

Welsh Assembly Government

# **Gender Equality Scheme:**

## **Advancing Equality for Men and Women**

### **Summary of Engagement Events**

**June 2006**

## **THIS SUMMARY**

This is an account of three 'engagement meetings' held in Mold (19<sup>th</sup> June 2006), Cardiff (21<sup>st</sup> June 2006) and Carmarthen (22<sup>nd</sup> June 2006). The meetings were organised by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG). Their purpose was to start identifying priorities for the WAG and for the Gender Equality Scheme Action Plans. Each meeting lasted for about three hours, and explored general issues relating to the responsibilities of WAG, and also several specific policy areas, including Training and Education, Health and Social Care, Housing, Transport, Planning and the future processes for engagement. The emphasis was on finding out the priorities of the participants, rather than responding to any pre-determined agenda set by the WAG.

The report is in two parts:

- the first section reports the key themes and general issues that were raised during the meetings; and
- the second lists specific issues relating to the various policy areas that were discussed.

Wherever possible, the words are those of the participants themselves, as captured during the events.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Background to the Gender Duty**

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (as amended), will place a general duty on public authorities from April 2007 when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- promote equality of opportunity between men and women; and
- to eliminate unlawful sex discrimination and harassment.

This means that public bodies will be required to promote gender equality in the design and delivery of services and address issues for the public sector workforce. In addition, individuals will no longer have to bring cases in order for inequalities to be dealt with as the onus will now be on public authorities to eradicate discrimination and to endorse equality. Clearly then the impact on the gender equality duty will be far-reaching.

The duty also requires some public authorities to develop a Gender Equality Scheme setting out the overall objectives that the authority has identified as necessary to eliminate discrimination and promote gender equality. This will include considering the need to have objectives that address the causes of any disadvantage between men and women that are related to their sex.

Fundamentally, the duty is more than equal treatment; it is about promoting and taking action to bring about gender equality. It involves looking at gender equality issues for men and women and understanding the reasons why inequality exists and how to overcome them. It is about creating an effective service for all, which will bring about the opportunity for everyone to be able to take up the services that they require.

## KEY THEMES

### The Pay Gap

One of the key issues raised at the meetings concerned the pay gap between men and women. There is still a pay gap of 12% between full time working women and men. In Wales, in 2005, the average hourly earnings for women working full time were £10.63 and £12.08 for men.<sup>1</sup> For women, working part time they were £8.31, thus showing a 31% pay gap between part time working women and full time men who work.<sup>2</sup> By examining statistics like these it is clear why the Equal Opportunities Commission still considers the pay gap to be a significant issue that needs to be addressed.

To compound this income inequality women also lose out in pension schemes because they do not accrue the same number of years of full time paid employment without gaps. Linear career patterns mean that men have more of an opportunity to contribute to a pension scheme and therefore secure a better level of pension in their retirement.

### Horizontal Segregation

Horizontal segregation refers to the fact that women are often concentrated in certain sectors of the labour market, otherwise known as the 'feminised professions'. This type of segregation is supported by widely held cultural values and social attitudes. A lack of gender equality in education and training has helped to embed these attitudes, which in turn has led to men and women dominate different industries and sectors<sup>3</sup>.

The Equal Opportunities Commission in its report 'A fair Deal for Women in the workplace' found that three-quarters of working women occupy just 5 occupational groups, the 5 C's (Clerical, catering, caring, cleaning and customer service).<sup>4</sup> In addition, these occupational groups are typified by low pay.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Facts about men and women in Wales,' *Equal Opportunities Commission* 2006, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> 'Facts about men and women in Wales,' *Equal Opportunities Commission* 2006, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> 'Breaking Through the Glass Ceiling – women in management,' *International Labour Office* 2004, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> 'A fair Deal for Women in the workplace,' *Women and Work Commission* 2005, p.12.

## **Vertical Segregation**

Vertical segregation refers to the fact that women are under-represented in higher levels of all organisational hierarchies and occupations<sup>5</sup>. This form of segregation has its foundation in both cultural and organisational barriers and has resulted in women dominating lower category jobs. A quick look at the private sector in the UK gives us a good example of a vertically segregated labour market where women make up only a small proportion of high level executives within organisations<sup>6</sup>.

## **Pregnant Women and Childcare**

In the UK in 2005, it was found by the Equal Opportunities Commission that 45% of employed pregnant women suffered pregnancy discrimination<sup>7</sup>.

## **Part-Time Working/Other Caring Responsibilities**

Research published in 2006 shows that 40% of employed women work part time compared with 11% of men of which only 4% are fathers. In addition, caring responsibilities were found to have a significant impact on women and men's ability to continue in employment or to take up employment. Figures did show an upward trend in the number of fathers taking advantage of paternity leave, however in general men are still less likely than women to take time off work to care for their children due to perceived work pressures and societal norms<sup>8</sup>.

