

Gender Pay Gap Working Group

1 October 2020 10:00 – 11:30

Minutes of the 8th meeting of the Gender Pay Gap Working Group, held by Webex.

Members Present:

Jamie Hepburn, Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills (JH)
Emma Ritch, Engender (ER)
Lesley Laird, Equate Scotland (LL)
Anna Ritchie Allan, Close the Gap (ARA)
Francis Stuart, STUC (FS)
Ima Jackson, Glasgow Caledonian University (IJ)
Nina Teasdale, Glasgow Caledonian University (NT)
Laura Pasternak, Equality and Human Rights Commission (LP)
Patricia Findlay, University of Strathclyde (PF)

Scottish Government (SG) Officials:

Adam Reid, Deputy Director, Fair Work & Labour Market Strategy (AR)
Lorraine Lee, Fair Work & Labour Market (LLe)
Vivian Bogle, Fair Work & Labour Market (VB)
Eileen Flanagan, Equalities Unit (EF)
Gayle Mackie, OCEA (GM)

Apologies:

Rose Munenura, Equality & Social Justice Analysis (RM)

1. Welcome and Introductions

JH welcomed everyone to the meeting with a specific welcome to new members of the group. The new members include, LL the new director of Equate Scotland replacing Talat Yaqoob and LP who is representing EHRC replacing Helen Miller. JH also congratulated IJ who is now joint chair at the National Advisory Council for Women and Girls and welcomed VB who will be supporting the group as Cath Campbell is going on maternity leave.

JH summarised the agenda, acknowledging how challenging this time has been for everyone, particularly women who were at the forefront of our response to the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to be disproportionately impacted. JH made reference to the recently published paper on the [Impacts of Covid-19 on Equality in Scotland](#), which shows how the pandemic is exacerbating existing inequalities.

JH welcomed AR to the meeting, Deputy Director of the Fair Work and Labour Market Strategy division responsible for addressing workplace equalities and addressing the gender pay gap. AR is on the agenda to introduce himself and some of the work that has been undertaken in support of Scottish Government's response to the pandemic.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes from the 10 September 2019 were agreed and accepted by the working group. Actions from this meeting have been completed.

3. Update from Adam Reid, Deputy Director, Fair Work and Labour Market Strategy

AR introduced himself to the group and was delighted to meet everyone after a year in post.

AR informed the group that the directorate was currently being led by David Wilson on an interim basis while Dominic Munro has been supporting work centrally in response to the pandemic. AR provided a short summary of the new structure of the directorate¹.

AR made reference to the recent publication on the [*Impacts of Covid-19 on Equality in Scotland*](#), which shows COVID-19 is likely to have a disproportionate longer term impact on women in the labour market due to multiple factors such as women who are employed being less likely to be in secure employment, earn less on average than men and less likely to be eligible for sick pay. It also mentions reports of women entering or re-entering prostitution and commercial sexual exploitation as a result of current economic challenges and that in low-income households, women are more likely to experience deprivation than their partners or children, and more commonly sacrifice their own basic needs to avoid similar deprivation in family members.

AR highlighted the additional £100 million fund to tackle rising unemployment and address retraining needs. In particular the Young Persons Guarantee programme which will support young people into education, training and jobs.

AR reflected on COVID-19 and the changes in social norms around flexible working and working from home and how we continue to support this across the directorate. He recognised that although the UK Government holds many of the key economic levers such as the Furlough scheme, we would continue to work on the gendered impact of COVID-19 through our work.

LP asked what synergies there are with this directorate and the Equalities Unit. LLe reported that the Fair Work division are in regular communication with the Equalities Unit, and Eileen Flanagan (in attendance) leads on gender equality attends all group meetings.

ARA highlighted how policy development reflects a lack of gender mainstreaming, particularly policy in response to COVID-19 which is being developed at pace and gender is coming in later rather than in the early stages of development. AR acknowledged ARA point and agreed that we need to ensure gender is at the forefront of policy making decisions and that we can continue dialogue outside of this meeting.

4. Impact of COVID-19 on Women's employment

This section of the agenda was led by ARA and ER who presented to the group. Copies of the presentations will be shared alongside these minutes.

Following the presentations, JH invited comments from the group on the update.

