

The Honorary Graduand: Rachel Mostyn and Camilla Rigby

Doctor of Business Administration

About Women's Work Lab

Founded by Rachel Mostyn and Camilla Rigby in 2018, Women's Work Lab is an award-winning social enterprise established in Bristol to support mums on benefits back into meaningful work.

Since launching, the organisation has supported more than 700 women — and, in turn, over 1,600 children — across the South West and beyond. Rachel and Camilla founded Women's Work Lab after recognising a significant gap in support for mothers looking to return to work. Too often, women facing barriers such as caring responsibilities, low confidence, domestic abuse, poor mental health, disability, or caring for children with additional needs were being overlooked by traditional employment programmes.

Many had been out of work for years and no longer believed there was a place for them in the workplace.

Women's Work Lab was designed around the realities of motherhood. Its programmes are delivered during school hours and combine volunteer work placements, mentoring, confidence-building, career coaching and practical support. More than 70 per cent of participants go on to secure employment or further formal training, helping to improve outcomes not only for themselves but for their families too.

What began as a small Bristol-based pilot has grown into a nationally recognised social enterprise, delivering programmes across the UK and working in partnership with employers, councils, universities and community organisations. One of Rachel and Camilla's proudest achievements is that almost half of the Women's Work Lab team are former programme participants, ensuring lived experience remains at the heart of the organisation's work.

Camilla Rigby

Camilla was born in Somerset and lived in Bridgwater before moving to South East London aged 10. Despite passing her 11+ and gaining a place at a state grammar school, secondary education was tough and at 16 Camilla was asked to leave with a handful of GCSE passes. She was introduced to vocational study at sixth form college, which proved to be the key to finally unlocking education, enabling her to secure a place at the University of the West of England to study Business Studies.

The vocational aspect of the degree proved to be the making of Camilla, who loved her year in London working at a technology PR agency called Firefly. The year's work experience helped to secure a pre-graduation role at a global WPP-owned PR agency.

Camilla loved the buzz of agency life and her hard work and tenacity was spotted by one of her clients, Dyson, who headhunted her for a PR Manager role in 2006. She spent 5 enjoyable years at Dyson, being promoted to Head of PR and having the opportunity to travel the world and work closely with James Dyson and the senior team.

She left Dyson after having her first son Wilf and relocated with her husband Olly to Bristol in early 2012. At the time, a small start-up energy company called OVO was looking for a Head of PR and having already worked in a founder-led environment, she joined them. Another son Gilby followed in 2013 and the realities of being an almost-full-time working mum started to bite.

The wheels finally came off in 2016 and on the verge of a complete breakdown, she quit.

Much soul-searching then followed but soon she realised she wanted to do something entrepreneurial and work with more purpose. Having recently met Rachel on the Bristol women in business circuit, it soon became clear that they not only had lots of shared values and beliefs, but both could both see a gap in support for mums in receipt of benefits who were wanting to work. Finding her work soulmate has led to building a wonderful team and creating life-changing impact but most importantly, purpose in work and also life.

Rachel Mostyn

Rachel grew up in Cardiff with her parents, Philip and Wendy, and her older brother, Andrew. As a first-generation university student, she studied Spanish and Politics before beginning a career in journalism. After training at The Sunday Times, she went on to work as News Editor at Cosmopolitan magazine before moving to Bristol in 2006.

Over the years, Rachel has worked as a journalist, writer and communications consultant, specialising in women's issues and contributing to national newspapers and magazines, as

well as appearing regularly on television and radio to discuss issues affecting women and families.

She particularly valued the flexibility of freelance life, which allowed her to build a career she loved while raising her three children, Amelia, Leila and Jobo.

Rachel's passion for helping women recognise their strengths and potential has been a constant thread throughout her career. Throughout her working life, she has been driven by a belief that talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not. A chance meeting with Camilla at a networking event in 2017 sparked both a friendship and a shared ambition to create more opportunities for women whose talents and potential were too often overlooked.

Rachel has lived in BS3 for almost 20 years with her husband, Toby, and their family, and is proud to call Bristol home. She feels incredibly fortunate to live in a city whose creativity, community spirit and sense of possibility have shaped so much of her life and work.

Alongside bringing up three teenagers, they are also foster carers, opening their home to children and young people who need support and stability. She considers this one of the most rewarding parts of her life.