ARK Working Papers

Gender Budgeting: Working Paper 2
Case Study: Apprenticeships in Northern Ireland

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Why look at apprenticeships in Northern Ireland (NI)?

Since 1995, apprenticeships have formed the mainstay of UK government policy for vocational education and training. To that end, they are recognised as an important tool for social mobility and workforce upskilling (Newton et al., 2012). Apprenticeships offer employees improved employment prospects, higher earnings over their lifetime and greater occupational mobility. For employers, they offer an increased and steady supply of skilled labour, in addition to improved recruitment and retention.

A wide range of analysis, however, suggests that apprenticeship programmes may reflect existing inequalities in labour market participation and as a policy intervention which establishes career paths and trajectories, may actually serve to consolidate and reinforce gendered inequalities (Sosenko and Netto, 2013). Conversely, well targeted interventions in this area offer the prospect of offsetting and disrupting gender differentials which result in locking in lower pay, gendered occupational segregation and unequal labour market participation. While occupational segregation restricts choices for both men and women, the jobs that are likely to be done by women are more likely to be associated with low pay and limited potential for career progression. This is sometimes referred to as the 'five C's': cleaning, catering, cashiering, clerical and caring. Occupational segregation has also been implicated as a key component of a gender pay gap, which places women at greater labour market disadvantage and pension poverty (Close the Gap, 2015).

Understanding the gender impact of apprenticeship policy therefore enables government to identify the steps that are required to address occupation segregation, narrow gender gaps and disrupt gendered inequalities. In the context of NI, this is the positive action, envisaged by Section 75 of the 1998 Northern Ireland Act, which extends beyond the current approach to policy predicated on the (false) assumption that gender neutral policy will result in gender neutral outcomes. Rather, it envisages an active role, where public policy and resources are targeted to impact on structural inequalities. Within this context, this policy brief summarises the results of a gender analysis of current apprenticeship policy in NI. The analysis finds that notwithstanding policy commitments within the apprenticeship strategy to widening participation and challenge occupation gender segregation, the strategy and its associated expenditure overwhelmingly benefits participants who are men. Moreover, the strategy in its current form, may not only fail to impact on gendered structural inequalities but may actually deploy public finance in ways which consolidate further gender inequality in Northern Ireland.

Key Findings

- Men represent the majority of participants on ApprenticeshipsNI programmes, with their representation increasing year on year since 2013/14. The number of women participants over the same period has fallen.
- Men also dominate new Higher-Level Apprenticeships (HLAs), with the number of men participants almost double that of women participants. HLAs continue to privilege traditionally male sectors and remain under- responsive to an identified skills shortage in the social care sector.
- ApprenticeshipsNI and HLAs exhibit unmitigated occupational segregation, perpetuating harmful stereotypes which lock women into economic and labour market disadvantage over the course of their lifetime. For example, men represent almost all ApprenticeshipsNI in building and construction, engineering and transport operations and maintenance frameworks while women represent a significant proportion of health and social care apprentices. (ApprenticeshipsNI Statistical Bulletin, 2019/2020). HLAs also exhibit significant occupational segregation, with men representing 90% of engineering and manufacturing technologies and 89% of construction, planning and the build environment apprentices.
- The economic forecasting tools, which underpin the NI apprenticeship strategy (i.e. the NI Skills Barometer) may fail to afford requisite value to the economic value of social care. Women are more likely than men to work in care, be in receipt of care in old age and to take on responsibility for unpaid care for children, elderly, disabled and/or vulnerable people, when social care provision is inadequate. Failure to respond to an impending skills crisis in this sector, results in a gender double whammy.
- Economic analysis of the apprenticeship data in NI reveals that the estimated GVA per participant for men is £78,400 while the GVA for women is estimated to be less than half at £35,900. These figures reflect the fact that women's representation is dramatically lower in those subjects which lead to high wage jobs, and ultimately a higher standard of living for women and their families.
- Public expenditure on apprenticeships in NI overwhelmingly benefits participants who are men as a result of men's overrepresentation in general and men's colonisation of more resource intensive programmes (HLAs). Whilst ostensibly neutral, apprenticeship policy and expenditure in NI are, in fact, highly gendered in operation and perpetuate gender norms which inhibit women's engagement with the labour market in Northern Ireland.

In response to the findings of the gender analysis, the brief sets out a suite of recommendations aimed at offsetting persistent gender differentials which inhibit the current capacity of the programme to deliver equal benefits for women in Northern Ireland.