Comments included:

- AR asked ARA if she could say more about the disproportion of gender equality by employers.
- ARA highlighted that traditionally it has been harder to engage with SME's on gender equality.

¹ To note that since this meeting, AR has become Deputy Director for Skills alongside Fair Work.

- ARA also highlighted that with the public sector, despite women making up the majority of key workers, public bodies don't all have a clear understanding of equality impact assessments.
- ARA also highlighted how the redeployment of staff within the public sector to COVID-19 posts creates a massive vacuum and has meant policy areas steaming ahead without thinking about gender.
- LL mentioned there is a clear opportunity to make an intervention at this point.
- How do we ensure jobs and apprenticeships tap into a green recovery approach.
- If we are going to have a recovery plan, it could address some long standing inequalities.
- The pandemic has shown that employers can adopt flexible working, we could use this as an opportunity to break the trend.
- LL also highlighted the need to baseline data at the start of policy development.
- FS need to make sense of the data given impact of pandemic on male employment.
- Need to recognise roles of key workers and pay them more.
- Look at free universal social and childcare.
- Ensure we fully utilise the Young Person's Guarantee to support young workers.

5. Repurposing the Gender Pay Gap Plan in light of COVID-19

LLe updated the group on progress on the actions contained in the Gender Pay Gap action plan. A number of actions (16/62) have now been completed which mostly relate to publishing research, funding initiatives and refreshing the Scottish Business Pledge. However, a number of actions have been impacted by COVID-19 and delivery has been delayed. All actions remain relevant but some may now need to be strengthened to respond to the current and imminent impact of the pandemic on the labour market. LLe also clarified FS point that the recent SG publication did indeed state that COVID-19 has had a bigger impact on male employment and that the impact on female employment will be long term due to underlying inequalities. LLe asked the working group for their thoughts on the actions, do any actions need to be added, amended or removed in light of the pandemic?

- ER asked if there virtue in adding to the mainstreaming approach to boost gender competence.
- ER also asked if there should be a separate progress report for the Gender Pay Gap, rather than it being combined with the Fair Work action plan as discussed previously. JH said he was happy to reflect on this.
- IJ disappointed at lack of stakeholder engagement on COVID-19 matters unless it is being mainstreamed.
- EF reassured the group that they Equalities Unit are looking to revamp and refresh the mainstreaming strategy and with the equality unit moving to become a directorate, it should help ensure it remains high on the agenda.
- LP agreed with the need for mainstreaming and that gender should not be put on the backseat due to COVID-19, it should be a push for more action.
- ARA mentioned that it would be helpful to have a commitment in the Gender Pay Gap action plan to improve on data for Young Person's Guarantee.
- LL suggested this is an opportunity to prioritise some of the actions which could be built into the recovery plan and use this as an opportunity to do things differently. Tap into the green jobs agenda.
- LP suggested liaising with The Young Women's Movement (YWCA) which will be focussing on women's labour market so it might be worth reaching out to them to ensure gendered approach to Young Person's Guarantee.

- LP highlighted the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery recommendations on “supporting jobs, protecting and progressing education and skills, [...] thereby helping to tackle inequality. Specific, clear action is necessary to address existing and new inequalities. For example, the report identified that caring responsibilities fall disproportionately on women and economic impacts of this, but failed to follow this through in its recommendation on flexible working.
- JH recognised that we need more time to work through the actions and suggested meeting next month to discuss further.
- JH asked the group to submit comments to officials in the meantime.

6. AOB

ER paid tribute to the Equality Unit for their work on progressing equalities during Covid-19. ARA agreed.

7. Close of the meeting

JH thanked everyone for their attendance and their contributions. JH recognised that the group agreed a schedule of 6 monthly meetings since publication of the action plan. However, in light of the pressing need to support women when moving through pandemic he suggested bringing the next meeting forward to November. Members agreed.

Meeting Action Points:

1	JH to consider publishing distinct Gender Pay Gap Annual Report.
2	VB to arrange another meeting to take place in November 2020 – meeting will take place on the 26 th November 2020 – 10:00 – 11:30.
3	Working Group to submit any feedback on the Gender Pay Gap action plan to VB which will help inform our next meeting.