

## Response to NAFW Enterprise and Business Committee inquiry:

# Assisting Young People into Employment

November 2014

### Introduction

Chwarae Teg exists to deliver our vision of a Wales where women achieve and prosper. We do this by working with women to broaden horizons and build confidence and skills; working with employers to create modern workplaces that are successful by harnessing everyone's contribution; and working with influencers, educators and decision makers to build a society that values, supports and benefits women and men equally.

While unemployment levels on the whole are decreasing, youth unemployment remains stubbornly high across Wales and the UK<sup>1</sup> which means that action to support young people into sustainable employment must be a priority. Young men and women can often face quite different barriers to accessing the workplace and strategies to support young people into work must take account of these differences to have any lasting impact.

These differences and the support required are discussed in our detailed response below.

Key points:

1. Young men and women can often face quite different barriers to entering employment and strategies to support young people into employment and tackle youth unemployment must be based on a full understanding of these differences.
2. It is vital that young people are equipped with the skills and experiences that employers are looking for and that all young people, regardless of gender are encouraged to explore a wide range of career options.
3. While schemes and initiatives in Wales, such as Jobs Growth Wales and the Apprenticeship programme are having success it is important that this is being felt by both men and women and action is taken to ensure these schemes do not perpetuate gender stereotypes.

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<sup>1</sup> Welsh Government (2014) Key Economic Statistics, October 2014

## Detailed Response

### 1. Strategies to support young people into work and tackle youth unemployment must be based on an understanding of the different barriers and support required by young men and women

- 1.1. Young men and women can often face quite different barriers when entering the workplace and the support they need to access work is different as a result.
- 1.2. Caring responsibilities remain a significant barrier for women of all ages and for young women the difficulties can be even more acute. Over half of females aged 19-24 who are NEET are economically inactive due to family or other caring responsibilities and 84% of young mothers in Wales (under 21) are NEET.<sup>2</sup>
- 1.3. For those with caring responsibilities finding work or training that offers the flexibility they needs is vital.

**Recommendation 1: We recommend that the current level of flexibility in support be investigated and where possible improved to offer young mothers a better chance of gaining the necessary experience and qualifications to enter quality work.**

- 1.4. The cost of accessing work or training, particularly in circumstances where pay may be lower such as apprenticeships, can be prohibitive to young people with caring responsibilities. This is due in part to the high costs of care services.

**Recommendation 2: We recommend that financial support and childcare support be made available to carers entering training positions.**

- 1.5. Transport helps the labour market to function effectively linking workers with their workplaces and influencing where people choose to work and live, how many hours they work and the wages they can accept.<sup>3</sup> For those that rely on public transport, such as women and young people, cost and availability of services can be another barrier to the workplace.
- 1.6. In rural areas, issues around cost and availability of public transport can be even more acute, especially for those who may need to travel to access services such as childcare as well as access work and training.

<sup>2</sup> Chwarae Teg (2012) "Female Youth Unemployment" Briefing Paper

<sup>3</sup> Missing Million policy paper (2012) 'Transport barriers to youth employment'

[http://www.theworkfoundation.com/DownloadPublication/Report/327\\_Transport%20Policy%20Paper%202.pdf](http://www.theworkfoundation.com/DownloadPublication/Report/327_Transport%20Policy%20Paper%202.pdf)

- 1.7. We were pleased to see Welsh Government commit to look at the potential use of concessionary fares for young people hope that this will be progressed quickly.
- 1.8. Following calls from a number of organisations including ourselves and Sustrans Cymru multi-use discounts are currently being trialled on the South Wales Valleys line.<sup>4</sup>

**Recommendation 3: The multi-use discount scheme being trialled on the South Wales Valleys line should be rolled out further to include bus travel to limit the prohibitive effect of travel costs of those that work part time.**

- 1.9. Among young people who are not in employment or training (NEET) there is a clear gender split. Between the ages of 16-18 boys are more likely to be NEET than girls but this changes for those aged 19-24. With this in mind we have some concerns about the potential impact of the prioritisation of support for young people aged 16-18 by Welsh Government.

**Recommendation 4: It is clear that young women will be impacted disproportionately as a result of this decision and we suggest that mitigating actions are needed to support this group.**

- 1.10. Evidence from England also suggests that the problem of female NEETs may be more entrenched than that of male NEETs. A recent study by the Young Women's Trust stated that male NEET rates may be more sensitive to economic conditions and as a result we might see male NEET levels fall more quickly than female NEET levels as the economy recovers.<sup>5</sup> It may be beneficial to see if similar trends are true in Wales.
- 1.11. We welcome the integrated approach outlined by the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework and the inclusion of the lead worker role. This allows for a personalised approach to employment support that is vital if young people are to be supported to find sustainable employment.