Securing Our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships (2014)

Northern Ireland's (NI) aspirations for its apprenticeship programme are set out in Securing Our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships (Department for Employment and Learning[1], 2014). The apprenticeship strategy sets out the policy imperative for apprenticeships in NI in the form of twenty policy commitments, grouped thematically, together with an associated implementation plan. The strategy aims to increase participation in apprenticeships and to improve partnerships between key stakeholders (employers and training providers). As part of the strategy, Higher Level Apprenticeships (HLA) were introduced allowing individuals who have completed Level 3 apprenticeships to earn a degree level qualification. The rationale behind the introduction of the HLA was to provide a vocational route to higher level skills traditionally the preserve of higher education. Additionally, apprenticeships are industry-led and as such provide the opportunity to fill identified skills gaps by enhancing supply to meet demand.

Two policy commitments, in particular, have significant potential to address gender inequalities, namely commitments 11 and 14. Policy commitment 11 commits to "include a range of measures to support the participation by both genders across occupations, and to address other equality issues, such as encouraging the participation of people with disabilities" p.8). In addition, the strategy indicates that the Department will adopt a 'twin track approach of addressing the existing gender imbalances within the traditional sectors, whilst also aiming to ensure that a gender balance is instilled in the new apprenticeship areas, from their commencement'. Policy commitment 14 commits to establishing a skills barometer "to support the better matching of apprenticeship supply and demand" (p.9). The skills barometer (now developed and operational) is used to identify and prioritise training in line with zorecasting of those key skills required for economic growth.

Analysing Apprenticeship policy in NI: What data did we use?

There are two main sources of apprenticeship data for NI, both of which are published by the Department for the Economy (DfE) as statistical bulletins. First, data is published for participants who are undertaking a Level 2, 2/3 or 3 apprenticeship, where the apprentice is in paid employment from the outset. Data for Levels 2, 2/3 and 3 are published on a biannual basis, being first made available in 2012-2013[2]. The second source of data relate to HLAs in NI. Typically, HLAs are available for qualifications from level 4 (up to 8) and above and take a minimum of two years to complete. HLA steady state data are available for the years 2017/18 and 2018/19[3]. For the purposes of our analysis, where gender disaggregated data did not appear in the publicly available statistics, these were requested from DfE. Of note, was the fact that although gender disaggregated data was collected and where available, made available to us, it did not form part of the data routinely published in the context

1. Following a restructuring of the Northern Ireland Executive in May 2016, the work of the Department for Employment and Learning was subsumed within the Department for the Economy (DfE).

2. Data is available at: https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/apprenticeshipsni-statistics

3. Data is available at: https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/higher-level-apprenticeship-activity

of the DfE's statistical bulletins. The statistical and departmental gender disaggregated data were also augmented by analysis commissioned from the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC) in relation to productivity and Gross Value Added (GVA), together with a comparison of projected wages. In contextualising the data and analysis, we benchmarked gender outcomes against policy commitments and intent as explicated in the Securing Our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships (Department for Employment and Learning, 2014).

Further comparative data was available by virtue of the substantive review of the Modern Apprenticeship Framework in Scotland, which included academic analysis of comparative apprenticeship policy and outcomes across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (Sosenko and Netto, 2013; Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2013). In addition, the results of research commissioned by Unionlearn, the National Apprenticeship Service and the Skills Funding Agency in England, and published by the Institute for Employment Studies (2013) in relation to under-representation by gender and race in apprenticeships provided significant insights. These studies facilitated comparative gender analysis, and were helpful in indicating trends and patterns, where the relevant NI data was incomplete or unavailable. Local and regional data was further located in the wider context of International best practice, experience and comparators, with a view to formulating specific recommendations for policy and practice.

What does the data tell us?

- Men have represented the majority of participants on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme (Levels 2, 2/3, 3) since its inception (see Figure 1). Securing Our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy

Figure 1: Participation in ApprenticeshipsNI programme by gender

Source: Data in ApprenticeshipsNI Statistical Bulletin 2019/20

on Apprenticeships (Department for Employment and Learning, 2014) is a policy that therefore presents with an extensive and persistent gender imbalance

- Men's representation on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme (Levels 2, 2/3, 3) has been increasing year on year, as a percentage of total participants, since 2013/14 (see Figure 2). Reflecting this, the number of women, has fallen year on year, over the same period.

