



**First Minister's National Advisory
Council on Women and Girls**

Website Summary

January 2019 Spotlight: Gender and Education

IT'S TIME TO WORK
TOGETHER
AND MAKE CHANGE
HAPPEN

**#GENERATION
EQUAL**



YOU SAID – WE LISTENED

In January 2019, we invited public feedback on the Spotlight topic of gender equality and education. We'd like to give a huge thank you to everyone who shared their experiences and ideas.

A full report has been given to the NACWG, and a summary version is shared below.

Please note: these reports summarise the responses received to this open call for submissions. They do not represent the views of the National Advisory Council on Women and Girls (we are seeking feedback to gain more insight) nor do they represent a majority view or the view of the Scottish population. They represent the views of those organisations or individuals who have chosen, proactively, to respond.

Who did we hear from?

We had a great response and heard from both individuals and 'Wee Circle' discussions.

We heard from a range of genders, ethnicities, religions, ages, as well as from people with a disability.

WE ASKED THREE QUESTIONS:

- Q1. WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST EQUALITY ISSUES, IN SCOTLAND, AROUND WOMEN AND GIRLS IN EDUCATION?**
- Q2. WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE, IN SCOTLAND, TO IMPROVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN EDUCATION?**
- Q3. WHAT ACTIONS SHOULD NACWG RECOMMEND TO IMPROVE GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND?**



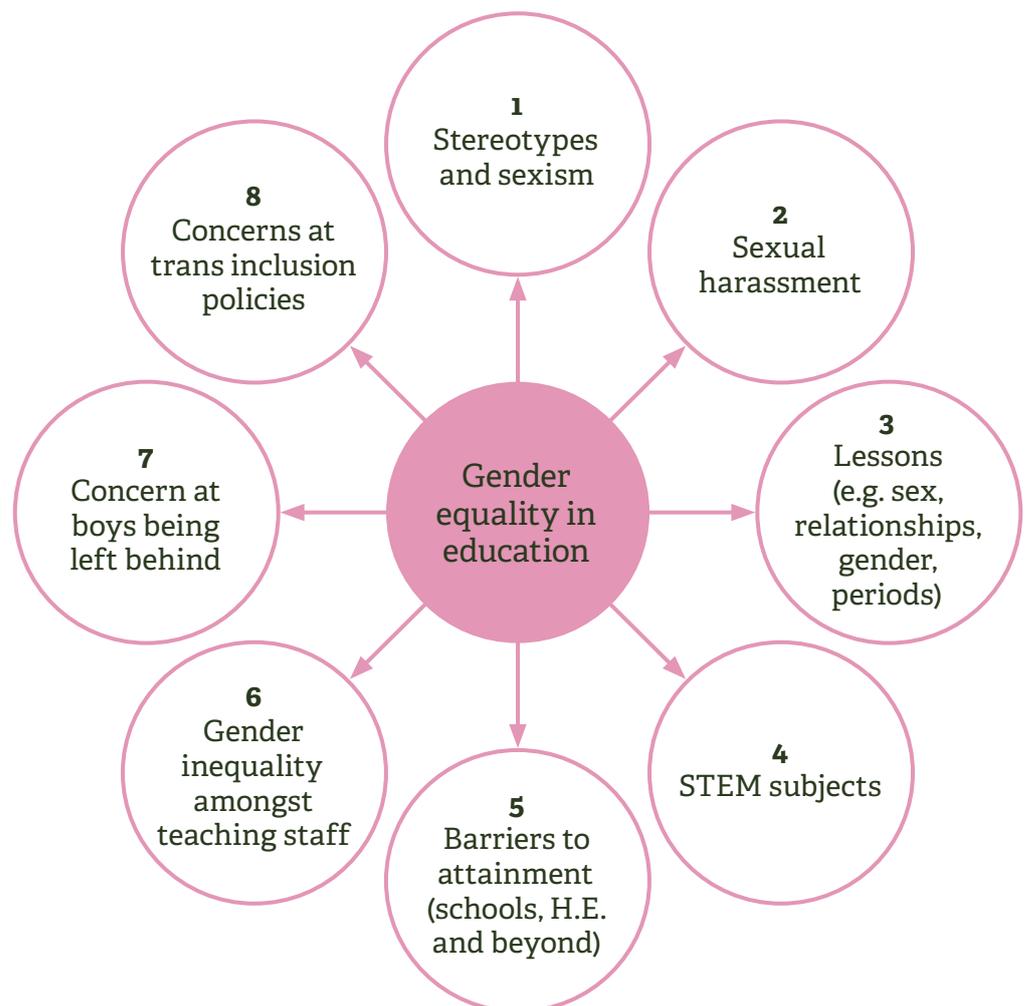
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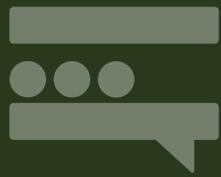
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WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Feedback addressed various factors that can affect girls' and women's ability to achieve their full potential in terms of education. These included: gender stereotypes and sexism; sexual harassment; the availability and quality of lessons around issues such as sex, relationships, gender and periods; barriers around STEM subjects; and other barriers to attainments in schools, higher education and when moving from education to employment.

