



A gender review of Developing
the Young Workforce:
Scotland's youth unemployment strategy



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Introduction

Gender inequality remains a persistent problem throughout women's and girls' lives. Gender-sensitive policymaking is essential to tackling this inequality. This involves developing policy that both takes account of the gendered inequalities which are pervasive in society, and sets out action that will challenge these.

A key stage where gender inequality becomes increasingly embedded in young women's and girls' lives is education. As such it is crucial that education and skills policy is alive to the ways in which experiences of education can sustain and exacerbate gender stereotypes and segregation. The Developing the Young Workforce strategy is one such policy.

The strategy takes a helpful pipeline approach with stakeholder action at each stage of the education and skills journey. This provides a range of opportunities for targeted action to tackle the barriers which prevent young women and girls from realising their full potential.

In 2019, Close the Gap undertook of the DYW strategy to identify the activity that has been delivered as part of the actions relating to gender equality, and whether these have resulted in better outcomes for girls and young women. Close the Gap used the findings of the review to highlight gender gaps in delivery to date, and advocated that Scottish Government and its delivery agencies take an improved approach to gendering DYW implementation.

We are very pleased to say this has resulted in a strong commitment to accelerate action in the final years of the strategy's work. The most recent progress update¹ from Scottish Government commits to work with Close the Gap to:

- Develop a strategic approach to building gender competence in teachers and other education practitioners;
- Ensure the DYW Regional Groups review is informed by gender expertise;

¹ Scottish Government (2019) *Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy – 5th annual progress report*

- Develop guidance for employers engaged with DYW on tackling gendered occupational segregation, and build capacity on the importance of gender equality at work in realising the ambitions of DYW; and
- Ensure any new resources developed for teachers and careers practitioners are gender-sensitive and include guidance on tackling gender stereotyping and segregation.

We also welcome the commitment from Skill Development Scotland in its new Career Information, Advice and Guidance Action Plan² to roll out mandatory training for career practitioners to build their gender competence and to undertake focused work on gender stereotyping with school pupils and parents.

These commitments are more important than ever. We're looking forward to working with Scottish Government and Skills Development Scotland to drive real change for girls and young women that will challenge gender stereotypes and reduce gender segregation.

² Skills Development Scotland (2019) *Careers Information, Advice & Guidance Equality Action Plan*



Gender inequality – a pipeline problem

Gender inequality is a defining characteristic of our society. Key societal features such as gender stereotyping in children’s clothing and toys, gender segregation in subject and career choice, and the categorisation of societal roles as ‘male’ or ‘female’, result in rigid gendered inequalities which constrain women’s and girls’ lives, limiting their freedoms and opportunities. The gender pay gap is both a cause and a consequence of these gendered inequalities and its persistence reflects the need for continued policy focus on women’s labour market and economic inequality, and its causes and solutions.

Gender inequality at work starts long before a woman has entered the labour market, and is reflected in the different expectations of girls and boys regarding toys, play and interests, which intensify as they move through the early years setting and into education. Gender stereotyping has an impact on the decisions that girls and boys, and young women and men, make about subject and career choice. As children and young people progress through the education and skills pipeline, their ideas about gender and work become increasingly fixed. This results in gender segregation in subject choice in school, further and higher education, skills programmes, and the labour market.

Women’s labour market inequality is also caused and enabled by employer practices which do not recognise the gendered constraints on women’s lives, in particular their propensity to have caring roles alongside paid work. A lack of quality part-time and flexible working means women are shut out from many senior roles and well-paid occupations. Commonplace recruitment, development and progression practices reward stereotypically male traits and fail to recognise women’s skills and attributes. Workplace cultures, especially those in male-dominated workplaces, often create a hostile environment for women, further excluding them from particular jobs and sectors. This creates economic injustice for women, and is also bad for the economy as a whole. Occupational segregation is an allocative inefficiency, which sees workers allocated to roles based on gendered assumptions instead of actual skills and abilities. This effectively means many people are in the wrong jobs.