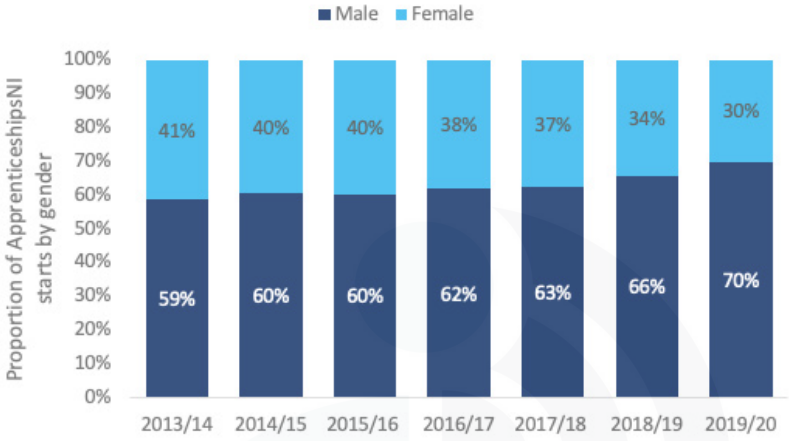


Figure 2: Yearly Participation in ApprenticeshipsNI programme by gender

Source: Data in ApprenticeshipsNI Statistical Bulletin 2019/20

- **HLAs in NI are also dominated by men at a rate of 2:1** Provision of HLAs commenced in 2017/2018. Figure 3 shows the number of HLA starts in 2017/18 and 2018/19. As identified in the DfE's more recent statistical bulletin[4], "a trend is emerging showing that more male participants are entering HLA programmes compared to females" (Department for the Economy, 2020, p.12).

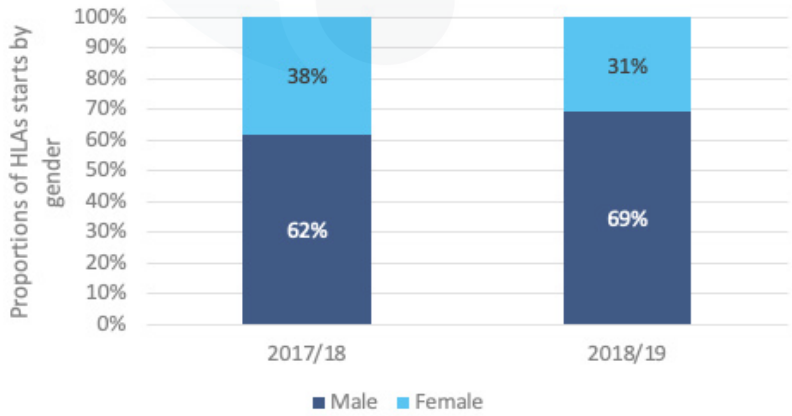


Figure 3: Number of HLA Starts by gender 2017/18 and 2018/19.

Source: Data in HLA Statistical Bulletin (Department for the Economy, 2020)

- Departmental statistics therefore reveal that across the two years of operation, men are almost

4. The 2017/18 and 2018/19 statistical bulletins are available at: https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/higher-level-apprenticeship-activity

double the number of women participants with two thirds (66.2%) of HLA participants being men and the remaining 33.8% women.

- **Females are older than men when they start apprenticeships (excluding HLAs) in Northern Ireland.**

Women are older than men when they commence apprenticeships in NI (see Figure 4). A much greater proportion (76%) of apprentices who are men are under 25 (a total of 16,965 apprentices to date[5]), while women apprentices are much more likely to be older workers (termed 'adults' aged 25+)

