

## SUBMISSION FROM SKILLS DEVELOPMENT SCOTLAND

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this important inquiry on women in the workplace. SDS is Scotland's skills body, focused on contributing to the delivery of the Scottish Government's Economic and Skills Strategies. Our services are further shaped in response to the Scottish Government's Career Information, Advice and Guidance Strategy and more recently, the Youth Employment Strategy. We set out our vision future development and delivery plans in our Corporate Strategy (2012-15) and annual Operating Plan (2012-13)<sup>1</sup>.

SDS's key aim is to deliver support to those who need it most, particularly young people. SDS is working collaboratively with training providers, individuals employers and partners throughout Scotland to raise the aspirations of all women and enable them to move more successfully between learning and work.

This submission provides an overview of the work we are doing to promote gender balance throughout our service offers, addressing the information gaps highlighted by the inquiry to date.

### **Our commitment to equality and diversity**

Cross cutting everything we do is our commitment to equality of opportunity. In our role as a service provider, we are committed to taking practical steps to ensure equality of access for all of our customers to make it easier for them to access the learning, information, advice and guidance they want and need. We are also committed to promoting equality in our capacity as an employer, as a buyer of services and in how we work in partnership with others. Our ambition is to ensure our services meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century; we need to deliver better services to more customers more efficiently and improve equality of opportunity and diversity as an employer and in our service delivery.

### **Workforce Issues**

#### *School Leaver Destination Return (SLDR) 2010-11*

Evidence suggests that the economic downturn is having a disproportionate impact across certain groups such as those with disabilities, women, ethnic minorities and younger people<sup>2</sup>. Individuals can also fall into multiple equalities groups, therefore further exacerbating their vulnerability.

Significant improvements have been made in the employment rates of women in the last couple of decades leading to a narrowing of the gap between men and women.<sup>3</sup> However certain groups of women such as teenage mothers

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/our-story/our-achievements-and-ambitions.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> [The equality impacts of the current recession \(2009\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Scottish Government Resilience Report 2011](#)

and single mothers can face further significant barriers in entering education or employment.

Our SLDR figures show that 29.3% of male school leavers enter employment or training in comparison to 20.4% of females, a difference of 8.9 percentage points. However girls continue to outperform boys in terms of attainment at school and progression to higher education, with a higher proportion of females going into further and higher education than males. 90.4% of females enter positive destinations in comparison to 87.4% of males and 68.9% of females continue with their studies post school in comparison to 57.2% of males.<sup>4</sup> In employment terms, the economic downturn has had the greatest impact, so far, on men and young men in particular (11.4% of male school leavers are unemployed compared to 7.7% of females).<sup>5</sup>

## **Occupational segregation**

### *Challenging stereotypes*

Occupational segregation is part of the Scottish Ministerial Priorities for Gender Equality and SDS, in working to improve the skills and learning system, has a part to play with partner organisations to help tackle this. One of the key contributors to occupational segregation in the workplace is the choices which are made early in life. Successive studies have shown that there continues to be segregation in subject choice at school and career choice between boys and girls and concern that subject choices made at school can contribute to occupational segregation.

The most popular area for all school leavers entering further and higher education is Arts and Social Sciences with the majority of entrants being female (66%). The two most popular occupational areas with female leavers entering employment are Sales (25%) and Hospitality, Catering & Tourism (24%). Administration has replaced hairdressing and beauty as the area with the third highest proportion of female leavers.

Occupations in Engineering and Construction remain male dominated with around 91% of entrants being male. Female leavers opt to enter occupations in Social/Caring, Health & Medicine and Arts & Social Sciences. This has been the case since 2008/09, with 32% of female leavers entering these occupational areas.

SDS has a range of equality and diversity support for its colleagues delivering Careers Information Advice and Guidance services in order to enable them to understand gender equality issues and have the confidence to challenge stereotypical career assumptions. This ranges from equality and diversity e-learning to our [Equality Toolkit](#) to our team of equality champions across the organisation who are front line employees from across Scotland who volunteered to support their colleagues and promote equality and diversity in our work. Our 20 champions include a trade union representative.