Scottish Government policy responses

In Scotland, there has been a clear recognition of the economic case for gender equality, which has generated a welcome focus on gender in policy terms. In recognition of the multiple, inter-related causes of the gender pay gap, A Fairer Scotland for Women, Scotland's first gender pay gap action plan, includes action across a broad range of policy domains including early learning and childcare, education and skills, employment, social security, procurement, employability and economic development. This joined-up approach is essential to tackle the complex and inter-related causes of women's labour market inequality.

The Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Strategy takes a similar pipeline approach to preparing children and young people for the world of work, and tackling youth unemployment. The strategy's recommendations, KPIs, and key themes and milestones for stakeholders seek to drive action across the five key areas of the education and skills pipeline: schools, colleges, apprenticeships, employers, and equalities. The strategy also explicitly sets out that its recommendations on equality should not be seen as "separate activity" but as an approach to ensure equality is "embedded throughout" its actions.

Education and skills policy is a strategic focus for Close the Gap as areas which influence women's labour market inequality. We welcomed the development and launch of the DYW Strategy and have paid close attention to the activity that has emanated from its recommendations since 2014.

Methodology

The DYW strategy was published in 2014 with its implementation planned over seven years, ending in 2021. More than five years have now passed since the DYW strategy's introduction and, with under two years to go of its delivery plan, Close the Gap has undertaken a review of progress and a gender analysis of its actions.

This review was undertaken between May and October 2019. The review process involved reading all relevant reports and resources connected to the Strategy which were accessible at the time of the review. The core strategy itself and official progress reports formed the initial basis for the review, alongside a review of all key stakeholders' websites and published materials. This was followed by an extensive online literature review to identify and collate further relevant documents, resources and websites which were connected to work under the strategy.

These were reviewed in order to identify any work on gender, or relevant work on equalities which included a gender focus. In the course of the assessment over 200 reports and papers, and over 30 websites, were reviewed. This review enabled Close the Gap to develop a fulsome picture of the extent to which action on gender was evident, and if the ambition of equality mainstreaming was being achieved.

Findings

The findings of the review and gender analysis indicate that the DYW Strategy is failing to deliver substantive action on gender, or improved outcomes for girls and young women. Key actions under the strategy have not engaged with gender, including those which have an explicit commitment to work towards gender equality. The available evidence suggests that work to address gender stereotyping and segregation is inconsistent and not being prioritised, and indicates varying levels of engagement on gender among different stakeholders.

No substantive action on gender

All of the strategy's recommendations have the potential for gendered impacts, however there is little evidence that gender is being considered in implementation. Despite the commitment to embed equality throughout the actions flowing from the strategy's recommendations, a mainstreaming approach is absent.

Equality impact assessment (EqIA) is the central tool for the mainstreaming of equality in the development of public policy. An EqIA on the Wood Commission³ report, the recommendations of which formed the DYW strategy, was published in 2014. This EqIA led to the inclusion of a specific section on equalities. While this was a positive step, it does not appear to have led to action on equalities being mainstreamed in the strategy, or supported meaningful action on gender.

Inappropriate indicators

Of the strategy's 11 KPIs, only two have a specific gender component⁴. This creates the basis for a reporting approach which does not effectively track or encourage action on gender inequality. The gender KPIs themselves are also insufficient to drive meaningful work on gender stereotyping and segregation. They are open to interpretation and only relate to a small part of the education and skills pipeline, gender segregation in college superclasses and Modern Apprenticeships, with no KPIs focused on schools or employers.

³ Scottish Government (2014) *Education Working for All! Final report of the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce - Equality Impact Assessment Record*

⁴ KPI 7: To reduce to 60 per cent the percentage of MA frameworks where the gender balance is 75:25 or worse by 2021. KPI 8: Increase by 5 percentage points the minority gender share in each of the 10 largest and most imbalanced superclasses by 2021.

Close the Gap's experience of compliance with the public sector equality duty, and the gender pay gap regulations, has demonstrated that public bodies and private sector employers are unlikely to take action on gender inequality without clear directions. These headline indicators could have had effect if they were supported by clear and focused indicators on specific underpinning actions. The strategy has relied on stakeholders being motivated to develop this action, and stakeholders have failed to fill this gap.

Unclear reporting and a lack of accountability

There is a significant number of stakeholders involved in the delivery of the strategy, comprising:

- National and local government,
- Education Scotland,
- Education authorities,
- Schools,
- Skills Development Scotland,
- Scottish Funding Council,
- Colleges,
- Training providers, and
- Employers.

