

**Race and Gender Equality in the Joined
Up for Jobs Strategy**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Executive Summary

Main Findings

The Employment Research Institute, Napier University was commissioned by Capital City Partnership (CCP) to conduct research on race and gender equality in pre-employment service providers operating under Joined Up for Jobs (JU4J); Edinburgh's employability strategy. Many organisations were filling gaps in government provision by delivering services and identifying and addressing the barriers which contribute to the labour market disadvantage suffered by women and ethnic minorities. However, the research did highlight areas that require significant improvement. The main findings were:

- Overall, the service providers who participated in the research were more familiar with the issues surrounding gender inequality than for race.
- The approach to equalities issues generally was “non-discriminatory” (e.g. *‘we treat everyone the same regardless of gender and race’*). The research highlights a need for a more proactive approach where the systemic causes of gender and race inequality are made visible and addressed.
- There were reports of a reluctance among some ethnic minority clients to access white-dominated pre-employment services. A small number of organisations had no ethnic minorities in their client group and had not taken steps to address this imbalance.
- Childcare remains one of the most important barriers to training and employment for women. Policy has focussed on childcare support for lone parents but partnered mothers from low income families can find it difficult access pre-employment training opportunities because service providers' childcare budget was often not sufficient to meet demand.
- Some organisations were challenging entrenched stereotyped attitudes held by clients by raising and broadening their employment aspirations beyond traditional boundaries of gender, race and class.
- Organisations experienced in helping recent immigrants said these clients could help fill skills shortages but often took jobs below their capabilities due to: the lack of affordable English language classes; their qualifications and experience not being recognised; and employer discrimination.
- Many organisations collected client demographic and progress/outcome information but there was a significant underutilisation of this data to analyse, report and act upon gender and race equality performance. Few organisations had gender targets and even fewer had race targets.
- Training needs of service providers' employees in the following areas was identified: the use and importance of monitoring, targets, equality impact assessments and active equal opportunities policies; service providers' role in public funders' duty to promote race and gender equality; advice on reaching and meeting the needs of ethnic minorities; and new age and disability legislation.

Methodology

The survey comprised two phases: a questionnaire survey and interviews with Joined Up for Jobs service providers. Questionnaires were sent to 63 JU4J partners from a database supplied by CCP. 29 organisations completed the questionnaire, a response rate of 46%. Interviews were conducted with 13 representatives from JU4J partner organisations. Organisations invited to participate in an in-depth interview were selected to reflect a range of service providers including local area intermediaries, government agencies, sectoral Employment Academies¹ and specialist ethnic minority and women's organisations. Jobcentre Plus declined to participate in the research.

Policy Context and Employment Rates

Closing the gender employment gap is central to the European Employment Strategy. The gap between male and female employment is much smaller in Edinburgh (2.6%) than in Scotland (5.8%). ILO unemployment for men and women are similar, yet women are *less* likely to claim Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) and participate in New Deal and *more* likely to receive income support. There are more economically inactive women in Edinburgh who say they want to work than men. Taken with the proposed new duty to promote gender equality, women should be an explicit target group in Joined Up for Jobs.

The employment gap between white and non-white men in Scotland is 19%, for women 24%. Race equality is less central to the European Employment Strategy than gender equality but UK legislation imposes a duty to promote race equality on public bodies. Ethnic minorities are a JU4J target group but public funders like CCP, Scottish Enterprise and the Department of Work and Pensions should be ensuring that their duties of promoting race equality and good race relations are being articulated through the private and voluntary sector organisations receiving public money to deliver employability services. In addition, the JU4J strategy itself should be subject to a race impact assessment, monitoring and equality scheme.

¹ See www.employmentacademies.co.uk for more information

Barriers to Training and Employment

Survey respondents and interviewees were asked what they thought were the main barriers faced by women and ethnic minority job seekers in Edinburgh. The most frequently cited were: family responsibilities (women); low and stereotyped aspirations (women and ethnic minorities); problems with qualification recognition and language (ethnic minorities, particularly recent immigrants); and prejudice and discrimination (women and ethnic minorities).

Family Responsibilities

- Lack of childcare was the most frequently cited barrier for women. Many service providers said that current childcare budgets for pre-employment training were not adequate to meet demand. There was greater financial support for childcare for lone parents but partnered mothers from low-income households often missed out on pre-employment training opportunities. The JU4J partnership are in a unique position to advise on how best to implement the Executive's *Working for Families Fund*² in Edinburgh to help close these gaps effectively.
- Family-friendly flexibility can reduce reliance on childcare services but clients with low qualifications, confidence and little recent experience are in a weak position to negotiate their working hours. In line with the European Employment Strategy, JU4J partners should promote the 'business case' for flexible working and support clients in the negotiation of working hours.
- Traditional models of work and care constrain the choices of some ethnic minority women from religiously conservative families and some white women whose family do not provide them with the emotional or practical support they need to engage in employability training and secure employment.