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<sup>4</sup> [School Leaver Destination Return 2010/11](#)

<sup>5</sup> [School Leavers Destination Return 2010/11](#)

## SDS Equality Champions

- disseminate information on equality issues, developments and good practice to all SDS Directorates;
- identify equality issues and challenges and collect objective data where appropriate across the organisation;
- feedback of issues and challenges to appropriate employees with responsibility for particular products / services;
- utilise existing networks with appropriate agencies and organisations who can support SDS efforts to address the equality issues within their Local Authority area.

SDS careers advisers challenge gender stereotypes and encourage young women to make informed choices about their career choices and broaden their horizons. Through the use of Career Management Skills (CMS) women can build the skills they need to make the right decisions about jobs, training and careers. However, it is important to note the difficulties faced in attempting to alter long standing attitudes towards certain types of jobs and industry sectors.

SDS will continue to work collaboratively to progress joint working and initiatives to support the tackling of occupational segregation, engaging with the Scottish Funding Council and Sector Skills Councils in conjunction with the [Joint Skills Committee](#).

### Positive Messaging

Our marketing activity and magazine content on our careers web service My World of Work, regularly features case studies<sup>6</sup> highlighting women in “non traditional” roles, promotes local events and ensures the MA programme is not promoted with a gender bias. Our new employer web service, [Our Skillsforce](#) reinforces positive messages to employers on the economic benefits of supporting a diverse workforce.

SDS seeks to become involved in wider groups and projects that aim to address issues relating to the representation of women in the workforce. We also regularly co-host events which focus on gender balance. For example, we have worked in partnership with Women’s Resource Centres on a range of projects and support partners, such as ConstructionSkills with initiatives such as [Be Onsite](#) – aimed directly at supporting women into non-traditional sectors.

### National Training Programmes (NTPs)

SDS administers the public funding contribution for the National Training Programmes (NTPs), on behalf of the Scottish Government, and our monitoring data shows lower participation rates by women, particularly for those who choose to take up a Modern Apprenticeship (MA) opportunity.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media-centre/press-releases/jobs-for-the-girls/elise-littlejohn.aspx>

Equality monitoring data of all MAs – where a public funding contribution was made - is included within the Modern Apprenticeship Group (MAG) quarterly statistics published on the SDS corporate website. This shows the gender split between *starts, leavers, achievement by framework by level by age*.<sup>78</sup> Women accounted for 43% of all apprenticeship starts in 2011/12. The occupational breakdown of the data shows that particular occupations are gender-biased, mirroring the gender segregation of the wider labour market which results from, amongst other things, the socialisation of young people from birth into the norms, values and culture of UK society including gendered delineation of roles, behaviour and occupations. It also mirrors the School Leaver Destination choices of young people as highlighted earlier.

SDS undertakes continual monitoring of representation across all MA frameworks to monitor trends and to identify areas that need to be addressed.

SDS contracts with Training Providers to deliver NTPs and employers and there is a contractual requirement placed on them to adhere to non-discriminatory recruitment practises and to promote equal opportunities in the workplace. We also assist employers in developing equal opportunity policies for their workforce, encouraging them to be flexible in relation to the working patterns of women, where the business can allow for it. We support employers on recruitment policy and any work they do to encourage female participation, for example with the roll out of taster work experience days, and would encourage employers to be adaptive to workforce needs to undertake training, and the possibility of part-time work to allow workers to undertake training outwith the workplace.

SDS has developed and is executing an Equal Opportunities Action Plan for the MA programme. Our Equality Outcome related to MAs in our Equality Mainstreaming Report includes actions around addressing occupational segregation, promoting positive messages through our careers web service My World of Work, and influencing Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) to ensure it incorporates learning around gender stereotyping. Our Equality Outcomes and Equality Mainstreaming Report will be published in April 2013.

Some commentators have suggested the introduction of quotas to attempt to redress the gender imbalance; however, there are practical issues to be overcome which largely relate to choice for both the individual and the employer. We are aware that predecessor organisations attempted to introduce this for certain types of occupational training, however, not enough young women chose to come forward to take up the opportunity.

