

# Ensuring equality and flexible working is not just a ‘buzzword’ but accessible to everyone



**Jessamy Baird**  
Director of Market Access  
Sanofi UK

**Jessamy Baird, Director of Market Access, shares her thoughts on equality and opportunity at Sanofi UK**

With over 1,200 employees in the UK, cultivating a policy of inclusion and support for career progression is at the heart of Sanofi. The rigid days of the traditional healthcare career ladder, when a career break would often mean the death knell to a promotion, are now thankfully near extinction.

Today, more than ever, professionals are being empowered to drive their own careers – regardless of gender. However, with an increase in opportunities comes an ever-growing need to effectively navigate one’s progression while keeping the often-cited career Holy Grail of ‘work life balance’.

Next month Sanofi UK will be hosting the Healthcare Businesswomen’s Association (HBA) London Chapter’s first event in Reading titled: **Navigate Your Career – Personal Journeys from Senior Leaders to Ignite Your Drive to Achieve**. The event will include an expert panel of senior leaders from within and outside of the healthcare sector, all of whom have navigated great careers in challenging and ever-changing settings. One of the key speakers is Jessamy Baird, Sanofi UK and Ireland’s Director of Market Access. Baird will share her thoughts on equality for healthcare employees and her insights into the changing landscape of opportunity for female employees at Sanofi UK – an area she is passionate about.

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I’ve got a particular interest in flexible patterns that support women both in their remuneration but also in their ability to return to work, without feeling they are making trade-offs. As a single parent, I never had the opportunity to work part-time and I’ve often thought I made trade-offs to be at work, rather than with my kids. Now, my children might be quite independent and ambitious as a result, but I’ve always felt that women should have the choice to do both. As a manager I can make that possible by introducing really flexible working patterns.

Does she think the next generation of future women leaders at Sanofi have more or less opportunity to build up such an accomplished career portfolio?

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I think Sanofi is really committed. Right from the top where they’ve got a goal of 50% balance of male to female on leadership teams. It’s also a focus in the Executive Committees’ performance plans, right through to our level. We are looking at balanced assessment centres too, where there are both women and men on the interview panel. We’ve also talked about removing gender from candidate’s applications and having a balanced shortlist. But we also need to ensure women are being supported to want the next role and to believe they can do the next role. Within my team I have a number of women in senior roles and all these positive changes are making them feel they can come back from maternity leave with flexibility and support.

In terms of incentives to attract more women into the industry Baird adds:

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I think flexible working is a sort of buzzword, isn’t it? The more women you see speaking out at events, such as those run by the Healthcare Businesswomen’s Association (HBA), explaining their own history and what it’s like working in a male dominated environment supports others to think they can do it. These women are laying a path for others to follow. There is evidence that, when it comes down to tough times, companies tend to take a punt on men doing the job, and they’re not as willing to take a punt on women. The proportion of women on Boards in FTSE 100 companies consistently goes down in times of financial crisis. I think Sanofi has really grasped this as an issue and is willing to take a punt on women too.

Baird says:

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You have to have the male advocates in order to bring on the females. Certainly, Hugo Fry, who is the Managing Director in the UK, is a huge advocate. He doesn't differentiate if you're male or female. If you do a good job, he's happy with you. He's a strong spokesperson for gender equality, increasing female confidence in senior roles, and will actively develop people. So, I think having respected, accomplished leaders like him and acknowledging that there are challenges is the first place to start.

Creating a long-term culture of equality and opportunity needs to be totally gender inclusive, adds Baird. At the heart of this is mentorship from both genders and, in time, paternity rights mirroring those of women's too at Sanofi UK.

Baird is a member of the Leadership Team at Sanofi UK. As Director of Market Access she supports national and local healthcare access for patients to medicines and vaccines. Her own career trajectory reflects the drive and focus of a professional destined for leadership, regardless of gender.

Prior to joining Sanofi in 2015 she worked at Eli Lilly as Director, Real World Evidence (Australia, Canada, Europe) and previously as Director, Market Access Strategy. She also held the post of Director, Health Technology Appraisal (Australia, Canada, EU, Japan). She began her career in healthcare research/health economics and since then has worked in roles that span the pharmaceutical industry, academia and the NHS.

Jessamy has also held Non-Executive roles in the NHS for more than 10 years. She is currently Non- Executive Adviser for Hampshire and Isle of Wight Partnership, North Hants Clinical Commissioning Group, and was previously a Non-Executive Director at the Isle of Wight Healthcare NHS Trust, and an Executive Director within an NHS Foundation Trust.

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Baird will be the moderator and one of the key speakers at the HBA London Chapter career event titled, **Navigate Your Career – Personal Journeys from Senior Leaders to Ignite Your Drive to Achieve**, hosted by Sanofi.

**Date:**

Thursday 12th September 2019, 6:00–9:00 PM

**Venue:**

Sanofi, 410 Thames Valley Park Drive,  
Reading, RG6 1PT

**For more information go to:**

<https://my.hbanet.org/MyHBA/EventDetails.aspx?MeetingID=43ADC482-99A8-E911-80F7-000D3A01CFD3>