**Recommendation 5: To further strengthen the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework recommend that lead workers be provided with gender awareness training to ensure that they fully understand the different barriers that young men and women face and are also aware of the need to tackle gender stereotyping.**

<sup>4</sup> <http://chwaratwg.com/news-1/2013/11/12/part-time-train-travel-for-wales/>

<sup>5</sup> Young Women's Trust (2014) "NEETS and Gender: A preliminary study for 'Scarred for Life?' an inquiry led by Young Women's Trust

## **2. We must ensure that young people are equipped with the right skills and take action to tackle the skills mismatch**

- 2.1. It is becoming increasingly clear that employers are looking for 'hard skills', such as numeracy and literacy, alongside 'soft skills' such as work ethic and time keeping.<sup>6</sup>
- 2.2. While action is being taken to tackle poor numeracy and literacy levels, less attention is being paid to the employability skills that some young people are lacking. By including these skills across the curriculum and employment support schemes this deficit could start to be addressed.
- 2.3. As well as having the right skills, quality work experience and careers advice are vital to ensuring that young people are able to succeed in the workplace.
- 2.4. Research has shown that for work experience to be of benefit it has to be meaningful and of a high quality.<sup>7</sup>
- 2.5. Careers advice can also be improved to provide greater information about the various routes into work – University, apprenticeships, traineeships – and move away from being about information to being about helping people to 'navigate information that leaves them inspired and sets them on a practical path to achieve their goals'<sup>8</sup>
- 2.6. Careers advice would benefit from being more aware of issues of gender stereotyping and occupational segregation. Women continue to dominate in low paid, part time and insecure jobs. If young women are not encouraged to consider a wider variety of career paths this occupational segregation will continue in the long term and in the short term, girls will be more vulnerable to recurring spells of unemployment.

**Recommendation 6: All Careers Advisors should be provided with gender awareness training to support them to play a role in tackling occupational segregation.**

- 2.7. Currently the UK is seeing a substantial skills mismatch where there are 5 hair and beauty qualifications awarded for every vacancy compared to 3 vacancies for every STEM qualification awarded.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Centre for Social Justice (2013) 'Signed on, written off: An inquiry into welfare dependency in Britain

<sup>7</sup> The Work Foundation (2013) 'Youth Insight – The voices of UK young people on their experience of the world of work and their aspirations of the future'  
[http://www.theworkfoundation.com/DownloadPublication/Report/340\\_Aspirations%20and%20Experience.pdf](http://www.theworkfoundation.com/DownloadPublication/Report/340_Aspirations%20and%20Experience.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> CBI (2013) 'Changing the pace: CBI/ Pearson education and skill survey 2013'  
[http://www.cbi.org.uk/media/2119176/education\\_and\\_skills\\_survey\\_2013.pdf](http://www.cbi.org.uk/media/2119176/education_and_skills_survey_2013.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Sutton Trust (2013) 'Real Apprenticeships: Creating a revolution in English skills'  
<http://www.suttontrust.com/news/publications/real-apprenticeships/>

**Recommendation 7: Careers advice and employment support should be more closely aligned with the labour market to tackle the skills mismatch.**

**3. How effective are the range of schemes, initiatives and projects aimed at supporting young people into work, for example: Jobs Growth Wales; apprenticeships; traineeships; other projects supported by European funding; and third-sector-run projects? Do they provide good value for money?**

3.1. Jobs Growth Wales is having notable success in supporting young people into work. However the recent evaluation did suggest that more could be done to ensure that the scheme does not inadvertently perpetuate gender stereotypes.

3.2. The evaluation showed that the most prominent occupations in the JGW programme are administrative and secretarial positions; elementary positions and caring leisure and other service occupations.<sup>10</sup> All of these are quite feminized sectors that are characterized by low pay. The evaluation also showed that females are more likely to found in caring, leisure and other services than men, 28% compared to 7%, and in administrative roles, 39% compared to 23%.<sup>11</sup>

**Recommendation 8: We recommend that steps are taken to tackle the continued gender segregation within Jobs Growth Wales placements to ensure that both young men and women are able to consider the widest range of job opportunities possible.**

3.3. Apprenticeships also continue to be notably segregated by gender with many higher paying sectors seeing much larger numbers of male apprentices than female.

**Recommendation 9: Action to address the significant gender division within apprenticeships should be prioritized and Welsh Government should encourage apprenticeship providers to consider what action they could take to appeal to a wider applicant base.**

3.4. For those further from the labour market and those from disadvantaged areas accessing training opportunities can be even harder and they can face greater exclusion when competition is high.

**Recommendation 10: Pre-apprenticeship support for disadvantaged young women would help them to gain the skills and confidence required to secure an apprenticeship.**

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<sup>10</sup> Welsh Government (2014) Jobs Growth Wales Evaluation

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

## Conclusion

The barriers to the workplace that young men and women face can often be quite different and as such the support needed is also different. It is important that strategies to support young people into work take full account of these differences. It is also important that young people are being equipped with the right skills for the workplace. The skills mismatch in the UK is increasingly apparent and action must be taken to better align employment support and careers advice with labour market trends. By doing so we can ensure that young people are able to access sustainable employment and help Wales to evolve into the highly skilled nation that contributes to a vibrant Welsh economy.

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Chwarae Teg would be happy to discuss any of the above in more detail. Please contact:

Natasha Davies

**Policy Partner**

[Natasha.davies@chwaraeteg.com](mailto:Natasha.davies@chwaraeteg.com)

02920 478900