



UNBLOCKING THE PIPELINE: GENDER AND EMPLOYABILITY IN SCOTLAND



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1. INTRODUCTION

Scottish Government defines employability as “the combination of factors and processes which enable people to progress towards employment, to stay in employment and to move on in the workplace.”

A complex schema of policy, programmes, and initiatives underpins employability activity in Scotland. A blend of Scottish Government, UK Government, European, and local authority funding is committed to the task of readying people for paid work and sustaining them in employment. Private sector, public sector, and third sector organisations act individually, and in consortia, to bid for funding and to deliver programmes and initiatives.

It is hard to access basic facts about the sum of employability activity in Scotland. The estimated spend on employability in Scotland in 2013-14 was £660m (or £533m if you exclude some groups of employees who are developing their skills from a position of secure employment¹),² but this figure is the product of a one-off survey undertaken on behalf of the Scottish Employability Forum. There is limited coherence in the data gathered about employability beneficiaries, which does not appear to be gender-disaggregated at programme level and is not disaggregated at national level³. There is lack of clarity about the objective of the “employability pipeline”, which is the core conceptual framework of employability in Scotland around which all programmes are designed⁴. There are evidence gaps on both the nature and scale of need⁵ for employability interventions.

Of particular concern to Engender is the fact that the employability sector appears to have failed to engage with gender. It has not appreciated, in the design of (most) initiatives or programmes, that women’s starkly different experience of the labour market and of life may necessitate a differentiated approach to employability. This failure to engage can be seen in the mirror that the sector holds up to itself. A paper reviewing the allocation of employability resources in Scotland for the Scottish Employability Forum contains no gender-disaggregated data, and mentions women and gender once each in its 95 pages⁶. A paper analysing responses to Scottish Government’s recent consultation on use of forthcoming employability powers does not mention women at all. Its equality

¹ This “narrow” definition of employability excludes expenditure on Modern Apprentices who were working for their employer for more than 6 months prior to starting their MA, and Scottish Funding Council expenditure on vocational learning for those in work at the start of their course.

² Cambridge Policy Consultants (November 2014) *Review of the Allocation of Employability Resources in Scotland: Final Report* p.iii

³ Ibid. p.iv

⁴ Ibid. p.iv

⁵ Ibid. p.v

⁶ Cambridge Policy Consultants (November 2014) *Review of the Allocation of Employability Resources in Scotland: Final Report*

analysis is limited to noting that “a majority of people who responded to [a specific equality] question supported the notion of equality”⁷.

Employability policy and programmes that are not well gendered will not be good quality policy and programmes. This is because an individual’s readiness to work is profoundly affected by their education and skills, by their caring responsibilities, by their safety at home and in the workplace, and by the types of work they are able to access. Women have different experiences than men in all of these areas. Employability programmes need to take account of these differences and purposefully respond to them.

This paper represents Engender’s first thoughts on the challenge of gendering employability. It sets out the gendered context in which employability policy and programmes must operate. It briefly describes the ways in which women’s experiences of the labour market, of education and skills, and of social security are different. It then raises some specific issues about how employability work in Scotland is developing, before finally making some recommendations on how this could be better gendered.

Scotland is currently responsible for a significant amount of employability activity, and will soon get new powers to deliver additional programmes. The commitment that Scottish Government has shown to ending the gender pay gap, eradicating violence against women, and increasing women’s representation at decision-making tables must be extended to this work. Gender-neutrality does not work when designing policy and programmes around labour market participation. Scotland needs employability interventions that are developed with women’s needs in mind. We will continue to think and engage with other stakeholders, including women struggling to access the labour market, about how that should be done.

2. GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPLOYABILITY

In order to develop employability programmes that engage and enable women, it is critical to understand women's economic inequality, and the barriers to women's participation in the formal labour market.

2.1 Women, education and skills

First, girls and women have a different experience of primary, secondary, and higher education and skills programmes.

Gendered segregation is evident along the skills pipeline from the cradle to the labour market, where it emerges as occupational segregation. Evidence shows that gender stereotyping from a very early age has an impact on the decisions that girls and boys, and young women and men, make about subject and career choice. Fixed ideas about gender and work results in the concentration of girls in subjects such as biology, art and design, languages and home economics, while boys are more likely to study maths, computing and physics. These gendered patterns of education have not shifted substantially over recent decades.

As gender and labour market experts Close the Gap note, "generic skills and employability programmes that do not consider occupational segregation are likely to replicate gendered patterns of skills acquisition and employment. This will entrench occupational segregation and widen the gender pay gap.⁸" Not only will ungendered employability programmes fail to result in skills utilisation that leads to inclusive growth, but they will entrench existing economic inequalities through inertia.

