



Women's Equality Party
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Sharon White, CEO

Ofcom
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2a Southwark Bridge Road
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Dear Ms White,

I am writing to ask you to urgently investigate whether public service broadcasters are meeting their obligations under sections 27 and 337 of the Communications Act 2003, to promote equality of opportunity in employment on the basis of gender, race and disability.

The broadcasters' recent examples of pay discrimination and pay gaps - in addition to your own findings on lack of diversity in staffing - suggest discrimination that directly undermines their ability to represent diversity and alternative viewpoints in programming. Ofcom has pledged to hold broadcasters to account and I am asking you to do just that.

In the past week, we have learned that Channel 4 and ITN have a gender pay gap of 29% and 20%, respectively. Women are also being awarded smaller and fewer bonuses than men (as much as 77% at ITN). This follows news that women make up a third of the BBC's top earners and the ten highest-paid BAME stars were together paid about the same as the highest paid white man. Public service broadcasters appear to be using their considerable influence to contribute to growing inequality across the industry.

The gender pay gap is a symptom of the structural barriers that women face and can be seen at every level of working life, across every industry. It thrives on the direct and indirect discrimination that daily goes unchallenged by all the white men in decision-making roles, and is magnified by occupational segregation, unequal caring responsibilities and pervasive stereotypes that intersect with class, race, age, sexuality and disability. The fact that it is systemic makes it no less our responsibility to fix it.

We have public service broadcasting in the UK because we recognise the fundamental role that culture and media can play in examining and shaping our society. The idea, therefore, that broadcasters should tackle inequality only to the extent that they are required to is lazy. They have the privilege of being able to speed progress towards equality.

Ofcom published guidance on promoting equality of opportunity more than a decade ago. Public service broadcasters have had every opportunity to act. Instead, as shown by the BBC, they obfuscate and present their failings as the fault of women. It falls to you as the regulator to step in.

Women are paid less because they are considered to be worth less. You can change this.

Yours sincerely,

Sophie Walker, Leader of the Women's Equality Party