Equality action plan – Year 1 update:
For Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland

July 2017
At Skills Development Scotland we are proud to publish our updated Equality Action Plan for Modern Apprenticeships.

When the plan was first published in 2015 we emphasised that SDS places equality and diversity at the very heart of our work and that we are fully committed to driving forward change that will make an enduring difference.

SDS has a key role in taking decisive action, with partners, that helps to create a fairer and more prosperous nation, in which opportunities are open to all and where each one of us is able to contribute our talents, skills and commitment.

Our commitment to supporting this ambition is reflected in our own corporate plan 2015-20, which is strongly aligned to the Scottish Government’s aim of building a fairer Scotland.

The recommendations set out in the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce report, and the Scottish Government’s Developing the Young Workforce Scotland’s Youth Employment Strategy rightly made some recommendations in relation to disability, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME), gender and care leavers.

Some of these recommendations included ambitions specifically for Modern Apprenticeships. We worked with our partners to understand the many factors affecting participation and set out decisive action in our Equality Action Plan.

The five-year plan presented both what we and our partners had been doing and action we were committed to taking to build fairer and more diverse workplaces.

Since the plan was published we have increased work-based learning pathways through the introduction of Foundation and Graduate Level Apprenticeships.

We have worked with partners including our network of training providers, colleges, universities, schools, business and industry to strive to achieve our shared ambitions in support of equality and diversity.

We have begun to make some progress. However we know there is much more to be done to break down cultural and societal inhibitors in both education and the labour market which gives rise to under-representation, and we know that change in participation levels for some groups will take some time to be realised.

The updated plan is an opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved, but more importantly it is a time to look forward to our shared aims for the future.

We will continue to work with partners to build fairer and more diverse workplaces, to ensure real change and to deliver the very best outcomes for Scotland’s people, businesses and economy.

John F. McClelland CBE
Chair, Skills Development Scotland
Introduction

“At Skills Development Scotland we place equality and diversity at the very heart of our work and are fully committed to driving forward change that will make an enduring difference. We recognise our key role in taking decisive action that helps create a fairer and more prosperous nation, in which opportunities are open to all and where each one of us is able to contribute our talents, skills and commitments.” John F. McClelland CBE, Chair, Skills Development Scotland from the Equality Acton Plan for Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland, December 2015

Over the past year, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) staff and partners have developed and delivered actions to meet the objectives of our Equality Action Plan for Modern Apprenticeships (MAs in Scotland) (the plan). The plan details both what we and our partners are doing, and what we will do, to build fairer and more diverse workplaces, drive real change and delivering the very best outcomes for Scotland’s people, businesses and the economy. This update summarises and highlights some of the activity and successes from December 2015 to 2016, the learning from this, and outlines how the plan will continue to be delivered in the year ahead.

Background and objectives

The plan summarises SDS’s contribution to the equality actions and milestones in the Scottish Government’s Youth Employment Strategy (2014) (YES) that was developed in response to the recommendations made by the Commission for Developing the Young Workforce (DSYW) led by Sir Ian Wood.

The five year plan reflects the important role we can play in stimulating change in the short, medium and long term. It specifically outlines the challenges to be addressed to improve the participation of disabled, care experienced and ethnic minority groups in MAs, as well as addressing gender imbalance within uptake of some occupational frameworks. Specific objectives outlined below were created for each of these four groups. The plan supports our broader corporate goal of improving equality of opportunity for all.

Disability Objectives
Support young disabled people through transition periods in their education and into employment

Improve the successful uptake of Modern Apprenticeships by young disabled people

Gender Objectives
Reduce gender stereotyping and gender segregation in career choices and occupational routes chosen by young people in education

Reduce gender segregation in Modern Apprenticeship frameworks

Ethnic Minority Groups Objectives
Broaden the range of career pathways taken by young people from Scotland’s Ethnic Minority communities

Improve the successful uptake of Modern Apprenticeships by individuals from Ethnic Minority communities

Care Objectives
Support young people in care and leaving care through transition periods in their education and into employment

Improve the successful update of Modern Apprenticeships by young people in care and leaving care

The Importance of Partnership Working

Given that a Modern Apprenticeship is a job (with training), the equality challenges facing MAs are reflective of wider issues in the labour market and the plan’s objectives can only be fully realised when cultural norms change. There is no short term solution and such transformation cannot be achieved by one plan or individual agency. There is, however, much that can be achieved by working in partnership to address real and perceived structural barriers to MA participation. Taking decisive action to contribute to a fairer and more prosperous nation, in which opportunities are open to all and everyone is able to contribute their talents, skills and commitment. For example, for disabled young people cultural change might mean challenging the wider issue of discriminatory attitudes but we can work to support individuals to overcome structural inhibitors such as access and transport issues, as well as making reasonable adjustments that optimise the apprentice’s chances of success.

