

Free to choose: Tackling gender barriers to better jobs

Great Britain Summary Report –
EOC's investigation into workplace segregation of women and men

March 2005



EUROPEAN UNION
European Social Fund



Women. Men. Different. Equal.
Equal Opportunities Commission

About this investigation

The Equal Opportunities Commission has conducted a General Formal Investigation into the segregation of men and women in training and work (known as occupational segregation), according to its statutory powers under section 57 (1) of the Sex Discrimination Act. These allow the Commission to make recommendations for changes to policies and procedures or even to the law.

The investigation has concentrated on five sectors: construction, engineering, plumbing, information and communications technology (ICT), and childcare. However, it makes the case for addressing segregation more widely. The investigation was conducted in two phases. Phase 1, on which we reported in May 2004, focused on gender segregation and inequality within the Apprenticeship system. Phase 2 was designed to gather further evidence on the reasons for occupational segregation and the barriers to change, especially in terms of the attitudes, aspirations and experiences of young people; delivery and practice in education, careers advice and training; and the practices and attitudes of employers (with an additional focus on small and medium-sized enterprises in Wales). We also wanted to identify strategies and solutions to remove these barriers, focusing on best practice; and in England, to provide additional evidence on segregation in wider vocational education and training, at the request of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

The investigation covers England, Wales and Scotland, reflecting the different institutional structures and modes of training delivery across the three countries. The England investigation has been supported by funding from the European Social Fund, while the Scottish and Welsh investigations have received support from the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI). In Scotland, a partnership between the EOC and Glasgow Caledonian University secured funding from the European Social Fund.

- In Scotland, responsibility for education and training is devolved to the Scottish Executive and Parliament. The Modern Apprenticeship¹ scheme is implemented at local level by the Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) via funding from the national statutory agencies, Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, who are responsible for economic development and regeneration.
- In Wales, responsibility for education and training is devolved to the National Assembly for Wales. The Apprenticeship scheme is implemented by Education and Learning Wales (ELWa).
- In England and Wales, apprenticeships are delivered by the local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs). They have a clearly defined skills-based remit with input from employers, in contrast to the Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) in Scotland, that have a broader focus on economic development.

Research has been carried out in parallel in England, Scotland and Wales. While occupational segregation and apprenticeships have been the central focus for all, the emphasis in each country has varied according to different executive and delivery-agency priorities, as well as specific concerns that have either already been identified or emerged during the investigation.

Scotland, for instance, has kept closely to the investigation's key remit to look at gender segregation in apprenticeships and training. England, on the other hand, in response to a request from the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, has extended its research to cover wider vocational education and training from age 14. This has led to an enhanced focus on young people's choices. In Wales, the Welsh Development Agency has sponsored some research on Small and Medium Sized Enterprises and segregation issues, and the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning has sponsored research into good practice in addressing gender segregation.

About this report

This report draws on evidence from England, Scotland and Wales to identify common findings and recommendations and signal where differences exist. The full evidence base, findings and recommendations can be found in the separate England, Scotland and Wales reports.

The executive summary below gives a précis of the case for change, the barriers to change and our recommendations to deliver change. All these sections are covered in more depth in the main body of the report and there is additional evidence in the appendices.



Executive summary

“I used to look at people working in manual trades and think, I would love to do that. I always liked the idea of construction, but never saw women doing it, so I didn’t think it was possible for me...When I saw an ad in the London Standard for a plumbing training course with a women’s group, I realised that it was something I could actually do.”

Trainee plumber

Britain is failing to provide real opportunity and choice for girls and boys entering work from school and college, despite the interest of many young people and employers in opening up “non-traditional work” to the opposite sex. This investigation has found a number of barriers to change. It’s time for action.

Women now make up nearly half of Britain’s workforce and the proportion is growing, with eight out of ten new job vacancies set to be filled by women. We have the highest workforce participation rate for women in Europe, with the exception of the Scandinavian countries. Women are excelling in education at all levels. Many families today rely on women’s income.



Photo courtesy of Forum Training Ltd

But women’s skills are under-used in an economy that needs the best people, with high-quality skills, in the right place at the right time. Many women face barriers that prevent them from making the best use of their skills. Some occupations remain almost ‘no go’ areas for women, others for men, while at the same time industry is facing major skills shortages in sectors where women are under-represented. To explore the barriers to best use of women’s potential, we have chosen to investigate five sectors that are currently experiencing skills shortages – but at the same time are highly segregated: construction; engineering; plumbing; information and communications technology (ICT) and childcare.

Failure to make best use of women’s skills impacts not only on the economy but on individual opportunity. Despite the fact that girls and young women are excelling and outperforming boys in education, this is still not translating into earnings for many. Recent Trades Union Congress (TUC) research has found that many young women who start working life as apprentices earn a quarter of what many male apprentices earn. Women are still working predominantly in lower paid areas, the 5 “C”s – cleaning, catering, caring, cashiering and clerical work – which is one of the reasons why their full-time pay on average remains 18% less per hour than full-time men, 40% less if they work part-time.

Women whose routeways into work have been through higher education have broken through occupational barriers, which for many seemed insuperable a few generations ago. More women than men are now entering the professions of medicine and the law, demonstrating that the education system is able to facilitate gender equality. But, for many girls and particularly those who are entering jobs through vocational pathways, that is directly to employers from school or via college or work-related training, there has been little significant change in recent years, with only 1% of women in construction and only

22 girls enrolling for plumbing apprenticeships in England last year. The same is true for men, who make up only 2% of the childcare workforce. In Scotland the situation is even more stark, with only 4 women on plumbing MAs (Modern Apprenticeships), 41 women on construction MAs, and 15 men on childcare MAs. Why? This is the question this investigation, which has focused on the sectors of construction, plumbing, engineering, ICT and childcare, has sought to answer.

Our findings show that the current 'education to training to work' system is failing the young women who need it most by channelling them into generally lower paid jobs than young men and not opening up genuine opportunity and choice. Only 19% of those from lower-socio-economic backgrounds gain the 2 or more A levels which could secure a place at university. DfES reports that 59% of a sample of 16–30 year olds from social classes C1, C2, D and E did not plan ever to go to university, and almost half of the sample had never thought about doing a degree. While the importance of raising aspirations and widening participation is high on the agenda, the current reality is that the majority of young people from lower socio-economic groups will use vocational routes into the workplace that deliver, for women in particular, a limited range of opportunities with lower pay.



