

# Action for change

How those involved in work-related learning can break down gender segregation in vocational education, training and work.



Practical guidance based on examples of actions taken by those involved in work-related learning to open up non-traditional opportunities for women and men.

# Action for change:

## breaking down gender segregation in vocational education, training and work

Helping women and men to access sectors where they are currently under-represented, and to succeed in acquiring skills, qualifications and good jobs, is a major challenge. Work experience co-ordinators, teachers, and Education Business Partnership managers can play a key role in ensuring that all young people have an opportunity to sample work not normally associated with their sex, and to widen and test their knowledge about atypical careers.



Photo courtesy of Churchdown school/LSC/ATP

This document suggests practical steps that can be taken to break down gender segregation in work-related learning, particularly in work experience placements. It is based on tried and tested methods already being used by those involved in work-based learning across England, which the EOC uncovered during its General Formal Investigation into occupational segregation.

[www.eoc.org.uk/segregation](http://www.eoc.org.uk/segregation)

### This document has three sections:

- ways in which Education Business Partnerships (EBPs) can take the lead in tackling gender segregation and opening up a wider range of work placements;
- school initiatives to open up non-traditional work-based learning opportunities to girls and boys; and
- organisations and resources that can assist all those involved in tackling gender segregation in work-related learning.

### Setting the agenda for change

**Phase 1** of our Investigation into gender segregation identified many specific actions that could be taken by Government and organisations to help break down stereotyping in Apprenticeships and more widely.

**Phase 2** identified further practical and attitudinal barriers to achieving wider change – and proposals for removing these. One of our main findings was that there was no strategic agenda in work-based learning to encourage and support young people who want to sample non-traditional work (see Investigation recommendations on the back page).

An Action for Change document aimed at careers advice professionals ([www.eoc.org.uk/segregation](http://www.eoc.org.uk/segregation)) also contains many suggestions that are relevant to those involved in work-related learning provision.

# Section 1: How EBPs can take the lead in tackling gender stereotyping

- Be proactive in **contacting employers** who currently provide placements and **encourage new employers** to offer placements to the non-traditional sex. *(see Practice in Action 1)*
- **Run short courses** through local colleges, training centres and construction curriculum centres, aimed at giving girls and boys a **taste of work in non-traditional sectors**. *(see Practice in Action 2)*
- **Offer** young people a **work experience placement** in a **non-traditional field** and **encourage them** to take up the offer. *(see Practice in Action 2)*
- Look at **creative ways** of exploring and challenging the views of young people before they get to the stage of choosing work experience placements – such as through **drama and role-play**. *(see Practice in Action 3)*
- Work in **partnership** with the local Learning and Skills Council, Sector Skills Councils and careers guidance services to encourage non-traditional work placements. *(see Practice in Action 3 & 4)*
- Take advantage of the **resources and events** on offer to **challenge stereotyping in careers education**, such as the girls' summer schools run by Women Into Science and Engineering, and JIVE events. *(see Section 3 for more information)*



Photo courtesy of Birmingham & Solihull LSC

### Practice in Action 1

- forging links with employers
- promoting non-traditional work placements
- monitoring provision

One EBP manager forged links with the local Fire and Rescue Service to target placements at girls – historically demand from boys for places had outstripped supply, meaning girls rarely got a look-in. Through promoting the initiative in schools, four girls took up placements, and the Fire Service was delighted with this response, as female representation was virtually unheard of. When pupils take up non-traditional placements it is vital that such experiences should be as positive as possible: systems of employer (and pupil) report forms and checklists provide excellent models for monitoring and ensuring positive provision.

### Practice in Action 2

- run single-sex taster courses
- actively encourage non-traditional placements

The EBP in Somerset has a construction curriculum centre (funded by the Construction Industry Training Board – CITB), which runs women into construction courses aimed at girls in year 9 (13–14 year olds). The students try carpentry and joinery, brickwork, electrical installation, surveying and operating a mini digger within a college environment. This year the EBP wrote to all the girls who had taken part to ask them to consider a work experience placement in the construction industry in Year 10. They will be tracking the girls to see how many took up a placement.

### Practice in Action 3

- use drama
- partnership working
- involving local learners
- role models

North Yorkshire EBP worked with their local LSC to produce a play to challenge traditional attitudes and encourage both boys and girls to consider work experience in areas they may not usually consider. It worked with a school that has specialist status for the performing arts. A group of 15–20 youngsters, as part of their GCSE coursework, wrote a 15 minute play focusing on young people choosing to do non traditional training and work and the reaction of their friends, families and employers. This was then performed for Year 10 students in other schools who were at the stage of choosing work placements. The EBP arranged for ten people who worked in ‘non-stereotypical’ jobs to be present in the audience, including female police and Navy officers, a male hairdresser, a female chef, a female managing director, male nurses, and a female engineer. These people were available to talk with young people at the end of each production about their roles and progression in their professions. The LSC believed the play had had an impact, particularly on girls’ choices.

