

Team: **STEM Team**

Protected characteristic: **Gender**

Eliminating discrimination/Advancing equality of opportunity/Fostering good relations

Key area/example of where progress has been made with regard to equality and diversity:

The UHI STEM team have been involved in a number of projects over the last few months regarding gender imbalance in STEM. A general outline of the work being carried out for each of the projects is listed below.

Action we have taken to progress this key area:

People Like Me Training:

The UHI STEM team were involved in training and delivering “People Like Me” training on behalf of the WISE (Women in Science and Engineering) group. The “People Like Me” program is designed to help girls aged 10-15 to think about careers in STEM. Sessions comprise a careers quiz that has been specifically designed for women. It focuses on getting girls to think about their skill set using adjectives and was developed based on research carried out by the WISE group. The second part of the sessions involves careers talks from women in industry. WISE are extremely strict that sessions must only be run to girls and in parent sessions, only female parents, or guardians can attend. Two People Like Me workshops ran last year. One was to a group of school students and the other was a student and parent session. All attendees were female and the sessions were run outside of school hours.

WISE training:

In addition to the People Like Me workshops we have also delivered training on behalf of WISE. This includes unconscious bias training. Training has been delivered to STEM ambassador volunteers of both genders.

CoderDojo:

Over the summer holidays the UHI STEM Team helped facilitate CoderDojo taster clubs. CoderDojo is a worldwide club that aims to get children interested in computing programming and ultimately into digital tech jobs. In the summer a group of volunteers led by Robert Fraser, held CoderDojo Clubs in the UHI STEM Hub. In order to promote girls, we decided to hold a pilot girl only, CoderDojo week and a mixed gender week and advertised as such. The mixed gender week was attended exclusively by boys. Both weeks were oversubscribed with a waiting list having to be made for attendance. The age range for both weeks was 6-15. Both weeks ran the same content but the sessions turned out to be very different.

Working with Women in Construction and companies such as LifeScan:

The UHI STEM Team are in the process of working with a number of companies to set up events in schools that address the STEM gender problem. LifeScan for example are looking to develop an engineering style competition. Go Construct are also setting up a scheme that targets girls. We are also working closely with the formation of a new group of women working in construction.

Measures we are using to monitor our progress:

Feedback from school pupils/parents/role models/STEM ambassador volunteers

Evidence of progress that has been made:

People Like Me Training:

On the whole, the girls did like the session and said they found talking to the role models interesting. They thought the quiz was pretty useful although thought it needed to be adapted for a local Highlands and Islands relevance.

The parents had much more mixed feedback. It was almost exactly a 50/50 split on whether or not they believed the quiz was relevant or useful. Parents were much more sceptical about splitting the class into girls only.

Everyone was in agreement that talking to the role models was useful.

WISE training:

Feedback has been on the whole positive.

CoderDojo:

Interestingly, overwhelming feedback from both genders was that they didn't care if the sessions were mixed gender. Girls appeared to not mind if the boys were around. Older girls also said they wanted to be doing the exact same work as the boys. They didn't want anything to be feminised as then they saw it as being less good than what the boys got.

The most interesting finding from this study (although the sample size is very small) is that despite girls saying they didn't care if the boys were there, girls who attended a split gender lesson on their first time were more likely to come back to mixed gender sessions at a later date. While girls who attended mixed gender sessions (later in the summer and in October) on their first visit were less likely to return.

This is seen in our current Tuesday night club which sits at an average of 20% girls, of which 100% attended a "girls only" session first time around. The sample set is far too small to draw meaningful conclusions, but this is something that we are going to continue to explore. Are the girls getting more confidence by realising they can achieve in the first girls only session so they are then happy to return and mix in with the boys?

Challenges that have been faced in progressing this key area:

People Like Me Training:

It was very clear that the parents were influencing what the pupils were discussing.

WISE training:

Feedback from male ambassadors has shown a reluctance to deliver the sessions to female only audiences.

One thing that has come from meeting women in STEM careers is the need for boys to understand that women can succeed in these areas. Many women in engineering and construction have complained of sexism and difficulties in progressing to high level jobs. It is important to try and attract girls and to speak to parents, but perhaps the real key area is to focus on young primary school aged children to show both girls AND boys that girls can succeed in these areas. If boys continue to grow up thinking it is normal for a girl to be for example a senior engineer and equally girls think it's normal for boys to be become nurses, then the sexism when they reach employment is likely to be much less and should hopefully lead to less drop outs.

Further action we intend to take:

To develop a university STEM Strategy that tackles gender inequality.