Scottish Government publish annual progress reports on DYW which contain information on each of the five key areas of the strategy and on progress towards the KPIs. However, the lack of clear or consistent external reporting by other stakeholders has created challenges in relation to reporting and accountability. The number of stakeholders makes it difficult to obtain information on activity and to measure progress. This is compounded by the level of collaborative or partnership working under the strategy. Where stakeholder reports advise that action on equality is included in their DYW work, many of these reports signpost to other stakeholders' reports for a fuller description of the work. However, the review found that this often resulted in a closed loop, with those reports either containing no information on equalities work, or directing the reader back to the original stakeholder for further detail. This has created a landscape where accountability is unclear.

There is also a large number of reports which describe or connect to activity under the strategy. This is compounded by the different reporting approaches used by different stakeholders, and where certain stakeholders have no clear reporting process. While the specific action plans of Scottish Funding Council and Skills

Development Scotland provide a set of actions to enable progress tracking, there is a lack of evidence on activity in schools and on employer engagement in the work of the strategy. Of particular concern are the regional employer-led groups, which appear to have no reporting structure or requirements.

The majority of progress reporting does not include evidence of work on gender. Almost none of the data included in the core strategy progress reports is disaggregated by gender. Even for some of the recommendations which contain explicit commitments on gender there is no gender-disaggregated data in progress updates, for example, on the development of senior phase vocational pathways. This inconsistent, convoluted and opaque reporting makes it extremely difficult to adequately track progress against the commitments of the strategy and to hold stakeholders to account.

Gaps in collaborative work

Collaborative working is central to the DYW recommendations; however, it is difficult to track how it is happening, to evaluate approaches, and to ensure consistency, due to the mix of partners and stakeholders involved. A number of recommendations and actions involve multiple stakeholders representing different parts of the education and skills pipeline working together to deliver on particular recommendations. This is a positive approach, reflecting the interconnected nature of each stage of this pipeline and the need for the strategy to use these links to drive action. However, an important requirement of pipeline work is that stakeholder roles are clear and that they are accountable. In the context of the equalities ambitions it is also essential that gender and equality are mainstreamed within the work of partnerships under this approach.

Lack of focus on the employer role in tackling gender inequality

Gender is missing entirely from the employer section of the strategy. The pipeline approach simply will not be effective for girls and young women if gender is only a focus in certain sections. A further risk to the success of a pipeline approach in tackling gender stereotyping and segregation is the lack of gender competence among employers. Employer influence on curriculum, career conversations, and collaborative working is given prominence and power throughout the strategy, and is universally framed as having only a positive influence on the success of DYW. However, evidence shows that most employers lack gender competence, and there are no recommendations for employers which explicitly include a consideration of gender. It is therefore difficult to see how employer influence in and of itself will have a positive impact on either gender stereotyping or segregation. It is more likely that employers' gender-blind approach and input will perpetuate existing stereotypes.

Gender-blind resources

The vast majority of the resources and guidance reviewed do not mention gender and where equalities is mentioned, this is marginal. For example, the resources for schools are frequently cited as evidence of work that is happening on gender and described as a key driver in this area.

The main resources for schools are:

- Career Education Standard,
- Work Placements Standard, and
- Guidance on School-Employer Partnerships.

Both the Commission and the DYW strategy are clear in the commitment that career education and work experience should seek to tackle gender stereotyping. However, these three key resources have very little content on gender or equalities. There is a single, generic paragraph on equalities in the Career Education and Work Placements Standards, with almost identical wording in both resources. This includes a generic commitment to “eradicating discrimination and promoting respect and equality of opportunity”.

There is no mention of the specific barriers faced by girls and young women in education, skills acquisition or the labour market in any of these key resources. They are insufficient to support teachers to embed gender in their work on career education and work experience, and are very unlikely to encourage the consideration of gendered issues in the work of school-employer partnerships.

Stakeholders

Turning to the stakeholders themselves, there is also evidence of an inconsistent approach in relation to the requirements on gender. While two of the key stakeholder areas – colleges and apprenticeships – were required to develop gender/equality action plans and respond to specific gender KPIs, there is little detail on the gendered action required of schools, and there is no specific gender component to any of the employer recommendations.