Photo courtesy of Learning & Skills Council

“Getting rid of career sexism is vital to British industry and our wider economy. We need to plug our skills gap and we cannot afford to waste anyone’s talent”

Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt, MP, Secretary of State for Trade & Industry and Minister for Women & Equality
October 2004

The case for change

Our investigation has found, first, that there is a real appetite for change.

I. Increased choice

A high proportion of girls and boys are interested in non-traditional work experience and job choices: 80% of girls and 55% of boys said they would or might be interested in a non-traditional job and 76% of girls and 59% of boys wanted to try non-traditional work before making their job choices; 25% of boys in England and 20% in Wales said caring work sounded interesting or very interesting; and 12% of girls in England and 11% in Wales were interested in construction.² Women in focus groups all reported high levels of job satisfaction and that their choice of non-traditional work had improved the quality of their lives. Many of these women had always wanted to do this type of work but had been put off when young. 92% of women and men said they would want children who are about to enter the workforce to be able to make job choices without worrying about traditional stereotypes of women’s and men’s working roles, rising to 100% in Wales.³ Occupational segregation denies young people the chance to achieve personal or professional fulfilment by doing jobs they would love and be good at.

2. Increased opportunity

The impact of segregation is particularly acute for girls from lower socio-economic groups who may not have access to information about a range of choices. The prospects for many young women are lower earnings and limited opportunity. 67% of women we surveyed were not aware of the differences in pay rates for work usually done by women and men and, of these, 67% of women aged 16–24 said they would have considered a wider range of career options if they had known.

“I wanted a career that paid enough as a single parent. It’s enabled me to go back on a lot better pay than I would have been on as a hairdresser.” Female non-traditional apprentice

3. Increased productivity

Britain’s economy would benefit from breaking down occupational barriers, helping to tackle skill shortages and making better use of individual education, skills and potential. Our investigation found a clear correlation between the employment sectors where men predominate and skill shortages, which demonstrates that occupational segregation causes employers to miss out on a huge potential pool of labour with which to plug their skills gaps. Many employers see the business case for change: 7 out of 10 employers in the engineering, childcare and IT sectors, and 6 in 10 in construction said taking on more recruits of the non-traditional sex could help them meet skills shortages. 70% of employers in England thought atypical recruits could bring positive benefits to the business, and eight in ten said a better gender mix would create a better range of skills and talents.⁴ Yet construction, engineering, plumbing, ICT and childcare remain amongst the most heavily segregated sectors of the workforce in Britain. And the apprenticeships which should be at the cutting edge of skills development in these sectors, are actually perpetuating segregation, with levels that are equal to or greater than the segregation in the workforce.

“Women are already transforming the British economy. But women could achieve so much more if we could break down those barriers that hold them back...”

... It is the failure of past governments, Labour and Conservative alike, and a failure of the Treasury in the past. For too long the equality issue has been marginalised and seen as part of social policy, not macro-economic policy. Economic policy needs to give central importance to equality of opportunity.”

Rt Hon Gordon Brown, MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer,
at the EOC’s Gender & Productivity Summit October 2004

The barriers to change

The investigation looked at the components of the education to training to work system which are behind this gender segregation. This is what we found:

1. An education system that fails to support entry to non-traditional employment via vocational routes

There is no strategic agenda for schools to encourage and nurture the interest and enthusiasm that the investigation has uncovered, or to help young people to try out and test their ideas. Careers advice reinforces traditional choices and young people have no information on the pay advantages of non-traditional routes. Pay in childcare, the only female-dominated sector, is generally half or less than in construction, engineering, plumbing or ICT.

“If a young person wanted to choose an atypical job we would back them, but I don’t think we would go out of our way to encourage a youngster into non-stereotyped jobs.”

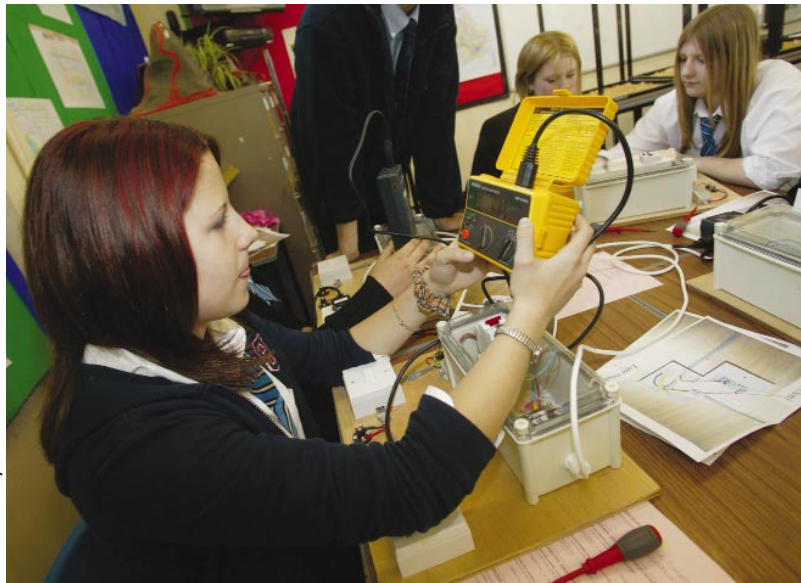
Case study interview, Connexions PA

43% of boys and 38% of girls we surveyed in our work experience research said their placement had encouraged them to pursue a career in that area, but only 15% received any advice or information on work experience in a non-traditional sector. Where individuals are encouraged to find their own placements, children from higher socio-economic groups are better placed to find less predictable placements while other young people are allocated or choose from placements in sectors perceived to be suitable for their gender. 43 girls did placements in childcare – but only 29 had listed it as a possible future job.⁵ Work experience, which should be playing a crucial role in allowing young people to test and develop ideas about non-traditional work, is in reality reinforcing gender, class and race divisions.

