# Helen Fielding reveals BBC harassment as common in 1980s workplace culture



Helen Fielding, renowned author of the "Bridget Jones" series, has shared her unsettling experiences of sexual harassment during her early career at the BBC in the 1980s. Speaking at the annual Soho Summit, held at the Soho Farmhouse in Oxfordshire, Fielding, now 67, revealed that it was common for male colleagues to inappropriately touch women's breasts while discussing work matters.

Fielding recounted, "I worked at the BBC when I was in my 20s, and you just got used to the fact that people would actually put their hand on your boob while they were talking to you about work." This alarming norm, according to her, left women at the corporation resigned to enduring such behaviour as part of their workplace reality.

Reflecting on her experiences, Fielding expressed disbelief at the similarities between her life and that of her literary creation, Bridget Jones. "I first wrote Bridget pre #MeToo, and when I look at that film now, I can't believe that that stuff was going on," she commented, noting the parallels between her experiences and scenes in the films where Bridget faces unwanted advances from male colleagues, including her fictional boss, Daniel Cleaver, portrayed by Hugh Grant.

During the discussion, conducted by author Dolly Alderton, Fielding also highlighted ongoing issues of sexism within the film industry, asserting, "I honestly think it's still there in the movie business; it's just under the parapet." She emphasised the need for continuous awareness and advocacy regarding gender equality, stating, "You still have to fight much harder as a woman, even a successful woman, and you get treated in ways that men would not be treated."

Fielding's initial role at the BBC was behind the scenes of “Jim’ll Fix It,” a children's TV show hosted by the now-disgraced Jimmy Savile, whose history of abuse led to significant controversies engulfing the BBC. Recalling her suspicions about Savile, Fielding remarked, "Well, we always said, 'Don't leave Jimmy alone with the children.'" Despite her concerns, she noted that their young age and lack of awareness contributed to their acceptance of the environment at the time.

After beginning her career at the BBC as a regional researcher in 1979, Fielding later produced documentaries for Comic Relief and transitioned to journalism before penning her now-iconic columns for The Independent, which paved the way for the creation of the Bridget Jones novels that resonated with many single women.

In response to Fielding's comments, a spokesperson for the BBC stated, "We're sorry to hear of these experiences. Attitudes and behaviours have changed significantly in the last 40 years, and the BBC – like the rest of society – is a very different place now from what it was then."

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/jul/05/i-cant-believe-the-sexism-in-bridget-joness-world-says-helen-fielding> - Helen Fielding discusses her shock at the sexism depicted in the Bridget Jones films, highlighting scenes where male characters inappropriately touch Bridget, reflecting her experiences of sexual harassment during her early career.
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2017/may/26/helen-fielding-says-bridget-jones-books-are-not-anti-feminist> - Fielding defends the feminist nature of the Bridget Jones series, emphasizing the strength found in self-deprecating humor and the importance of laughing at oneself.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/jul/05/i-cant-believe-the-sexism-in-bridget-joness-world-says-helen-fielding> - Fielding reflects on the parallels between her life and her character Bridget Jones, noting the similarities in their experiences with unwanted advances from male colleagues.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/jul/05/i-cant-believe-the-sexism-in-bridget-joness-world-says-helen-fielding> - Fielding highlights ongoing issues of sexism within the film industry, asserting that such behavior is still prevalent, albeit less overt, and emphasizes the need for continuous awareness and advocacy regarding gender equality.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/jul/05/i-cant-believe-the-sexism-in-bridget-joness-world-says-helen-fielding> - Fielding recalls her initial role at the BBC behind the scenes of 'Jim’ll Fix It,' expressing concerns about Jimmy Savile's behavior and the lack of awareness among young staff members at the time.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/jul/05/i-cant-believe-the-sexism-in-bridget-joness-world-says-helen-fielding> - Fielding discusses her career trajectory, from her start at the BBC as a regional researcher in 1979 to producing documentaries for Comic Relief, transitioning to journalism, and eventually creating the Bridget Jones novels.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-14675957/Bridget-Jones-author-Helen-Fielding-groped-colleagues-worked-BBC.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data