



Rt Hon. David Cameron  
Prime Minister  
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Royal Academy of Engineering  
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CC: Rt Hon. Vince Cable MP  
Rt Hon. Nicky Morgan MP  
Jo Swinson MP  
and supporting signatories

Date: 24 September 2014

Dear Prime Minister

### **10 point plan for sustaining female talent in STEM**

Your Government has been vocal in its commitment to sustaining the UK's science and engineering capability. You have been similarly public in your commitment to increasing female participation in science, technology and engineering and at board level in business. We welcome government's initiative in starting the *Your Life* campaign to make the next generation aware of the excellent career opportunities available in these fields.

However, we already lag well behind in the number of women working in science and engineering and more must be done within UK companies. For example, less than 10% of UK engineering professionals are female – the lowest proportion in Europe.

As leaders of major science, technology, engineering and manufacturing companies, we are all partners of the WISE campaign and/or members of the Academy's Diversity Leadership Group of engineering companies and share your determination to promote diversity. Our ambition is to convert commitment into practical action which makes a difference to women already working in our industries. It is not simply a matter of fairness, but a business imperative as we look to maintain and enhance the UK's competitive edge.

We offer the following steps as a roadmap for companies seeking to retain and develop female talent. We call on all STEM employers, large and small, to adopt these ten steps within their own companies. A public commitment by industry leaders to improve conditions for women working in science and engineering is an essential plank of the campaign to attract more girls into our sectors.

We are seeking your help in promoting this message to UK business. Although designed to improve opportunities for women, these actions will make our companies better places to work for everyone.

To improve the gender balance in our organisations we will:

1. Understand the starting point and put plans in place to improve performance and monitor progress
2. Educate leaders and give them accountability for change
3. Change mind-sets by challenging bias and sexism
4. Be creative in job design
5. Make flexible working a reality for all
6. Increase transparency of opportunities for progression

7. Sponsor talented women, giving the same exposure as men and support to develop their career
8. Demonstrate to women that we want to retain them through career breaks and beyond
9. Treat the retention of women as we would any other issue affecting our core business
10. Share learning and good practice with our industry partners

By making a concerted, co-ordinated approach to tackling the issue, led from the top, we will begin to make a difference.

We ask you for a personal statement that can be included in our communications and would value your reference to this work on appropriate public stages.

I trust we may count on your support.

Yours sincerely




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Allan Cook  
Chair, Diversity Leadership Group  
Royal Academy of Engineering




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Trudy Norris-Grey  
Chair, WISE Campaign  
General Manager, Central and Eastern Europe:  
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**Supporting signatories**

Robin Southwell  
President, Airbus Group UK

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