At this early stage in the plan’s delivery, we have engaged partners through a project-led approach. The aim of this was to trial different approaches and, where effective practice and positive results can be demonstrated, consideration can then be given by the appropriate agencies – including SDS – to mainstream this activity within policy and practice. Therefore, where possible, we had proactively aligned our efforts with existing development activity – such as utilising Education Scotland’s school cluster approach – to realise synergies and the likelihood of mainstreaming.

In addition, the organisations that have produced effective outputs in delivering collaborative project activity are helping us to create exemplars of effective practice for others to learn from and copy.

We continue to work with partners in education, Local Authorities, contracted Training Providers, Colleges, Third Sector organisations, Equality Groups and agencies, Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Regional Groups, and employers and their representative groups to challenge the perceptions which result in under-representation. The support of our stakeholders has been invaluable in enabling us to deliver against the plan during its first year in operation. We would particularly like to thank all those who have offered feedback and proactive guidance over the past 12 months. We will continue to develop and maximise the benefits from these strong relationships throughout 2017.

Employers

Can take people who have no skills, no experience and give them a career, a competence and a route to the world of work that they’d not have previously had. It gives them a chance. I should think that in a few years, we’ll be saying that this is what we expected when we hired them.

Training Providers

I think it’s the most important thing you can do is to be equal opportunities employers and Training Providers – not just because it’s the law, but because it’s the right thing to do. I think it’s the right thing to do to make equality a priority. How do you do that? You do it by recruiting in a genuinely equal manner. And this is an issue that we’ve been working on for a few years now.

Our postcard series signposts solutions to frequently raised equality challenges
The original plan highlights that to tackle many of the factors affecting participation – particularly with regard to changing cultural norms – requires a great deal of focus on activities which are ‘upstream’ of MAs. In 2015-2016, our approach has been to develop, fund and manage creative equality activity at all stages in the equality pipeline (see diagram), from early school years through to support for apprentices and employers. It is not always helpful to consider the equality agenda for MAs in isolation of other routes that young people may take into the world of work but, rather, to focus on supporting the best career pathway for the individual. The pipeline represents the various stages of the learner and employee journey which must be targeted to improve the chances of young people from under-represented groups taking up and sustaining apprenticeship opportunities. Where a young person has been given sustained, unbiased information and exposure to role models from an early stage, and then receives support in the workplace that meets their needs, their chances of success are optimised.

Our experience of implementing the plan over the past year has confirmed that the pipeline approach is the best means of achieving the kind of cultural changes required to influence career choice and the workforce. There are many individuals and institutions involved in the journey to employment which is why no one agency can achieve this goal. Active engagement of the key influencers and partners involved in local regional areas, as well as national stakeholders, is vital to reaching our objectives. Investment in partnership needs to be sustained across the pipeline and embedded within mainstream services to achieve results. Due to the nature of the activities involved, the results from this activity for some groups e.g. women entering STEM-related apprenticeships, will not be evident for some time.

We have supported action across all stages of the pipeline as well as introducing cross-cutting activity which underpins all four stages. This work over the past year is summarised in this update together with case study examples and details of the lessons we have learned.

Figure 1: Stages in the equality regional partnership pipeline
This section provides a summary of our tactics in the first year of delivery of this plan and provides some examples of the short, medium and long term projects and activities and their progress.

Key activity during the year includes:

- 210 contracted training providers engaged with 1,080 hours of activity with school pupils and key influencers (e.g parents, teachers etc)
- The Improving Gender Balance project delivered over 1,000 hours of activity with school pupils and key influencers (e.g parents, teachers etc)
- We produced 30 local Additional Support Needs (ASN) guides to assist guidance staff, training providers and other partners to source appropriate provision and funding
- Over 6000 young people engaged in specifically targeted IGBS sessions
- Over 40 employers engage in our Equality Challenge Fund project activity

Early Years to Secondary School – Influencing Cultural Change

The first half of the pipeline starts in early years, and covers the learner journey throughout primary and secondary school. During this time young people may develop preconceptions in their understanding of what options are available to them in later life. They may also make choices – such as school subjects – based on stereotypes or perceived expectations which can then direct or affect their journey to employment. In the early stages of the pipeline, our activities focus on encouraging the provision of sustained support for young people which empowers them to make informed career choices. At the same time, we have developed activities and resources to ‘influence the influencers’ of young people in primary and secondary school phases.

