



**Response to the Welsh Government's consultation on:**

## **A new national youth work strategy for Wales 2013–2018**

**September 2013**

### **Introduction**

**Chwarae Teg** has extensive experience of working with women and girls to tackle gender inequality and works with the Welsh Government to promote policies and practices that are gender sensitive. Raising aspirations and promoting the engagement of girls and young women in education, training and employment opportunities is a primary concern for Chwarae Teg as it is linked to the persistence of occupational segregation, the over representation of women amongst the working poor, and the gender pay gap in Wales.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation and whilst we did not feel it appropriate to respond to the specific consultation questions, we would like to make a number of points to ensure that gender aspects are properly considered in the new strategy for youth work in Wales.

The strategy for youth services in Wales needs to take account of the gender differences between its users. It is important to have gender sensitive targeted support and interventions in order to maximise the impact of services provided to young people in Wales. We need to make sure that boys and girls are being treated equally. This paper highlights the role youth services can play in engaging with girls and young women in Wales so that they benefit from the advice, guidance and support they provide in developing the necessary social and personal skills that prepare them for life and employment.

## Key points:

1. There is a need for more gender disaggregated data to be collected by both the statutory and voluntary youth services so we have an accurate picture of any gender differences between service users. This will be a first step in developing appropriate gender specific interventions which may have more impact.
2. All youth service providers should be aware of gender differences and take steps to increase equality of opportunity for males and females. Services and initiatives should be 'gender-lensed' to ensure females are not unintentionally excluded.
3. The Youth Service Reference group should have gender balance to ensure females have an equal voice. Evidence exists that inclusive and diverse boards are more likely to be effective boards, better able to understand their customers and stakeholders and to benefit from fresh perspectives, new ideas, vigorous challenge and broad experience.

## Detailed Response

### 1. The need for data disaggregated by gender

To deliver the best service, it is important to understand the needs of the service user. We know from the reports of 22 local authorities in Wales that 123,110 young people were registered members of the Youth Service in 2011-12, representing 21 per cent of the population of 11 to 25 year olds. 52 per cent of the 123,110 were male and 48 per cent were female<sup>1</sup>. **Statutory and voluntary youth services should collect and monitor gender disaggregated data in order to build an accurate picture of how our young people are engaging with statutory and voluntary services in Wales.** Drawing out any gender differences from statistical information available would clearly show if the both girls and boys are being supported equally, the points at which efforts might need to be redoubled and would be a first step in helping those designing services to develop gender specific interventions which may have more impact.

### 2. Reasons for gender lensing - specific considerations for young women

*"A gender lens helps us to see clearly the role that gender plays in shaping our male and female lives, work, experiences and choices"*<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Stat Wales, SDR 178/2012, Youth Services in Wales, 2011-12, Oct 2012

<sup>2</sup> The Victorian Women's Trust, Gender Lens for Inclusive Philanthropy, 2009

The potential for impact is strengthened when the different circumstances and needs of men and women, boys and girls are taken into account.<sup>3</sup> Highlighted below are some specific considerations for young women in Wales which could be taken into account to improve opportunities for young women.

**Youth services have a key role to play in raising the aspirations of girls and young women by promoting a broad a range of opportunities so that they develop skills that will help them succeed in life, education and future employment. Youth services have a critical role to play in minimising the perpetuation of gender stereotyping and must empower both boys and girls to make the most of the opportunities available to them.**

## **2.1 Young women with caring responsibilities**

Figures published by the Welsh Government show that just under one fifth of young people in Wales are currently Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).<sup>4</sup>

Statistical information provided by the Welsh Government indicates that males are more likely to be NEET between the ages of 16-18 and females between the ages of 19-24 (that is 28,700 males as compared to 31,200 females between the ages of 19-24). Over half of these young women are economically inactive due to family or other caring responsibilities<sup>5</sup>. **Gender differences must be considered when planning a future youth work strategy for Wales and there needs to be positive action to ensure that young women with caring responsibilities do not become disengaged.**

Figures show that 84% of young mothers in Wales (under 21) are NEET.<sup>6</sup> Young women can struggle to access childcare support that meets their needs and a lack of transport results in them being socially excluded. Young single mothers in rural areas feel particularly isolated. **Sound advice and support for this group is absolutely crucial to ensure that young women understand the options available to them.**

