



# Women in Employment

ADVANCING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

24<sup>th</sup> March 2015  
University of Glasgow



**GRAMNet**  
Glasgow Refugee, Asylum and  
Migration Network



CONFERENCE  
REPORT

# Women in Employment

## ADVANCING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

BEMIS • STUC • GRAMNet • Scottish Refugee Council • Scottish Women's Convention

### Equality, employment and gender in Scotland

Gender inequalities in the labour market exist on many levels. Research shows that women are often under-rated by employers and disadvantaged due to, for example, the responsibility for childcare, lack of knowledge about their rights, insufficient qualifications and, in the case of ethnic minority women, certain cultural norms, expectations and prejudices. In Scotland, as of 2014, the gap between male and female employment rates is 5.4% and the gap in earnings between man and woman is 17.5%. Whilst numerous policies and schemes have been designed to tackle this issue, the inequalities exist to an even larger extent if ethnicity is taken into account.

In 2012/13, people from minority ethnic (visible) groups were more likely to be in relative poverty compared to those from the 'White - British' group (25% and 14% respectively). The ONS data published in February 2015 revealed that in the corresponding groups of men (with the exception of mixed and Indian groups), there is far more unemployment in ethnic groups than in the indigenous group. Percentage of unemployed indigenous women is 4.6%, while for other ethnic groups (with the exception of Chinese), the unemployment indicator is between 10 and 20%. Various earlier pieces of research found that people – and especially women – from Minority Ethnic backgrounds show poorer outcomes in terms of rates of unemployment, the level of work attained and rates of pay. Asylum-seekers are unequivocally the most disadvantaged group (while the A8 migrants have been found to be performing best when it comes to the levels of employment).

A number of barriers to employment have been identified as contributing to this picture among ethnic minority women: lack of awareness of sources of support and advice, lack of self-confidence or language skills, lack of role models in leadership positions (including managerial roles), underrepresentation, lack of provision of safe and motivating coaching environment, gender discrimination and lack of clear progression routes for diverse EM communities in the labour market. Under-rating of higher education certificates from abroad has also been emphasized as well as the substantial evidence that high educational attainment is not being translated into labour market advantage across several ethnic groups. Moreover, ethnic minorities have been found to be heavily discriminated compared to other groups even at an early stage of the recruitment process.

The general gender inequalities in the labour market and high level of unemployment rates among the ethnic minorities remain significant obstacles for anti-poverty strategies.

**The aim of the “Woman in Employment: Advancing Equal Opportunities” conference is not merely to reiterate findings and recommendations but to start a coherent process of addressing barriers to employment with an active involvement of equality groups, employers, policy-makers and, most importantly, women themselves. The conference will serve as a refocusing, empowering platform for discussion and exchange of ideas. We hope that this event will set the scene for further debates and decision-making process and will help to fully include women's rights in the First Minister's vision for Scotland. What we aim to achieve ultimately is a cultural shift towards equal rights in employment for all women.**

## Programme

09:30–10:00	Registration
10:00–10:10	Dr Rami Ousta (Chief Executive Officer, BEMIS) – Welcome and scene setting
10:10–10:40	Annabelle Ewing MSP (Minister for Youth and Women’s Employment) + Q&A
10:40–10:50	Ann Henderson (Assistant Secretary, STUC Women’s Committee) <i>Employment issues for women</i>
10:50–11:00	Evelyn Fraser (Development Manager, SWC) <i>Stories from Women Themselves – ‘Barriers Women Overcome in Employment’</i>
11:00–11:10	Prof Rebecca Kay (Co-convenor, GRAMNet) <i>Encountering employment in Scotland: perspectives from EU migrant women</i>
11:10–11:20	Dr Ima Jackson (Glasgow Caledonian University) <i>Gender in immigration: how women's experience of immigration processes impacts on their initial engagement in Scotland as well as future employability, career progression and their social and professional status.</i>
11:20–11:30	Q&A
11:30–11:45	Comfort Break
12:00–13:00	Workshops  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <b>Advancing Opportunities in Employment for Women (Modern Apprenticeships and more)</b> – BEMIS &amp; SDS</li> <li>2) <b>Barriers and Support for Women</b> – SWC (<b>WOMEN ONLY</b>)</li> <li>3) <b>Barriers Faced by Refugee Women in Accessing Employment</b> – SRC &amp; RWSG</li> <li>4) <b>Older Women in the Workplace</b> – STUC</li> </ol> <p>See overleaf for workshop descriptions</p>
13:00–13:15	Closing Remarks  Panel Discussion of Way Forward  <b>BEMIS, Skills Development Scotland, STUC &amp; The Bridges Programmes</b> chaired by <b>Elwira Grossman</b> (University of Glasgow & GRAMNet)
13:15–14:00	Lunch