In 2015/16 this work has included:

- Developing and implementing a comprehensive suite of school-focused activity from primary to S6, which focuses on choosing careers options based on strengths rather than cultural norms.
- Unconscious bias training for key influencers (teachers, parents, career advisors and peers) to challenge assumptions of traditional career choices.
- Creating additional pathways to MAs through the development and piloting of Foundation Apprenticeships.

Our mainstream work in schools continues to be the cornerstone of our services for individuals – helping people to build the career management skills needed to succeed in today’s world of work and to make informed choices based on Career Management Intelligence. We have now rolled out a new service offer in schools offering Careers Information Advice and Guidance (CIAG) support from an earlier stage (from S1 onwards). Through both our face to face and digital offers we understand the importance of – and provide support that is all about - challenging stereotypes and preconceptions at an early age and building on strengths.

A major part of our investment is in supporting school-based partners through specialist, equality input in the Improving Gender Balance Scotland (IGBS) project (see case study below)

Case study – IGBS

Improving Gender Balance Scotland (IGBS) aims to challenge ideas that some school subjects are ‘just for girls’, or ‘just for boys’.

The partnership between SDS, the Institute of Physics (IOP) and Education Scotland focuses on challenging gender bias in subject choices and supports young people into STEM sector careers.

The objectives of IGBS link with the first two stages of the equality transition pipeline. These are aimed at influencing the influencers of young people including teachers and parents, as well as supporting aspirations for career choices matched to young peoples’ strengths.

The early years and primary school work of IGBS looks at preventing early bias in career choices, when it’s known young people first form ideas for their future career. In the senior phase, a particular focus is on STEM subjects to encourage more diverse subject selection and prepare young people for the world of work.

The project’s officers work to empower pupils, teachers, parents and local authorities to address the complex issues that can lead to stereotyping when it comes to picking school subjects, and supporting them to challenge traditional career choices.

IGBS is being delivered in six clusters across five regions – South Ayrshire, North Ayrshire, Glasgow, Fife and West Lothian. School clusters include a secondary school and the associated primary, early learning and additional support needs establishments linked to it.

The programme takes a whole school approach: sessions are delivered to build confidence and resilience, time is spent with subject teachers to look at enhancing pupils’ experiences with science subjects and work is undertaken with the wider school community, including parents. A suite of resources for teachers has now been shared with all schools across Scotland.

IGBS has generated positive press coverage, across newspaper, radio and national TV.
We have worked with other schools, Local Authorities, industry bodies and employers, for example, to deliver four targeted work taster programmes for young women into non-traditional STEM-related workplaces through our “Why Not...” programme. The girls who attended the sessions were given the opportunity to think more diversely about their career choices and to consider MAs. These programmes will have long-term benefits in helping us to attract talent to the workforce.

Learning resources and materials from IGBS, “Why Not...” and other programmes we have supported are being disseminated through our programmes we have supported are being disseminated through our programmes.

In delivering our early FA pilot activity, we worked with key influencers and young people from different backgrounds, to encourage them to choose the FA route based on their strengths and interests. We also delivered unconscious bias training with young people about to make their subject choices. Our approach to contracting for FAs embeds equality considerations within the requirements of delivery partners.

Long term, we expect that with our expansion strategy for FAs, aligned to the Education Scotland STEM strategy, they will be a key route for encouraging more diverse routes and less “traditional” career choices for young people from all backgrounds.

A major new development which we hope will see more young people benefitting from earlier experience of work-based learning – and thus tackling misconceptions – is Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs). They typically take two years to complete and normally pupils will begin in S5. Whilst undertaking a Foundation Apprenticeship pupils will complete elements of a Modern Apprenticeship.

Pupils completing a Foundation Apprenticeship can apply for accelerated entry onto a related Modern Apprenticeship, go on to further or higher education, or go into direct employment. Foundation Apprenticeships can broaden career opportunities for young people and make them more attractive to potential employers as they undertake real work experience with an employer.

Supporting Post-school Transitions and Sustained MA Employment – addressing inhibitors, positive promotion and action-based research

The second half of the pipeline focuses on supporting those who can positively influence the post-school transition of young people into sustained MA employment, this includes working with the individual young people, intermediary groups, training providers and employers.