### Practice in Action 4

- promote non-traditional work experience placements
- partnership working
- accessing ESF funding
- incentives for choosing a non-traditional placement

Career Connections Ltd (Wirral and West Cheshire) received a grant from the European Social Fund for a post to work with schools in two related areas: to encourage pupils to make non-traditional choices in careers; and to work with work experience advisers to ensure that placements promote equal opportunities.

Cornwall and Devon Careers has developed ‘Challenge 500’, an award of £500 for young people who choose interesting or unusual work experience placements. The Service is particularly keen to attract applications with an equal opportunities dimension.



Photo courtesy of Topstay Nurseries

## Section 2: What schools can do to open up work-related learning for both genders

- Involve **atypical workers**, such as male childcare workers and female engineers, in 'What's my line'-style **quizzes or role model panels** at careers and equal opportunities events. Include questions about pay rates and opportunities for progression. *(see Practice in Action 5)*
- Encourage **local employers** to get involved with your students through mentoring, sponsored projects, assignments, and providing role models. *(see Practice in Action 5)*
- Conduct **single-sex taster activities**, to avoid the danger of peer pressure preventing girls or boys from taking up non-traditional placements. *(see Practice in Action 6)*
- **Introduce** children to a wide range of work from an early age.
- Work with employers who have a **reputation for promoting** diversity to organise **tours of local workplaces** for young people of the non-traditional sex, with the specific aim of providing a more positive image of what working in these sectors is like. *(see Practice in Action 7)*



Photo courtesy of Churchdown school/LSC/ATP

### Practice in Action 5

- ‘What’s My Line’ quizzes/role model panels
- local business input

‘What’s My Line’ quizzes are frequently the main event at school ‘equal opportunity days’. This activity requires young people to guess the occupation of a number of ‘non-traditional’ employees or trainees from local businesses. They are invited either by careers services or schools and typically include female builders, engineers or managers and male hairdressers, dancers or nurses. After the quiz young people can question the role models on their experiences of work.

A school invited a panel of professionals and asked pupils to guess what they did for a living. Women in non-traditional careers helped to address gender stereotyping, and the minority ethnic professionals helped to challenge race stereotypes. Later in the day the truth was revealed and the stereotypes discussed.



Photo courtesy of Learning & Skills Council

### Practice in Action 6

- single-sex taster activities

One school described a successful initiative called ‘Girls on Wheels’. This involved two days of ‘hands on’ activities for girls in motor vehicle engineering and bodywork. It was strongly believed that the girls would not have participated had boys been present.

### Practice in Action 7

- workplace tours

Schools have organised tours of different work environments usually involving groups of girls being taken to manufacturing plants, engineering and mechanics workplaces. In order to make such tours effective the young people need to be properly briefed on the traditional nature of the work environment, and employers must be encouraged to make efforts to make these trips positive and engaging for pupils.

# Section 3: Organisations and resources that can help challenge gender stereotyping

## **JIVE** [www.jivepartners.org.uk](http://www.jivepartners.org.uk)

The aim of the JIVE project is to create cultural change in the engineering, construction and technology sectors by addressing the barriers that prevent women from pursuing careers in these sectors. Interventions are targeted at Year 9 girls who are at a critical stage in making GCSE choices. Their work supports girls to make wider choices, for example through: 'Hands on' events where girls can undertake practical project work, meet women role models and visit a company that employs women; and follow-up mentoring and after-school clubs.

## **Lets Twist Project** [www.letstwist.bradfordcollege.ac.uk](http://www.letstwist.bradfordcollege.ac.uk)

A national project run by Bradford and Ilkley College to encourage and support women and girls into engineering and construction careers.

## **The GERI project** [www.geriproject.org.uk](http://www.geriproject.org.uk)

The GERI (Gender Equality and Race Inclusion) consortium works closely with schools, other education and training providers and Learning and Skills Councils and helps the Connexions and Careers Guidance Sector, schools, colleges, training providers, and employers to tackle gender and ethnic stereotyping.

Their interventions include: locating and publicising role models; developing new and innovative teaching resources; and designing training and guidance materials for careers staff and other relevant parties.

## **Women in science, engineering and technology** [www.set4women.gov.uk](http://www.set4women.gov.uk)

Government run campaign that provides posters, videos, magazines and teaching materials

## **Women & Manual Trades** [www.wamt.org](http://www.wamt.org)

Produces videos and teaching packs for schools.

