

# Improving Gender Balance and Equalities: A Collaborative Approach

This document provides an overview of the [Improving Gender Balance and Equalities programme](#), our rationale, key actions and connections with other education priorities and key national strategies.

## Rationale

Children receive and absorb gender stereotyped messages about what they can and cannot do as a girl or as a boy from a very early age. Research strongly suggests that there is no inherent difference between girls and boys which should limit their interests, capabilities or ambitions. And yet, we recognise that subject choice, and many subsequent work and life choices, are highly gendered.

The Improving Gender Balance & Equalities Programme aims to establish interventions to effect long-term cultural change with a particular focus on challenging gender stereotypes and addressing the impacts of unconscious bias to encourage greater gender balance across occupations. The team of six officers work with Early Learning and Childcare, primary and secondary establishments on a regional basis to develop and embed practical ways to address gender bias and tackle inequity in learning.

## Our key actions are to:

1. Raise awareness at every level of the system of the need for Improving Gender Balance and Equalities activity.
2. Provide necessary support, including offering professional advice, engaging in professional dialogue and facilitating a range of professional learning opportunities, to enable establishments, local authorities and Regional Improvement Collaboratives to engage with Improving Gender Balance and Equalities in a meaningful and sustainable way.
3. Develop mechanisms for growing Improving Gender Balance and Equalities leadership capacity in the system.
4. Engage with a wide range of partners to share, to collaborate, to influence, and to ensure a coherent, joined up approach.
5. Monitor ongoing engagement and impact.

## Improving Gender Balance and Equalities Engagement

Gender and equalities impact every element of education and so the Improving Gender Balance and Equalities programme weaves across improvement plans and priorities. Schools and settings cite a range of reasons for engaging with the Improving Gender Balance and Equalities programme and tend to approach the partnership and their journey in different ways. Some choose to start with a smaller pilot in one classroom, others start with a whole staff engagement; some begin with links to STEM, DYW, HWB, rights respecting schools, raising attainment and so on. There is no single pathway and it is important that establishments have ownership over their planning and actions. At a national level, it has been important to site Improving Gender Balance and Equalities within the key national priorities rather than as an extra.

Gender and education is an area of increasing policy focus for Scotland. This is reflected in the establishment of the [First Minister's National Advisory Council for Women and Girls](#), the subsequent [Gender Equality Taskforce in Education and Learning](#) and the new [Fairer Scotland for Women Gender Pay Gap Action Plan](#). Gender is centred within the Scottish Government's Youth Employment strategy, [Developing the Young Workforce](#). The Improving Gender Balance and Equalities programme is also identified as a form of primary prevention of violence against women and girls within the [Violence Against Women and Girls: Primary Prevention Guidance for Community Planning Partners](#).

## Connections with National Priorities

### [Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics \(STEM\) Education and Training Strategy](#)

The STEM strategy for education and training is a programme of activities to support involvement in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Central to the strategy is an ambition to close persistent gender and other equity gaps in participation and attainment in STEM. One of the key commitments was to establish the team of Improving Gender Balance and Equalities officers.

### [Developing the Young Workforce \(DYW\)](#)

DYW is the Scottish Government's Youth Employment strategy to better prepare young people for the world of work. The Improving Gender Balance and Equalities programme feeds directly into DYW's equalities milestones. The Improving Gender Balance and Equalities programme aims to expand perceptions of what any individual might want to do and to ensure that all young people have genuine opportunities to develop skills and confidence across the whole breadth of the curriculum.

### [Health and Wellbeing](#)

Gender stereotypes shape self-perception, behaviours, and attitudes. Gendered thinking influences what we expect and accept in ourselves and others. Breaking down gender stereotypes and supporting equality will contribute to young people's emotional wellbeing, physical safety, sense of inclusion and resilience.

### [Raising Attainment](#)

Many settings welcome the opportunity to consider the impacts of gendered thinking on all learners. For some centres, their starting point is tackling the gender-related factors impacting the poverty related attainment gap. Other settings engage with the Improving Gender Balance and Equalities programme in response to the under-attainment of some boys. Focused work around the gender self-efficacy gap amongst learners also has an impact on attainment, particularly in relation to maths and science.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss our [resources](#) further, please contact us on [IGBE@educationscotland.gov.scot](mailto:IGBE@educationscotland.gov.scot) or follow us on twitter [@EdScotIGBE](#).