Our work in this area has included:

- Providing funding for apprentices with Additional Support Needs to support, for example, making reasonable adjustments to improve their chances of success.
- Engaging a wide range of ethnically diverse community groups, care experienced and disabled young people and linking them and their influencers to apprenticeship opportunities.
- Equality Challenge Funding supported delivery partners to design and deliver over 40 regional and action research projects across Scotland to try different approaches to recruiting, supporting and delivering MAs to particular under-represented groups. The outcomes from these projects are helping us to gain a better understanding of what works and learning from these and other activities has been shared through our training provider network through digital channels, events and conferences.
- Creating networks and resources to support successful transition of under-represented groups into apprenticeships.
- Piloting mentoring support for apprentices from under-represented groups to help them improve their chances of success.
- Continuing to develop and enhance our dedicated vacancy site for apprenticeships, apprenticeships.scot. This site raises awareness and knowledge of apprenticeships, and enables individuals to search and apply for opportunities. This is an important tool for supporting transitions from school into work-based learning and improving equality of access for all to thousands of opportunities. As part of our continuous improvement of the site, we used an online accessibility tool to assist us in further improving equality of access.
- Engaging employers to assist them in recruiting and supporting apprentices from more diverse groups in their workforce.

For more information on how our skillsforce.co.uk/ Employers and Training Providers:

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Working with intermediaries and pre-employment support

‘Modern Apprenticeships for all’ is a project delivered in partnership with BEMIS. This multi-stranded project supports stages two and three of the pipeline and is aimed at influencing key influencers from ethnic minority groups, attracting talent to the workforce and signposting the services available to support the success of young people from ethnic minority communities. Through this project over 230 Grassroots Community Groups have been engaged and more than 1,000 young people and their parents/careers from ethnic minority communities have been involved through seminars and other events. Around 60 employers have participated in recruitment drives, events and information sessions.

We also developed and delivered ‘Care Connections’ – a range of programmes delivered in partnership with third sector organisations to raise the aspirations of care experienced young people, attract their talent to MA opportunities, and signpost them to the support that is available to optimise their chances of success. An example of this in practice is our partnership with the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO). We have worked with them to identify care experienced young people who are completing a Community Jobs Scotland (CJS) opportunity and who may be suitable to move straight into a Modern Apprenticeship. We have also worked with CJS employers to promote the benefits of MAs, particularly for young people from under-represented groups.

Both ‘Modern Apprenticeships for All’ and ‘Care Connections’ have similar core aims and project activities in that they seek to:

• Raise awareness of MAs with targeted under-represented groups and communities,
• Help SDS and our partners to build networks and referral routes,
• Build the capacity and confidence of training providers to work with under-represented groups, and
• Support our targeted marketing approaches.

We are working with Project Scotland to establish pre-apprenticeship routes into MAs. The target audience for this course is young disabled people and those from an ethnic minority background. Project Scotland train volunteer mentors, who then work with participants on a one-to-one basis and, where appropriate, encourage them to access MA opportunities.

A mentoring approach has also been adopted with Equate Scotland who has worked with us to offer tailored one-to-one support for female apprentices to increase their chances of success. This project is designed to create a mentoring blueprint to increase retention of female apprentices across Scotland, the roll-out of which will enable more young women to be offered support to succeed in their MA.

Danielle Ovens
Modern Apprentice, Diageo

“How can we encourage girls and boys to pick the school subjects they need to work in our sector?”

Challenge #11

Employers can influence young people’s subject choices by offering hands-on taster days in the workplace, and bringing male and female role models to schools to talk about their careers.

Training Providers can achieve a better gender balance in their MA workforce through positive action in recruitment processes, ensuring male and female apprentices are offered support to help them succeed.

For more information on how to improve gender equality in Apprenticeships, visit ourskillsforce.co.uk/diversity
Case study – Concept Northern

Concept Northern specialises in providing support and using assistive technology to help young people get into employment. Using the SDS Equality Challenge Fund, 10 young people with learning difficulties (dyslexia) have been supported to progress to MA opportunities.

The objectives of this project focused on the third and fourth stage of the pipeline. To support the success of the MAs, which included ensuring suitable infrastructure existed through providing funding to delivering appropriate reasonable adjustments.

Thanks to the Equality Challenge Fund, Concept Northern established an SCQF Award (Assistive Technology Associate), designed specifically to help young people with dyslexia progress into an MA.

One of these apprentices, Amy Renwick, was chosen as an SDS featured case study, sharing her positive experience to encourage other young people with dyslexia and their parents to consider apprenticeships.

Amy, along with her employers, also played a key role in the SDS led event ‘Progressing Equality and Diversity in Modern Apprenticeships’.

