



## Modern Apprenticeship programme

The Modern Apprenticeship (MA) is a publicly funded training programme which gives individuals the opportunity to combine employment and training by following an industry designed training framework. Introduced in 1994 to address a perceived lack of intermediate skills in the UK economy, it is aimed at 16-19 year olds but has been available to all ages since 2002 (those aged 19 are known as adult MAs).<sup>1</sup> MAs include frameworks located in the 'traditional' sectors where the notion of apprenticeship training is established such as construction and engineering, and in 'non-traditional' sectors where the concept of apprenticeship training is relatively new; mainly in service sector occupations.<sup>2</sup>

As education and training are devolved to the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Government develops policy on MAs and provides funding for Skills Development Scotland to deliver the programme.<sup>3</sup>

## Occupational segregation within MA

Following a review of MAs in Scotland in 2001, the Scottish Women's Budget Group (SWBG) highlighted the extent of male dominance of MAs with women making up 20% of MAs at the time.<sup>4</sup> Female apprentices were concentrated in a small number of non-traditional frameworks typically associated with low participation and high drop-out rates. Concerns were raised by the SWBG that the review failed to undertake any gendered analysis of this issue or the high levels of gender-based occupational segregation in MAs.

In 2005, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) carried out a General Formal Investigation (GFI)<sup>5</sup> into occupational segregation in the MA programme.<sup>6</sup> The investigation focused on the five most gender segregated sectors, construction, engineering, plumbing, (all traditionally male-dominated sectors), childcare, (almost all childcare workers are women), and ICT (Information and Communication Technologies).

## Skill shortages and the under-representation of women and men

In Scotland, the sectors with the highest numbers of hard-to-fill and skill shortage vacancies are those within the skilled trades occupations, including construction, engineering and plumbing.<sup>7</sup>

In recent years, there has been a growth in the demand for childcare workers due to the increase in the proportion of families with both parents in full-time

1. Thomson, E. and Gillespie, J. (2009) 'Accounting for Gender in the Modern Apprenticeship Programme in Scotland' Paper presented to the PSA 'Scotland: Ten Years On' Conference June 18th 2009
2. Ibid.
3. Implementation of MAs was previously the responsibility of Local Enterprise Companies overseen by the Enterprise Networks until April 2008.
4. Thomson and Gillespie (2009)
5. The Sex Discrimination Act (1975) enabled the EOC to investigate issues of gender inequality or discrimination. Following a GFI, the EOC may recommend to any person or organisation, including government, changes to their practices and procedures in order to promote equality of opportunity between the sexes.
6. Thomson E, McKay A, Campbell, J and Gillespie, M. (2005) 'Jobs for the boys and girls: promoting a smart successful and equal Scotland', Equal Opportunities Commission
7. Futureskills Scotland (2005).

employment. However, in Scotland one in five childcare workers do not have any formal qualifications, and the main reason given for hard-to-fill vacancies was a lack of candidates with the required qualifications and experience.<sup>8</sup>

The fifth sector examined within the GFI was information and communication technology (ICT). More than half of Scottish employers (61%) believe their IT staff require additional skills and there has been a marked increase in the number of hard-to-fill executive level IT posts.<sup>9</sup>

The investigation made the important link between sector specific skill deficiencies and the under-representation of women or men in these sectors. Promoting these occupations as viable career options for women and men is one way of addressing hard-to-fill vacancies while encouraging gender equality in a wider sense. Similarly, from their extensive knowledge of the industry, employers' representatives, and employers themselves, provided an explanation of the barriers they believed to exist preventing them from recruiting non-traditional candidates.

#### **These included:**

- the funding mechanism, which prioritises the 'Government guarantee group' of 16-18 year olds, makes it more difficult for employers to recruit older MAs;
- a lack of 'parity of esteem' between vocational training and further and higher education;
- the negative attitudes of friends, family and employers, particularly towards women entering atypical work;
- in the childcare sector the negative attitudes and assumptions of childcare purchasers acted as a barrier to the recruitment of men into the occupation, in addition to the low pay in the sector; and
- masculine culture within the negative attitudes of spouses, acted against women working in male-dominated environments.

All participants agreed that tackling occupational segregation was an important issue particularly in terms of the contribution it would make to Scottish economic performance and the improvement of the working lives of those making non-traditional career choices.