## Biographies

### **Annabelle Ewing MSP (Scottish Government, Minister for Youth and Women's Employment)**

Annabelle graduated with EC Law Honours from Glasgow University in 1981. Following post-graduate studies in Bologna and Amsterdam, and 10 years as Brussels-based EC lawyer, Annabelle returned to run a small legal practice in Glasgow. She was elected as MSP for Mid Scotland and Fife region in May 2011. She was previously elected as the MP for Perth between 2001 and 2005. Annabelle was appointed as Minister for Youth and Women's Employment on November 21, 2014. Annabelle is interested in reading, travelling, gardening and swimming.

### **Ann Henderson (STUC)**

Ann Henderson is an Assistant Secretary at the STUC and her responsibilities include government and parliamentary liaison, and Secretary to the STUC Women's Committee. She is currently a member of the Scottish Government Ministerial Group on Women and Work. Prior to joining the STUC in 2007, Ann worked in the Scottish Parliament as a researcher, and has a background in the railway industry and the women's movement. Ann was the Scotland Commissioner on the Women's National Commission prior to its closure in December 2010. She is a member of the GMB, and sits on the Executive Committee of the Abortion Rights campaign.

### **Elwira Grossman (University of Glasgow & GRAMNet)**

Elwira Grosman is Stepek Lecturer in Polish Studies and Director of the Comparative Literature programme in the School of Modern Languages and Cultures at the University of Glasgow. Her research interests include intercultural communication, the Polish-Jewish relationship, gender studies, critical theory and teaching of Polish as a foreign language. She has been a part of GRAMnet since its conception in 2009.

### **Evelyn Fraser (Scottish Women's Convention)**

Evelyn is the Development Manager of the Scottish Women's Convention – an organisation funded to consult with women throughout Scotland to ensure that their views are considered by key decision makers. Evelyn has previously worked as a paralegal, supporting women clients with equal pay claims against employers; a careers advisor, assisting long term unemployed women to enter employment; helpline advisor, assisting individuals with discrimination queries in the workplace; development manager, highlighting the gender pay gap in Scotland. Prior to working in the voluntary sector, Evelyn was employed as a Management Account in the private sector.

### **Ima Jackson (Glasgow Caledonian University)**

Ima is an academic researcher and lecturer with a clinical background in health. She has spent most of her career working with marginalised groups: initially pregnant women in the poorest parts of London and Glasgow, and in more recent years with refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants in Scotland. She currently works with migrants and minority ethnic communities to help articulate and translate their experience into supportive practical projects and relevant research. The evidence documented from migrants' lives and "host country" citizens experiences in Scotland, the UK, EU and internationally is used to influence policy and practice and ultimately support productive change. She enjoys working with politicians, civil servants, policy makers, other academics, artists and activists. Her

research interests are in transnational workforce issues, ethical recruitment processes, migrant health and healthcare infrastructure needs and gendered migration policy.

#### **Nina Murray (Scottish Refugee Council)**

Nina is Women's Policy Development Officer at Scottish Refugee Council and leads on the organisation's women's project, which aims to support refugee women to have their voices heard on the issues that affect their lives in Scotland.

#### **Rami Ousta (BEMIS)**

Dr Rami Ousta is the CEO of BEMIS Scotland: a democratic representative organization that was acknowledged by the EU parliament as a best practice organization in Europe. Dr Ousta's experience covers a wide range of senior roles and responsibilities related to Race Equality, Human Rights Education & Democratic Active Citizenship, Policy Development, Strategic & Community Re-generation at various levels, Training & Consultancy work, Research work, and representation at National, UK and EU advisory forums and policy committees in relation to Equality and Human Rights Education.