This event was an opportunity for partners and stakeholders to share best practice and to learn more about equality and diversity initiatives.

Supporting employers

To increase the recruitment and success of under-represented groups we are reliant on employers – as all MAs are employees – to embrace diversity and inclusive practice in their workplaces. Our activities with employers seek to influence and support businesses to create and sustain fair and equal work environments. Over the last year this work has included:

- Funding seven employer-led projects, as part of our Equality Challenge Funding, to highlight best practice in recruiting and supporting MAs from under-represented groups. The success of these projects developed confidence in diverse recruitment for the employers involved.
- Developing new resources to share with employers, and through DYW groups, via ourskillsforce.co.uk. These resources include ‘equality postcards’ which highlight simple solutions to frequently raised challenges and promote the business case for diversity.
- Targeted funding support to both encourage employer recruitment and in-work support for disabled and care experienced MAs (through pathways into MAs), ASN Discretionary Fund (mentioned earlier), promoting the Scottish Employer Recruitment Incentive (delivered through Local Authorities) and in-work support funding through the Open Doors Consortium.
- Enhancing the digital equality support available to employers and training providers including the equality toolkit, local authority ASN guides and the equality helpline.

Challenge #12

Employers can contact Access to Work* who can advise on reasonable adjustments that can be made to make the workplace accessible and ensure no disadvantage is caused. They can also advise on how to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled staff to do a job on an equal level with other employees, while maintaining professional and quality standards. The ‘Access to Work guide for employers’ is available from Jobcentre Plus.

Training Providers can consult with Skills Development Scotland Staff on equality support for National Training Programme participants.

For more information on how to improve participation by disabled people in Apprenticeships, visit ourskillsforce.co.uk/diversity.

* Access to Work is a publicly funded employment support programme that supports reasonable adjustments for disabled people in the workplace.

"Making reasonable adjustments for one person disadvantages others. We can’t sacrifice quality for equality.”

“Making reasonable adjustments for one person disadvantages others. We can’t sacrifice quality for equality.”
Case study – Wheatley Group

Wheatley Group – Scotland’s leading housing, care and regeneration group – have been supported by SDS to work collaboratively with specialist support groups to encourage more young disabled people, young people from ethnic minority backgrounds and care leavers to apply for MA opportunities both within Wheatley Group and with contractors and suppliers.

Successful activity included employer recruitment events and information sessions for young people and their parents, guardians and support workers. Wheatley Group apprentices attended these sessions, sharing their experiences and offering advice.

Targeted marketing was issued to reach vulnerable young people who may not be receiving support from specialist groups. Wheatley Group directly mail shot over 3,000 properties with 16 to 19 year olds. As well as this, MA opportunities were advertised within tenant publications, reaching in excess of 40,000 households.

To further remove recruitment barriers, Wheatley Group introduced a “no minimum qualification” criteria to their own MA programme to further remove recruitment barriers. Assessment Centres were introduced featuring a variety of skills including communication, planning, understanding and team working. This approach resulted in 20% (9) of total recruitment being taken up by under-represented groups.

It is apparent from many of the provider and employer projects we supported that fostering linkages between training providers, equality partners and employers is important to enable a smoother transition from school to the workplace. We are sharing the learning from this activity and providing key partners with tools and resources to help young people to navigate through the transition landscape.

We will continue to share examples of good practice with stakeholders to ensure positive approaches are familiar and widespread. We intend to take a regional focus going forward, working collaboratively with DYW groups and partners to ensure approaches are joined up.
Training providers have a key role to play in increasing the diversity of apprentices. They can support (and thus influence) the recruitment of individuals to new apprenticeship opportunities and also the selection of candidates from an existing workforce. In addition to this, they have a vital role to play in encouraging participants to disclose personal information, and ensure that it is recorded appropriately. By improving disclosure we are more able to understand how well MAs are supporting people from different groups and therefore put in place measures to support their success. Some organisations are both training providers and employers, so supporting them to address issues of under-representation can be particularly beneficial.

Our work with training providers aims to:

- build the overall capacity and understanding of training providers in relation to equality and diversity;
- support them to encourage employers to consider their recruitment and workforce selection and in-work support practices, and
- help them enable individuals to feel more comfortable in declaring their status through an extensive equalities-focused training programme.

