



**Response to the Finance Committee's consultation on:**

## **Welsh Government draft budget proposals for 2013-14**

**September 2012**

### ***Introduction***

Chwarae Teg is funded by the Welsh Government to promote, support and develop the role of women in the Welsh economy. Since 1992, we have carried out valuable awareness-raising work to draw attention to the positive contribution women make to economy. We provide expert advice to Ministers and policy-makers in order that the barriers preventing women's participation in the labour market are addressed.

We welcome the opportunity to provide information to the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee to support their inquiry into the equality considerations in the Welsh Government's budget. We understand that difficult decisions must be made around public spending at this time and we are encouraged to see that the impact of decisions on equalities groups is being given full consideration.

## Consultation Response

Overall, Chwarae Teg is concerned about how cuts will impact women since this group is likely to be disproportionately affected by a reduction in services. Inflation will reduce budget allocations even further which will impact on delivery, creating greater disadvantage.

### Equality Impact Assessment and Inclusive Policy Making

Chwarae Teg welcomes the Welsh Government's commitment to equality and trust that this will continue, despite extreme financial pressure. We recognise that the Welsh Government uses the **Equality Impact Assessment** process to identify unintended consequences and fully support this approach. We stress the importance of data collection and analysis within this process. There is a severe lack of gender disaggregated data which means that it is difficult for policy-makers to fully appreciate the impact of decisions on women. We also note that any issues identified in assessment must be address in order for the process to be worthwhile.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has recently carried out an Appreciative Inquiry into the Equality Impact Assessment process for Welsh Government budgets and we hope that the learning from this exercise will inform the budgetary planning process going forward.

We would also promote a process of **gender mainstreaming**. This process ensures that the implications of policy decisions for women and men are considered before decisions are made so that both groups benefit equitably. This concept was introduced at the United Nation's Beijing World Conference for Women in 1995 and the principles are now applied in policy-making all over the world. The European Commission defines this concept as:

*'mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality by actively and openly taking into account at the planning stage their possible effects on the respective situation of men and women (gender perspective). This means systematically examining measures and policies and taking into account such possible effects when defining and implementing them.'*<sup>1</sup>

The Council of Europe on Gender Mainstreaming in 1998 offered an alternative definition:

*'the (re) organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy making'*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> European Commission, Communication COM(96)67 final «*Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities* »

<sup>2</sup> Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs (2009), Gender Equality Division, Gender Mainstreaming, Action Undertaken by the Council of Europe

Ultimately, gender mainstreaming aims to have an impact on all policies and to promote lasting structural and cultural change. Whilst awareness of the concept and purpose of gender mainstreaming is increasing, there remain challenges to truly embedding it in policy making, especially in times of economic duress.

Women's earning capacity and spending power are crucial for economic recovery. Public spending cuts are likely to impact women's jobs disproportionately and have a detrimental impact to the wider economy. We therefore stress the importance of action that will support women to engage with the economy.

### **Impact of the public sector equality duties**

Chwarae Teg hopes that the public sector equality duties will lead to greater consideration of gender issues in policy development. As mentioned in the previous section, there is a shortage of gender disaggregated data in a number of key areas such as business (e.g. births and deaths), transport (e.g. travel to work areas) and skills (e.g. apprenticeships). This will severely inhibit the ability of policy-makers to ensure gender mainstreaming.

The Equality Act has failed to prevent a reduction in funding for Equality and Human Rights. Our analysis of the draft budget for 2013-14 shows that there will once again be cuts to this allocation and we are concerned about the impact of this. Equality and Human Rights support the most vulnerable in our society and organisations funded by this department are already struggling with cuts in the face of increased demand. The voluntary sector delivers excellent value for money and continues to do so under difficult circumstances. Organisations are continually looking for ways to economise and further cuts will increase pressure on the sector. Welsh Government funding for the voluntary sector is already very small and cuts would make little difference to the immediate challenges the Government is facing and create more difficulties in the longer term as support services diminish.

### **Issues with using techniques such as gender budgeting**

Chwarae Teg is keen to see a process of **gender budgeting** implemented by the Welsh Government. We draw attention to data gaps again here as gender disaggregated data is crucial to ensure budgets are planned in a way that allows women and men to benefit equitably.

### **Further issues for consideration**

Chwarae Teg is very concerned to see a reduction in allocations for **match funding**. This money levers in value over and above the amount of the monetary investment for Wales and represents capital investment rather than revenue spend. Match funding is already difficult for organisations to secure and reduction will restrict valuable work with disadvantaged groups.

We are also alarmed to discover that the Welsh European Funding Office is considering **removing gender equality as a priority in the next round of structural funds**. As our forthcoming research into Women in the Workforce in Wales will show, women continue to face severe disadvantage in the economy, despite their prominence in the labour market and their overall success in education.

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