## **WISE – Women into Science and Engineering** [www.wisecampaign.org.uk](http://www.wisecampaign.org.uk)

WISE promotes science and engineering as a suitable career among girls and women across the UK, through brochures, posters, websites, a video, hands-on courses and presentations. The campaign works with girls and women, parents, teachers, careers advisers, employers, politicians and the media.

## **Gender and achievement website** [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/genderandachievement](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/genderandachievement)

Department for Education and Skills website for teachers, local education authorities and others with an interest in gender differences and related areas of achievement.

## **Science Year** [www.scienceyear.com](http://www.scienceyear.com)

Initiative to raise awareness amongst young people aged 10–19 of the wide world of subjects and careers that are underpinned by science and technology.

## **Women and Equality Unit** [www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk](http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk)

Produces 'Does Sex Make a Difference?' an equalities resource for teachers, careers advisers and others who work with young people aged about 14. The pack contains useful statistics and some general information on International Women's Day, women in the labour market, the gender pay gap, women's representation and domestic violence. It also includes a number of lesson plans to support each of the main topic areas.

## **Work-Related Learning and the Law, Guidance for schools and school-business link practitioners, Department for Education and Skills, 2004.**

Copies of this guide can be obtained from: DfES Publications PO Box 5050, Sherwood Park, Annesley, Nottingham, NG15 0DJ. Email: [dfes@prolog.uk.com](mailto:dfes@prolog.uk.com)

## **Take our daughters to work** [www.girlguiding.org.uk/daughters](http://www.girlguiding.org.uk/daughters)

This project aims at promoting awareness amongst girls of the diversity of the working world. It involves a special visit to a workplace to highlight the range of work opportunities available.

## **Works4Me website** [www.works4me.org.uk](http://www.works4me.org.uk)

Visit the Works 4 Me website to find out about non-traditional work, pay rates, and work experience placements

## **UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology** [www.setwomenresource.org.uk](http://www.setwomenresource.org.uk)

Provides accessible, high-quality information and advisory services to industry, academic institutions, professional institutes, and education and research councils within SET and the built-environment professions.

## Investigation recommendations

The EOC's Investigation into occupational segregation phase 1 recommendations were for schools to:

- Put more focus on challenging stereotyped subject choices, and targeting boys and girls directly with information about a wide range of opportunities including non-traditional training and work or work experience

Phase 2 recommendations were for the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to introduce a new strategic focus in work-related learning on widening choice and opportunity for girls and boys; and to put in place a new national agenda for schools that promotes real opportunity and choice and challenges the myths and stereotypes that form from an early age. Specific actions include:

- All girls and boys should have an opportunity to sample non-traditional work. The DfES, working with Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) and Education-Business Partnerships (EBPs), should revise work experience policy and practice so that each pupil is offered at least two work experience placements, one a non-traditional one.
- LSCs through EBPs should work proactively to develop more and better employer-school links, coordinate and source more high-quality placements and make them accessible to young people, if necessary by providing incentive payments for small employers and groups.
- Every employer in the sectors covered by this investigation should be encouraged to offer at least one non-traditional work experience placement to schools, even if they do not want to offer an apprenticeship.
- While it is recognised that for some learners with learning difficulties, simulation is not as effective as real life for learning skills, in order to address the shortage of placements, EBPs and placement providers should consider using college-simulated work environments and project-based apprenticeships.
- A more supportive placement allocation policy and process should be devised so that schools can use placements to broaden rather than constrain children's ideas about what they can do.
- All institutions should take steps to improve their data collection, monitoring and evaluation of work experience placements by gender, and EBPs could set Equality and Diversity Impact Measures for getting more children into non traditional placements.
- There is a need for detailed guidance for schools, work experience co-ordinators and employers on how they can tackle gender stereotyping in work experience placements. For example, EBPs could access support from agencies such as JIVE and GERI for materials and activities.
- All pupils should receive information on the opportunities for non-traditional placements and the benefits these can bring, as well as support in securing a placement in a non-traditional sector.
- There should be firm support mechanisms in place for pupils undertaking non-traditional placements, such as mentoring by the employer or work-based personal advisers, to ensure their experience is as positive and encouraging as it can be.
- There is a need to develop more and better employer-school links at both primary and secondary level to support work-related learning and provide a wider range of possibilities to hear about non-traditional work "from the horse's mouth" – such as placements, tasters, visits and talks.

### 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](mailto:info@eoc.org.uk)

#### Scotland

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

email: [scotland@eoc.org.uk](mailto:scotland@eoc.org.uk)

#### Wales

Windsor House, Windsor Lane, Cardiff, CF10 3GE

email: [wales@eoc.org.uk](mailto:wales@eoc.org.uk)

To find out more about us, visit

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