

APPG on Diversity & Inclusion in STEM - Call for Ideas 2024

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Diversity and Inclusion in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) aims to promote the inclusion and progression of people from diverse backgrounds in STEM, and to encourage government, parliamentarians, academics, businesses and other stakeholders to work towards a STEM sector that is representative of the population.

Since its formation in 2018 the [APPG](#) has undertaken a variety of policy activities relating to STEM and the pursuit of equity in the sector. Beginning with a series of events in 2018 discussing education, industrial strategy, regional disparity and social mobility the group then moved focus to conduct two in-depth inquiries into [equity in STEM education \(2020\)](#) and [equity in the STEM workforce \(2021\)](#) and report on [regional STEM skills inequity \(2023\)](#).

The APPG seeks to represent and explore the diversity of views and voices from across STEM. As such, we would like to invite submissions of potential future activities for the group to undertake.

Thank you for your interest in submitting to our call for ideas - please include as much detail as possible. All submissions will be presented to the MPs and Lords in the APPG, who will decide on the activity and topic. If you have any questions, please contact the Secretariat at appg@britishscienceassociation.org.

Submissions close 9am, Monday 19 February 2024.

1. Email* a.clempson@surrey.ac.uk

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2. First name* **Andy**

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3. Surname* **Clempson**

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4. Organisation (if applicable) **The Daphne Jackson Trust**

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5. Job title (if applicable) **Project Lead**

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6. What is the focus or problem area of your suggestion?*

- Diversity and inclusion in AI
- Inclusive STEM teaching and learning
- Other (specify)... **Barriers to retention and career progression in STEM workplaces**

7. Please describe your suggested activity

We suggest that the APPG consider how STEM workplaces can dismantle barriers to staff retention and career progression by creating a fairer and more equitable employment landscape.

The Daphne Jackson Trust is the UK's leading organisation dedicated to realising the potential of returners to research careers following a career break of two years or more taken for a family, caring or health reason.

Anyone working in the STEM community could face the prospect of taking a break from their careers at some stage in their working lives – often due to factors entirely outside of their control. Many that wish to return after such a break can find themselves unable to do so due to significant barriers that are systemic within the STEM sector. These are almost impossible to overcome without help and support.

The Daphne Jackson Trust provides Fellowships for those in such positions, allowing professionals to return to the workforce with updated skills, experience and renewed confidence. Our proven track record has resulted in almost 500 researchers returning to work after a break, and 9 out of 10 of them stay in research or teaching at least 5 years after their Fellowship. This has saved over 1250 years of research experience from being lost from the sector.

The success of returners is dependent on a concerted and consistent effort to break down barriers that hinder their progress. The APPG has an opportunity to continue this work by exploring three key areas that would benefit staff retention and career progression:

1. Ensuring that employers clarify expectations around family leave including its length, level of pay, eligibility and flexibility.

We believe that STEM employers (such as Universities, Research Institutes, industry and beyond) should introduce a system of monitoring and reporting to ensure uptake of family leave is fair and equitable. Carer's leave – including for those with tertiary care responsibilities – should be made much more visible to employees with clearer routes of how to take such leave, when it applies and the length of leave allowed. This work should also explore how the STEM sector can rethink the unpaid care work that many people do and how this work is valued.

2. Improve publicly provided or subsidised early childhood education and care.

Nearly three quarters of Daphne Jackson Fellows initially took their career break due to family reasons. Yet, the provision of early childhood care remains an enormous barrier that prevent many from returning to work, despite wanting to do so. The APPG has an opportunity to explore how this barrier can be overcome. One suggestion could be to ensure that parent(s) are compensated through more inclusive childcare funding to increase the affordability and avoid the necessity of career breaks in the first instance. The individual income caps that determine access free childcare often means that women are ineligible to be able to access government schemes due to their partners earning over the threshold. The most vulnerable groups, such as single mothers and those from minoritised backgrounds should also have more explicit support.

3. Close the gender and ethnicity pay (salary and bonuses) and pensions gap. We believe that Government should continue to publish data on gender pay gap reporting, but also extend this to ethnicity pay gaps. The fact that women and minority ethnic groups are in some cases paid less than white men has no place in a modern STEM workforce. The APPG has an opportunity to explore how this might be undertaken.

8. Who are the potential beneficiaries of policy change?

The STEM sector as a whole would benefit by increasing staff retention and thereby retaining valuable skills and experience. Ensuring that the STEM and research ecosystem maximises the contribution of the widest range of participants aligns with Government's R&D Roadmap, in particular, the goals of the R&D People & Culture Strategy.

More specifically, some initiatives would target specific groups such as:
Those from minoritised backgrounds.
Vulnerable groups including single mothers.

9. What potential solutions could arise from this work?

Please see question 7 where we outline some potential solutions to the three areas of suggested focus.

10. Who are the experts on this topic?

The Daphne Jackson Trust.
Learned Societies such as the Royal Society of Biology, the Royal Society of Chemistry.
STEM workforce members directly – particularly those with lived experience.

11. Is there current evidence about the problem?

Yes - addressing the career break penalty for women could boost the UK economy by £1.7bn (https://pwc.blogs.com/press_room/2016/11/two-thirds-of-female-professionals-are-estimated-to-be-working-below-their-potential-when-they-retur.html). Policy makers have an opportunity to make positive action here.

12. Who should be involved (individuals, organisations, specific sectors or minoritised groups)?

The Daphne Jackson Trust
Learned Societies such as the Royal Society of Biology, the Royal Society of Chemistry.
STEM workforce members directly – particularly those with lived experience.

13. Why would this activity or subject benefit from an APPG focus? Are there any organisations that would be more suited to leading this activity?

The APPG represents the most valuable partner with which this work can be undertaken due to its broad church of members across the STEM community. The majority of other STEM organisations work within specific subject areas, yet many of the suggestions within our submission traverse those boundaries, and the potential solutions would need to work across all of STEM. We believe that there aren't any other organisations, other than this APPG, with the same scope and influence that could explore these solutions to the same degree.

14. Who are the relevant Ministers or Government departments?

Department of Business and Trade
Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
Department for Work and Pensions

15. Which Equality Act 2010 Protected Characteristics or minoritised identi(ies) does your suggestion apply to?

Being pregnant or on maternity leave
Race

16. Are you happy for your name and organisation to be published online and in print by the British Science Association?

Yes

No

17. Are you happy for your submission to be made publicly available on the British Science Association website?

Yes

No

Please complete this form by **Monday 19 February** and send it to the Secretariat:

natalia.grzomba@britishscienceassociation.org

We're happy to receive separate PDF documents as part of your submission. Please describe the attachments in your email.

All submissions will be made public on the British Science Association website, unless otherwise specified.