#### **Rebecca Kay (University of Glasgow)**

Prof Rebecca Kay is co-convenor of the Glasgow Refugee Asylum and Migration network at the University of Glasgow, a network of academic researchers and knowledge exchange partners from the fields of policy, practice and the arts. GRAMNet is the leading centre for integrated research and knowledge exchange in the field of migration, refugee and asylum studies in Scotland and hosts a wide range of research projects, events and activities. Her own research focuses on migrant's experiences of social (in)security in Scotland and their longer term intentions regarding settlement. This includes concerns regarding employment, gendered experiences and inequalities and access to equal citizenship. She has also been interested in studying gendered experiences of socio-economic, cultural and political transformation since the early 1990s. She has undertaken ethnographic research into both women's and men's experiences of post-Soviet transformation in Russia and considered engagements with grassroots organisations as well as state-led support mechanisms a means of negotiating these gendered transformations.

#### **Tanveer Parnez (BEMIS)**

Tanveer Parnez is the Director of National Development with BEMIS. She is a postgraduate in Equality & Discrimination with diverse experience in policy, strategic development, and community regeneration, research, consultation at local and national levels and partnership development. She has proactive experience in developing and initiating capacity building programs and consultations in support of local community groups; developing national partnerships with various stakeholders including public and voluntary sector groups; facilitating and ensuring contribution of grass root communities in the wider decision making process on a local and a national level and encouraging them to lead on local initiatives. In addition, she is responsible for the rural dimension as part of the national scene across Scotland ensuring input into strategic work on policies and consultations with the Scottish Government. She is a board member of two European networks and is a partner on a number of EU projects and has experience in EU funding applications.

### **Zaffir Hakim (STUC, One Workplace Equal Rights)**

Zaffir Hakim works for the STUC's One Workplace Equal Rights Project, which aims to promote equality and tackle racism in the workplace by building the capacity of trade unions on equality issues. His responsibilities include representing the project to unions, employers and other organisations interacting with the project as well as managing a range of activities associated with the project including research, campaigning, training and positive action initiatives for equality groups

## CONFERENCE SUMMARY

The Women in Employment: Advancing Equal Opportunities conference hosted by BEMIS Scotland in partnership with STUC, SWC, SRC and GRAMNET attracted a number of participants who had occasion to listen to the invited speakers and participate in the conference workshops. The following pages provide summary and the most important findings and recommendations from the day.

### Speakers and presentations

#### **Annabelle Ewing MSP (Scottish Government, Minister for Youth and Women's Employment)**

In her presentation Annabelle Ewing referred to the challenges that the Wood Report presented, proposals and clauses that will follow from the Smith Commission as well as the principles that would apply to new powers. The Minister quoted statistics showing that employment figures for women are at record high but at the same time women are still over-represented in low paid and low skilled jobs, struggling to reach highly paid positions. Ethnic minority females the most disadvantaged in terms of employment. The Minister reiterated that the Scottish Government is determined to tackle inequalities and barriers facing women, young people and ethnic minorities. The speaker also talked about fair work conventions that will be established for research innovation, job choice, access to work place and the planned robust employment strategy for young people. The fact that the uptake of Modern Apprenticeship Programme is very low among the ethnic minority communities was also emphasised. Finally, explicit reference was made to the Wood Report and the Minister stated that the Scottish Government aims to reduce unemployment by 40% by 2020. One of the measures that the Government is planning to implement within its powers (85% of the powers still sits with Westminster) is the introduction of 600 hours of free child care which will increase employment opportunities for women.

Questions that the Minister was asked following the presentation:

**Q: What protection for women has been offered in the clauses in the Smith Commission?**

A: Fair work and training-in-work programme, robust approach, development of employability programmes.

**Q: Would the Government engage ethnic minority women on boards?**

A: 50% of the board will be made up of women and also from ethnic minorities, and our attention is to proceed with this to engage other under-represented groups".

