

**Delivering Skills that Work for Wales:**  
Reducing the proportion of young people not in education,  
employment or training in Wales

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## **Chwarae Teg Consultation Response**

**30<sup>th</sup> July 2008**

## ***Introduction***

Chwarae Teg promotes supports and develops the role of women in the Welsh economy. We do this by raising awareness of the positive contribution women make to economy, and sensitising government strategy and policy to the barriers confronting women who wish to fully participate in the labour market and economic development programmes.

The persistency of occupational segregation, the over representation of women amongst the working poor, the under utilisation of women's skills, the gender pay gap, the lack of women in senior and management level positions and the limited number of women in decision making roles presents a challenge to Welsh policy and practice.

We are funded by the Welsh Assembly Government to provide expert advice to Ministers and policymakers on these matters. Chwarae Teg also designs and manages significant projects that support women's participation in, and the development of, the Welsh economy. This has included working with women entrepreneurs on business starts, managing early stage enterprises, and providing pre-employment training for economically inactive women in their communities. We also work directly with employers and training providers to support the design of gender sensitive employment and training programmes.

## ***Consultation Response***

Chwarae Teg welcomes the new strategy to reduce the numbers of young people not in education, training nor employment. We note the inclusion of information detailing the complex characteristics of this group of young people. The focus on individual support through careers advice and intensive personal support for the core group of 6500 is welcomed.

However, Chwarae Teg, in its role as expert advisor to the Welsh Assembly Government, notes that the strategy should provide a more detailed gender focus with regard to policy implementation.

Our response to the consultation document is in two parts. Firstly, an overview of the strategy highlighting the gender dimension, and secondly, attending to some of the questions framed by the strategy.

The data review implies the different reasons that girls and boys may become NEET and thus the need to account for gender in the programmes suggested by the policy. From the data supplied in the strategy proposals, we discern that more boys than girls are NEET at age 16, and that they are likely to be unemployed - that is available to seek education, training and work. Whereas girls are more likely to be economically inactive, that is unable to seek work often for reasons of providing adult dependent care, or childcare whether as a lone parent or in a couple.

Gender disaggregated data from Scotland, suggests that as the proportion of young people NEET rises at 17 and 18 and gender balance changes (EOC 2006).<sup>1</sup> This accords with your observation that NEET young people are more likely to have caring responsibilities, indeed one in ten undertake such work in comparison to one in twenty of young people overall (WAG 2008: p10-11).<sup>2</sup>

More young women are NEET and remain NEET due to domestic responsibilities (Maguire and Rennison 2005).<sup>3</sup> The conclusion is that young women find it more difficult to move out of the NEET category despite having on average higher qualifications than young men who are NEET (Maguire and Rennison 2005). Therefore those with domestic responsibilities need specific tailored support.

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<sup>1</sup> Equal Opportunities Commission Scotland (2006) 'Submission to the Scottish Affairs Committee Enquiry 'Poverty in Scotland'.

<sup>2</sup> WAG (2008) Delivering Skills that work for Wales: Reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in Wales

<sup>3</sup> Maguire, S., and Rennison, J.(2005) 'Two Years On: The Destinations of Young People who are Not in Education, Employment or Training at 16', *Journal of Youth Studies*, Volume 8, Number 2, June 2005 , pp. 187-201(15): London: Routledge

Further, whilst the intention is to prevent young men from drifting into criminality for income, there is also a significant group of young women who do not become NEET but drift into low paid work with no prospect, on a 'jobs until marriage basis'. This represents an enormous waste of talent for Wales, contributes to the cycle of women's poverty over the lifetime, and does not attend to the duty to promote gender equality for young people.

We suggest the following recommendations to assist with the targeting of the new support mechanisms:

- Commissioning of a gender analysis of the existing data
- Gender, disability and ethnicity disaggregation mechanisms to be built into the new processes for identifying and monitoring NEETs within administrative data sets
- Gender sensitive arrangements to be built into the Careers Wales advice services and individual counselling - including specific support to enter gender atypical jobs, and participate in gender reflexive confidence and self esteem building programmes
- Cross-cutting gender reflexive employment, skills and regeneration plans
- Extension of free child care places targeting the under 20s, particularly for rural and regeneration areas
- Adult social services staff to be trained to undertake respite care assessments where the carer is a 'young carer' to replace the current process where a full 'children in need assessment' is triggered - perhaps allowing them to stay at school, return to education, find work.