In supporting training providers to work with employers to recruit and train a more diverse group of apprentices we have:

- Delivered a structured programme of 19 Equality CPD events for our training provider network. This included a webinar programme on basic Equality & Diversity (3 training), face to face advanced workshops Equality Challenge Unit, deaf awareness training (The Academy of BSL) and Understanding Learning Disabilities (SCLD). Our CPD activities reached over 500 individuals.
- Delivered an equality-focused conference for training providers in June 2016, sharing and showcasing our most effective approaches from peer providers and employers.
- Developed a range of resources for employers and training providers outlining effective measures to improve their equality approach including guides to Additional Support Needs and Labour Market Intelligence.
- Signposted and supported employers and training providers to other available funding streams including Access to Work, and Local Authority Incentives such as North Lanarkshire’s Working.

Training Providers say:

“The training has given me a much clearer understanding of the differences between learning disabilities and learning difficulties. I found everything and the session very useful.”

“I will be sharing the knowledge gained with the rest of my team to ensure we all have a better understanding of the difficulties faced by young people and adults with learning disabilities.”

From our delivery of equalities training we recognise that we need to consider the differences of our large and diverse training provider network. Our training providers include large organisations such as colleges, third sector organisations and Local Authorities, large and small independent providers and employer-providers. They work across different industry sectors.

Case study – ASN Ayrshire forum

This Ayrshire regional project is a great example of how partners from across an area can work together to align their products and services for people with additional support needs and ensure that opportunities are highlighted and local support can be easily accessed. This means that young disabled people are supported through their transition phase into MA opportunities and that relevant support is in place to optimise their chances of success at stages 3 and 4 of the pipeline.

This forum began through a collaboration of the SDS equality team working with SDS South West career colleagues who have great local links to local support, funding and training providers who can help support disabled people in the workplace, particularly through MAs. The network meets regularly and consists of disability organisations, Ayrshire DYW group, Ayrshire College, training providers, SDS CIAG colleagues, DWP and employers. Using the SDS ASN guide the network has developed a tailored localised guide for partners supporting individuals that identifies all the training providers and support agencies and funding opportunities that are available in the area.

A successful ‘Creating Connections’ event organised by the network took place at Ayrshire College in February 2017, where employers, training providers and disabled people heard more about the opportunities and support available and this has resulted in a number of employers preparing to take positive action within their recruitment of apprentices.

“Are you worried there may be health and safety risks when employing a disabled person?”

**Employers**

For more information on how reasonable adjustments for disabled people can be provided, visit ourskillsforce.co.uk/...
3 Cross-cutting activity – embedding equality considerations in apprenticeship support mechanisms

In 2015-16 we have embedded equality considerations within key elements of the employer-led skills infrastructure in Scotland including new Skills Investment Plans and the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB).

The development of any new or refreshed industry Skills Investment Plans now feature equality-focused activity to support the attraction of diverse talent to key sectors and this new approach incorporates our ICT gender action plan.

We understand that some employers seek evidence of success from others prior to considering how they might change, for example, their recruitment and workforce development practices. We recently set up the employer-led Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) Employer Equalities Group. This group has already given us some early insights on the approach to take to support employers to recruit from a more diverse group of talent. We will work with the group, and with other agencies offering support, with the aim of developing a simple, easy to use, SME focused equality advisory support service. This is aimed at ensuring employers can access the right information and support when it is needed, including how to develop and promote positive action to increase diversity in the workplace.

We have continued to embed positive representation of the four under-represented groups covered by this plan throughout our marketing and communication activity, including photography, video and written case studies and digital and printed marketing collateral.

2. Contracts and Funding Policy

We recognise that as a public body we have the ability and responsibility to advance equality, diversity and inclusion through our approach to funding and contracting. In response to this we have:

- Piloted increased contribution rates for older disabled MAs. Following the announcement by the Minister for Education and Skills in December 2016, we are now implementing enhanced funding contributions for all MA frameworks for all disabled and care experienced MAs up to and including the age of 29.
- Improved our recording and reporting of equality characteristics. We undertook an external consultative review of how we monitor and report on disability. This resulted in:
  - improved guidance and CPD for our contracted training providers and contract management staff on encouraging disclosure.
  - more detailed disability classifications that allow us to understand better the challenges and successes of disabled people in apprenticeships.
- Enhanced equality requirements in our apprenticeship contracting processes. All training providers are now required to produce their own equality action plan which outlines the positive steps they are taking to encourage employers to recruit more diversely and support individuals in the workplace.

We observed from working with contracted providers that there was a clear need for the latter to understand better the diversity of the labour market they operate in. We therefore developed easy to use Local Authority Equality Guides – outlining the support available in each of the Local Authority areas in Scotland – which providers can use to inform their provision. We will build on these guides to develop and enable more targeted local approaches going forwards.