## **2.2 Gender stereotyping and the promoting non-traditional career pathways to girls**

The persistence of occupational segregation in the workforce is one of the main causes of the gender pay gap in Wales. Evidence drawn up by Chwarae Teg<sup>7</sup> shows that women are severely under-represented in the priority sectors in Wales.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Welsh Government (2012) Further analysis of data related to young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), March 2012

<sup>5</sup> Statistical Bulletin, 69/2013 Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), July 2013

<sup>6</sup> IWA (2010) Engaging Wales' Disengaged Youth, IWA, Cardiff

<sup>7</sup> Women in non-traditional sectors, Dr. Lucy Rees, Chwarae Teg, August 2013

For example, in apprenticeships, girls tend to be concentrated in sectors that offer little scope for reward and are under-represented in areas of skills shortages, such as science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). **Youth services have a key role to play in tackling gender stereotypes and need to find ways to open girls' and young women's minds to a broader range of opportunities.** It must avoid inadvertently reinforcing stereotypes of what are appropriate behaviours and future career paths for girls and boys. It must work to engender the skills and personal qualities that will equip young women to compete as they progress in school, college and the workforce. Much more needs to be done to encourage girls to consider pathways to entering employment in sectors which are predicted to grow in the future. In June, the Women's Business Council called on the UK government to invest in the futures of girls and young women in order to maximise their economic potential and increase the UK's competitiveness in a global market<sup>8</sup>.

The Welsh Government urgently needs to broaden girls' aspirations and career choices by creating partnerships between youth services, schools, career development services, employers and parents.

Chwarae Teg has extensive experience of working with women and girls to challenge stereotyping and encourage them to consider non-traditional careers. It has developed promotional materials which highlight the diverse careers available to girls in non-traditional sectors. Encouraging more girls into higher level apprenticeships will provide access to good quality jobs and the opportunity to study at a higher level and thereby counteract the view held by careers advisers, schools and some parents that apprenticeships are low status. Youth Services also have a key role to play in changing this viewpoint.

### **2.3 Promotion of Young Women's Entrepreneurship**

Figures show that women are under-represented in business in the UK, starting enterprises at a lesser rate than men (6.3% for women, 11.6% for men in 2012)<sup>9</sup>. Chwarae Teg believes that **youth work strategies should be strengthened to engender a spirit of enterprise and encourage more girls to consider starting their own business as a career opportunity.**

Chwarae Teg strongly recommends that the Welsh Government requires the two consortia led by Menter a Busnes and Prospects (in partnership with Cazbah) to consider any gender dimension as it develops the recently launched Youth Entrepreneurship Services (YES).

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<sup>8</sup> Maximising women's contribution to future economic growth, Women's Business Council, June 2013

<sup>9</sup> Global Entrepreneurship Monitor

### **3. Gender Balance on the Youth Service Reference Group**

**Chwarae Teg recommends that the Welsh Government ensures there is equal representation of women and men on its proposed new Youth Service Reference Group** to ensure that women's needs are considered. Evidence shows that inclusive and diverse boards are more likely to be more effective, better able to understand their customers and stakeholders, leading to better decision making<sup>10</sup>.

#### **Conclusion**

Youth services need to understand the potential impact of gender issues and take these into account when planning their strategy if it is to deliver maximum results. In order to understand these, it is imperative that more data needs to be collected by gender to fully understand the differences and ensure services are planned with these in mind. It is important that youth services are targeted to meet differing gender needs and particularly that services do not exclude girls but are equally supportive to everyone. Moreover, youth services have a crucial role to play in tackling gender stereotyping. Given that the oversight of Youth Services is to be vested in a new Youth Service Reference Group, we strongly recommend that there is equal representation of women and men on that group so that it is truly representative of and supportive of young women in Wales .

Chwarae Teg has the expertise to advise the Welsh Government on the inclusion of a gender dimension as they develop the vision for a new national youth work strategy for Wales. This would result in the more effective use of resources as they would be targeted at the needs of the end users of these services.

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<sup>10</sup> Women on Boards, Gov.UK, 2011