#### **Ann Henderson (STUC)**

Ann Henderson spoke about women and work, referring to the recommendations on fair work convention and shared experiences of STUC Women's Committee. She discussed the changes they brought about in industry for women, through debates, campaigns etc. and the efforts to improved opportunities through participation in policy-making process, publication of independent reviews, child care etc.

#### **Evelyn Fraser (Scottish Women's Convention)**

Evelyn Fraser spoke about some aspects of the SWC's work. She highlighted the roadshows and its success in identifying issues concerning women across Scotland and publishing reports to ensure that women's voices are not forgotten. She mentioned that child care,

caring responsibilities and cut backs in public sector have affected women greatly and referred to Annabelle Ewing's presentation saying that Scotland is a 24hr working society and the 600hrs do not meet the needs of women in rural areas in Scotland, where public transport is limited and affects employment opportunities in 9 out of 5 women. Other problems Evelyn mentioned included: misleading job titles and anti-social working patterns which have adverse effects on women's lives.

### **Rebecca Kay (University of Glasgow)**

Rebecca Kay spoke about her work experience with migrants from central Eastern Europe in urban and rural context. She emphasised high rates of unemployment and the reality of low-skill, low-paid work, often in factories or in agriculture, where migrant women are clustered and do not have the chance to develop their language skills in English. Without the language skills they do not have chances to progress. The lack of welfare support and insecurity, the fact that the women are often told that if they don't like the job they are doing "they can go back home", are some other issues the speaker referred to. Consequently, they feel often that the State is a threat to them, they fear insecurity and deportation. Rebecca stressed that the Government officials and policies that talk about Fair Work need to live up to what they preach. EU women are an invisible part of the society.

### **Ima Jackson (Glasgow Caledonian University)**

Ima touched on her gradual discovering of the barriers that ethnic women encounter, and on her experiences as a BME women, working first for NHS and then in Academia. She emphasized the need to listen to people from minority backgrounds and the necessity to encourage them to speak out about their problems, facilitating their active engagement in shaping equality practice and policy.

# Workshop 1

## Advancing Opportunities in Employment for Women (Modern Apprenticeships and more)



Tanveer Parnez BEMIS

with input from Skill's Development Scotland's Peter Hughes (National Training Programmes - Development Manager) and Charis Briody (SDS Modern Apprentice).

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The workshop explored the potential of available and new initiatives and opportunities for women. It looked at the Equality Internship Programmes, Leadership Programmes and Modern Apprenticeships, in line with the Wood Commission Report. Ways to tackle existing gender stereotyping and segregation in education and in career choices were discussed. The question "Are Diverse Ethnic and Cultural communities restricting themselves to certain employment pathways?" was also raised.

### Summary of discussion

Programmes, such as the Modern Apprenticeship scheme, which are designed to support young people into the workforce, have a very low level of uptake among ethnic minorities. The participants discussed reasons for this state of affair and steps that could be taken to improve the use of this pathway by ethnic minorities.

### Reasons for low engagement:

- The initiatives are short-term (e.g. funded for two years) and to be successful they need to remain visible, not just a "flavour of the month". The projects should be supported and developed.
- Parents place higher value on academic pathways than apprenticeships.
- There can be stigma around Modern Apprenticeships - something that the "trouble-maker" kids would do.
- Young people feel confused - they need support to make choices.
- Employers need to understand that they need to have a diverse workforce.
- Employers need to be educated in how to support Modern Apprenticeships so that they are successful and don't break-down.
- Not all have access to the Internet or are computer-literate and if information is available on-line only, it excludes certain groups. Parents are key in influencing and supporting their children so it is crucial to ensure they are provided information in a form that is accessible to them.
- There is a gap for people who are out-with the age range and for those wanting to retrain (eg. lone parents).
- The BME disabled community is not aware of the opportunities and can often be excluded.