2. An Apprenticeship and vocational training system that fails to support atypical recruits

Apprenticeships are the major Government-funded training route into work for young people from age 14 and are recognised as an important source of skills for the economy. But we found that Apprenticeships are heavily gender segregated and the current system perpetuates segregation, or even makes it worse. This is because of the lack of apprenticeship places, lack of taster courses and inflexibility in the way training is delivered which disadvantages women with caring responsibilities. What is more, there has been a lack of data about who is doing what in Apprenticeships, that has made it difficult to set targets for desegregating them and monitoring progress. Differential pay rates across sectors, with male-dominated sectors paying more highly, are similarly masked by lack of public data on pay.

Photo courtesy of Churchdown School / LSC / ATP



3. A lack of coordinated and consistent action amongst employers

There is a clear correlation between a lack of women in the workforce and skills shortages and many employers see the business case for recruiting atypical staff. This was demonstrated by the CBI and TUC's commitment to promoting the reduction of occupational segregation as a productivity and business issue among employers at our Gender & Productivity Summit in October 2004. This is positive but needs to be translated into practical action. There are pockets of best practice to recruit more atypical workers across all sectors, and in all countries, mainly in response to a perceived business need. But employers are not actively engaging with schools and 46% of apprenticeship employers that we surveyed recognised that they were not offering enough work experience opportunities to young people. And at the same time, many women in non-traditional sectors face isolation and a culture of machismo, bullying and harassment, often with little or no support.

“This is a job for big strong men. We don't want women coming in here with their hormones.”

Employer response to training provider

4. Lack of national strategies to tackle occupational segregation

Our investigation discovered that while there were many specific initiatives across Government and by employers to increase the numbers of workers in non-traditional areas, these efforts were often insufficiently joined-up and sustained. Tackling occupational segregation has not been put at the heart of Government agendas to raise productivity and skills levels. However, this is changing. At our Gender and Productivity Summit in October 2004, the beginning of the process to develop a national strategy and action plan was marked by the DTI and the DfES with the launch of a strategic statement and plan on occupational segregation. In Scotland, the Scottish Executive Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning

department, together with the Scottish Executive Education department and key stakeholders, have committed to working with the EOC to take forward the recommendations. In Wales the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning has initiated research to identify current good practice.

Delivering change: recommendations of the investigation

Individuals, employers and the economy would all benefit from reduced gender segregation, and there is a balance to strike in sharing the costs and responsibilities of achieving it. Breaking down these barriers will require national agendas, with actions from educators, trainers, employers and unions, coordinated at high level by the Governments in Westminster, Scotland and Wales. The action required is comprehensive and far-reaching.

1. Delivering an education system that widens choice and supports vocational routes into non-traditional employment

- The GB Governments need to put in place a new national agenda that opens up choice and opportunity and challenges the myths and stereotypes that form from an early age.
- Careers education should become statutory and subject to inspection on gender equality.
- Every schoolchild should be entitled to a personal careers interview with a teacher or adviser who has been trained to open up choices, challenge gender stereotyping and promote non-traditional work opportunities.
- There should be a new strategic focus in work-related learning on widening opportunity with work experience policy and practice revised so that each pupil is offered two placements, one a non-traditional one.
- To address the difficulties in securing work experience placements:
 - every employer in the sectors covered by this investigation should be encouraged to offer at least one non-traditional placement;
 - Sector Skills Councils should work with Education Business Partnerships and school coordinators to source college simulated-work environments and project-based apprenticeships for non-traditional placements.

2. Delivering an apprenticeship and vocational training system which encourages the take-up of atypical recruits

- The GB Government's ongoing development of the Apprenticeship scheme should include actions to address the systemic barriers to taking on atypical recruits.
- Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) and Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) with Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) should set national and local targets to reduce segregation.
- SSCs should use sector skills pathfinder agreements (partnership agreements between employers and training providers to deliver skills needs for the sector) to address gender segregation, make gender targets an integral part of sector recruitment targets rather than an add-on and develop project-based Apprenticeship groups for small employers as an alternative to single employer placements.
- The national minimum wage should be extended to apprentices.
- Vocational training schemes, whether apprenticeships or beyond, should be designed with the needs of atypical trainees in mind, using best practice identified in this investigation. This would mean tasters for young and adult apprenticeships; that young people and adult women trainees have more support to find adequate work placements, possibly through small employers sharing trainees and by project-based training; and there being local support networks for atypical trainees on training and apprenticeship schemes.

“I thought, ‘I’m going to work, it’s an adult environment’, but with the boys, it’s just like being back at school again... I was so close to leaving so many times, the bullying went on for months, but when I spoke to my boss they were very supportive.”

Female non-traditional Apprentice

3. Delivering proactive action by employers which is joined-up and sustained

- The reduction of occupational segregation, not just as an equality issue but also as a business and productivity issue, should be promoted amongst employers in the sectors covered by this investigation by CBI, TUC and their learning and skills partners. Employers should be encouraged to:
 - train, recruit, and retain women in non-traditional sectors.
 - re-skill women employees – the extension of Employer Training Pilots provides the opportunity for a new national focus on in-house training of women in non-traditional skills.
 - offer at least one non-traditional work experience placement.
- Business leaders and major employers should support and promote better, more flexible employer practices that would help and encourage more women to enter male-dominated sectors.
- Trade unions should expand their efforts to challenge occupational segregation by increasingly including this on the agenda in collective bargaining, for example negotiating re-training for women.
- Given that companies are now reporting on human capital where this is material to their performance as part of Accounting for People, this should include progress towards gender equality recognising that good equality practice is material to good performance.

4. Delivering national strategies to put tackling segregation at the heart of policies to raise productivity and skills

- GB Governments should develop national strategies for England, Scotland and Wales, driven by a high-level alliance and linked to key economic and skills strategies, to promote joined-up delivery of action to tackle gender segregation in training and work.
- The strategies should incorporate effective incentives for leveraging real change, including targets, with monitoring and evaluation for measuring progress. The strategies should provide the framework for acting on the recommendations of both phases of this investigation with dedicated funding and resource support.
- Challenging job segregation should be built into national procurement policy.
- There should be a focus on attracting women into the sectors that are experiencing skills shortages in the Treasury’s women in enterprise initiative.
- The National Childcare Strategy should highlight the benefits of attracting more men into childcare.