Occupational segregation in Modern Apprenticeships

Scottish Modern Apprenticeships are an intermediate skills programme that acts as a key entry point to the labour market for young people who do not go to university. The programme forms part of the patchwork of employability spending. There is acute and chronic gendered segregation in Scotland's Modern Apprenticeship programme. The frameworks in which men are concentrated, such as engineering and construction, are also those which are the most resource intensive, longer in duration on average, and lead to better labour market outcomes associated with higher rates of pay. The frameworks in which women dominate, such as early years care and education and hairdressing, are shorter in duration, have lower rates of pay, higher drop-out rates, and poorer labour market outcomes.

Table 1 shows women’s participation in a range of MA frameworks which are characterised by occupational segregation. While the rates of women’s participation in plumbing, construction, and engineering have marginally increased over the past decade, women’s participation in ICT has plummeted.

Table 1: Participation in MA frameworks, by gender 2005-2015				
Framework	% women 2005	% women 2010	% women 2015	% change since 2005
Construction	0.7	1.6	2	+1.3
Engineering	2.4	2.6	4	+1.6
Plumbing	0.4	0.9	0.9	+0.5
Early years care and education	98.5	97.9	100.0	+1.5
ICT	49.7	20.7	15.0	-34.7

Source: Skills Development Scotland, Modern Apprenticeships in training Q2 2015-16

Modern Apprenticeships have been a focus of gender equality advocates’ concern for over a decade. In that time the case has been made for quality gender-disaggregated data, analysis of the multifactorial causes of gender segregation⁹, and commitment to a national action plan for ending gender segregation in the programme¹⁰.

However, the data enables us to analyse the programme spend on women (39% of the spend on the twelve largest frameworks¹¹), and to conclude that this £75m plus programme is unintentionally widening the gender pay gap and sustaining gendered occupational segregation.

2.2 Women and the economy

Occupational segregation is a major cause of the gender pay gap, and is therefore intrinsically linked to women’s and children’s poverty. Women’s employment is clustered into a small number of low-paid, undervalued occupations such as caring, cleaning and retail. Men are more likely to be found in technical and manual occupations that have higher rates of pay. Occupational segregation also contributes to skills shortages, and sectors with the highest level of skill shortages are also often those which are the most segregated. Employability programmes

⁹ Thomson, E., McKay, A., Campbell, J. and M. Gillespie (February 2005) *Jobs for the boys and the girls: promoting a smart, successful and equal Scotland*

¹⁰ Skills Development Scotland (December 2015) *Equalities Action Plan for Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland*

¹¹ Close the Gap (June 2015) *A tool for assessing the gender impact of spending on skills and training*

and initiatives that link effectively to economic development outcomes should therefore be working to reduce levels of occupational segregation, and their drag on Scotland's economic growth¹².

We see the economy-wide effects of occupational segregation in the persistence of the Scottish and UK gender pay gaps. The pay gap in Scotland, which currently sits at 15%¹³, is a blunt indicator of systemic failure to realise labour market gender equality.

Disabled women¹⁴, black and minority ethnic women¹⁵, lesbian and bisexual women¹⁶, trans women¹⁷, older women¹⁸, refugee women¹⁹, and young women²⁰ experience different, multiple barriers to participation in the labour market, and to progression within their chosen occupation.

2.3 Women and care

A contributing factor to the pay gap is the extent to which women bear responsibility for care. For many women, providing care in the household and more widely constrains their participation in paid employment and reduces their income potential, leaving them more vulnerable to poverty, particularly in old age. A great many women juggle multiple responsibilities, including more than one 'mini job' or job-seeking commitments with care for family members, including for grandchildren. This is highly stressful and results in 'time poverty' that significantly compromises wellbeing.

Childcare

Scotland has some of the highest childcare costs in the UK, and the UK costs are already among the highest in the world.²¹ Access to affordable childcare is a major barrier to women being able to work, study and train. A quarter of parents in severe poverty in Scotland have given up work, a third has turned down a job, and a quarter has not been able to take up education or training because of high childcare costs.²² Less than one fifth (15%) of local authorities in Scotland have sufficient childcare for parents who work full-time, and less than one in ten (9%) local authorities have enough childcare for parents who work outside of normal hours.²³ Access is worse for disabled children, older children, or in rural areas.²⁴

¹² Scottish Government (March 2015) *Scotland's Economic Strategy*

¹³ <http://www.closesthegap.org.uk/news/blog/new-scottish-pay-gap/>

¹⁴ Leonard Cheshire (March 2014) *Realising the Rights of women and girls with disabilities*