### Possible ways forward:

- A “one-stop shop” to go and ask questions and find out more about different pathways.
- Support employers with MAs to ensure that the apprenticeships are successful and don't break-down.
- Develop infrastructure.
- Give credit for the existing skills and experience that ethnic minority communities have.
- Prepare case studies - positive stories and get the stories heard!
- Educate and reduce the “fear” in both employers and communities.
- Recognize and address stigma around apprenticeships.
- Use social networks - build a hype around MAs, to be seen as “cool” and positive, exciting choice.
- More funding to engage with older generations, be aware that technology is less easy to access.
- Modern Apprenticeship app for phones.
- TV awareness raising campaign (especially for parents).
- Apply for apprenticeships through UCAS (help to remove stigma, increase prestige).
- Challenge gender and social stereo-types from nursery up.
- German model - high levels of prestige for apprenticeships and supported by strong technical colleges and at school level.
- Older women need to be assertive.
- Public sector pipelines.
- Complete an analysis of institutional values.
- Set targets for numbers being employed and organisations being measured against them.

### Questions that came out of the discussion:

- Why has it taken so long to recognize under-representation?
- Are Modern Apprenticeships getting promoted in schools?
- How many people on employability programmes move on to MAs?

### Recommendations

Delegates at the conference were invited to write their recommendations on post-it notes.

The list below is a summary of the ideas recorded:

- Positive action pathways in Skills Development Scotland and training providers.
- Supports for schools to take forward the recommendations of the Wood Commission.
- Career support and skills development for women on maternity leave or caring for their children.
- Training and careers pathways for over-qualified graduates in search of jobs.
- Consideration of the position of young asylum seekers' access to Modern Apprenticeships within the current legal context.
- Role of trade unions in supporting/highlighting Modern Apprenticeships.
- Grants for schemes for BME communities in employment and training.
- Awareness raising marketing of case studies of BME Modern Apprenticeships.
- Specific targets for BME uptake in MAs need to be set.
- Move support from asylum seeking women in terms of skills development – voices need to be heard!
- Don't blame the communities!

## Workshop 2

### Barriers and Support for Women



**Evelyn Fraser**

Scottish Women's Convention

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The SWC workshop facilitated discussion around women in employment. The issues discussed included: barriers in the workplace, advances, opportunities and available forms of support as well as examples of best practice.

#### **Summary of discussion**

For many BME women, language is the most significant barrier to entering, sustaining and progressing in employment. The skills and knowledge that they possess are often underestimated or, in some cases, ignored due to basic language barriers.

"I have to translate what's being said to me in my head and then translate my answer into English. I'm always concerned that people don't understand me. It's really frustrating."

The way in which language is used can also create barriers, or make existing barriers worse.

"I volunteer in a school as I was a teacher before I came to Scotland. Working with the children helps me to improve my English as well as teaching them. However sometimes I struggle with what the teacher is asking me to do, because of the way she says it or the words she uses."

Women who enter the country on a spousal visa can access certain levels of education or volunteer, however they are unable to enter into employment. This means that the skills of these teachers, nurses and many others are being diminished and in some cases lost altogether.

The unpaid work that women undertake can be a barrier to employment, particularly for women who move to Scotland and who are expected to carry on the culture and traditions of their home country.

"In my culture, women are there to be the mother and the wife, to keep the house clean and cook the food. But I see myself as a 'Scottish woman' having lived here for a number of years now. It's difficult to strike a balance."

Society places very little value - either in monetary or social terms - on unpaid work. As a result, women often do not recognise the transferrable skills they have gained from years of keeping a house and bringing up a family. The abilities these women have could be incorporated into the workplace with the right support and guidance, however that very seldom exists. This is further exacerbated by the idea there are 'men's roles' and 'women's roles' in society.

BME women possess transferrable skills, however, because they lack the formal qualifications - and in some cases also have the language barrier to contend with - they are unable to get into paid work.

"It's great to see more BME women getting involved in volunteering across various different organisations but more needs to be done to up-skill them so they can actually get a job. There's not a lot of support there."

The community groups which often empower women to achieve their potential are not given the recognition they deserve.

"Women need help to build their confidence which, in turn, will increase their potential in the economy. Without the support of these groups, they wouldn't be able to do this."

Assumptions based on appearance are also a barrier.