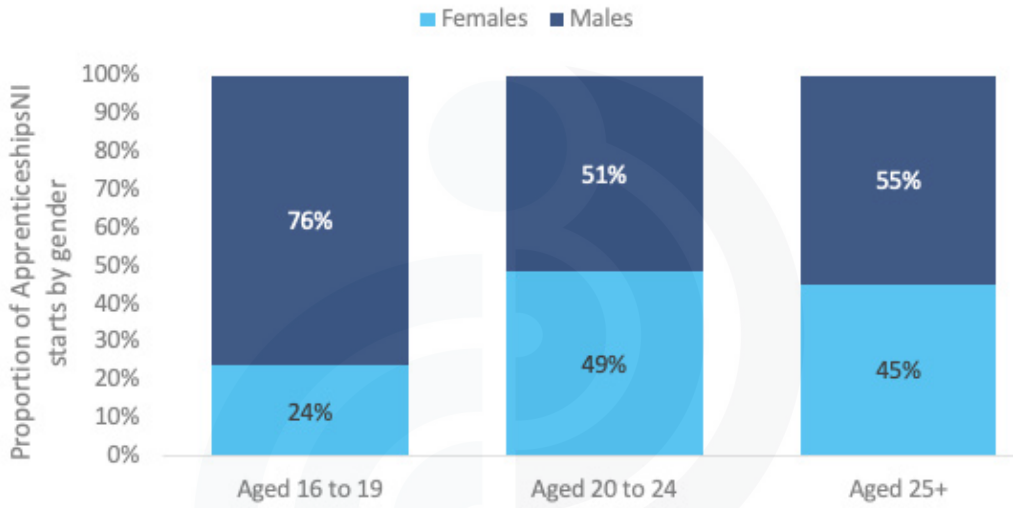


Figure 4: Total Participation in ApprenticeshipsNI programme by Age & Gender

Source: Data in ApprenticeshipsNI Statistic Bulletin 2019/10

Women constitute 1 in 4 (24%) of the 16-19-year-old group on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme. This indicates that a larger proportion of apprenticeship spend for females is directed to existing workers, rather than on young people specifically recruited as apprentices. Given that apprenticeships can potentially provide an excellent first step on a career pathway, the current apprenticeship numbers suggest that young women's career options are being limited from the start of their working lives, in comparison the opportunities open to young men. This inhibits the capacity for ApprenticeshipsNI to impact on occupational segregation, given that women are already on traditional career pathways, when they engage with ApprenticeshipsNI programmes.

- **Stark occupational segregation is prevalent in both ApprenticeshipsNI and HLAs**

Figure 5 shows the sector subject areas comprising almost 89% of Level 2, 2/3 and 3 apprenticeships in NI. The figures illustrate significant occupational segregation with men dominating traditional sectors such as building and construction and engineering.

5. Note, this number includes duplicate apprentices as each apprentice is enrolled for at least two years.

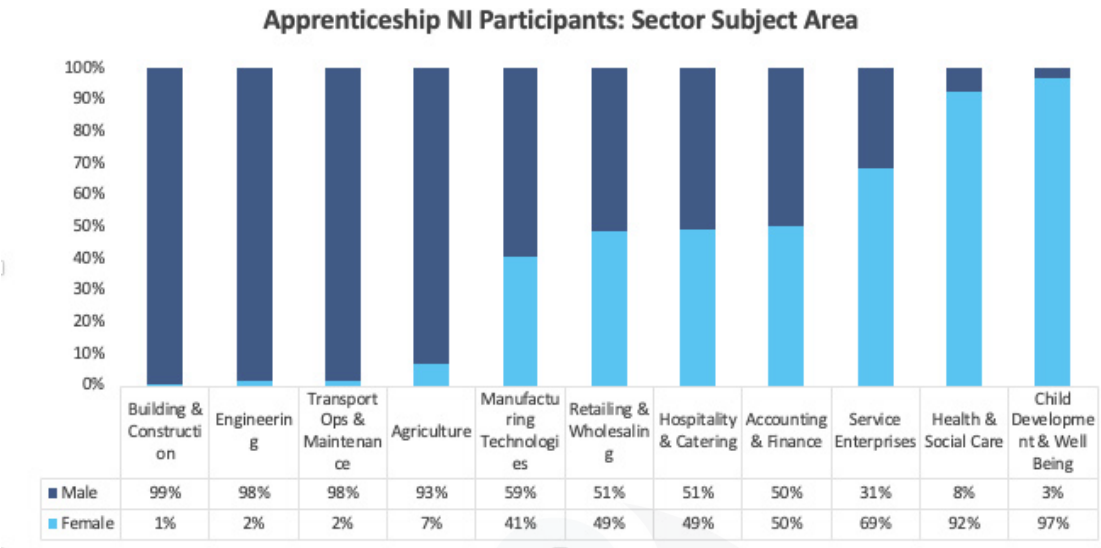


Figure 5: ApprenticeshipsNI programme by Sector/Subject Areas & Gender (as at Feb-Apr 2020)

Source: Data from Department for the Economy

Further analysis of the sectors subject areas constituting 82% off the ApprenticeshipsNI programme, and hence areas of greatest expenditure, illustrates significant gendered occupational segregation and men's colonisation (see Figure 6). As illustrated, men comprise almost all of the apprenticeships in building and construction, engineering and transport operations and maintenance: combined these three areas equal 50% of all apprenticeships in NI. There is greater parity in manufacturing and technologies and hospitality and catering. However, the trend reverses for service enterprises and health and social care which are dominated by women.