¹⁵ Equal Opportunities Committee (January 2016) *Removing Barriers: race, ethnicity, and employment*

¹⁶ Stonewall (2014) *The double-glazed glass ceiling: Lesbians in the workplace*

¹⁷ House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee (December 2015) *Transgender equality*

¹⁸ Scottish Commission on Older Women (August 2015) *Older Women and Work: Looking to the Future*

¹⁹ Scottish Refugee Council (July 2014) *One Step Closer: Confidence building and employability skills for refugee and asylum seeking women*

²⁰ YWCA Scotland (2015) *Status of Young Women In Scotland 2015*

²¹ Save the Children (2011) *Making Work Pay – The Childcare Trap*

²² Ibid.

²³ Rutter, Jill (2015) *Childcare Costs Survey 2015, Family and Childcare Trust*

²⁴ The Daycare Trust and Children in Scotland (2011) *The Scottish Childcare Lottery*

The lack of accessible, flexible, affordable childcare contrasts with the requirement for single parents, most of whom are women, to start to engage in employability activities when their child is two years old.

Long-term care

Women also make up the majority of carers in Scotland for older people and disabled people. This is particularly acute amongst working-age women between 25 and 64 years old.²⁵ The cost of replacing this unpaid care is estimated at £10.3bn, or over a third of the Scottish budget.

A culture of expectation around women's caring perpetuates this. Women who gave evidence to the Carers UK *Inquiry into Caring and Family Finances*, and Engender's *Preparing to Care* project described the assumptions made by professionals that they would be able and willing to provide long-term care, despite the profoundly negative impacts on their own career and pay progression. Women are twice as likely as men to give up paid work in order to care, and a low earning disregard within Carers Allowance can act as a financial disincentive to take up paid work where this is possible.²⁶

Despite the multiple barriers presented by women's childcare and long-term care roles, the implications of care demands are not built in to employability programmes. Respondents to the Scottish Government's consultation on the future of employability provision in Scotland demonstrated a failure to grasp the scale of carers' needs. Less than ten per cent thought that lone parents or carers needed "additional support"²⁷.

2.4 Women and social security

The interrelationship between employability and social security policy has tightened as a result of the shift in UK Government policy described as "welfare reform". The regime of sanctions and conditionality now in operation in Job Centres mandates enforced participation in so-called employability activities.

The social safety net is now under intense pressure in the UK, and the dramatic reduction in social security budgets and familialisation of benefits is having a profoundly negative impact on women. This negative impact is only projected to worsen. The increase in women's poverty as a result of "welfare reform", and the withdrawal of public services because of austerity, will have an effect on women's capacity to participate in employability activity.

²⁵ Scottish Government (2015) *Scotland's Carers*

²⁶ Carers UK (2014) *State of Caring 2014*

²⁷ Rocket Science (December 2015) *Creating a Fairer Scotland: Employability Support: Analysis of consultation responses* p.50

Confusion and perverse incentives: the example of carers

A detailed analysis of the impact of social security changes is beyond the scope of this paper, but a brief consideration of the possible implications of “welfare reform” for carers demonstrates its compounding effects on women’s attachment to the labour market. Of those in receipt of Carer’s Allowance, 74% are women.²⁸

Following the introduction of Universal Credit, certain carers will be subject to conditionality and sanctions²⁹. Carers juggling micro-jobs with pressures such as multiple appointments with healthcare and support services are being subject to “work requirements”, despite the fact that Carers UK has shown that carers with over 20 hours of caring responsibilities do not have sufficient flexibility to be subjected to work requirement programmes.³⁰ There are significant concerns that a change of status for carers following the implementation of personal independence payment (PIP)³¹ will see many unpaid carers forced into claimant commitments and at risk of sanctions.³² Although plans to exempt carers from the benefit cap were announced following a recent High Court ruling, the law is still in place, with thousands of carers losing £105 per week on average.³³ Finally, cuts and changes to support with housing costs, and the Bedroom Tax in particular have had a major impact on carers.

Social security’s impact on women’s capacity to take part in employability programmes goes beyond the regime of conditionality and sanctions that is now in operation. Additional downward pressure on carers’ incomes will need to be factored in to the design and delivery of employability programmes, as women who care will increasingly struggle to afford adequate clothing and footwear, transport, internet access and other requirements of work requirement programmes.

2.5 Women, work, and safety

Women’s attachment to the labour market, or to an employability programme, may be affected by an experience of gender based violence. This may be in the form of sexual harassment at work, which is experienced by six out of ten working women in the UK³⁴. Women may be one of the 75 per cent of those experiencing domestic abuse who are targeted at work. Perpetrators often use workplace resources such as phones and email to threaten, harass or abuse their current or former partner³⁵.