"I was born in Scotland and when people speak to me on the phone they don't ever assume I am a BME woman. Yet the minute someone sees me, and looks at the way I dress, they presume I don't speak much English or that I don't know much about Scotland."

There is a real lack of diversity in many workplaces, meaning there are not enough role models for young BME women.

What should be done to improve access to employment for BME women?

"We need more role models for BME women to give direction for women to come through and challenge perceptions and discrimination."

Better representation of BME women in workplaces, as well as political and public life, is one of the most important ways to remove barriers. More recognition of the vital role that women play, both in the workplace, and in the home, is also vital.

"Society wouldn't function without the hours of unpaid caring, housework and cooking women do. A lot of the time they do this alongside paid employment as well. This amount of work can't go unnoticed."

Improved access to childcare would also be welcomed. Lack of provision is one of the most significant barriers for women who wish to enter, sustain and progress in employment. This is particularly the case for women who are incorporating two different cultures. Recognition of this is extremely important.

"In my culture we don't put our children into nursery or to a childminder, because it's the role of the women to look after their children. There needs to be a balance for women like me who want to honour our own culture but also integrate into Scottish society."

## Workshop 3

### Barriers Faced by Refugee Women



**Nina Murray**

Scottish Refugee Council

**Berthe Patricia Blanche Zimouini Nganga**

Refugee Women's Strategy Group

**Vuyelwa Mpongoshe**

Refugee Women's Strategy Group

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This workshop explored the multiple barriers faced by refugee women on their journey to employment in Scotland, drawing on the Refugee Women's Strategy Group's (RWSG) report, *The Struggle to Contribute*. The workshop began with a short presentation on refugee women's experiences and the work of the RWSG around employment and it was followed by a discussion exploring the issues, possible solutions and forms of support.

#### Summary of discussion

RWSG and SRC provided context to the discussion with a presentation by members of RWSG on some of the barriers refugee women face to employment and the work the group has done to tackle these. SRC provided some statistics from its Holistic Integration Service to illustrate demographics and experience of new refugees and spoke about some of the work it has been doing to support refugee women into employment.

This was followed by a small group discussion on three questions:

- What experiences do you have working with refugee women?
- How can we break down some of the barriers faced by refugee women?
- What more can we do to support refugee women into employment?

The following issues have been highlighted by participants:

#### Group 1

- Childcare is a key issue.
- Waiting time in the asylum process until getting refugee status causes skills atrophy, loss of confidence and gaps in work experience.
- No recognition of qualifications gained abroad.
- Need to make people more aware of these issues – policy makers, government, employers.
- Entrepreneurship – need to promote entrepreneurship more and enable us to use existing skills.

- Need for more signposting and orientation for refugees to help us understand the landscape and labour market.
- Need for joined up services and early intervention – earlier intervention while still in asylum process; not enough to only have access to support once granted leave to remain

Example of local Maryhill Directory not being accessible to refugees has been referred to. Maryhill Integration Network has met with Orchard & Shipman (asylum housing provider) to highlight need for the right information to be available to asylum seekers from day one

The work of the Radiant & Brighter community based organisation providing information and advice for asylum seekers and refugees was provided as an example of good practice. The group's focus is on what you need to know in the community, where services are, orientation but there's no funding for that kind of work – more investment in these kinds of initiatives is needed.

#### *Group 2*

- Lack of awareness of migrants'/refugees' skills.
- Need for media attention on positive contribution that migrants and refugees can make and for this to be more widely publicised – give more of a voice to refugees and migrants.
- Need for more contact with employers to raise awareness.
- Specific problem of employers not understanding language needs – online application forms are often timed so they time out before you can complete them.
- English language is really necessary even for manual labour jobs e.g. cleaning as you need to be able to read and understand health and safety etc. – employment services, Job Centre, employers etc. need to understand language needs of refugees.
- New English Language Requirement linked to benefits is concerning as newly granted refugees with language needs must now participate in mandatory courses provided by DWP private contractor which focuses on speaking and listening only and there is no flexibility e.g. if someone is already attending an ESOL or college course, they must withdraw from this to attend the mandatory DWP course – need to keep an eye on this to see how it develops and impacts on people.

