

### Another Glass Ceiling – are Young Women Missing Out on Training and Employment Opportunities?

#### Introduction

The aim of this briefing sheet is to give an overview of the main themes that arose from a networking session in December, 2016 facilitated by [Partnership for Young London](#) at the Guildhall, City of London Corporation. It explored how service providers could increase access to training and employment opportunities for young women. Presentations were made by three speakers; Mark Gale of the [Young Women's Trust](#), Yvonne Field CEO of [Ubele](#) and Samantha Rennie CEO of [Rosa](#), the UK fund for women and girls.

Significant research has been done to clearly indicate the correlation between gender equality for women and advances in their economic development. Such empowerment is intrinsically linked to a range of additional social factors such as opportunities for girls and women to assert their sense of self-agency; engage in civic initiatives and political activism. (Alexander & Wezel, 2012) It is recognised that these issues are complex. However, changes can and do come when those working to advance the status of women and girls, both at a strategic level and on the ground, collaborate.

Talking on the theme of women's Economic Empowerment in Geneva in January 2017, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngaika asserted 'partnerships are key to address laws that discriminate against women'. (Phumzile Mlambo-Ngaika, 2017)

#### Research

Although the event focused specifically on the outcomes for young women with regards to employment, data shows that both young men and young women in London experience greater levels unemployment than other parts of the UK. (Alridge, Bushe, Kenway & Macinnes, 2013) Factors such as race and gender have been an ongoing focus as to poor outcomes (Richardson & Christopher, 2015) But research also suggests inadequate opportunities for work experience and an increasing skills gap may also be key indicators as to low employment amongst young people in the Capital. (UKCES, 2015)

Samantha from Rosa set the issue in context by reminding us that challenging the inequalities that young women face in training and employment requires examining their status across every strata of society because gender inequalities are structural and systemic. She shared a range of findings that reflected inequalities in different aspects of women's lives in terms, for example, of leadership roles, emotional wellbeing and incidents of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) then went on to share findings relating to employment. She quoted that 'women make up 50% of entry level posts, 17% of corporate boards, 15% of executive committees and 5% of CEOs'. (Rennie, Rosa Girls and Women's Fund, 2016)

This message was reinforced by the following two speakers, Mark Gale and Yvonne Field, who explained that as factors such as class, age and race intersect, they compound discrimination and often further reduce life

chances for younger and older women. Yvonne drew on research from the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) (2016) stating 'Black workers with degrees earn 23.1% less on average than White workers with degrees, the number of 16-24 year olds from ethnic minorities in long term unemployment has risen by 49% since 2010. During the same time (2010 to 2015) unemployment fell amongst young White people'. Mark went on to provide an overview of a national survey carried out by Young Women's Trust called No Country for Young Women (2016) and cited the following in relation to young women, apprenticeships and employment:

'40% of BAME young people said they have been discriminated against when working or looking for work because of their ethnicity (compared with 5% of White people)'

'Over four in ten of young people (41%) said they had been discriminated against when working or looking for work because of their age (44% of young women and 37% of young men)'

'Women aged 18-24 were the most likely group (55%) to have said they were treated less well because of their age'. (Young Women's Trust, No Country for Young Women, 2016)

### What Professionals Told Us

Attendees were asked to share what they felt were the key barriers to young women gaining access to training and employment. Key points raised chimed with wider research. For example, we learned that young women and men were generally ill-prepared to enter the jobs market; schools needed to review the

model for work experience to make it meaningful. Young people need more support with gaining skills like writing C.Vs, applying for jobs and presenting themselves well in interviews. Teachers and careers advisors needed to work more closely with young women to develop confidence, build resilience and raise self-esteem by taking an asset based approach and encouraging young women and men to have a [growth mindset](#).

We were told that young women often did not know what career options were available to them and that apprenticeships for young women with disabilities needed to be significantly improved. Attendees went on to say Job Centre Plus should provide more personalised support for its clients and sectors should work in a more joined up way. Those present also reported that young women from Black and Asian Minority Ethnic groups (BAME) asserted they experienced discrimination on the grounds of their race as well as their gender and that not enough young women were opting for STEM based professions (Science Technology Engineering and Maths); continuing to steer towards the stereotypical Health and Social Care professions.

This may, in part, be because more young women than men take responsibilities for child care and/or care of another family member such as a sibling or parent.

Enabling young people to feel equipped to cope emotionally with an ever changing, and at times torrid landscape, is as fundamental to their success as providing them with the 'hard' skills such as being able to write their own C.V. and interview with confidence.

[The Young Foundation Framework](#) is a useful tool outlining key social and personal capabilities deemed fundamental to young people making successful transitions to adulthood.

### **How are Service Providers Addressing Some of the Key Issues for Young Women?**

Rosa is the only UK wide fund for women and girls that is targeted at providing financial support to organisations delivering work that benefits girls and women. Part of the organisation's commitment to empowering beneficiaries is to broker relationships between grantees at a local level in order to build sustainable resources for girls and women headed up by effective leaders. Ubele also deliver training programmes which build young leaders from BAME communities to sustain African Diaspora Communities and protect and maintain local assets such as schools, local businesses and community centres. As well as producing comprehensive data providing insightful knowledge from a national perspective on how young people feel about key aspects of their lives, Young Women's Trust provide a range of services including work on a one to one basis with young women. They also give professional coaching, support with job applications and advice on issues such as grants and benefits.

Everyone present was invited to make a commitment to link up after the event with at least two other people from different organisations in the room with the intention of working in partnership in the near future.

Partnership for Young London pledged to maintain an online network of organisations engaged in this field of work.

The evidence from colleagues at the coalface reminded us that, as well as continuing to challenge institutional inequality, making relatively straightforward improvements to our own current working practices, such as using current resources even more effectively and having a more collective approach to what we do generally, could radically improve outcomes for girls and young women. This in turn would boost their personal confidence, sense of progress and productivity thereby, feeding the economy, creating greater community cohesion and benefitting us all.

### References

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