



Press release immediate: May 15th

CaSE PR 08/06

Delivering Diversity in Science and Engineering

Campaign for Science & Engineering (CaSE) today called upon the Government to take more radical steps to improve the diversity of the science and engineering workforce.

CaSE's latest policy report, *Delivering Diversity: Making Science and Engineering Accessible to All*, sets out a series of recommendations to help eliminate the under-representation of certain groups, namely disabled people, people from certain ethnic minority groups or from socially-disadvantaged backgrounds, and women.

CaSE's Assistant Director, Dr Hilary Leever, said: "The science and engineering community prides itself on being a meritocracy yet has swathes of society under-represented at its highest levels. Success may depend on merit but it is limited for many by practical barriers and bias."

"Although the Government has many schemes to improve diversity in science and engineering, it is seen as a side-issue and was barely mentioned in the Sainsbury Review or the recent Science and Innovation White Paper. CaSE believes that it is morally right and strategically wise to have increasing diversity at the heart of Government science and innovation policy."

"Despite many efforts to improve the number of women in science and engineering, now extending to other groups, progress is slow, variable and often relies upon good practice encouraging gentle change. We need to come up with more effective strategies. Organisations in the science and engineering community should not be able to get away with just showing a commitment to diversity, they need to do what it takes to actually deliver it."

"Diversity should be implemented at the highest levels to provide the role models and networks, and people in positions of power and influence, to help pull up others. Efforts have often focused on pushing more and more people up from below, but this can be ineffective without support from above."

Commenting on **disabled scientists and engineers**, Hilary Leever said: "Disabled scientists and engineers are under-resourced both financially and practically. It's astonishing that there is no centralised resource for disabled scientists and engineers and funding one should be a top priority."

Commenting on the impact of **ethnicity and socially background**, Hilary Leever added: "It's depressing that so many students from socially-disadvantaged backgrounds can't access a good science education and the stimulating and lucrative careers this can lead to. Schools in socially deprived areas are more likely to lack specialist science teachers and offer fewer science options and university students living at home are restricted in their subject choice. Similar factors contribute to the under-representation of certain ethnic groups, although the situation is very complex. We appreciate the money that the Government is pumping into schools to increase science uptake, but it needs to develop a strategy to target its resources to where they are most needed, and where they have the potential for most impact."

Annette Williams, UK Resource Centre for Women in SET Director commented: "Occupational segregation, which results in women's under representation in SET is bad for the UK's skills shortage, its productivity and competitiveness. The UKRC endorses the Delivering Diversity Report; the recommendations emphasise that SET organisations and industry can no longer afford to ignore the talents of women and other under-represented groups as this undermines the UK's aspirations for fairness and opportunity."

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. The policy recommendations and full document are available to download at:

<http://www.sciencecampaign.org.uk/documents/2008/CaSE0608.pdf>

2. For further information, please contact Hilary Leever, Assistant Director of CaSE, on 07905 304702 or Nick Dusic, Director CaSE, on 020 7679 4995 or 07749 953041.

3. The Campaign for Science & Engineering (CaSE) is a pressure group aiming to improve the health of science and engineering in the UK. Our objective is to communicate to Parliament and the nation as a whole the economic and cultural importance of science and engineering, and the vital need for its funding by government and industry. CaSE is supported by its members, which includes individuals, corporations, universities and learned societies. Further information on CaSE can be found at: <http://www.sciencecampaign.org.uk/>

4. The UKRC for Women in SET works to significantly improve the participation and position of women in science, engineering and technology occupations in industry, research, academia, and public service to benefit the future productivity of the UK and the lifetime earnings and career aspirations of women. It is the UK's leading Centre providing information and advisory services to employers and organisations in the SET sectors and supporting women entering, returning and progressing in these fields.

www.ukrc4setwomen.org