#### *Group 3*

- Need to understand the needs of specific groups; “one size does not fit all” approach – need for flexibility.
- Community engagement is really important.
- Need to affect cultural change – long process.

- Length of time between arrival and getting status has a big impact on job seeking – lack of training opportunities while in the asylum process.
- Language skills might have actually deteriorated while waiting for status – women feel that they are often in a worse position for accessing employment by the time they are granted the right to work, than they were when they arrived in Scotland.
- Training should be provided before being granted status to support employment preparation.
- Need for orientation type training on what to expect from living in the UK.
- IT training and access needs – lack of access to IT and IT training opportunities.
- Third sector in Scotland does have a lot of services and initiatives but there is a need to match up people in need with services available – need for outreach, networking, and provision of accessible information.
- Need to tackle issues of ‘no recourse to public funds’ for migrant women who are often dependent on spouse/partner for social security – big issue if relationship breaks down and woman is left with no support.

## Workshop 4

### Older Women in the Workplace



Zaffir Hakim

One Workplace Equal Rights

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The discussion during the workshop was focused on:

- promoting policies and campaigns to support older women (particularly where employers and unions have worked together to achieve good practice);
- looking at ways to encourage support organisations, women workers and other stakeholders to work with trade unions on these issues;
- distributing a number of publications on key issues affecting older women in the workplace (such as skills development, health and safety, pensions and caring responsibilities).

#### Summary of discussion

A number of measurements to tackle age and gender inequalities were identified by the workshop's participants.

In order to ensure *inclusive treatment of older women in the job market* the following is needed:

- “Refresh” training.
- Positive recruiting.
- Awareness of rights (may apply more to under-represented groups).
- Considerably more experience.
- Assertiveness training, mentoring/peer support.

*Sustainable work for older women workers* – main needs identified in the discussion:

- Older women should continue to be valued – their experience is a great resource for their employer.
- Mentoring relationships can support women to progress.
- Importance of flexible working to support a good work/life balance – particularly for parents, grandparents and carers.
- Confidence issues – empowering older women.
- Continuing access to training and development opportunities.
- Recognition of intersectionality – particular issues which may be faced by older women and appropriate support that can be offered.
- Awareness-raising campaigns for the workforce – health issues affecting older women.
- Reasonable adjustments – taking into account changes to physical ability.

*Additional issues BME (older) women face in the workplace; disabled, other protected characteristics:*

- Lack of privacy and empathy to respond to medical needs.
- Lack of sensitivity to specific issues related to menopause or ill-health.
- Limited or no work experience impacting on retirement/pension due to limited NI contributions.
- Language barriers – the older you get, the harder it gets to learn a new language.
- Restrictions based on capabilities due to illness or disability, e.g. women with joint pains due to vitamin D deficiency – affects handling/moving jobs.

## Closing remarks

The Women in Employment conference, which was focused on advancing equal opportunities, was attended by over 100 participants, representing diverse ethnic minorities, third-sector organisations and key stakeholders, including the Scottish Government.

The participants contributed their knowledge, opinions and stories. The outcome of the conference is a long list of practical recommendations and suggestions for improvements as listed on previous pages. In addition a number of contacts were exchanged between the participants, who were representing the interest of groups of numerous protected characteristics: ethnic minority women (including those who migrated from Eastern Europe and refugees), young and elderly women, as well as disabled.

The general conclusions that can be drawn from the conference are that the approach to tackling inequalities in employment has been quite fragmented so far and that more joined-up, long-term effort is needed, as well as more early interventions and flexibility, more community and third-sector engagement. It is also worth emphasizing here that the role of media (including TV) in providing information and promoting initiatives such as Modern Apprenticeship was referred to on many occasions as an important factor in advancing employment opportunities. Furthermore, the role of media in shaping opinions about ethnic minorities, refugees and migrants was also considered to be of critical importance.

BEMIS Scotland will make sure that the detailed recommendations and conclusions are submitted to relevant stakeholders and Scottish Government's officials and will refer to them at any arising occasion.