shows that gender diverse workforces are correlated with better overall retention, as well as enhanced innovation and better problem solving.

# WISE Campaign

WISE Campaign is a not-for-profit CIC which exists to deliver women-centred equity, diversity and inclusion solutions for the STEM sectors. We support our partners to achieve gender parity and benefit from better productivity, innovation and business performance.

We work with major UK organisations to improve their gender balance and are open about the economic and business benefits of doing so. WISE offer exclusive membership support to over 100 organisations through events, webinars, workshops and training.

[For more information, please visit us at:  
www.wisecampaign.org.uk](http://www.wisecampaign.org.uk)

**Please follow, share and tag**



## WISE Contacts

### **Katherine Watson**

Head of Products and Services Delivery - Projects

*k.watson@wisecampaign.org.uk*

07885 864 839



### **Jack Painter**

Head of Products and Services Delivery - D&I Lead

*j.painter@wisecampaign.org.uk*

07762 275 316



**Report author: Nell Osborne**



WISE Campaign, Carlton House, Grammar School Street, Bradford, BD1 4NS  
0345 527 0889 | [info@wisecampaign.org.uk](mailto:info@wisecampaign.org.uk) | [wisecampaign.org.uk](http://wisecampaign.org.uk)

WISE is a Community Interest Company. Registered company name: WISE Campaign CIC. Company No. 07533934 VAT No. 136 5513 20