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**Tapping All Our Talents Review 2018: Women in STEM
Policy and the Third Sector Roundtable
4 May 2018, 10.00 – 12.00**

Summary Note of Meeting

Roundtable Participants:

Morag Campbell, Assistant Director, Scottish Funding Council
Patrycja Kupiec, Director, The Young Women's Movement
Lindsey Millen, Policy Manager, Close The Gap
Kevin Mceever, STEM Ambassador Hub
Jean McFarlane, STEM Ambassador Hub
Alison McLure, National Officer (Scotland), Institute of Physics
Clare Taylor, Science Grrl UK and Senior Lecturer, Edinburgh Napier University

Working Group Members:

Talat Yaqoob, Director, Equate Scotland
Dr Rebekah Widdowfield, RSE Chief Executive

Secretariat

Morven Chisholm, RSE Fellowship Manager

Resources / Reports mentioned:

British Science Association Media Fellowship
<https://www.britishecienceassociation.org/media-fellows>

Discussion Topics

Do we see evidence of a more joined up, coherent, strategic approach (with evaluation) to increase the number and status of women in STEM, compared to 2012?

Is Scottish Government and public bodies using their procurement power to ensure that suppliers and contractors improve gender equality in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty?

- We are seeing more visible initiatives focused on women in STEM, but we're not seeing gender issues mainstreamed into all policies, as they should be. Perception that there is a flurry of activity every two years to meet reporting deadlines, but little concrete action or progress the rest of the time. Lack of equality impact assessment and understanding of what's actually required.
- The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) should require actions, targets for improvements etc. It is a step forward, but need better understanding of it and more meaningful implementation.
- Have noticed improvements since 2012, with more females choosing STEM subjects at school and more joined-up approach. But still some way to go.
- FE & HE are the best performing sectors (because Athena SWAN provides a 'carrot and stick' approach which encourages real actions, not just statements). Local Authorities are consistently low performers. Procurement not used to advance equality, and there is a fear of using it in this way (though there is evidence that it can

work, including from other EU countries working within the same rules as the UK).

- Little evidence of equalities targets for Education Authorities. School leadership teams do not know enough about PSED. PSED could provide an excellent framework for the Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) strategy.
- Challenge of attracting females in to STEM subjects at school has implications for the further study/career pipeline.
- Schools should have an equalities charter mark.
- A lot of the progress has been made because of a small number of people, usually women, who are very passionate. This work is often done (unpaid) above and beyond the normal role.
- Reference to the accountability mechanisms and measurable targets within the Gender Action Plan.
- Policy push from government is positive.

What legislative and policy initiatives have the Scottish Government, Parliament and public bodies introduced since 2012 relevant to addressing the issues of occupation segregation and the gender pay gap, particularly in relation to STEM? What has been the impact?

- Action on gender balance for public boards is positive. We need to target good practice at men.
- Need to make sure that other aspects of inclusion are considered
- Action on gender equality can act as a pathfinder
- Reference to ongoing work to develop a kitemark for employers for gender equality. There will be a robust framework and employers can commit to measurable actions.

What legislative and policy initiatives that apply to Scotland has the UK Government introduced since 2012? What has been the impact?

- Gender pay gap reporting has been a big step forward, but there is room for improvement. The reporting does not require a narrative of why the gaps exist and does not require actions to change the situation. There is still confusion between equal pay and the gender pay gap. Occupational segregation and lack of flexible working are still issues.
- There are lots of high profile conversations and statements, but this is not necessarily resulting in change on the ground. Grassroots organisations are hindered by a lack resources. Need funding streams for small organisations to tap in to.
- More work needs to be done with parents to challenge stereotypes.
- Funding is often time-limited and project-based, but there is little legacy or long-term funding. This is particularly difficult for small, grassroots organisations.
- Some smaller organisations are using crowdfunding to fund their research work.
- Has any mapping been undertaken to bring together all the small-scale initiatives and to assess their effectiveness? If not, should this be done?

- Mapping is resource intensive, but it can be very useful to showcase what is happening and to identify gaps. Noted that the Higher Education Academy's work is useful. Could this be rolled-out more widely?
- RSE review group could consider recommending some form of mapping exercise/portal for logging activities, recording main contacts etc. This would support a bottom-up approach.

What initiatives have third sector organisations/networks delivered over the past six years, what impact have these had and what lessons have been learned from evaluation?

- Some organisations do not fully understand the distinction between positive action and positive discrimination, the former being lawful. However, they can be educated on this and once they have taken positive action in one area, they feel more confident expanding on it.
- Some of the placements for women are so successful that they become oversubscribed and demand cannot be met. This can be exacerbated by the fact that many STEM employers are SMEs and they do not have the resources to arrange and accommodate placements.
- Instead of placements, shadowing programmes can be used which are less resource intensive for employers.
- Need equality of access for women to such opportunities.
- There needs to be a greater focus on mainstreaming given the limitations of small-scale interventions.
- While there is progress in terms of education (and girls outperform boys at all levels of education), this does not translate in to greater success in the labour market.
- Recognition that culture will not change in the absence of existing policies not being fully implemented.
- In relation to working with parents and families, it was noted that the People Like Me WISE campaign has case studies of good practice, as does the Parent's Guide from Tomorrow's Engineers. Local and Education Authorities will also be key players in terms of parental engagement.
- There is a need to consider the varied nature of individuals' gender competence. To maximise the impact of unconscious bias training, it needs to be focussed and undertaken regularly. It is important that such training does not become a 'tick box' exercise.
- There is a need to develop a better way of identifying what constitutes 'good' training i.e. should there be criteria or a checklist?
- Science communicators should undergo training to ensure they provide an up-to-date and consistent message on gender equality.
- Mapping activities and the sharing of resources is very relevant here. This could showcase the action on gender equality being undertaken by employers as well as highlight employers that should be doing more.

Have third sector orgs/networks active in this space seen the understanding of the barriers to gender equality in STEM change over the past six years? If so, how? What are now understood to be key barriers and current thinking on how these should be addressed?

- Policy in the public sector is in place, but it is not necessarily implemented fully. However, more of an economic case needs to be made to secure buy-in from private sector employers and SMEs.
- Is there scope for raising this up the agenda of membership and umbrella organisations as they can use their reach and networks to share information?
- There is also a need to consider the role of third sector organisations in STEM areas.

What are the biggest challenges that are yet to be tackled? What are the barriers to tackling these?

What action has the Scottish Government taken to improve the affordability and availability of quality childcare and what has been the impact of this?

- Access to affordable, flexible childcare is a massive barrier. There has been an increase in entitlement to childcare, but it cannot always be taken up due to a lack of accessible and wraparound places. It was also noted that childcare roles are typically occupied by women and they are currently undervalued in the labour market.
- Important to ensure that women in STEM are on media 'go to' lists for STEM expertise. Women in STEM also need to feel confident about speaking to the media. Training might need to be provided to help with this. It was noted that there was a BBC initiative for women to put themselves forward as experts.
- It was noted that it would be interesting to explore the gender balance of those experts invited to give evidence to Scottish Parliament Committees and those approached by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe).
- It was noted that the British Science Association has Media Fellows.
- Recognised that overall there is a need for civility, whether in the media or in employment. This will require a culture that is less combative.
- The media often want to create division, conflict and false binaries. sometimes in an effort to provide supposed balance.