

# The Women of MKUH

## Vicky Balaktsoglou



My name is Vicky Balaktsoglou and work in OD as the Organisational Development Administrator. Essentially, my job is to support and facilitate all of our Trust-wide developmental programmes, from our ongoing Living Our Values culture programme to staff rewards and benefits including our new gym membership scheme offered via Vivup.

### **What are your future career goals?**

I have actually just successfully applied for a Communication and Engagement Officer role and will be joining the Comms team here at MKUH! It is a fantastic opportunity to be able to put my marketing and communications skills and experience to good use, engaging and informing staff, patients, and the general public.

### **What made you join the Women's Network?**

I have always been a proud (and outspoken!) feminist. Gender equality is something that's very important to me and something for which I have campaigned for a number of years. Whilst a lot of progress has been made over the past few decades, injustices still persist, in the UK and around the world. We're not equal until everyone is equal.

I joined the Women's Network almost immediately after I joined the Trust. Nearly 80% of the workforce at MKUH is female thereby making the Women's Network crucial, providing us with a forum where we can come and share our opinions and ideas. The opportunity to enact positive change for the benefit of women across the Trust, helping them reach their potential, is something that means a lot to me.

### **What changes have you seen, in terms of gender equality, within your career?**

When I first started working after graduating from university, misogyny was rife in a lot of the environments I worked in. Sexist remarks passed off as "banter", inappropriate comments and questions, and even outright harassment. It was almost par for the course. I do believe things have improved as perspectives and mindsets have evolved thanks to the hard work of trailblazing women. That's not to say that these behaviours don't exist nowadays. We still live in a patriarchal society and women in the workplace experience micro- (and often macro-) aggressions every day. So we continue to speak up and speak out, in the hopes that we will one day achieve true equality – for everyone.

## What changes would you like to see?

Having worked for a tech company, there were times when I was the only woman in the room. There are many industries where this is the case. I would like to see more women being offered the same opportunities as men, entering these historically male-dominated industries, operating at senior levels, and being paid the same as their male counterparts. The gender pay gap is something that remains an issue, regionally, nationally, and globally.

The average gender pay gap in the UK is 16.2%. We need to do more to ensure equal pay regardless of gender. As human rights activist Malala Yousafzai put it, “We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back.”

## What advice would you give women who want to follow a similar career path?

I would advise other women looking to pursue a career like mine, whether that's education, healthcare, teaching or marketing, to take the initiative to seek out and even create opportunities. Back yourself. Don't let imposter syndrome deter you from taking the leap, whatever that may be.

Your career, just like your life plan, doesn't have to be linear. Get all the experience you can, try new things, embrace creativity, and listen to your gut.