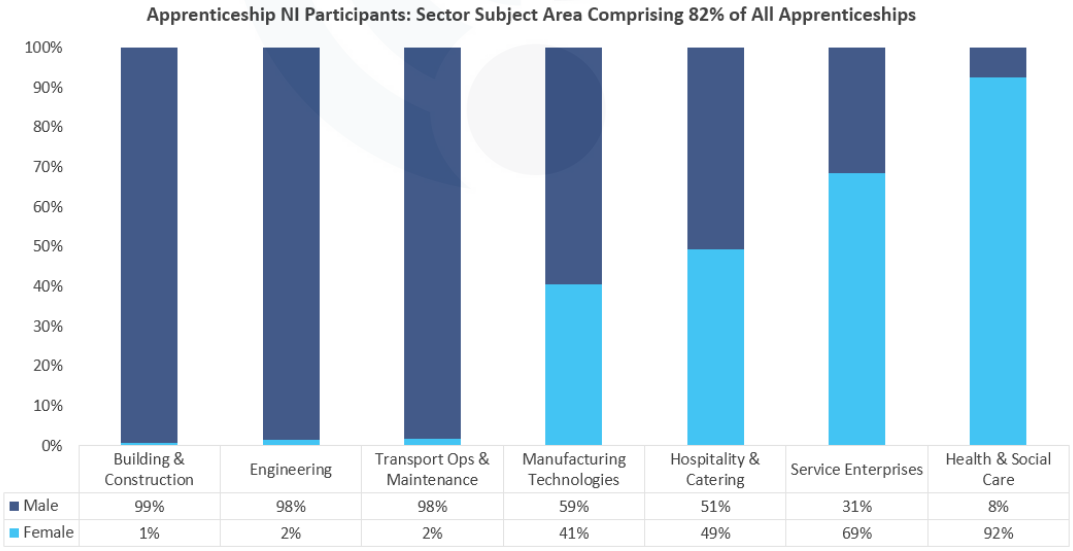


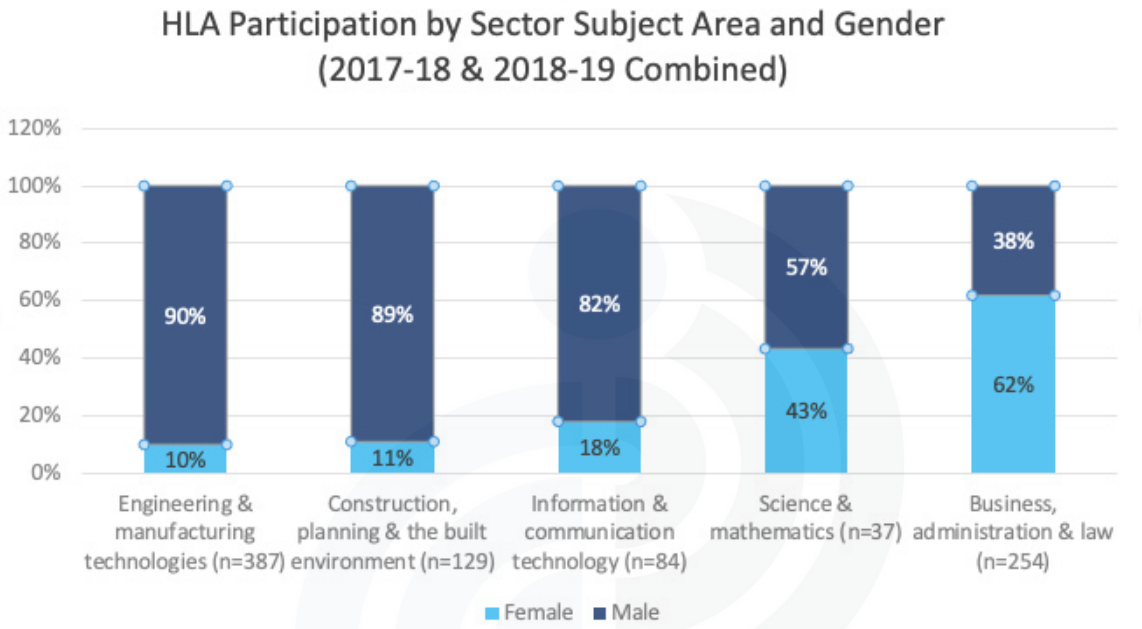
Figure 6: ApprenticeshipsNI programme by Sector/Subject Areas & Gender (as at Feb-Apr 2020)

Source: Data from Department for the Economy

- **Occupational segregation is also prevalent in HLAs**

In HLAs too, men dominate in most subject areas across the two years they have been operational.

Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies is the most popular sector subject area, representing 41% of all HLAs and recording the biggest gender differential with 90% men and 10% women participants (a total of 387 participants). Significant occupational segregation also exists in the area of construction, planning and the built environment (89% of 129 participants) and information and communication technology (82% of 84 participants). The only area where this pattern is reversed is in the area of business, administration and law (women comprising 62% of 254 participants).