Feedback also included: concerns around gender equality amongst teaching staff; concerns at boys falling behind girls in some aspects of education; and concerns around transgender inclusion policies.





MAIN ISSUES



1.

GENDER STEREOTYPES AND SEXISM

Some people felt that schools sometimes reinforce gender stereotypes, for example in terms of language, expectations of behaviour and the kind of references and examples used in lessons. Concerns were raised that sexist language and attitudes are not always challenged enough. Gender stereotypes and sexism were felt to have potential to impact on: subject choices, career ambitions.

Suggested actions to address this including: tackling gender stereotypes from early years education onwards; more diverse role models; greater care around language; building a school culture that challenges sexist behaviour; encouraging critical thinking around gender stereotypes within society; more impartial careers advice; and making sure boys are educated about gender equality too.



2. SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Some people raised concerns that schools aren't tackling sexual harassment within anti-bullying policies, and that cases are not being dealt with sufficiently well. Specific concerns were raised around: sharing intimate images; boys harassing girls in classes; and bullying of a gendered or sexualised nature. Concerns were also raised about pupils sexually harassing female teachers.

Suggested actions to address this included compulsory education around harassment, gender-based violence and abusive relationships, with teachers trained to recognise signs and give support. People suggested there could be more emphasis on teaching boys to be respectful. Some people wanted to see schools take the same approach to accusations as places of work.



3. LESSON CONTENT

Some people called for improvements to education around a range of issues including: healthy/unhealthy relationships; sex; consent; gender; periods; contraception; STIs; pornography; and body image.

Suggested actions to address this included: compulsory lessons in all secondary schools; re-considering if separate lessons for girls and boys is the most effective way of covering these issues; and delivering age-appropriate lessons in primary schools about consent, healthy/unhealthy relationships and online safety. Feedback highlighted volunteer organisations which could help deliver these kind of lessons. Feedback also suggested that teachers be allowed to specifically train in PSE teaching, making this a job in its own right, covering a range of mental health and wellbeing issues.



4.

STEM SUBJECTS

Some people highlighted issues around girls choosing STEM subjects and pursuing STEM careers. It was also pointed out that efforts to promote STEM to girls can sometimes be counter-productive.

Suggested actions included: avoiding gender stereotypes; raising awareness of the range of STEM careers, and women role models; making activities such as computing, coding and engineering fun from an early age; increasing teacher training opportunities in STEM subjects; 'upskilling' current teachers; and involving external professionals where current staff may not have specialist skills.



5. OTHER BARRIERS TO ATTAINMENT WITHIN SCHOOLS, HIGHER EDUCATION AND BEYOND

Some people highlighted how poverty can be a barrier to attainment, and limit education and career aspirations. The impact of challenging life circumstances was also raised (e.g. families with addiction problems). Coping with periods and pressure around body image were also mentioned as possible barriers for girls. Within higher education, concerns were raised about negative bias towards female students with children, and availability of childcare. Some people highlighted that girls can perform well at school, but fall behind in employment and career progression. Suggested actions largely mirrored the points above.



6. GENDER INEQUALITY AMONGST TEACHING STAFF

Feedback highlighted a lack of female leadership within education.

Suggested actions included: CPD events around leadership confidence; having 'stepping stone' roles for becoming a principal teacher; reviewing minimum contract lengths and maternity/paternity policies; more flexible working opportunities around promoted posts; greater promotion of early years and primary school teaching to men; and improved gender data on the education workforce.



7.

CONCERNS AT BOYS BEING 'LEFT BEHIND'

Some people highlighted that girls outperform boys in some aspects of education, and the need to make sure boys are supported to reach their full potential too.

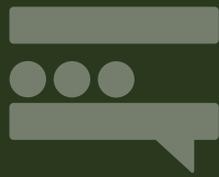


8.

CONCERNS AT TRANSGENDER INCLUSION POLICIES

Some people raised concerns around the safety and protection of women and girls in toilets and changing areas, including concerns around the cleanliness and hygiene of mixed-gender toilet facilities. Some people raised concerns around the potential for trans rights to erode women's rights, and suggested that education-related opportunities for women (e.g. specific funding and roles) should be retained for natal-women. Some people felt greater education was needed in schools around the difference between 'sex' and 'gender'; and some people wanted to see more consultation with women around transgender inclusion policies within education.

This is a summary of the response and can't highlight every individual point raised. However full feedback has been shared with the NACWG.



THANK YOU

Thank you to everyone who took the time to share their feedback – it is valuable.

We'd love as many people as possible to share their ideas on our next Spotlight topics. We have a new one every two months.