3. SDS Staff Development

We have worked to embed and mainstream inclusive practice through the delivery of all of our products and services by enhancing the knowledge and capability of our own staff. This includes workshops delivered to colleagues across the organisation to ensure that they embed equality into the delivery of their products and services including, for example:

- All of our employer engagement colleagues have participated in sessions to build their confidence in techniques to promote equality matters with employers;
- Our Foundation Apprenticeship colleagues engaged in sessions regarding tackling unconscious bias, challenging stereotypes and promoting positive action to recruit into Foundation Apprenticeships;
- Our National Training Programme contract managers (Skills Investment Advisors) participated in sessions to support training providers in development and delivery of their equality action plans; and
- Our digital services colleagues participated in training to ensure that equality messages are optimised and effectively embedded in our digital channels

Leveraging partnership activity and evaluating long-term change.

As outlined earlier, to bring about long-term change within apprenticeships and the wider labour market, equality activities have to be varied and stretched right across the equality pipeline: from early years education through to early in an individual’s career. In addition to this, we must also influence the influencers of young people, who may themselves hold long-established views built on bias and stereotypes. Given the need for an early age focus, gender projects are particularly difficult to evaluate over the short-term. New, more systemic models that go beyond MAs as a single pathway are required to evaluate change effectively.

Collaborative approaches from key strategic partners, including Local Authorities, Education Scotland, Regional DW groups and Scottish Government going forward will be essential to gain clearer baselines and to prove the value of current activity.

1 The Open Doors consortium (ENABLE Scotland, Action on Hearing Loss, Capability Scotland, The Lennox Partnership, Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH), Concept Northern and our Equality Advisory Group members all contributed to the development of the Apprenticeships Disability Marketing Campaign Plan.
The infographic below sets out our progress for the last year since publication of the MA Equality Action Plan in December 2016 against targets and milestones as currently set out in the plan. This covers the full year of activity from December 2015 to 2016. Updated figures on 2016/17 delivery can be found in our MA statistics publication www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/43282/modern-apprenticeship-statistics-quarter-4-2016-17.pdf.

MA Equality Action Plan Update 2015/16: Activity since December 2015 has resulted in:

### Disability
- **December 2015:** 3.7% of MA starts self-declared as disabled
- **December 2016:** 8.1% of MA starts self-declared as disabled
  - (~4.4 pp) higher than the same point last year

### Minority Ethnic Communities
- **December 2015:** 1.5% of MA starts self-declared as being from an ethnic minority group
- **December 2016:** 1.7% of MA starts self-declared as being from an ethnic minority group
  - (~0.2 pp) higher than the same point last year

### Framework Gender Ratio
- **December 2015:** 75% male, 25% female
- **December 2016:** The % of MA frameworks where there was a greater than 75:25 or worse gender difference fell from 74% to 68% of all MA frameworks

### Care Leavers
- **December 2015:** 0.9% of MA starts self-declared as having care experience
- **December 2016:** 1.3% of MA starts self-declared as having care experience
  - (~0.4 pp) higher than the same point last year

Significant improvements have been made in relation to disability representation. This relates to both improvements in reporting, due to the support that we have given to providers in relation to this, as well as the pro-active approach that we have taken with our partners. We have made less progress against existing ethnic minority and gender targets set out in the EAP. As previously stated, we expect that significant improvement will only be made by working to effect cultural changes and resulting changes in participation will take some time to achieve.

At the time of publication, the Training Employment and Research Unit of the University of Glasgow have reviewed our performance against the current KPIs which are set out in Table 2 right. TERU has identified a number of factors which suggest that some of the KPIs may need to be reviewed. We propose to discuss this with the DYW Programme Board in 2017 and should revisions be made these will be fully explained in a future detailed publication. We would like to work with partners within the education system to develop measures which better measure progress against challenges which are systemic in nature and will take some time to be reflected in the uptake of apprenticeships.

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KPI</th>
<th>Target</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>Increase the employment rate for young disabled people to the population average by 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority Ethnic Communities</td>
<td>Increase the number of MA starts from minority ethnic communities to equal the population share by 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Reduce to 60 per cent the percentage of MA frameworks where the gender balance is 75:25 or worse by 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care Leavers</td>
<td>Increase positive destinations for looked after children by four percentage points per annum resulting in parity by 2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Young people from a care experience background may not be reliable due to problems outside of work.

Employers
Employers can engage with organisations that advocate for and support care experienced young people to organise work trials, work placements and consider how to ensure their workplace offers the right support for the individual.