²⁸ Carers UK (2014) *Caring and Family Finances Inquiry: Carers struggling with alarming levels of hardship*

²⁹ CPAG Scotland (2015) *Welfare reform and carers*

(<http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-scot-factsheet-welfare-reform-carers-May-15.pdf>)

³⁰ Carers UK (2014) *Caring and Family Finances Inquiry: Carers struggling with alarming levels of hardship*

³¹ This is a new benefit paid to people of working age with a long-term condition or disability. It replaces Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

³² The expected reduction of claimants and knock-on effect on carers will mean a shift into ‘work related activity groups.

³³ DWP (2012) *Benefit Cap (Housing Benefit) Regulation 2012: Impact assessment for the benefit cap*

³⁴ Slater + Gordon (October 2013) *Sexual Harassment Rife in the Workplace* <https://www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/gender-equality/violence-against-women/sexual-harassment-still-fact-working-life>

³⁵ EHRC (March 2013) *Managing and Supporting Employees Experiencing Domestic Abuse*

Women may also be prevented from attending work because of the injuries they have sustained as a result of being attacked by a partner. In 2009, this was of such a scale that its estimated cost to UK employers was £1.9bn in lost output³⁶.

Tactics of economic abuse are frequently employed by perpetrators³⁷, and may have a significant impact on women's capacity to work, or participate in job-seeking activity.

Women may also have a break in employment when they are moving away from the perpetrator, whether into refuges provided by women's aid services, or into private accommodation. Economic abuse is likely to continue after separation, including refusal to keep up with mortgage payments or pay child maintenance, and pursuit of unrestricted contact with children that involves costly legal fees.

Women who are traumatised as a result of rape, stalking, or another crime being perpetrated against them may need time away from the labour market before they are able to work again.

Although the criminal justice system has made substantive improvements to its response to gender based violence, the vast majority of victims of violence against women do not report the perpetrator to the police or to another statutory service. Women who have experienced gender based violence are resilient and have considerable emotional intelligence, but do require services that are responsive to their needs.

As well as responding to the needs of women who have experienced violence against women, it is also critical for employability programmes to be cognisant of their function in *preventing* violence against women. Women's economic inequality is identified as one of the factors that creates a conducive context for gender based violence in the Scottish violence against women strategy, *Equally Safe*³⁸.

³⁶ Sylvia Walby (2009) *The Cost of Domestic Violence: Update 2009*

³⁷ These include: Preventing women from attending work or college by, for example, refusing to let women learn English, destroying work clothes, locking women in the house, or disrupting sleep; controlling access to money through monitoring pay slips, changing PIN numbers or cancelling debit cards; forcing women to incur costs or get into debt; forcing women to commit benefit fraud and then threatening to report them; and ensuring all assets such as mortgages are in the perpetrator's name only.

³⁸ Scottish Government and CoSLA (2014) *Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls*

3. SCOTTISH POLICY CONTEXT

3.1. Employability and the Scotland Bill

Discussion around employability has been precipitated this year by the anticipated devolution of two current Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) programmes in the Scotland Bill. The Work Programme for people who have been unemployed long term and Work Choice for disabled people will be devolved, and the Scottish Government will be able to design replacement programmes.

At the same time, Scottish Government will also acquire additional powers around social security. This will mean that Scottish Government will be responsible for a wider range of policy areas that interrelate with employability. The piecemeal way that the Scotland Bill has been developed, coupled with its rushed progress through the UK Parliament, means that the complexity of the devolution settlement has been compounded. A great deal of uncertainty remains over both substantive and administrative issues.

The Third Sector Employability Forum points out that only 11% of employability spending in Scotland comes via the Work Programme and Work Choice, but suggests that “this means that in the longer term, the Scottish Government can reshape, if it chooses to, the majority of the funding at our disposal”³⁹.

Scottish Government, like other public bodies in Scotland, is required to carry out equality impact assessments on substantial pieces of policy, in order to ensure that the possibility of increasing women’s equality is maximised. It is a process that is also designed to catch any unintentionally negative effects of a new or revised policy on women. The rough edges of the devolution settlement make equality impact assessment an even more important tool in finding and smoothing any potential problems.

