

News story: 'Prioritise gender equality' says City Minister to finance firms

[Speaking at the Women in Finance Awards](#) last night, newly-appointed minister for financial services, Stephen Barclay laid out the importance of the four industry actions in the Charter which aim to build the pipeline of female talent for leadership positions.

Mr Barclay made clear that the Charter offers financial firms, both large and small, the flexibility they need to make a real difference:

The [Charter](#) is simple. It doesn't tell companies who to hire, or how to run their businesses.

But it does ask them to make a real commitment to supporting women and their progression to more senior roles.

It asks them to set their own targets for what that looks like.

To measure their progress in achieving them – and make that progress public.

I simply don't buy the argument of those firms who say they cannot do this.

As well as celebrating the success of women in finance, the Economic Secretary emphasised that firms should also think about improving different types of diversity:

The charter does not prevent firms focusing on other aspects of diversity, and if we are to meet the economic and political challenges ahead, we need a meritocracy which promotes diversity across all areas, including LGBT, class, and geography.

The [Women in Finance Awards](#), held at the Grosvenor House Hotel, identified and celebrated role models and advocates in financial services.

The Awards are supported by HM Treasury, 30% club, London Stock Exchange, Virgin Money, Bloomberg, Prudential and Rolls-Royce, among others.

Winners were chosen by an independent panel of judges. Many of the winners, including the top prizes of the night, went to those from firms signed up to the Charter.

Stephen Barclay, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, said:

For too long many women have been underpaid, underrepresented and undervalued compared to men and it is events like the Women in Finance Awards which rightly shine the spotlight on female excellence and achievement in financial services. I want to congratulate all of the winners and I wish them luck for their future careers.

Top winners include:

Woman of the Year – Emily Cox, Virgin Money

For the flagship award of the night, given to an inspiring leader who has challenged, influenced and revolutionised the culture of the business, the judges chose Emily Cox. Emily stood out as a game changer for all of her work on the Gadhia Report, and for furthering the momentum of the Women in Finance Charter.

Banker of the Year- Maria Harris, Atom Bank

Maria stood out as one of the most influential and inspirational women in banking thanks to her genuinely disruptive approach to mortgage lending. Her work in mentoring team members and hiring for diversity singled her for this award. This was also evidenced by the scores of testimonials from clients and co-workers in praise of her hard work.

Advocate of the Year- Andrew Bester, Lloyds Banking Group

Andrew has gone out of his way to drive greater diversity and inclusion at all levels of Lloyds bank. Under his leadership, Lloyds Bank is now on track to reach its 2020 commitment of 40% of women in senior roles.

Employer of the Year- Columbia Threadneedle

Columbia Threadneedle has a proven track record of proactively cultivating a diverse workforce, introducing specific measures to promote diversity and backing these up by measurable impact.

Insurance Leader of the Year- Debbie Cannon, LV= Insurance

Debbie takes the title of Insurance Leader of the Year for her truly inspiring journey, her compellingly honest story, and for standing up as a role model to other women in the sector.

Legal Adviser of the Year- Leigh Kirkpatrick, RBS

Leigh stood out as a lawyer who has broken barriers to advancement, carved out a niche for herself in finance, while simultaneously paving the way for greater diversity in her firm. This was further bolstered by her mentoring and pro bono work outside of office hours.

Further information

Over 120 firms that have signed up to the Treasury's [Women in Finance Charter](#), covering over half a million members of staff – more than half of the financial sector staff.

The Charter sits among a set of wider government reforms to improve gender equality in the work place. These include the £5 million fund for 'returnships' announced at Budget 2017 and making gender pay gap reporting mandatory from April this year.