Training Providers
Training providers can engage with care experienced young people that have shown their ability to sustain and progress, to learn more about the kind of support that future trainees might benefit from.

For more information on how to improve participation by care experienced young people visit ourskillsforce.co.uk/diversity.
Focus for 2017/18

For next year, we will continue our efforts to address under-representation across the apprenticeship family by undertaking a range of activities summarised as follows:

Cross-cutting

1. Regional Partnership working to effect long term, cultural change: We will build on the existing strategy of working with regional partners (including schools, Local Authorities, DYW Groups, colleges and local equality partners) on sustained interventions across the pipeline – from primary school to in work – as the best approach to achieving systemic change. By working with local structures and their existing ways of working, support services, resources and expertise, we hope to optimise the chances of sustained focus and support for equality outcomes from primary onwards, and diverse recruitment by employers. The focus will be on building connections and leveraging commitment from key players to develop their own contributions to local pipeline activity that supports equality outcomes for individuals. This will include a continued emphasis on embedding and improving equality considerations within our own services – e.g. activities to support the development of Career Management Skills and pathways to and within the apprenticeship family. We have dedicated members of staff assigned to partnership working on equality in each of the 5 SDS regional operations areas across Scotland.

2. National Partnerships to embed change: We will further develop our national partnership working to influence agencies with the direct responsibility for key areas of policy and practice which can make an impact on addressing societal, longer term challenges. This includes Education Scotland and Teacher and Careers Advisor Training institutions. We will work alongside the Scottish Funding Council which has their own Gender Action Plan for Colleges in order to align activity and optimise the impact of our tactics. Partnership working will also include exploring ideas and issues on funding and policy matters for consideration by Scottish Government.

3. Supporting and encouraging Employers: We will work with the employer-led Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board employer equality group and equality support organisations to address the issue of providing easy-to-use, employer friendly, advisory support services. This will involve clear signposting and business advice in relation to recruiting and sustaining a more diverse workforce (e.g. in relation to disability, gaining the Disability Confident standard). It will also involve a targeted communication of business advice in line with employer recruitment patterns.

4. Contracted Providers: We will implement our revised approach to Formal Quality Assurance of provision which enhances and embeds equality considerations. We will identify and disseminate good practice, continue to offer capacity building support and monitor progress against Provider Equality Action Plans. We are developing an approach to embedding an equality score within our contracts – in future years – following the completion of the first full cycle of reviews undertaken using our new quality assurance model.

5. Financial Support: We will signpost and continue to offer the highest Modern Apprenticeship contribution rate per framework for disabled people and care experienced individuals up until the age of 30, and enhanced support for those who need additional support through the Employability Fund.

6. Staff Capacity: We will continue to develop the capacity of our staff whether directly or indirectly involved in the provision of services.

3. Gender Balance: Given the systemic reasons for occupational segregation – which is reflected in MA statistics – we will work with gender expert organisations to consider what needs to change to address gender imbalance in the uptake of apprenticeship frameworks. We will continue to support the Improving Gender Balance in Schools project with the Institute of Physics and for 2017/18 this will have a focus on a national role out of the approaches taken to challenge stereotyping in delivery of education through partnership with Education Scotland.

4. Care Experience: We will align our activities with those relating to our Corporate Parenting strategy to ensure that measures are put in place with key partners to optimise the chances of a successful transition for care experienced people into apprenticeships. We will also introduce strategies to support individuals who are care experienced to sustain and achieve their apprenticeship.
SDS fully recognises that achieving equality of opportunity and outcome is a critical priority. We have begun to make good progress in our first year of activity, however, there is much more to be done and we are committed to lead and work in partnership with stakeholders in what has to be a long-term commitment to achieving real change. We have learned much from the delivery of the Plan in year one and this will shape our activities in future years. Our Equality Advisory Group members continue to provide invaluable advice and feedback which informs our thinking and activities. Through our collective efforts we can obtain the real prize of an equitable and fair society which contributes to a more productive economy and successful country.

Young people from ethnic minority groups tend to prefer an academic route, choosing college and university over apprenticeships. 

Employers can highlight apprenticeship career pathways in their company or sector and promote how the qualifications apprentices achieve have equivalency to further and higher education qualifications on the SCQF framework.

Training Providers can highlight qualifications and career pathways to parents and young people through local ethnic minority community groups and take employers or apprentices along to speak from experience.

For more information on how to improve participation by ethnic minority groups in Apprenticeships, visit ourskillsforce.co.uk/diversity.