It is further noteworthy that in line with the DfE's disclosure control procedures, small counts are not published. Therefore, analysis of the gender differential and comparison across years in HLAs for Leisure, Travel and Tourism and Health, Public Services and Care is not possible. Given that women are likely to be significantly over-represented in care professions, this omission serves to obscure a significant source of data for gender analysis and may skew aggregated data. Moreover, there is evidence in Scotland, England and Wales that men are increasingly moving into 'traditionally female' apprenticeship programmes, but no evidence of an increase of women entering 'traditionally male' apprenticeships (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2014, p9; Newton and Williams, 2013). In the absence of full gender disaggregated data across sectors subject areas, year on year, it is impossible to establish the extent to which this trend is present in NI HLAs. What is clear, however, from the data analysis, is that both ApprenticeshipsNI and HLA in NI exhibit significantly gendered occupational segregation, which lock women into economic and labour market disadvantage over the course of their lifetime.

Gender inequality is likely to be further compounded further in NI by the fact that young women are less likely to obtain a permanent position when they finish their apprenticeship (Young Women's Trust, 2016). For instance, the Young Women's Trust (2016) report that demand for labour in the science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) sector means that apprentices, who are mostly men, will

find it easier to secure permanent jobs than their women counterparts. Additionally, a cost benefit analysis of apprenticeship qualifications carried out in Scotland in 2007 found that an apprenticeship qualification increased the average wage of an individual working in the construction sector by 32%, whereas in retail there was no effect of an apprenticeship on wages (McIntosh, 2007), thus increasing further gender inequality. Unfortunately, the attitudes about men's and women's work that exist across Northern Irish society remain largely unchallenged by apprenticeship policy in NI with the result that men continue to dominate in sectors such as engineering and construction while women remain clustered in care and service-based apprenticeships, namely the 5 C's.

- **Current public expenditure on ApprenticeshipsNI disproportionately favours participants who are men. Men will continue to reap the benefits of this investment over the course of their lifetime.**

Economic analysis of ApprenticeshipsNI data reveals significance differences in estimated Gross Value Added (GVA) for males and females. GVA measures the contribution to the economy of each individual producer, industry or sector in the UK and is equivalent to GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in regional terms[6]. The potential output to the NI economy (GVA) that is produced by ApprenticeshipsNI can be estimated based upon the number of participants, the sector of the framework, and the respective average productivity of that sector. Using this data, analysis suggests that total output for men equates to £493m and women £92m. This is expected given that males make up a larger proportion of ApprenticeshipsNI and HLA students. Further analysis suggests that GVA per individual apprentice equates to £78,400 for men and £35,900 for women, indicating that men study subjects linked to higher productivity sectors in comparison to women.

Financial data regarding the cost of Apprenticeships NI is outlined in the ApprenticeshipsNI 2013 Operational Guidelines (available from the DoF website[7]). Examination of the guidelines indicates six groupings or categories, with different levels of funding available (see below), depending on the level of study:

	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5	Category 6
Level 2 (young person)	£3,100	£3,400	£3,700	£5,200	£5,500	£5,800
Level 3 (young person)	£4,000	£4,400	£4,800	£6,450	£6,850	£7,250
Level 3 (Level 2 en route) (young person)	£6,800	£7,450	£8,100	£11,000	£11,650	£12,300
Level 2 (adult)	£1,550	£1,700	£1,850	£2,600	£2,750	£2,900
Level 3 (adult)	£2,000	£2,200	£2,400	3,225	£3,425	£3,625
Level 3 (Level 2 en route) (adult)	£3,400	£3,725	£4,050	£5,500	£5,825	£6,150

6. For more information on these measures, see the Office for National Statistics, https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossvalueaddedgva
7. See: https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/apprenticeship-guidelines-and-operational-requirements

The lower categories (1, 2, 3) includes subjects allied to accounting, hospitality, financial services, food and drink, creative and digital media: some of these categories are dominated by women apprentices, receiving less funding per participant. The higher categories (5 and 6) represent subjects which are dominated by men, including construction, engineering and electrotechnical, which receive much higher levels of funding. The funding levels outlined above indicate a disproportionate spend on men, on the basis of male over-representation and male clustering in the most cost intensive categories. This finding is consistent with data from Scotland which has shown similar trends to NI in terms of significant occupational segregation (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2014). The data reported suggests a significant 'gendered spend' on apprenticeships, with spend per male apprentice being 53% higher than for female apprenticeships. (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2014 p7). A similar picture is presented for HLA funding where some fifteen funding rates exist. For example, funding for a level 5 HLA ranges from £8,400 to £11,400 (a difference of 36%), depending on the subject being studied. Funding for HLA Level 6 is even more stark at the bottom and top ends: a minimum funding of £12,400 and a maximum funding of £23,400 (a difference of 89%). As with funding for ApprenticeshipsNI, funding at the higher end of HLA levels 5 and 6 represent areas of study dominated by men such as engineering.