² For information on Working for Families see: www.napier.ac.uk/WFFE/

Individuals' Aspirations and Stereotyping

- 90% of survey respondents thought gender stereotyping among their clients was 'quite' or 'very' common. These attitudes may be problematic for men since recent, and predicted future employment growth is in traditionally female-dominated occupations. The majority felt that part of their organisation's role was to raise and broaden clients' aspirations including assumptions around gender and class.
- The three 'caring' Academies (Healthcare, Childcare and Social Care) appear to have had some success in attracting men to traditionally female occupations. Projects placing clients in male-dominated occupations were less successful in attracting female clients and there appeared to be little active engagement with the gender equality issue.
- 42% of survey respondents did not know whether or not race stereotyping was common among clients. The majority thought it appropriate to challenge such views though they were not clear how they approached this. Organisations working predominantly with ethnic minority clients said they challenged race-stereotyped attitudes but progress in getting their clients employed in white-dominated workplaces was slow partly because of discrimination in recruitment.
- Successful, pioneering role models were thought to be an important tool in getting clients to think outside traditional gender and race boundaries.

Qualifications, Language and Skills

- Service providers felt that the supply of affordable English language provision, including work-specific English, is insufficient to meet demand.
- Respondents reported that many of their recently immigrated clients are qualified in areas of skill shortage but take jobs below their capabilities due to language barriers and problems with getting their qualifications and experience recognised by employers.
- Coaching in UK recruitment practices was an important service provided by Skillnet and Linknet to help immigrant clients overcome cultural differences.

- Many respondents felt that the Scottish Executive had not properly predicted or prepared for the planned (e.g. *Fresh Talent Initiative*) and unplanned (e.g. from the accession of Central and Eastern European states to the EU) immigration. JU4J organisations were filling some of the gaps in mainstream government provision but were not funded to deal with the additional pressure of large numbers of clients with little or no English.

Discrimination by Employers

- Three quarters thought gender stereotyped attitudes among employers about who they want to recruit 'quite' or 'very' common.
- 45% of respondents thought racism among employers 'quite' or 'very' common. Around a third didn't know whether race discrimination was common or not indicating a need to raise awareness among service providers on this issue since national studies have identified racism as a problem in Scottish society.
- The majority of respondents felt it was appropriate to challenge employers' discriminatory practices though noted that putting this into practice was difficult in the context of a demand-led agenda. There was sense that, while valid, the economic arguments used to encourage employers to recruit from JU4J target groups had not translated into adjustments in working practices to help them enter and sustain employment.

Identifying and Addressing Barriers

- The survey was not able to establish the exact extent to which organisations were addressing the needs of their clients. However, only three respondents could describe the type of information they collected to identify the specific needs of ethnic minority clients and few could tell us how their organisation addressed such needs. Eight referred clients to specialist BME organisations.
- The most common form of information collected on female clients was care responsibilities though only one organisation helped with the cost of childcare. Seven referred female clients to specialist organisations.

- A sameness, ‘non-discriminatory’ approach (*‘we treat everyone the same regardless of gender and race’*) to equal opportunities was detected in the responses which can be ineffective in identifying and tackling the systemic problems which cause labour market inequality.

The Shape of Services

The Joined Up for Jobs strategy fills some of the gaps in government provision by delivering services to those who don’t fit into mainstream provision (e.g. do not meet JSA eligibility criteria). It is also recognised that not every organisation can have a client base that exactly reflects the gender and race composition of the local in-need population. However, the JU4J partners must ensure that *positive action* is taken to ensure inclusive access to services in light of the following findings:

- A small number of survey respondents had no women and/or ethnic minorities in their client group and had not undertaken any remedial action.
- Interviewees identified a reluctance among ethnic minority clients to access mainstream and other white-dominated services due to: negative public discourse on immigration; a sense of ‘not belonging’; and anecdotes/experience of poor, potentially racist, service.
- Monitoring satisfaction among ethnic minority clients and publicising race equality work was rare. Such activity could help improve service levels and combat the damaging effects of anecdotes/experiences of racism.
- Respondents welcomed guidance on reaching potential ethnic minority clients but outreach work could be difficult particularly when there were a multiplicity of ethnic minority community organisations to engage with. Delivering services in the community was thought to be an effective way to reach ethnic minority clients but there were difficulties in finding the time and resources to pursue these activities.
- There was a demand and sound rationale for specialist pre-employment services for ethnic minorities. The specialist ethnic minority organisations participating in the research viewed their role as preparing clients to enter the mainstream.