Schools

The key priority areas for schools include the provision of more work-relevant education, including careers guidance and work experience, and supporting the development of a broader range of senior phase pathways. Schools also have three key equalities recommendations which include utilising career education and the new senior pathways to explicitly tackle gender segregation. Despite this, there is

little evidence of concrete action on gender inequality from schools and schools partners. The new resources produced on career education, work placements, and school-employer partnerships contain only a brief mention of equalities, which consists of generic prompts such as “actively challenge stereotypes and advance equality of opportunity”. Other learning resources for teachers were similarly lacking in useful content on gender or equalities. This is a particular concern as one of the key barriers to action on gender in schools is the lack of gender competence among teachers, and the lack of time and resource to support the development of this.

The overarching equality recommendation for schools is to embed equality education across Curriculum for Excellence. The generic and vague nature of this recommendation is unlikely to support schools to take concrete action, and this is borne out in the lack of information available on what is happening in practice. The ambiguity of this recommendation is likely to undermine this ambition.

Colleges

The strategy’s aims for colleges include improved vocational education and tackling gender segregation in subject and pathway choice. To this end the Scottish Funding Council has developed a Gender Action Plan, and all colleges have developed institutional plans which feed into this. This section of the strategy contains some of the clearest action on gender inequality. In college superclasses there has been a reduction in gender imbalance in 8 out of the 10 subjects. Progress reports also indicate some challenges, with colleges placing their focus on admissions and small-scale outreach activities, and a lack of action on the infrastructure and culture change required within organisations.

Modern Apprenticeships

The expansion of Modern Apprenticeships is a core aim of the strategy, and recommendations in this area require specific action to tackle gender segregation in apprenticeships. Unfortunately, progress reports show that there has been almost no progress on gender segregation in Modern Apprenticeship frameworks: in 2017/18, 72% of MA frameworks had a gender balance of 75:25 (or worse) compared to 73% in 2013/14⁵. Despite this stalling there is little clarity and urgency around what could be done to create change. Foundation and Graduate Apprenticeships, introduced under the strategy, show similar patterns of segregation. This indicates that even with the opportunity to integrate a gender analysis into the development of new pathways and frameworks there is still some way to go to realise change for girls and young women.

⁵ Scottish Government (2018) *Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland’s Youth Employment Strategy – 4th annual progress report*

Work to address gender segregation in apprenticeships includes engagement with employers and training providers, however this is largely focused on positive action approaches to attract and recruit individuals into sectors that are traditionally gender imbalanced. Employers are also engaged through the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) however this body has no gender expertise and at the time of the review there was little information available on any equality-related actions it may have taken.

The SAAB has recently established a commission on occupational segregation in order to establish what can be done to tackle occupational segregation in Modern Apprenticeships. This topic has been the subject of a number of studies for almost 20 years, including the Scottish component of the then Equal Opportunities Commission's General Formal Investigation⁶ (GFI) into gender segregation in Modern Apprenticeships. The GFI provided a range of recommendations for action to tackle gender segregation. It is therefore of concern that the focus of the SAAB commission is on "re-examining what works"⁷ as opposed to taking concrete steps based on the evidence already available.

Skills Development Scotland's Equalities Action Plan includes a commitment to refresh Skills Investment Plans and to review industry demand data through a "gendered lens", using this to develop action on gender inequality. Unfortunately, there has been very little progress on this work, and there remains a significant lack of gender-disaggregated data available on skills. The clear gender gaps in the skills planning approach undermine the equalities ambitions of the entire strategy, and broader action on women's economic inequality.

Employers

The strategy asks employers to "invest in the young workforce", with little specific asks beyond this central aim. This section of the strategy also led to the creation of DYW Regional Groups, whose purpose is to build links between employers and education, and the Investors in Young People employer accolade. The strategy's recommendations for employers are light touch, and fail to engage with gender or equalities. This represents a risk to the success of the equality-focused aspects of the strategy, and to its success overall, as children and young people will emerge from education and skills programmes into an unchallenged and unchanged labour market and workplace culture.