3.2. Scottish government policy

The Scottish Government has recently consulted on the future of employability in Scotland. The consultation paper, *Creating a Fairer Scotland*⁴⁰, describes the developing of a “Scottish Approach”, which is “focused on meeting the needs of the individual and the communities they live in”. It describes the Scottish Approach as “work[ing] to support our ambitions for fair work, social justice and sustainable economic growth”. It explicitly acknowledges gender as a factor that shapes the “employability needs of individuals.”⁴¹

³⁹ Third Sector Employability Forum (October 2015) *Employability in Scotland: A Response from the Third Sector Employability Forum (TSEF)*

⁴⁰ Scottish Government (July 2015) *Creating a Fairer Scotland: Employability Support: A Discussion Paper*

⁴¹ *Ibid.* p.18

Working for Growth, the 2012 refresh of Scotland's employability framework, also describes gender equality as important, and outlines some of the gendered barriers to women's labour market participation that are set out in section 2.2 above. However, the sole gender-related activity in the framework's action plan is to implement "wherever possible" the action plan emerging from the Women's Employment Summit in September 2012⁴². To date, no action plan from the Summit has been published by the Strategic Group on Women and Work that was established to undertake this task. It is unlikely, given the Summit's focus on employment and enterprise, that employability will feature strongly in such a plan.

The tri-partite Scottish Employability Forum is the body with strategic oversight of employability in Scotland. It has been jointly chaired by the Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Fair Work, Skills and Training, the UK Secretary of State for Scotland, and the COSLA Spokesperson for Health and Wellbeing⁴³. Its remit describes it as "leading efforts to reduce unemployment and increase employment in Scotland", as well as "development of a coordinated approach to the use of Scottish employability funding"⁴⁴. It has met four times since January 2013⁴⁵, and the meeting notes suggest that the sole discussion of gender has been a reference at the meeting in September 2013 to women's underemployment⁴⁶.

Gender equality has been more substantively recognised as an imperative in a more recent piece of employability policy targeted at young Scots. Developing Young Workforce, Scotland's Youth Employment strategy, recognises the need to "challeng[e] gender and culture stereotypes and remov[e] barriers where they exist for those who require additional support"⁴⁷. Two of the eleven key performance indicators (KPIs) relate to gender equality⁴⁸.

The strategy suggests the development of gender action plans by key delivery bodies. Scottish Funding Council is currently developing a gender action plan for colleges and universities in Scotland in order to deliver on Developing the Young Workforce KPI 8, which is to increase by 5 percentage points the minority gender share in each of the 10 largest and most imbalanced superclasses by 2021. An interim action plan is due to be published in February 2016, with a final action plan due in May 2016⁴⁹. Skills Development Scotland, in order to deliver against

⁴² Ibid.p.38

⁴³ http://www.employabilityinscotland.com/media/476124/sef_members_-_for_employability_in_scotland_website_-_february_2015.pdf accessed 16 February 2016

⁴⁴ http://www.employabilityinscotland.com/media/94473/scottish_employability_forum_-_remit.pdf accessed 16 February 2016

⁴⁵ 31 January 2013, 5 September 2013, 6 March 2014, and 26 February 2015.

⁴⁶ http://www.employabilityinscotland.com/media/285200/sef_minutes_5_september_2013_-_final_draft_on_13_nov_2013.pdf accessed 16 February 2016

⁴⁷ Scottish Government (December 2014) *Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy*

⁴⁸ KPI 7: Reduce to 60 per cent the percentage of MA frameworks where the gender balance is 75:25 or worse by 2021 and KPI 8: Increase by 5 percentage points the minority gender share in each of the 10 largest and most imbalanced superclasses by 2021.

⁴⁹ <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/Priorities/Access/GenderActionPlan/GenderActionPlan.aspx> accessed 16 February 2016

KPI 7, which requires greater gender balance across its most gender-segregated frameworks, and other KPIs relating to other protected characteristics, published its Modern Apprenticeship equality action plan in December 2015⁵⁰. This plan was produced in consultation with equalities organisations, including Engender, and was welcomed as a significant first step on a journey towards desegregation of the programme.

3.3. Employability policy and strategy outside Scottish Government

Recent activity by Skills Development Scotland and Scottish Funding Council is to be welcomed, but equalities action around Modern Apprenticeships and college and university delivery does not amount to a coherent approach to gendering employability. Failure to adequately gender employability policy in Scotland has resulted in large programmes and initiatives in which women's lived experiences are invisible. They do not appear to consider gender equality or women's specific needs at all.

Cambridge Policy Consultants' report, commissioned by the strategic Scottish Employability Forum, describes an employability sector pulled in slightly different directions by a gallimaufry of funders. Large pots of funding, including European Structural Funds, are distributed by the Scottish Funding Council, Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Government, Big Lottery Fund, and UK Government. These funders have overlapping requirements as to the data that providers gather, and the policy directions - and indeed ideological frameworks - within which providers should operate.

