

# RTPI response to the 7<sup>th</sup> Inquiry of the APPG on Excellence in the Built Environment

*May 2019*

1. We welcome the opportunity to respond to the 7<sup>th</sup> Inquiry of the APPG on Excellence in the Built Environment on the recruitment and retention of more women.
2. The Royal Town Planning Institute is the largest professional body for urban planners in Europe with 25,000 members. It promotes the role of urban planning in solving society's problems and it supports the recruitment, learning and continuing professional development of urban planners in pursuit of best practice and improved outcomes.
3. Urban planning has a balanced gender profile in aggregate, and certainly a better profile than some other parts of the built environment sector: **39% of all RTPI members are female**. However there is no cause for complacency. We observe that there is a glass ceiling in operation within the profession which means that at higher levels of seniority, the number of women declines.
4. The RTPI committed itself in November 2018 to increase the diversity of the planning profession. This is because a planning profession more representative of society is crucial to bring about more inclusive and accessible design, housing and public environments. Although there are more men than women planners today, this is fast changing. Across planning schools and entrants to the profession there is generally a 50:50 split. The RTPI's own governance has also seen good progress for diversity recently, with equal numbers of men and women elected to lead the Institute into the future. The RTPI's **Diversity and Inclusivity Statement** sets the ambition for the RTPI's external and internal activities, including work in growing its membership, diversifying routes into the profession, staff recruitment and governance, and broadening its base of volunteers.
5. The Institute recognises that a cornerstone in addressing gender diversity is to obtain better information on what can be a nuanced area to explore: aggregate statistics on gender composition may conceal issues which can only be understood through deeper investigation.
6. The organisation **Women in Planning** has done research on how many women there are at leadership level at private sector planning consultancies across the UK published this year. 83% of director and above roles are held by men and **only 17% by women**. Above Director level (Senior Director, Senior Partner, Managing Director or Chief Executive) the research found that 29% of these roles were filled by men, with women filling only 5%. This is from a sample of 379 consultancies
7. The RTPI is currently conducting research on the **professional journey of women** working within the profession and the impact of the profession on the day-to-day lives of women. The primary aim of this study is to better understand the professional journey of female planners – in particular, the barriers and

obstacles directly or indirectly related to gender as experienced by women working in the planning profession. A second aim of this study is to gauge the impact of gender mainstreaming on planning related issues – that is, to gain an in-depth understanding of the success and failure to implement planning policies sensitive to gender specific needs in urban and rural environments.

8. Initial findings of this research suggest that 'sexism' (from inappropriate comments to lack of promotion of female employees) remains an issue across all planning sectors (public, private, third and academic) and among all cohorts of respondents. They also suggest that lack of family friendly policies (and lack of support upon return from maternity leave) are still perceived as crucial barriers to professional advancement. Outputs of the research will be presented at the Women and Planning in the UK conference to be held on 20th/21st May 2019 at the Leeds Planning School.
9. A critical perspective in the framing of family friendly employment policy is to ensure that it is made clear that roles in the home and the family are not necessarily to be seen as female roles, and that policy measures assist in participation by male partners.