



NI SCHOOLS NEED MORE SUPPORT TO ADDRESS GIRLS' LOW EXPECTATIONS

Northern Ireland schools need the resources and support to ensure women and girls reach their full potential if the gender pay gap is to be eradicated, according to local teachers.

Avril Hall Callaghan, General Secretary of the Ulster Teachers' Union, was responding to the new mandatory pay gap reporting introduced this month for companies with over 250 employees.

"We know the gender pay gap sits around 9.4% with women earning less than men; there are also considerably fewer women in top ranking, top paying roles and we need to know why this is and to address that," she said.

"At its crudest this new requirement to report pay gaps is a naming and shaming exercise – there's no guidance on how companies which do uncover a pay gap should react.

"Presumably customers will vote with their feet and go elsewhere if a company refuses to address any pay gap revealed.

"However, it isn't just as simple as recruiting more females – those women need to be trained and qualified in the areas required and while girls and women don't see

their 'roles' in areas like STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Maths) subjects, for instance, that gap is going to continue.

"We need to break down the gender stereotypes when it comes to how men and women earn a living. A report from Young Enterprise last year revealed that even after three decades of awareness-raising substantially more girls still expect to earn less than £20,000 in their first job compared to their male counterparts.

"Girls still also lack the confidence to pursue leadership roles and don't have the same expectation as boys that they will earn higher salaries. There is also still the pervasive belief that STEM subjects are boys' subjects.

"We need stronger character development in school, the resources to deliver that and more engagement with female role models and business leaders to encourage all young people – boys and girls – to have the ambition and confidence to pursue exciting, well-paid careers."