Conclusion

Put simply, our investigation has found that occupational segregation is bad for individuals, bad for business and bad for the economy. It makes sense for Britain to tackle occupational segregation now: it joins up principles of fairness and choice with the goals of driving up UK productivity and competitiveness to deliver prosperity for all.

We have identified specific, practical action that educators, trainers, employers and Government can take now to tackle occupational segregation and create lasting change.

And we need sustained reform to ensure that this change is irreversible.

Investigation findings – the case for change

Many people want things to be different and there are higher levels of interest in non-traditional work than has been recognised previously. Our investigation has found a real appetite for change and considerable enthusiasm for opening up the world of work, from young people, adults and employers. This gives a clear signal to policy-makers and practitioners that what is on offer currently needs to change radically to deliver what people and businesses want and need.

Increased choice

A significant number of young people – girls in particular – told us they are keen to break out of the roles traditionally assigned to them. We found a much higher level of interest in non-traditional work choices than is generally acknowledged by schools and careers services.

More than a third of girls – 36% – said they definitely would consider non-traditional work, 44% said they might. Significant proportions of girls and boys showed an interest in atypical jobs: a quarter of boys in England and a fifth in Wales for example, said caring sounded interesting or very interesting. 17% of girls in England and 19% in Wales showed an interest in technical and engineering work, and 12% in England and 11% in Wales were interested in construction.

Out of 570 pupils, 36% of girls would like to try a non-traditional placement, and in a survey of 1300 pupils in England, 76% of girls and 59% of boys said that they would like to try out non-traditional work before making a final job choice. Many young people say they would be tempted to train and work in atypical jobs given the right incentives and encouragement, including better pay rates than for traditional jobs; extra money to train and the opportunity to try out non-traditional work before making a commitment.

Girls have strong views on their ability to do jobs traditionally done by males: 81% of girls in England and 82% in Wales said males and females could be equally good at plumbing, compared with just over half of boys in England and 61% in Wales. Overall, 70% of young people agreed that in 10 years' time, more jobs would be done equally by both sexes.



Photo courtesy of Churchdown School/LSC/ATP

Amongst **adults** we spoke to, 76% said that it was not a good thing that certain jobs like nursing and cleaning were carried out by women, and engineering and construction by men. Women who had made the choice to do non-traditional training or work all reported high levels of job satisfaction and that their choice of non-traditional work had improved the quality of their lives. Many of these women had always wanted to do this type of work but had been put off when young. More than nine out of ten in England,

rising to 100% in Wales said they wanted children who are about to enter the workforce to be able to make job choices free of stereotyped ideas about men's and women's roles.

No-one we spoke to, neither young people, parents, employers nor government was in favour of men's jobs and women's jobs. In fact, many people want change with better choices and opportunities for all.

Increased opportunity

Our investigation has shown that it is girls from lower socio-economic groups particularly who suffer as a result of stereotyping and segregation perpetuated by the current school system with no agenda to widen choices. With little access to information from other sources about wider work opportunities and associated pay rates, many girls are trapped in low-paid, low-status jobs that give little opportunity to improve the quality of their lives or to provide a decent income and future for themselves and their families. Only 19% of those from lower-socio-economic backgrounds gain the 2 or more A levels which could secure a place at university. DfES reports that 59% of a sample of 16–30 year olds from social classes C1, C2, D and E did not plan ever to go to university, and almost half of the sample had never thought about doing a degree. The prospects for these young women are lower earnings and limited opportunity.

67% of women we surveyed were not aware of the differences in pay rates between jobs usually done by women and men and, 57% of women said they would have considered a wider range of career options had they known. This figure rose to 67% of women in the 16–24 age group.

Increased productivity

Our investigation found a clear correlation between the employment sectors where men predominate and where there are skill shortages. Half of businesses with skills shortages experienced difficulties meeting their customer service aims, 44% lost business to competitors, and 2 in 5 had to delay the development of new products and services. Some employers faced increased operating costs, and difficulties in meeting quality standards and introducing new working practices. Many of those in the sectors we investigated are finding it impossible to meet even their most basic business requirements because of crippling skills shortages – up to 30 or 40% for some employers. Missing out on a huge potential pool of labour with which to plug their skills gaps is costing employers and the economy dearly.

7 in 10 England-based employers in engineering, childcare and IT, and 6 in 10 in construction, thought atypical workers were a way of meeting skills shortages. Across all sectors, 64% of employers in Wales agreed.

There is evidence that some employers in male-dominated sectors, such as construction and plumbing, are recognising the positive changes women can make to their businesses, and the added value they can bring to clients. Today's customers, whether domestic or corporate, have a keenly developed idea of the service they expect, in terms of communication, personal liaison, and attention to detail. And an increasing number of these customers are women.

Photo courtesy of Lincolnshire and Rutland LSC



70% of employers in England thought atypical recruits could bring positive benefits to the business, and 8 in 10 said a better gender mix would create a better range of skills and talents. In Wales, a smaller majority (57%) shared this view.

“A lot of single mums – they’d prefer a woman plumber. Us lot never leave a mess. We always clear up. And Muslim women won’t allow a bloke in the house without a chaperone. So we can do that work too.”

Female trainee plumber



There is a pressing reason for addressing the gender make-up of the childcare workforce. The Government is seeking a huge expansion of the sector as a central plank of its social policy, to enable greater female participation in the labour market and reduce child poverty and educational failure. But research has suggested that the sector’s traditional reliance on young, unqualified women is becoming unsustainable as they seek other employment opportunities. Making childcare work more attractive to non-traditional recruits could be crucial.

“I thought I would feel left out but it didn’t happen – I am treated like everyone else.”

Male childcare apprentice

Investigation findings – barriers to change

Segregation of women and men remains endemic to GB workplaces. Our investigation found marked, systemic gender segregation in all the occupational sectors we investigated across all three countries. The complex barriers to change are situated throughout the ‘education to training to work’ system. Young people lack the support they need in schools, work experience, careers, apprenticeships, and at work to make change happen. To tackle these barriers will require effort from educators, trainers, employers and Government. But until they are tackled, change will not happen:

I. An education system that fails to support entry to non-traditional employment via vocational routes

There is no strategic agenda for schools to encourage and nurture the interest and enthusiasm that the investigation has uncovered or to help young people to try out and test their ideas. Careers education, advice and work experience reinforce traditional choices and young people have no information on the pay advantages of non-traditional routes. With a lack of strong links between education and industry, young people are ill-informed on the range of jobs available and unable to assess the impact of school choices on work opportunities.

