



Gender Commission

Executive summary - a plan for action

A SAAB paper | October 2022

Executive summary - a plan for action

The Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board's Gender Commission report describes the current state of gender diversity in Scottish apprenticeships and the broader labour market. With this, it presents a series of twelve practical recommendations which employers, government and educators can follow to deliver tangible benefits for business, for individuals and for society, both in the immediate future and the longer term.

The report follows the work of the Gender Commission - made up of representatives from key business sectors, trade bodies, public sector employers, educators and academics. The Commission spent two and a half years gathering data, consulting experts, canvassing opinion and developing a recommended strategy.

Background - where we are now

The lack of gender diversity in education and employment is a world-wide phenomenon, and most observers acknowledge that cultural norms and traditions act as barriers to certain groups entering and progressing in many sectors. Scotland is no exception, with science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) school subjects still dominated by boys, and arts by girls. This leads to an equivalent lack of diversity in further and higher education and subsequently in the workplace, including apprenticeships.

Apprenticeships are key to bringing new talent into organisations while creating employment opportunities for people, particularly, though not exclusively, those aged between 16 and 24. Supporting diverse talent into the workforce pipeline through apprenticeships can be of enormous benefit to employers, and to the wider economy and society.

Meanwhile, many of Scotland's employers are facing a labour shortage and are competing to attract the best candidates from a limited pool of talent. Businesses across many industries are losing out on the potential benefits of a more diverse workforce, particularly in sectors like engineering and care.

How we worked

The Commission ran a series of thematic calls around a range of topics, including quality assurance, gender-inclusive education, media influence and the inclusive workplace. Members split into working groups to focus on four key themes, which were:

- the role of business
- key influencers
- employers and value
- young people and intersectionality

These subgroups consulted with a wide range of key groups including educators, parents, careers advisers, employers and, naturally, young people themselves, including groups representing black and minority ethnic young people.

The sub-groups reconvened to share their findings, with the Commission as a whole working together to develop the twelve recommendations which follow in this Report.

The Commission identified the significance of the early years sector, and the need for it to evolve. Recognising the significance of the sector as a key influencer in the earliest years of children's lives, and its role as an employer in a highly gendered sector, we commissioned a further consultation. This produced the additional White Paper appended to this report.

Our recommendations

The Commission's work has produced twelve practical recommendations for positive, achievable action. These are addressed to employers, government, educators and influencers, and the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board itself.

Recommendations primarily for employers

Recommendation One An inclusive culture



Employers should create an inclusive workplace culture, giving confidence and offering opportunities to employees of all genders and backgrounds. The Commission recommends the use of the [Think Business, Think Equality self-assessment tool](#) developed by Close the Gap.

[Find out more about this Recommendation >>](#)

Recommendation Three Engage with young people



Businesses should begin engaging with young people from the earliest years, through events like ‘bring your child to work’ days or by sending people of different genders into early years settings and schools. They should also use digital media and out-of-school settings to engage with young people.

[Find out more about this Recommendation >>](#)

Recommendation Two A proactive strategy



Employers should take a proactive approach in order to develop and maintain a strategy for improving gender diversity, including the use of gender-neutral language, a positive recruitment policy, and pay in line with the Gender Pay Action Plan. Businesses can use the [Action Priority Matrix](#), which has been developed by the Commission to help identify which steps to take.

[Find out more about this Recommendation >>](#)

Recommendation Four Create content about your sector



Industry and trade bodies should make and share content about their sectors, including information about gender diversity in employment. This material should be circulated to influencers, including teachers and early years practitioners, and shared online in appropriate media. Key transitions are important touch points – these include early years; choosing subjects; and leaving school leaving school for work or education.

[Find out more about this Recommendation >>](#)

Recommendations primarily for government and public sector bodies

Recommendation Five Fair Work First



Public sector bodies should engage actively with the Scottish Government's Fair Work First criteria and guidelines, which will help employers adopt Fair Work practices, and support them in creating more diverse and inclusive workplaces.

[Find out more about this Recommendation >>](#)

Recommendation Six A long-term partnership



Government should work with employers, trade unions and professional bodies to develop a long-term partnership approach for addressing gender stereotypes at work. This should focus on influencing the key influencers – parents, families, carers and teachers - as well as young people.

[Find out more about this Recommendation >>](#)

Recommendation Seven A localised approach



Government should engage with employers, unions and professional bodies to develop better localised engagement with education, including a special focus on skills for the future (Industry 4.0), regional skills and gender diversity.

[Find out more about this Recommendation >>](#)

Recommendation Eight A national awareness campaign



Scottish Government should create a sustained national campaign highlighting the impact of gender stereotypes on young people's choices and outcomes. This should be aimed at parents, carers and influencers. Actions could include the Babybox and Bookbug schemes, as well as introducing a national 'bring your child to work' day.

[Find out more about this Recommendation >>](#)

Recommendation Nine Build awareness



The Scottish Government should ensure high quality professional learning, inspection frameworks and supporting resources for professionals speaking to young people about career choices. The Careers Review should be used to help deliver consistent advice, and to raise awareness of the gender stereotyping which is endemic in pathways to work.

[Find out more about this Recommendation >>](#)

Recommendations primarily for education and training providers

Recommendation Ten **Teach the teachers about the impact of stereotyping**



Teachers, careers advisers, youth workers and others working with children and young people should receive professional learning with a specific focus on the impact of gender stereotyping.

[Read more about this Recommendation >>](#)

Recommendation Eleven **Recognise the ELC sector in the drive to remove barriers**



The Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) sector is vital in achieving progress, and efforts should be made to bring more diversity into the ELC workforce. The sector must be recognised as a key influencer on young people's perceptions of work.

[Read more about this Recommendation >>](#)

A recommendation for the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB)

Recommendation Twelve **Monitor and evaluate**



The SAAB Group Board and Equality Employer Group (EEQ) should monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Gender Commission's recommendations.

[Read more about this Recommendation >>](#)