#### **GFI findings**

The GFI found that occupational segregation has significant economic and social costs to the economy. It also indicated that the MA programme perpetuates occupational segregation in the labour market but that, as a key national training programme and first point of entry into the labour market for young people, it had the potential to challenge occupational segregation.<sup>10</sup>

8. Scottish Executive (2004).  
9. E-Skills (2003)  
10. Thomson and Gillespie (2009.)

### The key recommendations from the EOC in Scotland were:

1. A national strategy to tackle occupational segregation in training and work should be developed for Scotland and should be led by the Scottish Executive.
2. As part of the Scottish Executive's ongoing review and evaluation of the MA programme, action should be taken to address the systemic barriers to taking on atypical recruits.
3. All relevant data, including information on pay rates for MAs, should be available in the public domain in a readily accessible format.
4. Positive action on promoting industries to atypical candidates be undertaken, building on the existing work of the Sector Skills Councils<sup>11</sup>.
5. Actions to promote occupational desegregation should be seen as the collective responsibility of all key policy makers, not just Sector Skills Councils or other agencies with a marketing remit.
6. Local Enterprise Companies and Sector Skills Councils should work together in ensuring employers are aware of the efficiency losses associated with occupational segregation.
7. In conjunction with the relevant Sector Skills Councils, Local Enterprise Companies should become more involved in circulating best practice in an attempt to encourage initiatives designed to promote non-stereotypical career choice through the MA programme.
8. In consultation with Scottish Enterprise, it is suggested that training providers are required to provide qualitative feedback about the actions they have taken in the area of gender equality in the previous reporting period, thus making more use of the 'contractual management process'.

### Progress since the GFI

Although a number of recommendations were made by the EOC in terms of activity that the Scottish Executive, Scottish Enterprise, and Local Enterprise Companies should take forward to militate against gendered segregation, the then Scottish Executive focused its activity on cross-directorate Occupational Segregation Working Group (OSWG).

Before the OSWG was established, the EOC produced a progress report<sup>12</sup> in 2006. This report reiterated the damaging effect of occupational segregation on the economy; the undervaluation of women's work and the fact of women's concentration in low-paid and low status jobs; and the perpetuation of occupational segregation in the wider labour market. It further noted that the potential existed for the Modern Apprenticeship programme to challenge occupational segregation.

11. Sector Skills Councils are state-funded, employer-led organisations with a strategic role in training, workforce development and skills shortages with a view to sustaining economic growth.

12. Equal Opportunities Commission (2006) Occupational Segregation in Scotland: Progress Report Glasgow: EOC.

The EOC observed that take-up rates had not improved since the first phase of research and, in their gendered analysis of the pay rates of apprentices, noted that for those age 17 in 2003, working full-time and in jobs with skill seekers or modern apprenticeships, men earned an average of £115 per week (after deductions), women earned £80. This represents a 31% gender pay gap. The pay gap for those aged 17 working full-time and in jobs with no associated training programme is 13%.

Although the establishment of the OSWG was a very positive step, it ultimately made no recommendations around the Modern Apprenticeship Scheme. This lack of substantive action was echoed in the gender equality scheme (GES) of the Scottish Government<sup>13</sup>, produced as part of the Scottish Government's work to comply with the Gender Equality Duty, which contains no actions around Modern Apprenticeships within its action plan. Similarly, Skills Development Scotland, a non-departmental body that is fully accountable to Scottish Ministers and which has operational responsibility for Modern Apprenticeships (MAs), also has no substantive actions around MAs within its own equality scheme<sup>14</sup>. Its single equality scheme<sup>15</sup> indicates that MAs will be equality impact assessed in 2009, but contains no other analysis, detail or information.

The Modern Apprenticeship scheme is one example of the manifestation of occupational segregation within the Scottish labour market. However, it is significant because the evidence base for action is overwhelming and yet very little action has been taken forward. No other single cause of the gender pay gap has attracted such sustained focus from statutory Commissions, the Scottish Government, trade unions, and non-governmental organisations promoting gender equality in recent years. Nor is any single cause of the gender pay gap almost solely within the ambit of public sector bodies, to which the Gender Equality Duty applies. It is a matter of significant concern, then, that substantive action to address gender inequality within the Modern Apprenticeship scheme has been neither planned nor implemented.

### Further reading

Campbell, J. Gillespie, M. McKay, A. and Meikle, A. (2009) **Jobs for the Boys and the Girls: Promoting a Smart, Successful Scotland Three Years On** Scottish Affairs, no.66, Winter 2009 pp.40-58.

Thomson, E. and Gillespie, J. (2009) **Accounting for Gender in the Modern Apprenticeship Programme in Scotland** Paper presented to the PSA 'Scotland: Ten Years On' Conference June 18th 2009.

Thomson, E. McKay, A. Campbell, J. and Gillespie, M. (2005) **Jobs for the Boys and the Girls: promoting a Smart, Successful and Equal Scotland** (Final Report of the Scottish Component of the EOC's General Formal Investigation into Occupational Segregation) EOC Scotland.

13. Scottish Government (2007) Gender Equality Scheme 2008-2011 Edinburgh: Scottish Government (online) <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/227413/0061507.pdf>

14. Skills Development Scotland (2008) Equality Scheme - Interim 2008 Glasgow: Skills Development Scotland.

15. Public bodies can elect to meet the requirement on them to publish gender, race and disability equality schemes by publishing one single scheme that incorporates a response to each of the public sector duties and meets each duty's specific requirements.