Work experience placements, which should be playing a crucial role in allowing young people to test and develop ideas about non-traditional work, are in reality reinforcing gender, class and race divisions. The onus is on individual youngsters to find their own placements, which favours children from higher socio-economic groups who have the resources, knowledge and contacts to create less predictable opportunities. Those children who cannot find suitable placements choose, or are often allocated, a vacancy in a sector perceived as suitable for their gender, and sometimes whether or not they have expressed interest in it. For example, in our survey of work experience youngsters, only two boys undertook placements in childcare, compared to 43 girls; of the 43 girls, only 29 had listed it as their choice of future job. 43% of boys and 38% of girls we surveyed in our work experience research said their placement had encouraged them to pursue a career in that area, but only 15% received any advice or information on work experience in a non-traditional sector.

“Quite frankly it really does not worry me. Jobs are jobs and it does not matter which sex does them. I do not think people should be forcing the issue.”

Work experience coordinator

Though we found limited evidence that parents and other family members were consciously discouraging their children from making non-traditional choices – and were identified as most supportive of those giving non-stereotypical careers guidance – their influence could operate in more subtle ways, for example, there is a tendency for children from less well-off backgrounds to follow their same-sex parent’s choice of career. For the majority of young people particularly those from lower socio-economic groups, change is unlikely to happen without a new agenda in schools, to turn girls’ educational attainment into more informed choices and higher earnings in the workplace.

“Schools careers – it would have been good if they had just not discouraged us.”

Female trainee plumber

2. An Apprenticeship and vocational training system that fails to support atypical recruits

There is marked systemic gender segregation in all occupational sectors across all three countries – all are heavily male-dominated except childcare, which is heavily female-dominated. The exception is ICT in Scotland and Wales, where women are almost equally represented on apprenticeships (they account for only 15% in England).



Photo courtesy of JVE Partners

Apprenticeships are perpetuating segregation, or even making it worse, because of the lack of places, inflexibility in the way training is delivered, such as course timetables that make it difficult for women with caring responsibilities to attend, and a lack of childcare support. Also lack of taster courses means that there is no opportunity to try out non-traditional training.

Adults who wish to retrain in a non-traditional area face many barriers, which often mirror the difficulties faced in the workplace itself – such as isolation, lack of support, and no recognition of caring responsibilities. The current funding system for Apprenticeships favours 16–19 year olds so female apprentices, who tend to be older, face further disadvantage in securing training of their choice. Indeed this system bars both men and women from making career changes via Apprenticeships.

“It’s difficult to get them on site when they’re over 25 because they’re seen as too old. Employers like them straight from school so they can mould them.”

Trainer at women’s training centre

Male-dominated apprenticeships pay more highly: pay in childcare, the only female-dominated sector, is generally half or less of that in construction, engineering, plumbing or ICT. But young people are not aware of this because there is no apprenticeship pay data available publicly. A bottleneck shortage of apprenticeship places exists in sectors with a high proportion of small businesses and self-employment, because employers lack adequate incentives to offer training. What is more, there has been a lack of data about who is doing what in Apprenticeships, as well as Apprenticeship pay rates, that has made it difficult to set targets for desegregating them and monitoring progress.

3. A lack of coordinated and consistent action amongst employers

There is a clear correlation between a lack of women in the workforce and skills shortages, and many employers see the business case for recruiting atypical staff. There are pockets of best practice to recruit more atypical workers across all sectors, for example construction, and all countries, mainly in response to a perceived business need. Employers in Scotland strongly identified with a growing demand for female trades people, particularly in construction and plumbing.

There is a lack of strong links between education and industry – half of employers we surveyed in England and only 29% in Wales had links with secondary schools, while only 6% in England and 14% in Wales had links with primary schools. This means young people are not encouraged or enabled to make the connections between what they do at school and their occupational opportunities.

“[Young people are surprised]... how clean the factory is... they expect it to be dirty and almost like engineering under railway arches.”

Engineering employer

Employers are generally more positive about attracting women than the make-up of the workforce suggests and there are increasing numbers of employers in the sectors who are reaping the business benefits of training and recruiting women. At the same time, negative, dismissive and discriminatory attitudes and practices among employers in all sectors make it hard for young people to enter and remain in non-traditional sectors. Many women in non-traditional sectors face isolation and a culture of machismo, bullying and harassment, often with little or no support.

“Then he took me around the factory and introduced me to all the workers, and every man he introduced me to, he made them show me their hands to show how dirty they were.”

Training provider

At the EOC’s Gender and Productivity Summit in October 2004, the CBI and TUC endorsed the cross-government strategy to tackle gender segregation and agreed to promote the reduction of occupational segregation as a productivity and business issue among employers. Employers are generally opposed to any intervention that would require or coerce them to recruit more atypical workers, such as targets or ring-fencing, though they would back efforts to market non-traditional careers more effectively. More Welsh than English employers – 46% versus 35% – said they would be persuaded by extra funds to recruit more atypical workers.

4. Lack of national strategies to tackle occupational segregation

Our investigation discovered that while there were many specific initiatives across Government and by employers to increase the numbers of workers in non-traditional areas, these efforts were often insufficiently joined-up to sustain irreversible change. Our Spring 2004 launch of the investigation’s Phase I recommendations called for national strategies to tackle occupational segregation, driven by a high-level alliance across Government and linked to key economic and skills strategies.

The Westminster Government’s response confirmed that we had persuaded them of the economic and social benefits of helping more young people to train and work in non-traditional sectors. At our Gender and Productivity Summit in October 2004, the beginning of the process to develop a national strategy and action plan was marked by the DTI and DfES with the launch of a strategic statement and plan on occupational segregation. Other helpful Government initiatives include the Prime Minister’s *Women and Work Commission* focusing on occupational segregation as a key area for their own report’s recommendations for action, to be launched in autumn 2005; and a DTI Select Committee investigation into the gender pay gap, focusing specifically on occupational segregation.