## **Service Design and Delivery**

A significant area that the duty will address is the way in which public services are designed on the one size fits all approach. Women and men are different; this is why public policy needs to reflect this. It is evident that women still take on the majority of caring roles. Even if the roles were shared equally, women and men have distinctive needs. It is important to comprehend that

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<sup>5</sup> 'Gender and the Labour Market in South East England – Volume 1', Corby, S., Stannworth, C., Long, S. and Fox, M., 2005.

<sup>6</sup> 'Sex and Power: Who Runs Britain?', *Equal Opportunities Commission* 2005.

<sup>7</sup> 441,000 is the number of employed pregnant women per year (Source: *Register of Live Births and the Millennium Cohort Study*). The Equal Opportunities Commission has found that 45% of these suffer pregnancy discrimination (around 198,000 women per year).

<sup>8</sup> 'Facts about men and women in Wales,' *Equal Opportunities Commission*, 2006, p. 13-15.

gender equality is not simply about inequalities between men and women. It is also an inclusive issue which cuts across other areas of inequality such as age, disability, race and religion.

## **SUBJECT AND SPECIFIC THEMES**

### **Training and Education**

1. Peer pressure, social pressure and role models channel young people into career stereotypes. These need to be challenged to open up routes to non-traditional work and roles for both sexes.
2. There needs to be education on equality and diversity within schools imbedded into the curriculum.
3. Boys are more likely to be excluded for behavioural issues.
4. The boy/girl achievement gap does not equate to girls getting better jobs. Girls outperform boys at secondary level but to date this does not translate into better pay or job opportunities.
5. There need to be more positive role models promoted and specific training made available for women aspiring to leadership in all sectors.

### **Health and Social Care**

1. The social care workforce is dominated by women. This restricts the choice of male recipients of care who have no option but to accept female carers.
2. Men are less likely to visit their GP's compared to women. Men need to be encouraged to take up primary care and screening opportunities to reduce the number of late diagnoses and emergency interventions.
3. More help needs to be given to women following a hospital stay. Women tend to stay for a shorter time in hospital and are less likely to have support in place when they go home and tend to resume their normal responsibilities too quickly. This impedes their recovery time.

## **Housing**

1. Men are more likely to be earning higher wages and therefore have more ready access to the housing market
2. Single fathers are likely to be offered studio/one bed accommodation which impedes their ability to get access to their children and share childcare.
3. There is not enough childcare support for single parents to access work. The location of wider family determines where people chose to live as single people are dependant on the availability of childcare.
4. Gypsy and Travellers have the highest mortality rate in the country because they do not have the same access to health services and housing.
5. More men than women have access to a private vehicle. The transport links to housing estates should therefore be taken into account when new estates are built.

## **Transport and Planning**

1. Transport planning needs to consider the needs of:
  - parents who work irregular hours who have children of school age.
  - the accessibility of public transport e.g. buses and trains need to be accessible to pushchairs/wheel chairs.
2. Public transport should be more flexible. Timetables and routes should accommodate more than just the traditional commute form home to the workplace.
3. Transport costs also have a significant impact on access to its use. Fares also need to be flexible to allow the hop on hop off facility for parents and carers who may have to make a number of stops at different places on their way to and from work.



## Engagement and Involvement

1. 'Consultation' is too limited a concept – the aim should be the full involvement of people from the point where an issue is first being considered (and not just from the point where options have been short-listed).
2. All aspects of the public sector in Wales should cooperate to develop and support an on-going network of groups who would ensure the full involvement of women and men.
3. It is important to ensure that papers are distributed before any consultation meetings so that people can prepare beforehand. WAG should ensure that web sites contain all the necessary information for attending the meeting e.g. parking arrangements on the Assembly web site.
4. Special attention should be given to new and dedicated ways of engaging young people.
5. There should be more events in North Wales – there is a strong perception that the Assembly has less interest in north Wales than in the south.
6. In addition to holding meetings, WAG should explore more creative ways of communicating with people e.g. going out to community centres, leisure facilities
7. Good practice in the public sector should be publicised on the internet, so that people themselves, and those responsible for service provision, can see what should be achieved everywhere.
8. AMs still do not always respond to constituency communications within the recognised maximum periods.
9. The Assembly Government should publicise events. Men should feel that these events and these schemes and the legislation will encompass their opinions too.
10. Treat gender like key performance indications (targets,

plans, reviews, evaluate report). Participants wanted information on how to get engaged with other public bodies and their action plans.

11. Participants wanted to see public bodies engage more often with the public and organisations.
12. Participants wanted more transparency from WAG and other public bodies.
13. Questionnaires, consultation events, awareness, media campaigns.

### **The Way Forward**

There is evidence that there are still persistent inequalities between men and women. However, when the new legal duty on gender equality comes into force on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2007 there is an opportunity to bridge the gap and strive towards equality and better services for men and women.

The findings from these 3 engagement events has been fed through to the relevant policy departments within the Assembly Government and will be shared with other public bodies in Wales. The recommendations and suggestions raised by the participants of the events will be used to help WAG Departments to set the priorities in their action plans and will provide a useful basis for the Strategic Equality and Diversity Unit when drafting the first Welsh Assembly Government Gender Equality Scheme.