

# ADVANCING WOMEN IN MATHEMATICS: An Opportunity for Change

The London Mathematical Society (LMS) launched its report *Advancing women in mathematics: Good practice in UK university departments* at the House of Commons on 27th February 2013.

The event was hosted by Andrew Miller MP, Dr Julian Huppert MP and Stephen Metcalfe MP, with guest speaker Professor Margaret Wright of the Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences, New York University and Chair of the International Review of Mathematical Sciences 2010. This is the first launch event that the LMS has held at the House

sciences to the country's prosperity, and the need for continued interaction between the mathematical sciences community and Parliament.

Dr Graeme Segal, LMS President, described the reasons behind the LMS report and gave a brief outline. He also thanked Dr Catherine Hobbs and Professors Gwyneth Stallard and John Greenlees from the LMS



Anna Zecharia, Ellie Cosgrave and Chi Onwurah MP



Stephen Metcalfe MP and Graeme Segal (LMS President)

of Commons and the support from MPs, the mathematics community and other STEM organisations was excellent, with around 100 attendees.

Andrew Miller MP opened proceedings by welcoming the attendees and outlining the importance of the mathematical

Good Practice Scheme Steering Group, for their hard work in bringing the report to fruition. He mentioned the late Anne Bennett, who as the LMS Head of Society Business was instrumental in helping to produce the report. It is a lasting legacy to her ability to facilitate

collaborative working, her energy and drive, and her real interest ensured that mathematics and women in mathematics are properly represented at the highest levels.

The guest speaker – Professor Wright – outlined the process behind the International Review of the Mathematical Sciences 2010 and some of its findings in relation to gender diversity. One of the Review's recommendations was that, 'urgent action should be taken to improve participation of women in the mathematical sciences community', which supported the view of the LMS in undertaking this work.

The formal part of the

evening was closed by Stephen Metcalfe MP, who reiterated the importance of mathematics. He looked forward to continued dialogue with the community.

The LMS has long been concerned about the loss of women from mathematics, particularly at the higher levels of research and teaching, and the missed opportunities that this represents. Through its Women in Mathematics Committee the LMS established a Good Practice Scheme. Supporting departments participated in a benchmarking survey which led to this report.

Although similar surveys have been carried out for other disciplines, this is the first such

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survey undertaken within mathematics. It provides insight into areas of good practice as well as areas for further development.

The report also provides data on the proportions of women at each career stage. Although over 40% of graduates in the mathematical sciences are female, in common with other science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine (STEMM) subjects, there is a significant fall in the proportion of women who become academic mathematicians. Only 6% of professors of mathematics in the UK are female. The data contained in the report enabled each

proactive approach the community is taking in addressing the various challenges. The LMS was particularly pleased with the opportunity to discuss these challenges with the three MPs



Chi Onwurah MP

Business, Innovation and Skills who attended the event along with Joan Walley MP.

Professor Gwyneth Stallard, Chair of the LMS Women in Mathematics Committee said, 'The LMS is delighted that so many mathematical science departments are beginning to take these issues seriously. The LMS hopes that this report will provide a valuable resource for those seeking to make changes

technology, economy and society. The flow of trained mathematical scientists relies upon our universities' research and teaching excellence, and developing the rich pool of mathematical talent – both women and men – that is available in the UK. This is an excellent opportunity for the mathematical sciences to make a significant contribution in this area and the publication of this report is a huge step in the right direction.

There is a summary of the issues highlighted in the report in the previous issue of Science in Parliament magazine, *Supporting Good Practice in University Mathematics Departments*, p39-41.

The full report is available on the LMS website at <http://www.blitzadv.co.uk/LMS-BTL-17Report.pdf>



Joan Walley MP

department to benchmark itself against the national picture, and will assist departments and the LMS to target appropriate actions.

The event was an opportunity for the mathematical sciences community to meet policy makers and other influential people, and to promote mathematics and the



Stephen Huggett and Catherine Hobbs

hosting the event, and also with Shabana Mahmood MP, Shadow Minister of State for Universities & Science and Chi Onwurah MP, Junior Shadow Minister for

so that more women can achieve their true potential as mathematicians'

Mathematical sciences underpin our 21st century

If you would like a printed copy of the report please contact Dr John Johnston, LMS Communications Officer at [john.johnston @lms.ac.uk](mailto:john.johnston@lms.ac.uk)

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