In Scotland, the Scottish Executive Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning department, together with the Scottish Executive Education department and key stakeholders, have responded positively to our investigation and are committed to working with the EOC to take forward the recommendations. In Wales the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning responded positively and initiated research to identify current good practice.

Whilst this relatively recent action is very encouraging, there remains the need for significant and sustained change to effectively tackle occupational segregation, using powerful interventions such as procurement, which only the Government can leverage.



Photo courtesy of SureStart/DfES

Investigation recommendations – delivering change

While there are pockets of best practice in tackling gender segregation across Great Britain, these efforts have had only limited effect. This is mainly because there have been no national agendas, coordinated at the highest level, to bring together the key parties and ensure a consistent, sustained approach. Tackling the segregation of women and men in the workplace should be put at the **heart of economic policy**, not seen, as it all too often is, as an ‘add on’. Sustained and irreversible reform is needed now. Educators, trainers, employers and Government will all need to take action:

I. Delivering an education system that widens choice and supports vocational routes to employment

- **A new national agenda for schools** should make addressing gender stereotyping a key component of the curriculum in careers, work-related learning, Citizenship, and Personal, Social and Health Education at both primary and secondary school. This would mean that careers education would become statutory and subject to inspection on gender equality and every schoolchild would be entitled to a personal careers interview with a teacher and /or adviser who has been trained to open up choices, challenge gender stereotyping and promote non-traditional work opportunities. Equally, careers services and schools would be able to provide more accurate, up-to-date information on pay and opportunities to children and their families on specific workplace sectors.
- **Work experience policy and practice is revised** so that each pupil is offered **two work experience placements, one a non-traditional one**. Schools and business should forge better links to increase the supply of high-quality work placements, particularly in male-dominated, skills shortage sectors. A more supportive placement allocation policy and process should be developed that doesn't rely on individual youngsters to find their own placements, so that they broaden rather than constrain children's ideas about what they can do. Pupils should receive information on the opportunities for non-traditional placements, the benefits they can bring, and how to get one, plus there should be support in place for pupils undertaking non-traditional placements, such as work-based personal advisers.
- Immediate action is needed to address the emerging gender split in choices for vocational options such as Increased Flexibility for 14–16 year olds, Young Apprentices, vocational GCSEs and the 14–19 Pathfinders programme. **Tackling gender segregation needs to be mainstreamed in the policy, delivery and practice** of these new 14–19 vocational options to ensure that atypical choices are promoted. Likewise, the Tomlinson reforms should have widening opportunity for all young people, regardless of gender, as one of their underpinning aims, with delivery objectives that incorporate best practice.
- This should be taken forward by the DfES, the National Assembly for Wales Education and Lifelong Learning Division and the Scottish Executive Education department in partnership with the Lifelong Learning Group.



2. Delivering an Apprenticeship and vocational training system which encourages the take-up of atypical recruits

“One simple initiative ...involved changing the term ‘apprenticeship’ to ‘career start’ – it immediately became more attractive to women who before then made up just 17% of apprentices...”

Caroline Waters, Director of People Networks for BT Group, October 2004

- The UK Government’s overhaul of Apprenticeships signalled some positive changes in response to our call for immediate action **to address the systemic barriers to taking on atypical recruits**, by putting gender participation data on the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) web-site. Failure to put pay data on Apprenticeships in the public domain and **providing young people with pay information remains a priority. Action is needed to set national and more local targets to reduce segregation** and Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are an integral part of that. Specifically SSCs should use sector skills pathfinder agreements (partnership agreements between employers and training providers to deliver skills needs for the sector) to address gender segregation by making **gender targets an integral part of sector recruitment targets** rather than an add-on. SSCs should also offer project-based apprenticeships to address shortage of places. Extending the national minimum wage to apprentices remains a priority.
- **Interventions that girls and boys said would encourage them to choose atypical apprenticeships should be piloted.** Young women should be told about the better pay rates than for traditionally female jobs; central government through LSC’s could provide extra money through bursaries to train atypical apprentices in sectors most afflicted by skills shortages. This is already happening in Australia with some success. And importantly, providing the opportunity through work-related learning to try out a non-traditional job before making a commitment.
- Vocational training schemes, whether Apprenticeships or beyond, should be designed with the **needs of atypical trainees in mind**. This would mean that women trainees have more support to find adequate work placements, possibly through small employers sharing trainees and by project-based training, and there being local support networks for atypical trainees on Apprenticeship schemes. More action is needed on flexibility and support mechanisms with the piloting of adult apprenticeships for women signalling a positive way forward. A review of funding criteria and guidance is vital to ensure that single-sex training schemes are eligible for mainstream funding.

“Women-only courses are important. We had a Muslim student there, whose husband would only let her go on a women-only course. But the training was really valuable to her.”

Tutor on women’s training course

- In response to our call for **improved inspection**, the Adult Learning Inspectorate has committed to focusing on the achievement of individual providers in attracting and retaining atypical apprentices.

3. Delivering proactive action by employers which is joined-up and sustained

- The CBI and TUC’s commitment at our Gender and Productivity Summit to promoting the reduction of **occupational segregation as a productivity and business issue among employers** was positive but needs to be translated into practical action. This means encouraging employers to train, recruit, and retain women in non-traditional sectors; re-skill women employed by them and offer at least one non-traditional work experience placement.
- Business leaders and major employers should support and promote **better, more flexible employer practices** that would help and encourage more women to enter male-dominated sectors. This would mean employers setting an example by following best practice in implementing a family-friendly organisational culture.

- Trade unions should expand their efforts to challenge occupational segregation by increasingly including this on the agenda in **collective bargaining**, plus playing an active part in improving workplace culture for non-traditional trainees and workers by providing **practical and mentoring support**.
- As part of Accounting for People, companies should be required to **report on measures taken** and progress towards gender equality and maximising human capital as a key element of good practice. This would be a way of improving accountability on gender issues both within and outside the organisation.

