

## **Cross Party Group on Science & Technology**

**Tuesday 13 December, 18:00-20:00**

**Holyrood-The Clerk Maxwell Room and via Teams**

**Access to STEM**

### **1. Attendance**

**MSPs:** Clare Adamson, Brian Whittle (online).

**Non-MSPs:** Stephanie Webb, Alistair Taylor, Thomas Wild, Joanna Jasiewicz, Toni Scullion, Sylvia McKay, Stuart Farmer, Alison McLure, Niall Sommerville, Kathleen M Hill, Liz Lakin, Nicola Jorden, Derek Young, Fred Young, Karen Meechan, Andrew Mackenzie, Susan Burr, Katherine Kirk.

**Apologies:** Ale Palermo, Karen Petrie, Stewart Stevenson, Rebecca Bell, William Duncan, Allan Colquhoun, Janet Brown, Daria Tuhtar, Cristina Clopot.

### **2. Minute of the previous meeting**

Convenor requested a proposer and seconder to confirm that the minutes from the last meeting were an accurate record:

- **Proposer:** Niall Sommerville.
- **Secunder:** Alison McLure.

### **3. AGM: Election of Office Bearers**

#### **(a) Election of office bearers**

- **Election of Convener:** Clare Adamson
  - **Proposer:** Stuart Farmer.
  - **Secunder:** Fred Young.
  
- **Election of Deputy Convener:** Brian Whittle
  - **Proposer:** Stuart Farmer.
  - **Secunder:** Fred Young.
  
- **Election of Secretariat:** The Royal Society of Edinburgh.
  - **Proposer:** Clare Adamson.
  - **Secunder:** Sylvia Mckay.

### **4. Presentations on *Access to STEM***

- Dr Joanna Jasiewicz, Race and Ethnicity Unit Lead, Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC), presented on how to move *Towards a more inclusive chemical sciences community*. During the presentation, the following topics were discussed: An overview of the Royal Society of Chemistry's *Inclusion and Diversity Strategy to 2025*. The two main stands of the strategy were enabling access and progression for minority groups in chemistry. This highlighted underrepresented groups in chemistry, including women at senior levels, black and other minority groups, LGBT groups, students from deprived socioeconomic backgrounds and disabled people. The presentation also showed examples of the progression of RSC's work in this area with examples of findings and recommendations from multiple reports, such as *The Diversity Landscape of the Chemical Sciences*, (2018), *Breaking the Barriers: Women's retention and progression* (2018), *Missing Elements: Racial and ethnic inequalities in the chemical sciences* (2022), and *A sense of belonging in the chemical sciences* (2021). Slides available on request.
- Thomas Wild, Programme Manager, Young Engineers and Science Clubs Scotland (YESC) at SCDI, presented on *Inspiring the next generation of scientists and engineers in Scotland*. The presentation provided an overview of the SCDI programme. The programme has a network of over 1600 schools across Scotland to inspire the next generation of scientists, technologists, engineers and mathematicians. One part of the programme is developing school resource kits and holding events with SCDI industry partners bringing them together in order to create enthusiasm about STEM amongst the children. They also aim to broaden the access of STEM subjects. Using demographic data metrics to ensure that their projects and resources are directed at underrepresented groups across Scotland. Video and slides available on request.
- Toni Scullion, dressCode, presented on *The Next Generation of Tech Talent*. The presentation gave the group an overview of the work dressCode is conducting to inspire the next generation into computer science. The presentation provided data on the current Scottish tech sector landscape and the challenges, such as the lack of teachers in computer sciences and the lack of uptake in schools, particularly amongst girls. Computer science has the largest gender gap within STEM subjects. The presentation then turned to some of the work that dressCode is doing to combat these challenges, such as coding clubs for girls in schools, national campaigns and Turing's Testers, a student-led initiative to close the gender gap. Slides available on request.
- For slides please email Secretariat Stephanie Webb at [SWebb@these.org.uk](mailto:SWebb@these.org.uk)

## 5. Discussion Session

- Following the presentations, a discussion session was held. The following topics were discussed: regional uptake of the programmes provided by dressCode and SCDI, in relation to rural areas of Scotland, the systemic nature of the barriers to equity in STEM and the government's progress towards addressing the barriers, the lack of training and delivery competence of primary school teachers to deliver STEM subjects and the inclusion of early years education (including nursery) in STEM education, and how we develop a successful STEM education and training strategy. **It was noted that the CPG can write a letter to the minister asking when the *STEM Education and Training Strategy* will be updated.**
- Clare also pointed out following the topics that had been discussed that there are other CPG groups that could be of interest to members, including the CPG on Universities and Colleges and the CPG on skills. It may be worthwhile looking at joint meetings at a later date.

- **Dates and themes for future meetings**
- There is currently no date set for the next meeting. Once a date has been confirmed, members will be contacted.
- Brian Whittle MSP (Deputy Convener) proposed the following speaker for future meetings: [Intuitive](#) held an exhibition in the Parliament about their minimally invasive robotic-assisted surgery system, da Vinci. This system has significantly improved patient outcomes and has further facilitated collaboration between surgeons via remote connection.
- Any proposals for future themes would be welcomed. These can be submitted in writing to the RSE public policy team, [publicpolicy@therse.org.uk](mailto:publicpolicy@therse.org.uk).