The DfE are required under Section 75 obligations to use their resources, including those committed to the ApprenticeshipsNI programme and HLAs, to address existing inequalities. The disproportionate spend on men illustrated here, and the unequal distribution of participation and benefits across ApprenticeshipsNI and HLAs, will have a lifetime impact on women's earnings, and perpetuate the gender pay gap. In addition to the impact on individual women and their life opportunities, this will also have an impact on the demand for public services for older women experiencing so called 'pension poverty' later in life.

Securing Our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships - the gendered policy/practice gap

Three important dislocations are evident from apprenticeship policy intent in NI and subsequent practice, which have a significant impact on the capacity of the strategy to deliver equal benefits for females in NI. Firstly, the strategy notes occupational segregation as problematic from the outset, and in Policy Commitment 11 specifically states that 'apprenticeships will include a range of measures to support the participation by both genders across occupations.' In furtherance of this commitment the strategy indicates that 'the Department will take the twin track approach to address the gender imbalances which that exist within traditional sectors, whilst also aiming to ensure that a gender balance is instilled in the new apprenticeships areas, from their commencement'. (Department for Employment and Learning, 2014 p36).

Notwithstanding the specific recognition of occupational segregation, no targets or performance

indicators accompany these commitments, rendering them largely aspirational. By contrast, targets have been attached to other objectives, such as completion of qualification frameworks, data collected and monitored against annual performance. The absence of targets and performance indicators for occupational segregation and gender compares unfavourably with other UK jurisdictions. Scotland, like NI, notes gender segregation of apprenticeship occupational frameworks as problematic and sets out two objectives in this regard. Firstly, to reduce gender stereotyping and gender segregation in career choices and secondly to reduce gender segregation in Modern Apprenticeship frameworks occupational routes selected by young people. Unlike NI, however, Scotland sets a specific target against the realisation of these objectives, which is to reduce to 60% the percentage of Modern Apprenticeship frameworks where the gender balance in 75:25 or greater (Skills Development Scotland, 2015). These objectives are also reinforced through complementary action in other policy areas (i.e., education, childcare).

While the NI strategy indicates a twin track approach, spanning extant and new programmatic activity, it is nevertheless limited by focusing only on opening pathways to women in non-traditional sectors. It fails to recognise that an equally important aspect of challenging gender stereotyping and segregation is affording appropriate recognition for the work that women do, as skilled labour, and the need to provide accreditation and recognition for skills development in those sectors, together with appropriate remuneration and opportunities for career progression. The ApprenticeshipsNI and HLA Statistical bulletins are also limited in their ability to facilitate a comprehensive gender analysis. Thus, gender appears to be treated as a discrete category of analysis with little in the way of mainstreaming, through the routine gender disaggregation of all data.

A second gendered policy/practice gap is located in the stark differential which exists within the 16-19-year-old participant age group. Analysis presented earlier (Figure 4) revealed that of the 16-19 age group, young women were significantly under-represented within this range at a ratio of 4:1. This differential is highly significant given that apprenticeships in NI are a key policy intervention in respect of those young people who are not currently in education or training (NEETS). The evidence considered here suggests that while apprenticeships in NI have provided a policy intervention for young men aged 16-19 from the 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEET) group, it has failed to afford the same opportunity to young women. Apprenticeship policy is not catching enough women at the start of their career but rather when they are already on established career paths, which entrench gendered segregation, and lock in lifelong labour market disadvantage.

The third and final gendered policy/practice gap which emerges as a result of this analysis, relates to the capacity of the strategy to identify and be responsive to skills demand in NI. Securing Our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships, Policy commitment 14 commits to establishing a skills barometer "to support the better matching of apprenticeship supply and demand" (Department for Employment and Learning, 2014 p.9). The skills barometer (now operational) is used to identify and prioritise training in line with forecasting of those key skills required for economic growth. For

example, the ApprenticeshipsNI Operational Requirements for 2021 specifically state that "support for adult apprenticeships is restricted to the economically important sectors needed to rebalance the economy" (namely advanced engineering/manufacturing, business services, creative industries, financial services, food and drink manufacturing, life and health sciences) (Department for the Economy, 2021, p.23). Furthermore, using economic forecasting based on GVA (in lieu of GDP) and productivity measures, the barometer has the potential to influence skills assessments that privilege those occupations and skills allied to manufacturing and production, where product can be seen and counted. As a direct consequence of its failure to conceptualise economic value beyond productivity measures, the skills barometer thus remains under responsive to an impending skills crisis in the social care sector.