4. Delivering Government leadership which puts tackling segregation at the heart of economic policy

- **National strategies** should be developed for England, Scotland and Wales, driven by a **high-level alliance across Governments** and linked to key economic and skills strategies, to ensure a consistent approach from all relevant parties to tackling gender segregation in training and work. The Scottish Executive and the Welsh Assembly should lead this work in their countries. The strategies should incorporate effective incentives for leveraging real change, including targets for measuring progress. They should provide the framework for acting on the recommendations of both phases of this investigation.
- The Government should identify **dedicated ring-fenced funding and resource support** for the delivery of the recommendations in this report as part of an effective national strategy and action plan on occupational segregation. This would mean support for mainstreaming single-sex training, piloting incentives for Apprenticeships and initiatives at local level.
- National procurement policy, and in particular the Office of Government Commerce and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's sustainable communities agenda, should include challenging segregation to really drive change from the heart of Government.
- The Treasury initiative to promote **women in enterprise** should include a focus on attracting women into **sectors experiencing skills shortages** and supporting them. In particular, this should be included in the Small Business Service plan that will detail concrete steps to meet the new women in enterprise target.
- The British Governments should highlight as part of the **National Childcare Strategy** the benefits of attracting more men into childcare and addressing the gendered nature of the current workforce, including attitudinal and practical barriers, as a key objective for the development of the new infrastructure for the national Childcare Workforce.



“The stock market would not allow the waste of capital in the way we tolerate the waste of female talent and ability.”

Paul Myners, Chair of Marks & Spencer,
October 2004

Measuring change

It is important as part of the government's national strategy and action plan to monitor progress on maximising individual choice and potential and for meeting employer and economic need. We suggest that this monitoring and evaluation should focus by gender on:

1. **Qualifications, knowledge and skills acquired in school – academic and vocational subject and option choices, work experience placements, qualifications gained.**
2. **Post school destinations – work, further education or vocational training, higher education, other destinations.**
3. **Job choice – at entry to the work force, on returning.**
4. **Pay rates on entry to work, after re-entry.**

This will require the collection of data for individuals through the Individual Learner Record and other sources, and for cohorts through DfES, LSC, Labour Force Survey and other monitoring systems.

Taking the investigation forward

As well as the positive response highlighted above, the Government has pledged to introduce a new duty on public bodies to promote gender equality in forthcoming legislation.

We now look forward to working with Government, including the Scottish Executive and Welsh Assembly, the Skills Alliance, the Women and Work Commission, as well as many other stakeholders, to further develop the national strategy and action plan on occupational segregation. In England we will review progress and report publicly on all the recommendations by early 2006. In Scotland, this will take place in Autumn 2006.

The final phase

We intend to produce a series of Action for Change blueprints. These will provide tried and tested guidance on how to tackle gender segregation at a number of levels. We will also be targeting young people with a promotional campaign to raise awareness of issues such as pay, choice and opportunities. And we will be working with the Apprenticeship Task Force, TUC and CBI to share good practice among employers.

In these ways, we hope this investigation will bring about a concerted attack on occupational segregation on many fronts, and be a catalyst for real and lasting change.

“This is about people making their own choices, it is about the productivity agenda, and it is about fairness. We should be encouraging women into these areas permanently.”

Frances O'Grady, TUC, October 2004

Appendix I:

Examples of best practice

There is already a great deal of work going on to tackle gender stereotyping which we intend to promote widely and build on to bring about sustained and lasting change.

An example of a good partnership approach....

- E-Skills, the SSC for the IT and telecommunications sector, has developed the Computer Clubs for Girls (CC4G) initiative for schools with the aid of Government funding. CC4G exists to make girls more aware of the range of occupations available in the IT sector and increase the number of women entering IT careers.

Some examples of LSCs' and LECs' good practice include...

- London North LSC encouraging employers/work based training providers to make a commitment to interviewing atypical applicants who meet their selection criteria.
- Birmingham and Solihull LSC developing local marketing activities, such as publicity materials and drama productions to raise awareness and take-up of opportunities.
- Lincolnshire and Rutland and North Yorkshire LSCs working with partner organisations such as SSCs to provide hands-on activities, work experience and taster days.
- North Yorkshire LSC providing mentoring and support programmes for atypical trainees.

Some training providers are encouraging and facilitating participation by atypical trainees by...

- Setting more flexible training hours to fit around women's caring responsibilities.
- Subsidising childcare, either directly or via an allowance to offset costs.
- Offering personal development modules to help atypical trainees build confidence and assertive behaviour.
- Dedicating a member of staff to helping atypical trainees find work placements and supporting them through the placements.
- Encouraging employers to offer flexible-hours placements to accommodate caring responsibilities, as done the Women's Training Network in the ICT industry.
- Offering men-only introductory childcare courses, and those aimed at increasing participation by black and minority ethnic males. This has been implemented successfully by both Bradford City Council and Derbyshire County Council.
- Single-sex training by the Oxford Women's Training Scheme is opening up training possibilities to women from a wider range of backgrounds, such as those whose religions make it difficult for them to mix with men.
- Training schemes that are flexible in terms of access and methods, designed to help women overcome the barriers to vocational training, as offered by Reid Kerr College and Falkirk College.
- Offering vocational and pre-vocational training to enable women to gain higher paid jobs in ICT, as done by 'Routes to ICT for Women' at Falkirk Women's Technology Centre.
- Delivering vocational training with significant peer group support and alongside a high visibility campaign designed to alter attitudes, as offered by Edinburgh City Council's 'Men in Childcare' project.

Some examples of careers services' best practice include...

- Prospects, Tottenham's careers service undertaking group work with 12-year-old children to challenge and discuss attitudes and the influence of community, friends and parents.
- Prospects in Tottenham running evening sessions with Year 11 children and their families, encouraging parents to sit in on interviews to encourage support for non-traditional choices.
- Involving male childcare workers and other atypical choices in 'What's My Line'-style quizzes in schools.
- Lincolnshire and Rutland Connexions producing promotional material – posters, mousemats, leaflets to get across the message, 'You can dare to be different!'
- In Scotland, Careers Scotland are part way through an action based pilot project to implement positive career choice, free from gender bias or stereotypes. This has included reviewing and revising the current careers advice material, ensuring it is free from gender bias.
- Glasgow City Council's promotion of occupational desegregation, especially in childcare, through a two-tiered approach to their work placement scheme, involving work experience coordinators and administrators, and health and safety officers, as well as pupils.

Some employers are....