## **Consultation questions:-**

### **1) Do you welcome the broad policy direction set out in this document?**

In principle, Chwarae Teg welcomes the broad policy direction set out in this document, specifically, the preventative proposals which aim to tackle potential problems earlier through the suite of programmes identified in the consultation document – Flying Start and Foundation Phase programmes supported by the Parenting Action Plan, RAISE initiative, Basic Skills Strategy and Childcare Strategy. However, for the foreseeable future, and until the above strategies can be implemented and measured, some challenging decisions must be addressed. For example, the proposal that as many young people as possible choose to stay in learning post-16 is ambitious and does not acknowledge that for the NEETS cohort, interventions, other than formal education, should be considered a priority.

### **2) What should be the priority actions if we are to deliver in line with our ambitions for reducing the proportion of young people NEET?**

#### **PRIORITY ACTION 1:**

Disaggregated data - as identified in the Consultation document. There are a range of organisations working with Young People across Wales with no existing data sets. These could provide a comprehensive profile nationally or the production of local area statistics (1.8, 2.16)

#### **PRIORITY ACTION 2:**

Preventative measures - early identification of those young people who are at risk of becoming NEET and tackling how gender stereotyping can prevent girls or boys from attaining skills in sectors where there is a lack of skills. Closer parental engagement is key.

### PRIORITY ACTION 3

Preventative measures - provide guidance and support on equality, diversity and citizenship at an earlier age. Develop skills, attitudes and values in schools in Years 7,8,9 through structured course work, discussions, role models and introduction to the concept of the world of work.

Targeted research - engagement of those who are NEET or at risk to identify what measures can be undertaken to re-engage or stem the flow of those young people who have multiple barriers to education, training or employment. There is no mention in the Consultation document of any reference to research/engagement with the target NEET cohort.

### PRIORITY ACTION 4

Young lone parents or carers need additional support to return to education, training or employment through provision of child or family care. Women face a future of poverty through absence from the labour market which impacts on child poverty and the revolving door syndrome of worklessness.

There is an opportunity to develop mentoring schemes for young people to manage the transition from childhood to adulthood through greater development of intergenerational collaboration, acknowledging that the age divide can provide the support and guidance many young people seek.

### PRIORITY ACTION 5

Chwarae Teg, through promoting the role of women in the economy in Wales, can play a key role in supporting lone parents and young women in developing employability skills. As a partnership organisation, we are keen to work with those agencies in tackling issues to do with poverty and disadvantage (4.25).

There are approximately 110,000 lone parent households in Wales and 89% are headed by women. Without targeted interventions, the children in many of these households will be at risk of not realising their full potential and playing a role of the future prosperity of Wales. Chwarae Teg has considerable experience of developing initiatives to reach those furthest from the labour market. We do this through creating an environment for women of all ages to explore the opportunities of employment in non-traditional sectors of the economy. These do not always involve formal education but can lead to career progression and the attainment of financial independence for some women, whilst addressing the Wales skills agenda.

#### PRIORITY ACTION 6

The Right Provision (3) - Embed employability skills and soft skills that employers require, into education and training. Introduce the concepts and value of diversity, through structured workshops providing insight into different environments, overcoming barriers to employment and discussions and debates on key issues. Chwarae Teg can advise and deliver programmes exploring the changing patterns of work, the reconciliation of work and private life and opening up non-traditional career opportunities for young people (male and female).

#### PRIORITY ACTION 7

There needs to be further investigation of how to remove the financial barriers to learning. The proposals for contribution to training (for training other than basic skills) will further disenfranchise the NEET cohort. The financial constraints of remaining in education and fear of accruing debt is a major inhibitor of engagement for some young people. In this regard, Chwarae Teg welcomes the review of financial support mechanisms offered to 16-19 year olds. (4.32)

### ***Concluding Remarks***

Chwarae Teg has considerable experience of working to help women of all ages who experience barriers to labour market. We work with them to build their confidence, skills and knowledge. We would be delighted to participate in discussions leading to the gender sensitising of the NEETs strategy. The aim would be create better targeting of resource to need in ways that, by understanding the effects of gender in the person and gender as a social division, would encourage boys and girls to take up provision.