



***"Gender diversity in the  
healthcare sector - how much  
progress have we  
made?"***

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RESO

[hsj.co.uk/women](http://hsj.co.uk/women)

# Mixed picture of female leadership gives hope for future

The findings of the *HSJ* survey on female health leaders, run in association with the King's Fund, are a cause for both optimism and concern. Analysis by Claire Read

The more than 1,000 people who responded to the *HSJ*

to be one of simultaneous optimism and concern. While

**'Women need to earn authority**

entrants to medicine now female – to be nurses

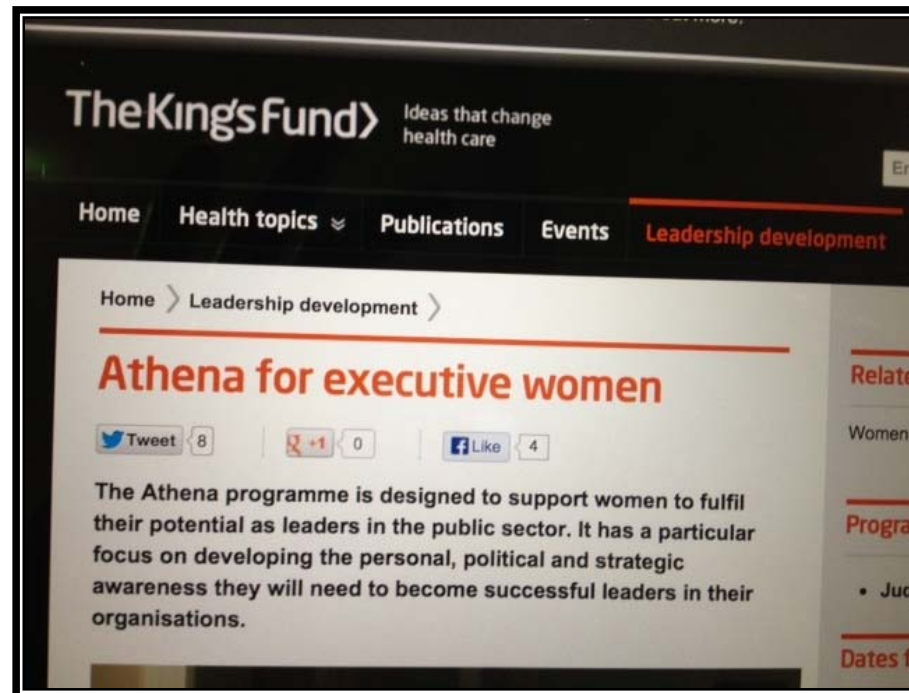
**The King's Fund**

Ideas that change health care

# Why a survey?

- › To get insight into current views in the service
- › Check out what we hear in our programmes
- › Inform our thinking and programme design

TheKingsFund›



- › 66% of public sector employees in UK female **BUT** only 35% hold leadership positions
- › 75% of NHS workforce are women
- › 37% of Foundation Trusts Directors are women (minority in Chair/CEO roles)
- › Majority of entrants to medical school are now female **BUT** only 32% of consultants are women

# Who responded?

- › 1,075 responses
- › 90% women
- › 46% clinical background
- › 63% had children
- › Breadth of organisations (acute sector, community, primary care, CCGs, CSUs)

# A mixed picture

## Positives:

- ✓ 75% women said they would recommend a career in healthcare management to other women
- ✓ 60% respondents felt female healthcare leaders had the same level of authority as men
- ✓ 60% respondents felt men and women were paid equally for similar jobs in the sector
- ✓ Vast majority said requests for flexible working had been granted willingly

# Less hopeful responses

- › Q: Have you ever experienced sexual discrimination during your career in healthcare?
- › A :
  - 37% said yes
  - bullying behaviour reported as more common in female leaders
  - women feel pressure to act in a “macho” way in order to be considered part of the group

## Less hopeful...

- › Over 50% felt female healthcare leaders under greater pressure to prove themselves than their male counterparts
- › “women need to earn authority and trust, which is more naturally granted to men”
- › “As a women you need to establish your authority, you can’t assume it”
- › “Developing an authoritative style when needed without being stereotyped is more difficult”



"leaders look for behaviours they recognise, and most leaders are men"

"barrier: being judged before I've even spoken"

"strong women are seen as difficult. Strong men are seen as good blokes"

"with a less aggressive nature, it is difficult to achieve the same gravitas as men"

# Different leadership styles

“the most inspiring female leaders I’ve met don’t try to adopt these (male) traits and actually embrace their own skills and values”

“The really visionary and inspiring female leaders manage to be strong and kind”

Themes identified and characteristics to be embraced:

Female leaders seen to be more:	
empathetic	collaborative
compassionate	communicative
inclusive	emotionally intelligent
listening	

# Impact

Research published in the Harvard Business Review which used 360 degree feedback to rate the performance of over 7,000 leaders found that :

- › women scored higher than men in 12 of the 16 leadership competencies including taking initiative and driving for results as well as the nurturing categories
- › at every level women were rated as better overall leaders than their male counterparts

# Barriers

## Culture:

- › Old boys' network
- › Nepotism
- › Prejudice
- › Macho, pace-setting environment
- › Unhelpful attitudes to women leaders

# Barriers

- › 61% of respondents had children
- › 50% felt being a parent had or would put their career in healthcare at a disadvantage

## Acknowledging childcare issues is key

“part-time working and career advancement are rarely compatible”

# Barriers

- › Difficulties in juggling child care and work responsibilities (33% of respondents)
- › Family responsibilities limit:
  - Attendance at early morning meetings
  - Conferences a long distance from home
  - Informal evening networking
  - work-related social events
- › Harder to break into male-dominated networks
- › Covering lost ground after maternity leave

Choices to be made...

"I would rather spend time with my children after work than go to an "informal" meeting and I hate going away to conferences"

# Barriers

- › Ethnicity “ being a young female of ethnic origin in a senior role means that I sometimes feel as if I am not taken seriously, despite my achievements”
- › Age “...below 35 you may have children; over 50, you may not be seen as current or ruthless enough”
- › Lack of self confidence/self belief...

**a key theme was the idea that what is sometimes stopping a potential woman leader progressing is herself**



Lack of confidence – how do we deal with this?

A male respondent:

“women should be more confident in their abilities and be more ambitious as they deserve positions at the top....”

# Enablers

- ✓ Good managers (male and female)
- ✓ Enabling organisational culture
- ✓ Peer support
- ✓ Female role models and mentors
- ✓ Coaching
- ✓ Flexible working
- ✓ Access to leadership development opportunities
- ✓ Networks
- ✓ Local secondment opportunities

# Have perseverance and confidence

“Life is not easy for any of us. But what of that? We must have perseverance and above all confidence in ourselves. We must believe that we are gifted for something and that this thing must be attained”

Marie Curie,  
chemist and physicist