- Similarly, the supportive and ‘safe’ atmosphere of a women-only environment is valuable for vulnerable women and those from culturally conservative backgrounds. These specialist services should therefore continue to play a role in the JU4J strategy.

Monitoring and Targets

We asked organisation whether they recorded client information, whether this was used and reported and the prevalence of gender and race targets. The main findings were:

- All organisations collected at least some demographic information about their clients (e.g. gender, race, age and disability status). Some organisations also collected information on client progress and (more commonly) outcomes. However, the practice of collecting data was more common than analysing, reporting or acting upon it.
- Analysing data and setting targets was more common for gender than race but in both cases there is a massive underutilisation of data collected.

Public bodies should ensure the organisations they fund are monitoring and reporting, and acting upon, their equality performance. A common monitoring system would reduce the reporting burden but it must have a clear purpose:

- to ensure inclusive and appropriately targeted public spending;
- to reflect on and inform service development both at an organisational level and, for funders, at a strategic level;
- to promote and develop good, and address poor, practice; and
- to discharge the legal obligation to report on progress towards race, and soon, gender (and disability) equality.

The JU4J strategy should have overall targets which reflect the local in-need population in Edinburgh which presents three challenges:

- having a monitoring system in each individual organisation (see above);
- to set overall targets based on sound evidence. Currently the only statistically reliable official ethnicity data for Edinburgh is the 2001 Census which does not capture recent migration; and
- to set challenging but achievable targets for individual service providers.

Equalities Policies and Training

- 24 out of 26 survey respondents said their organisation had a formal equal opportunities (EO) policy for the provision of services. Just over half of those with an EO policy said its performance is reviewed, all within the last year. However, few organisations monitored or had targets against which to measure their policy's performance so it is not clear on what basis the policies were reviewed. The introduction of any new system of monitoring should include support to develop more active EO policies.
- Less than half of survey respondents said staff in their organisation had attended EO training in the last three years.
- Survey respondents were asked which training programmes their organisation would benefit from. The most popular options were advice on reaching ethnic minorities and new age discrimination legislation. Information on other service providers working in Edinburgh was also popular and there was some appetite for training on how to conduct impact assessments and mainstreaming race and gender equality into service provision. Less popular was monitoring and disability rights (since many of the respondent organisations were expert in disability issues).

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION A: CHILDCARE

The JU4J partnership are in a unique position to advise City of Edinburgh Council on how best to implement the Scottish Executive's *Working for Families Fund* in Edinburgh to close the childcare gap for disadvantaged parents seeking to enter training or employment.

RECOMMENDATION B: POSITIVE ACTION ON EQUALITY

The principles of positively promoting equality should be actively pursued by all JU4J partners. In relation to gender and race equality, action includes:

- Conducting equality impact assessments for the JU4J strategy and in individual organisations and publishing equality schemes; and
- Valuing the work of specialist organisations while taking positive action on integrating women and ethnic minorities into pre-employment services and programmes where they are under-represented.

RECOMMENDATION C: MONITORING AND TARGETS

Develop common monitoring system for JU4J to aid decision making on service provision. The setting of equality targets for the JU4J strategy are reliant on this monitoring system. Any targets set for individual organisations should be challenging but achievable and support provided to meet them.

RECOMMENDATION D: TRAINING NEEDS

Based on respondents' preferences and broader findings, training for service providers' employees in the following overlapping areas is recommended:

- The use and importance of monitoring, targets, impact assessments and active equal opportunities policies;
- Service providers' role in the duty to promote equality;
- Advice on reaching and meeting the needs of ethnic minorities;
- Age and disability discrimination legislation.

RECOMMENDATION E: QUALITY OF WORK

Greater strategic support for raising the quality of work aspired to by, and available to, clients including the breaking down of gender and race labour market segregation, would be welcomed by many service providers.

RECOMMENDATION F: INFORMING NATIONAL POLICY

The JU4J partners should raise with the Scottish Executive the resource pressure placed on JU4J organisations, and their experiences of helping immigrants in Edinburgh, particularly in the following areas:

- Affordability and availability of English language provision, including work-specific English;
- Access to public services and awareness of rights and responsibilities (especially those relating to employment); and
- Qualification and experience recognition.

Another important message for national policy is the poor quality of official ethnicity data at the local level. There is a clear need for a boost to the Labour Force Survey if the JU4J partners are to understand and meet the needs of the in-need ethnic minority population in Edinburgh.