Of all of the funding pots for employability, the most exacting gender equality requirements are made by European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). These funds provide EU member states with financial assistance to deliver the EU2020 strategy of smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth. ESIF funds allocated to Scotland for the 2014-2020 programme amount to €941m. European Parliament and Council regulations⁵¹ require that spending programmes "promote equality between men and women" and "promote non-discrimination". Gender equality is treated as equivalent to the equality of other protected groups in UK anti-discrimination law, but it is privileged by the European Union.

The requirement to promote equality between men and women has been translated into something called a horizontal theme at the programme level. In theory, gender equality is supposed to cut across the processes of grant management, and feature as an assessment criterion, be the subject of grant recipient reporting, and be an analytical lens in ex post evaluations undertaken

⁵⁰ Skills Development Scotland (December 2015) *Equalities Action Plan for Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland*

⁵¹ Regulation 1303/2013 (Common Provisions Regulation) and Regulation 1304/2013 (European Social fund, ESF)

of programme-wide spend. The purpose of gender equality being a horizontal theme is to mainstream gender within the programme. A highly critical evaluation of gender mainstreaming within Scottish structural funds 2007-2013 suggests that this requirement has not been realised⁵².

The evaluation surveys project leads, and reports their sense that regression took place between ESIF programmes, with gender equality diminishing as a focus within the systems, processes, and content of the funded projects and initiatives. It charts a reduction in support and guidance for grant recipients on equal opportunities, a lack of systematic data gathering across all the projects that would facilitate a gender analysis of their impact, and a widespread understanding of gender mainstreaming as “not relevant” and an “administrative and legal burden”⁵³.

The lack of mainstreaming in response to a clear imperative to mainstream hints at a systemic lack of commitment and capacity within the current employability architecture to ensure that employability is gendered.

4. EMPLOYABILITY DELIVERY IN SCOTLAND

4.1. Employability delivery and gender

There has not been a systematic analysis of gender and employability in Scotland. Women's experience of employability services remains relatively underexplored and undertheorised. We know an increasing amount about women's labour market experience in Scotland, as a result of the work of initiatives like Close the Gap and EQUATE Scotland, along with the academic work of the Women in Scotland's Economy Research Centre and others. Women's Enterprise Scotland is driving forward our understanding of women and enterprise in Scotland, although it is hindered by its minimal capacity. Gender and employability has been a relatively marginal subject of inquiry.

Pipelines

The literature records a shift in employability policy in Scotland over the last decade or so, in which provision has moved from disparate projects to a cohesive, and sometimes integrated, approach. The broad thrust of employability development has been around the creation of local pipelines. A recent evaluation of the pipeline approach by University of Glasgow's Training and Employment Research Unit (TERU), describes the concept as being roughly ten years old, and having been given "increasing momentum" by the 2006 employability framework, Workforce Plus⁵⁴. These pipelines are conceptualised as joining together local services and actors to bring those furthest from the labour market into sustainable employment. Among other things, the pipelines would improve the "connectedness between employability services on the one hand and a range of other service areas (such as health, money advice, literacy and numeracy skills, etc.) which could tackle impediments to employment"⁵⁵.

European funding has again been dominant in shaping the measurements of success of the pipeline approach, and it is noted by the TERU evaluators that "the role of employability pipelines in delivering EU structural funds has enabled structured and integrated services." The evaluation hints at more local cohesion, more partnership working, more efficient referrals and signposting for clients, which sound collectively helpful. However, it does not attempt to evaluate whether the "more strategic approach"⁵⁶ taken by local partnerships has reduced funding for specialist employability services that target groups of women. It does not consider whether gender equality is being advanced or constrained by an approach that does not take cognisance of gender as a factor. It does note that "whilst females account for a third of all claiming JSA, only 8 [of 32] [Local Employability Partnerships] explicitly target this group"⁵⁷.

⁵⁴ Sutherland, V., Macdougall, L. and A. McGregor (October 2015) *Evaluation of Employability Pipelines Across Scotland: Final Report*