- Offering flexible hours to accommodate caring – there is evidence that small employers and large employers across all the investigation sectors have been able to meet different working patterns – often to the benefit of their clients and business.
- Providing travel and childcare support.
- Establishing buddying and mentoring to address isolation and lack of confidence.
- Setting clear expectations of standards of behaviour for employees – one large construction employer tackled persistent harassment by getting rid of the offending male employee.
- Establishing good links with local schools including offering work experience placements, single-sex taster days and open days.
- Providing training, support and guidance to open up non traditional career routes, for example by Kibble Education and Care Centre's 'Men Can Care' project.



Photo courtesy of Lincolnshire and Rutland LSC

Good practice employers who have helped us with the Investigation include:

Construction: Durkan, Lovell, Bramall Construction, Bovis Lend Lease, Oakwood Builders and Joinery Ltd, Leicester City Council; **Engineering:** BT, Jaguar, Ford; **Plumbing:** Centrica, Intertrade; **Childcare:** Puffins of Exeter, Sheffield Childrens Centre; **ICT:** IBM.

Appendix 2:

Research commissioned for the investigation

England/GB-wide studies

Dale, A. and Jackson, N. (2005) *Women in non-traditional skills training and employment*. Report by the Angela Dale Consultancy. Manchester: EOC Working Paper Series, forthcoming.

Francis, B., Archer, L., Osgood, J. and Dalgety, J. (2005) *Gender equality in work experience placements for young people*. Report by London Metropolitan University. Manchester: EOC Working Paper Series, forthcoming.

Fuller, A., Unwin, L. and Beck, V. (2005) *Employers, young people and gender segregation*. Report by the University of Leicester. Manchester: EOC Working Paper Series, forthcoming.

Haynes, G., Wragg, C. and Mason, K. (2005) *Equality and Pathfinders*. Report by the University of Exeter. Manchester: EOC Working Paper Series, forthcoming.

Miller, L., Neathey, F., Pollard, E. and Hill, D. (2004) *Occupational segregation, gender gaps and skill gaps*. Report by the Institute for Employment Studies. Manchester: EOC Working Paper Series, No. 15.

Miller, L., Pollard, E., Neathey, F., Hill, D. and Ritchie, H. (2005) *Gender segregation in apprenticeships*. Report by the Institute for Employment Studies. Manchester: EOC Working Paper Series, forthcoming.

Rolfe, H. (2005) *Promoting men's employment in childcare*. Report by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research. Manchester: EOC Working Paper Series, forthcoming.

Scotland

Thomson, E., McKay, A. and Campbell, J. (2005) *Modern apprenticeships and gender equality: a local perspective*. Report by Glasgow Caledonian University. Glasgow: Equal Opportunities Commission.

Thomson, E., McKay, A., Campbell, J. and Gillespie, M. (2004) *Identifying barriers to change in the Scottish modern apprenticeships scheme; report of phase two of the EOC's investigation into gender segregation and modern apprenticeships in Scotland*. Report by Glasgow Caledonian University. Glasgow: Equal Opportunities Commission.

Thomson, E., McKay, A. and Gillespie, M. (2004) *Modern apprenticeships and gender based occupational segregation in Scotland: a position paper*. Report by Glasgow Caledonian University. Glasgow: Equal Opportunities Commission.

Wales

Faust, A. (2004) *Evaluation of Modern Apprenticeships and National Traineeships in Wales*. Report by BMG Research. Available at: <http://www.eoc.org.uk/cseng/abouteoc/bmg%20research%20report.pdf>

Fuller, A., Unwin, L. and Beck, V. (2005) *Employers, young people and gender segregation in Wales*. Report by the University of Leicester. Manchester: EOC Working Paper Series, forthcoming.

WELMERC (2005) *SMEs and Occupational Segregation in Wales*. Report for the Welsh Development Agency and the EOC. Cardiff:

Terms of reference

A formal investigation under section 57 (1) of the Sex Discrimination Act into occupational segregation in training and work:

- To explore and highlight gender segregation in training and work, and the correlation with skills and pay gaps in the UK;
- To raise awareness of:
 - The extent of gender segregation and the undervaluing of women's work in Modern Apprenticeships
 - The barriers to change, and
 - How this contributes to the gender pay gap;
- To identify the extent and effectiveness of current initiatives at government, skills council, employer and schools level to challenge stereotyped training and work choices;
- To identify the experiences and support needs of women training and working in non-traditional sectors;
- To identify how young people and employers make stereotyped decisions and what would help them consider a wider range of options;
- To articulate the business case for change in policies and practices;
- To identify any specific race and disability aspects in relation to the above;
- To make and publicise widely recommendations and, where possible, guidance on policy and practice at national and local level which can address skills gaps by:
 - Increasing the numbers of young women choosing to enter modern apprenticeships in sectors currently dominated by men, including construction, plumbing, engineering and ICT;
 - Increasing the numbers of young men choosing training in childcare.

1. The Scottish Executive has retained the name: Modern Apprenticeships
2. Statistics from survey of 1281 year 10 pupils in 8 schools in England, and 535 year 11 pupils from 4 schools in Wales, with varying characteristics and performance
3. Survey of 1100 adults aged 16–59
4. Survey of 140 apprenticeship employers in England and 28 in Wales
5. Statistics from work experience survey of 566 pupils in 20 schools in England

Equal Opportunities Commission Helpline 0845 601 5901

(Calls charged at local rates)

Interpreting service available for callers to the Helpline

Typetalk service available on 18001 0845 601 5901

Great Britain

Arndale House, Arndale Centre, Manchester M4 3EQ

email: info@eoc.org.uk

36 Broadway, London SW1H 0BH

email: media@eoc.org.uk

tel: 0207 222 1110

media enquiries only: 0207 222 0004

Scotland

St Stephens House, 279 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4JL

email: scotland@eoc.org.uk

Wales

Windsor House, Windsor Lane, Cardiff CF10 3GE

email: wales@eoc.org.uk

To find out more about us, visit www.eoc.org.uk

For specialist legal information, visit www.eoc-law.org.uk

The full report is downloadable from the EOC's website:

www.eoc.org.uk/segregation

© EOC March 2005

ISBN 1 84206 135 6



Women. Men. Different. Equal.
Equal Opportunities Commission