"Gender Equality in Modern Apprenticeships in Wales"

An Executive Summary of the key findings and analysis of positive action approaches and good practice

Research undertaken by Chwarae Teg on behalf of the Equal Opportunities Commission

Funded by the Welsh Assembly Government

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Comisiwn Cyfle Cyfartal
Menywod. Dynion. Gwahanol. Cydradd.
Women. Men. Different. Equal.
Equal Opportunities Commission

Background

This research was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government in conjunction with the Equal Opportunities Commission in Wales. It was a study of positive action and good practice in Modern Apprenticeship Programmes in Wales. The work involved an exploration into the success rate of positive action and the impact of pro-active approaches to ensuring gender equality within Modern Apprenticeships. It examined both successful and unsuccessful approaches and analysed the reasons behind why some approaches work and others do not. The study also highlighted the main issues relating to gender stereotyping and discrimination and made recommendations for the way forward in Wales.

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Context

The study's research focused on examples of particular activities undertaken by employers, training providers, schools and Sector Skills Councils in Wales. It also examined the effect of gender mainstreaming in relation to Modern Apprenticeships in areas that have been traditionally dominated by men or women. This information would give an up to date picture of the current situation of gender segregation in Modern Apprenticeships. It was recognised that much work is being undertaken by a wide range of organisations to address gender imbalance but there was lack of clear evidence of which approaches were having the most impact.

Key Issues

The current situation identified in the research was that:

- gender imbalance still exists and that some pro-active approaches are not having a significant enough impact. This also reflects the occupational segregation by gender in the workforce as a whole in Wales. According to detailed research by the Equal Opportunities Commission in Wales *The*

Apprentice: Making genuine career choice a reality (2005) - both small and larger workplaces in Wales are more segregated than those in England and Scotland.

- conflict remains between the academic and vocational training routes in education and training. Students that excel academically should also be encouraged to consider vocational training routes.

- there is a need for career advice intervention for young people before they reach 14 years of age.

- there is a lack of awareness amongst some parents of the different career opportunities available.

- some working environments are not suitable or adapted for women (i.e. toilet, wash facilities).

- there is inadequate gender disaggregated data collection of the current situation in Wales. This is imperative in order to identify particular areas of imbalance that could be addressed through possible target setting for those industries.

- some sectors are being particularly pro-active to tackle gender imbalance these include the IT sector; construction industry and the plumbing and engineering sectors who have all been actively involved in positive action approaches with schools, colleges and employers at local and national levels.

- the barriers to and difficulties in addressing occupational segregation is to tackle the issue as part of a much wider human resources strategy for Wales.

- joint recruitment developed on a more formal basis between schools, colleges Sector Skills Councils and employers who currently offer Modern Apprenticeships and potential employers would produce significant impact.

- additional resources should be made available to :

  - Sector Skills Councils - to enable them to lead on some positive action projects with schools and colleges
  - Colleges and employers - for post 25 years olds to allow flexibility for women returners and/or lone parents
  - SME's - where local based activities could have a greater impact on equality and the economy.

Case study

Chevron Texaco Oil Refinery

This company puts Modern Apprenticeships at the heart of it's operations to ensure that they have a plentiful skilled workforce. They have adopted an equal opportunities policy and believe women have a definite place in the industry and would help to bridge the skills gap. The company's equal opportunities policy includes involvement in positive action with schools and colleges to attract women apprentices into the industry. They also ensure that they have active input into their training programmes to eliminate any barriers for their trainees.

Case study

Airbus UK

Airbus was named Employer of the Year in ELWa's Modern Apprenticeship Awards 2004. The company works very closely with Deeside College to recruit and support trainees. To date a total of sixteen females have completed the Modern Apprenticeship scheme with the company. Other staff members also get involved in encouraging more females into the training programmes. They also promote the use of role models in attracting more women to become trainees and provide support for current female employees to encourage others to consider a career in engineering.

Conclusion

Whilst it is recognised that good work is being done by many providers and related organisation to try and redress the gender imbalance, it is apparent that more formal joint approaches are needed to ensure a greater impact. The study also demonstrates that some small employers are taking advantage of their close working relationships with employers and providers and that larger employers have potential to contribute more towards the strategic approach. Further information is also needed on the retention levels of women in certain industries once they have completed their training programmes. This is essential to inform any policy development and to focus activities where needed. The next steps following this research involves:

- ✓ Further research
- ✓ Exploring targeted activities
- ✓ Maximising good practice
- ✓ Joint strategic approaches

Case Study

CYFLE

Cyfle is a training company for television and broadcast media based in North Wales. They have been very successful in attracting female trainees over a number of years. They attribute some of their success to their excellent working relationships with local employers who provide work based learning experience for their trainees. Being a small company based in a rural area Cyfle have maximised upon this and the opportunities afforded by the inter-dependency of rural working. Even though SME's sometimes find it difficult to provide comprehensive training support, Cyfle have actually found that this can also work to their advantage when it benefit's a wider community. The company have also encouraged some of their female trainees to become role models for others and to help raise the profile of the industry as a whole.

Recommendations

a) Other areas of research to be undertaken:

- Comprehensive gender disaggregated data collection of Modern Apprenticeship Programmes in Wales

- A career track study of women having completed training programmes in non-traditional areas for their gender. This information may also help identify where best to target resources.

- An analysis of the impact of addressing occupational segregation on the gender pay gap; the skills gap; the retention of trainees in SME's and on the career aspirations of young women and men

b) Specific actions for implementation:

Training Providers

- ✓ gender proof training programmes to eliminate barriers
- ✓ ensure more flexibility within training programmes
- ✓ targeting over 25 year olds
- ✓ collation of detailed gender disaggregated data

Employers

- ✓ undertake a gender proofing exercise of the workplace environment
- ✓ further promote work life balance in the workplace
- ✓ promote role models to raise the profile of industries

Schools

- ✓ be more pro-actively involved with colleges, sector skills councils and employers to combat gender stereotyping (i.e. industry days, role model days, have a go days)
- ✓ work with parents to raise awareness of certain career opportunities and prospects in industries currently dominated by women or men

Policy Makers

- ✓ undertake further research in identified areas
- ✓ ensure a mainstreamed cross-sectional approach to promoting equality
- ✓ consider targeting resources to enable further joint working
- ✓ creating better support packages for employers to retain trainees

Sector Skills Councils

- ✓ address poor pay and working conditions within Modern Apprenticeship programmes
- ✓ consider targeting resources to work with schools, colleges and employers on positive action activities
- ✓ maximising the potential of current good practice
- ✓ gender proofing their industries to identify and eliminate barriers
- ✓ raise the profile of Modern Apprenticeships for women and men in non-traditional areas

Careers Advice Services

- ✓ to consider the possibilities of earlier intervention in secondary schools and involvement with primary schools
- ✓ help raise the aspirations of young people