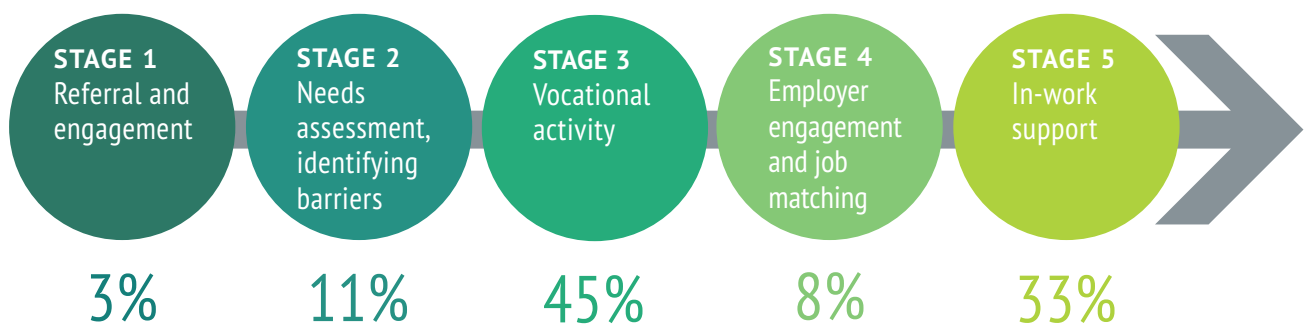
⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p.1

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p.9

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p.19

Figure 1, below, sets out the content of the pipeline, and the proportion of Scottish employability spend on each stage, using figures from Cambridge Policy Consultants' analysis⁵⁸. The pipeline is both a conceptual model for an individual's "employability journey", and a schema for how provision links together within a local setting. Individual service providers may support individuals through any number of stages, but the local pipeline should be equipped to take individuals from stage one to stage five, and enable the co-ordination of transitions between stages.

Figure 1: Employability pipeline and proportion of expenditure by stage



It is not possible to comment with any accuracy on the gender impact of the pipeline approach or on the allocation of spend across the various stages. Cambridge Policy Consultants' analysis of Scottish employability spend contains no gender-disaggregated data. TERU's evaluation does not consider the impact of the pipeline approach on women or on women's equality.

Gender mainstreaming and the pipeline

The framing of the pipeline was criticised by the (now defunct) Women onto Work, which was Scotland's only woman-focused employability organisation. They observed that the concept of a pipeline taking people from economic inactivity to labour market attachment was insufficiently iterative to capture the reality of women's lives. Their perception was that an overemphasis on job outcomes as the end point of the pipeline deprioritised forms of pre-employment support that were particularly necessary for women who had detached from the labour market to care, had poor mental health, or were survivors of domestic or sexual abuse⁵⁹. They conclude that "the predominant 'work first' approach to employability largely neglects gendered differences in the barriers to work experienced by men and women."⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Cambridge Policy Consultants (November 2014) *Review of the Allocation of Employability Resources in Scotland: Final Report*

⁵⁹ Women onto Work (January 2014) *Stating our Case: The Rationale and Practice of Gender Specific Employability Services*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p.59

We are concerned that the local employability partnerships (LEPs) may not be taking a gender mainstreaming approach. We are also concerned that they may, by virtue of their gender-blind co-ordination role, be reducing the possibility of the funding of gender-sensitive boutique services. Following the closure of Women onto Work in Edinburgh, Scotland now has no dedicated women-only employability services. An evaluation of Women onto Work from 2007 suggests that the project's budget in 2005-06 was pulled together from eight separate funding streams⁶¹, most of which are now co-ordinated by the LEP.

What we can learn from services

Reflections from initiatives that have targeted employability services at specific groups of women recommend an individualised, gender-sensitive approach. Designing programmes that take account of women's gendered lived realities must be done intentionally, or it is likely not to be done at all. Even well-run programmes like *Marks & Start*, an employability programme run by third sector organisations in partnership with retailer Marks & Spencer, does not wholly manage it. Designed to meet the needs of single parents, it requires women who transition from its mentoring and training programme into a job in one of Marks & Spencer's stores to adhere to a rota pattern that makes it hard to balance work and care. Gender advocates may also criticise the outcome of more women working in the female-dominated, low wage retail sector.

An example of a highly individualised programme is One Step Closer, which was a partnership between Scottish Refugee Council, ESOL Glasgow, and Refugee Women's Strategy Group. Targeting refugee and asylum seeking women, this incorporated ESOL provision, in order to unpack the "abstract and corporate language of job descriptions and person specifications"⁶², and included interview skills, and building confidence around "forms of greeting, hand shaking, and eye contact", and broadening horizons through effective signposting. Childcare and travel expenses were available so that women with caring roles could participate. The programme's success is attributed to its sensitivity to the needs and requirements of the group of refugee and asylum seeking women, as well as the needs of each woman as an individual.

4.2. Findings of roundtable

In order to add to the scant collective knowledge about gender and employability practice in Scotland, Engender and Close the Gap held a workshop with 10 women who use or have used employment support services, in October 2015 in Edinburgh. The opening discussion explored what a fairer Scotland would look like for women seeking paid work. The second session focussed on positive and negative aspects of women's job-seeking experiences, and how new powers over employment

⁶¹ http://www.capitalcitypartnership.org/UserFiles/File/publications/WoW_evaluation_2006_7.pdf accessed 16 February

⁶² Scottish Refugee Council (July 2014) *One Step Closer: Confidence building and employability skills for refugee and asylum seeking women*

support could be engaged to improve this for women and to address gender inequality.