⁶Campbell, J. Gillespie, M. McKay, A. & Thomson, E. (2005) *Jobs for the boys and the girls: promoting a smart, successful and equal Scotland*

⁷ Scottish Government (2019) *Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy – 5th annual progress report* p65

A small number of DYW Regional Group websites mentioned generic equality actions, however these lacked any detail to enable evaluation or analysis. The Investors in Young People accolade does not include any criteria which engage with gender, or with equalities more broadly, and there is no explicit engagement with gender or equalities in the work of the framework. The strategy's core progress reports do not mention equalities or gender in the employer sections.

Equalities

A central aspect of strategy's approach is that equalities is "implicit" throughout. This is also a key weakness, as stakeholders lack the gender competence to identify the actions needed to tackle gendered issues in their respective areas. We know that public sector bodies and employers across the labour market need the support of gender expertise and clear directions on what action to take if they are to begin to take meaningful steps towards addressing gender inequality. Without this, the strategy is unlikely to deliver benefits equally to girls and boys, young women and young men.

At this stage, the Developing the Young Workforce Strategy has delivered few substantive outcomes for girls and young women. There has been a reduction in gender segregation in some of the most segregated college superclasses, however other strategy ambitions have not materialised. With gender invisible in the majority of its recommendations, the result has been an absence of meaningful work on gender.

The few recommendations and KPIs which contain specific asks on gender inequality are insufficiently focused and lack the detail and competence-building support behind them that would enable their delivery. Progress has been impeded by a lack of actions for schools and employers. The strategy's pipeline approach is unsustainable if each stage of the pipeline does not include concerted action to tackle gender segregation. Where the expectation of action on gender is "implicit" this is unlikely to materialise as robust and meaningful steps towards gender equality. Stakeholders lack gender competence, and the lack of detailed information on gender in key resources, in particular for schools and employers, will not support them to build this essential component.

Recommendation

As many of the issues identified in this review relate to the strategy itself, and there are less than two years of its activity remaining, it is difficult at this stage to provide recommendations which can improve the strategy's outcomes. However, there are actions which can be taken to improve education, skills and employment outcomes for girls and young women.

It is hoped that the issues identified in this review will encourage and enable a change in approach in the future of work in this area.

Scottish Government should:

1. Ensure that its own policymakers and its delivery agencies have sufficient intersectional gender competence to design policy, programmes and services, including work under DYW.
2. Ensure that a gender analysis of DYW delivery is used to inform the final evaluation of the strategy, to identify any improved outcomes for girls and young women.
3. Develop a strategic approach to building gender competence in teachers and other education practitioners.
4. Ensure the DYW regional groups review is informed by gender expertise.
5. Ensure the review of DYW tools and resources in schools is informed by a gender analysis.
6. Refresh the Career Education and Work Placement Standards to make challenging gender stereotyping and gender segregation an explicit aim.
7. Ensure any new resources developed are gender-sensitive and include guidance on tackling gender stereotyping and segregation.

8. Develop guidance for employers engaged with DYW on tackling gendered occupational segregation, and build capacity on the importance of gender equality at work in realising the ambitions of DYW.
9. Improve the range of gender-disaggregated data used to develop RSA-related outputs and SIPs, and ensure that future RSAs and SIPs include addressing the gender pay gap as a core aim.
10. Work with Remarkable to enhance the current IYP framework to include a specific component on gender equality.
11. Ensure gender-disaggregated data is used in progress reports to ensure that girls' and young women's experiences and outcomes are specifically identified.
12. Include challenging gender stereotyping and gender segregation in subject choice in the content of SDS-administered CIAG qualifications.
13. Undertake a scoping exercise to determine options for implementing gender quotas for Foundation Apprenticeships.
14. Require colleges and universities to publish an outcome on retention of women in non-traditional subjects in their gender action plan.
15. As part of the review of the public sector equality duty, require education authorities to develop an equality outcome on gender stereotyping and/or gender segregation.
16. As part of the review of the public sector equality duty, designate Education Scotland a listed public authority.



Close the Gap works in Scotland on women's labour market participation. We work with policymakers, employers and unions to influence and enable action that will address the causes of women's inequality at work.

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Published July 2020



Close the Gap

Close the Gap (SCIO) (known as Close the Gap) is a Scottish charity, SC046842.