The importance of the social care section is reflected in statistics which suggest that by 2039 the population in NI is expected to have increased by 5.3%. Furthermore, the population aged 65 years and over is expected to increase by 74.4% between 2014 and 2039. Adding further pressures, the COVID pandemic has acutely illustrated how social care is economically vital in its own right. As an enabler, it assures labour market access and participation for women. The social care workforce in NI, however, faces a number of distinct challenges. Predominantly female (87%) (ICF Consulting, 2018), many work for low pay and there is very limited opportunity for career progression. Furthermore, given high levels of zero-hour contracts and part-time working and the stressful working conditions in NI, as elsewhere in the UK, challenges exist in terms of recruiting and retaining staff. The scale of the challenge is reflected in estimates provided by the NI Social Care Council which indicate that at the time the Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy 2026 was published (Department of Health, 2018), an additional 1,400 care workers were needed every year just to keep pace with demand. Further challenges exist in that registration for adult social care workers in NI is mandatory, but unlike Scotland and Wales, is not qualification led. Levels of training in the care sector are therefore very low. Reflecting this, a relatively recent NI Social Care Council (NISCC) survey (2014) of independent care providers which examined the qualifications levels of the domiciliary, residential and supported workforce (response rate 50%), found that only 48% held any relevant qualification. From an economic perspective, there is wider evidence that investing in social care could generate additional jobs and be an economic driver in its own right. For example, recent analysis for the UK Women's Budget Group suggests that investment in care could produce 2.7 times as many jobs as the equivalent investment in construction (see Table 1. Source: De Henau and Himmelweit, 2020, p.6).

Given the problems outlined above, reorientation of NI's apprenticeship strategy could provide a significant intervention at this juncture. The apprenticeship programme is uniquely placed to deliver high quality vocational training and qualifications. Corrective action could have the multiple advantages of ameliorating gendered inequalities which exist within the current strategy in respect of public funding and outcomes, ensure access to high level qualifications to a women dominated , low skilled and low paid workforce, impact on the gender pay differential by investing in social care as a

Table 1. The employment effects of investing 1% GDP in the care and construction industries

	Jobs generated in the industry	Jobs generated in other industries	Total jobs generated	of which for men	and for women
Care	534,000	179,000	713,000	206,000	507,000
Construction	105,000	158,000	263,000	182,000	81,000
Ratio of employment effects care/construction	5.1	1.1	2.7	1.1	6.3

Source: Calculations by Jerome De Henau for WBG, based on 2015 data from Eurostat

skilled profession, and rebalance gendered economic forecasting which underpins the apprenticeship strategy through recognition of the economic value of care.

On the basis of the information presented in this gender analysis, we argue that a full gender review of apprenticeship policy in NI is both timely and necessary. Any review should consider, but not be limited to, the incorporation of actions which encompass the following suite of recommendations.

Policy recommendations

- The development of long and short-term SMART targets with associated performance indicators to reduce occupational gender segregation in NI. This will require the collection, analysis and publication of gender disaggregated data on spend, outcomes, retention and individual experiences.
- There is significant evidence from other jurisdictions of the utility of women only training programmes in non-traditional sectors such as construction and engineering. In addition, early years and school-based interventions have been used successfully to challenge stereotypes, for example, through play with non-traditional toys, targeted careers advice and provision of work experience opportunities for men and women in non-traditional sectors.
- Use of cash incentives for employers – NI already uses a cash incentive system with employers. Employer Incentive Payments are available to employers where an apprentice successfully completes their full level 2 or level 3 apprenticeship framework. This amount ranges from £250 - £1500[8], depending on complexity, level and age of the apprentice. The incentive system could usefully be amended to incorporate a gender premium.
- Newton and Williams (2013) specifically examined apprenticeships in England and Wales in respect of race and gender and recommended that public procurement processes and statutory duties under public contracts could be used as a policy lever to ensure greater equality and diversity.

8. See ApprenticeshipsNI Operational Requirements 2013, 2021

Harnessing public expenditure for gender equality, could usefully be considered in NI in the specific context of women's apprenticeships quotas in non-traditional sectors as an element of public contracts.

- Rebalancing the higher-level apprenticeship framework to acknowledge the economic contribution of care based professions to the NI economy.

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