Critical issues identified by women about employability services:

1. A 'one size fits all' approach that does not take account of women's caring roles, skills, marginalisation in the labour market or gendered experiences of domestic abuse.
2. The lack of affordable childcare. Women are regularly forced to apply for jobs that do not fit with school hours or available childcare.
3. Job-matching is also often inappropriate in terms of skills, qualifications and location, with the assumption being that women with caring responsibilities can easily undertake lengthy commutes.
4. There is a culture of disbelief and suspicion across the benefits system, including in job centres and work programmes, which causes stress. The threat of sanctions and unrealistic conditionality is a major element of this, and heightens the "us and them" mentality between staff and claimants.
5. Accessing employment support also entails a lot of wasted time, effort and inefficiency. For instance, it is common to be requested repeatedly to provide documents and fill out forms, which is stressful and frustrating. Several women also experienced difficulty in accessing information.
6. Women do not have equal access to training opportunities. For instance, it is vital that the police force becomes more diverse, but women can't access the six week residential training because of "the motherhood penalty". As well as the need for more flexibility, certain occupations with long training periods exclude women on low incomes.
7. There is no support or safety net for self-employed women. This is particularly worrying given that the economic climate and cuts to public spending have precipitated an enormous increase in women's precarious self-employment.

These reflections made by a small group of women with experience of accessing employability services align with our knowledge of women's labour market participation, and women's propensity to care.

Their experience of gendered differences that profoundly impact their capacity to engage with employability provision as it currently is makes a powerful argument for additional research, reflection, and evaluation of existing programmes.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Employability policy and programmes that are not well gendered will not be good quality policy and programmes. This is because an individual's readiness to work is profoundly affected by their education and skills, by their caring responsibilities, by their safety at home and in the workplace, and by the types of work they are able to access. Women have different experiences than men in all of these areas. Employability programmes need to take account of these differences and purposefully respond to them.

We see little evidence that gender and women's equality have been included as factors in the development of policy, of the architecture of employability, or in the design of individual programmes and projects. Where gender mainstreaming has been mandated, in European-funded programmes, this has not happened.

Processes for developing new programmes

The devolution of the Work Programme and Work Choice to Scotland provides an opportunity to rethink employability delivery. Scottish Government is consulting on the development of a Scottish Approach that "delivers more for those who have not benefitted from current programmes"⁶³.

The programmes that are being replaced have been widely criticised in Scotland, and there is evidence to suggest that the Work Programme has been "worse than doing nothing" in some areas of the UK⁶⁴.

It is time for a creative, gendered approach.

Specific recommendations

Policy and leadership

- Investment in women's employability, through mainstreaming gender in funding programmes and in funding specific demonstration and pilot projects
- Scottish Government to include gender equality in refreshed employability strategies, including:
 - Incorporating gender competence within the Scottish Employability Forum

⁶³ Scottish Government (July 2015) *Creating a Fairer Scotland: Employability Support: A Discussion Paper*

⁶⁴ See Public Accounts Committee - Twenty-First Report, The Work Programme <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/public-accounts-committee/news/work-programme-report/> and [http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/pcs_comment/pcs_comment.cfm/work-programme-still-worse-than-doing-nothing,](http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/pcs_comment/pcs_comment.cfm/work-programme-still-worse-than-doing-nothing)

- Considering how employability provision could tackle gendered occupational segregation
- Exploring the connection between care and employability
- Improving equality impact assessment of employability strategies
- Links with preventing violence against women to be made
- Local employability partnerships (LEPs) to include gender equality in their work, including:
 - Building gender competence within the LEP
 - Tackling gendered occupational segregation through local provision
 - Ensuring the provision of appropriate childcare and long-term care
 - Links with local prevention of violence against women to be made

Data and evaluation

- Gender budget impact analysis of employability programmes in Scotland, using a methodology developed by WiSE for Close the Gap to analyse the gender impact of spending on training and skills⁶⁵.
- Good quality gender-disaggregated data on employability activity to be gathered at the employability programme and initiative level.
- Gender indicators to be included in the design of employability programmes and initiatives.
- Women's economic equality to be a cross-cutting theme of employability programmes, and to be included as a funding criterion, and a monitoring and reporting criterion for individual projects and initiatives within programmes.
- Gender to be included as a factor in ex post evaluation of employability programmes.



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