In addition, MAs are not a supply side opportunity: SDS does not “put on” a course but, rather, the apprentice must be employed by the company and SDS administers a contribution towards the costs of training and assessment. If quotas were to be introduced around the contribution, this could be seen as

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/1018976/mag%20quarter%204%202011-12%2016-19%20year%20olds.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> [MAG Report 2011/12](#)

undue interference with company recruitment practices. Any proposals in this area would need further detailed investigation with businesses and their representative organisations.

## **Women in business**

Although the gender balance in many MA frameworks is unequal, there are many sectors where this has resulted in a very lucrative and flexible career for women. High numbers of young women undertake MAs in beauty and hairdressing (over 1000 females started a hairdressing or hairdressing and barbering MA in 2011/12<sup>9</sup>) and have moved on to start their own business after completing their training. Those undertaking MAs in the beauty sector are supported through training to make a step towards self employment should they express an interest in this route.

## **Case Study - Women in Information Technology**

Although women continue to be considerably under-represented in science, technology engineering and mathematics jobs (STEM careers), numbers of women going on to study STEM subjects has increased in recent years. However most are taking up science subjects, with the percentage of women in the IT & Telecoms sector declining – only 17% in the IT sector are women. Gender imbalance is also prevalent across IT related courses; around only 15% of those on IT degree courses are female.

The skills shortages in STEM fields are detrimental to economic growth, especially as the IT industry in Scotland is forecast to grow at nine times the national average over the next decade, generating a requirement for approximately 40,000 new IT & Telecoms professionals over the next five years.

SDS is therefore working with partners to ensure there is an increased pipeline of future talent in the Scottish IT workforce by attempting to inspire young people - especially girls – into studying IT by helping them discover the range of career opportunities in the sector. Using [successful female IT role models](#), it is hoped that more women will be inspired to enter the IT sector.

We have collaborated with Scottish Women in Technology (SWiT) to promote women in the IT sector and have provided funding for a range of events which offer the opportunity for girl pupils in schools to hear from women who have not only pursued a job in the technology industry but who have gone on to have highly successful careers.

In 2012 we co-hosted the “Women Professionals Working in Digital Technology & IT Industries” event at Napier University with the Scottish Resource Centre for Women. Aimed at S4-S6 pupils, it helped to assign mentors, create networks and encourage general interest in this important area.

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<sup>9</sup> [MAG Report 2011/12](#)

SDS is supportive of and encourages women to use their entrepreneurial skills. The Training for Work employability programme which is delivered by SDS on behalf of Scottish Government can support women to start up their own business if this is a route they are interested in. Entrepreneurship is encouraged and identified as a positive choice and outcome for women.

### **Unequal Pay and Childcare**

As all MAs are employed, ensuring compliance with equal pay legislation lies with HMRC, but SDS would always encourage any employee receiving less than the appropriate rate to contact the confidential helpline detailed on our website.

SDS works in partnership with Close the Gap which works across Scotland with employers and employees to encourage and enable action to address the gender pay gap. SDS is a member of the Close the Gap steering group and Close the Gap support the SDS Equality Advisory Group.

In terms of childcare, this is not a direct area of SDS responsibility, but we would always remind providers and employers of their obligations to adhere to non-discriminatory working practices. Childcare is expensive and the market dictates the price; women (and men) must weigh up the options open to them in terms of training, employment and what their career aspirations are. We encourage women, through both our CIAG services and training providers to look at all kinds of working practices and patterns to allow them to reach their career goals such as working from home, flexible working and starting up their own business.

### **Conclusion**

Addressing issues relating to women in the workplace is complex and multi-faceted. Societal, individual and employer views and choices are all key determinants of women's subject and career choices, job opportunities and earning power. SDS does play an important role in its Careers Information, Advice and Guidance activities; in assisting women to make the career choices which will work for them and in combating gender stereotypes/supporting the STEM agenda. In our contracts relating to National Training Programmes our Providers are contractually obliged to promote equality of opportunity. Our marketing, communications and partnership working attempts to highlight where women have combated gender stereotypes to encourage others to do the same. We are keen to work with others to understand how we can contribute further to this agenda.

Skills Development Scotland  
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