

Chapter 4: Priorities in Wales

Purpose of Section

4.1 This section sets out the priorities for EQUAL in Wales. These priorities have been developed within the overall framework of the GB aims for EQUAL as set out in the GB Community Initiative Programme. The priorities identified are broad enough to allow for policy developments over the 6 year period of the Initiative and are intended to provide a prospectus for potential applicants.

Aims & Objectives of the EQUAL Community Initiative

4.2 EQUAL is part of the European Union's strategy for promoting more and better jobs and for ensuring that no one is denied access to them. The overall aim of EQUAL is to promote new ways of combating all forms of discrimination and inequality in connection with the labour market, through trans-national co-operation. The Initiative has a strong emphasis on dissemination and influencing the policy making process and will provide the scope to trial and test new ideas which can shape future human resource development and employment policy.

4.3 The Initiative will have a particular focus on equality issues associated with gender; disability; race or ethnic origin; religion or belief; age and sexual orientation. EQUAL will also support the social and vocational integration of asylum seekers/refugees.

GB Priorities Framework

4.4 The GB CIP sets out an overarching framework of priorities for EQUAL. This framework was developed in consultation with the National Assembly for Wales and the Scottish Executive. In addition, a GB EQUAL Working Group was established to advise on the proposed priorities and the outcomes of the GB wide consultation exercise undertaken during the summer of 2000. This Working Group included representatives from various Government Departments, social partners, the statutory equality commissions, the voluntary sector and other organisations with a specific interest in EQUAL.

4.5 Responses to the consultation, and advice from the GB EQUAL Working Group, indicated that the Employability themes were regarded as being of particular importance in exploring ways of overcoming barriers to employment facing excluded groups and should attract a high proportion of the available resources. In particular the absence of basic skills was identified as a key issue for EQUAL to address.

4.6 It was also concluded that with the exception of theme G (reconciling family and professional life), all of the EQUAL themes should be included within the GB programme. The issue of work/life balance will be addressed through the Adaptability themes, because of the need to integrate this with measures to promote flexibility in working practices and to promote business competitiveness.

4.7 The results of the consultation in Wales were very much in accord with the overall GB view. Therefore, although many of the priorities for Wales have been tailored to respond to particular Welsh needs and circumstances, there are clear and demonstrable links with the aims of the initiative at the GB level.

Equal Opportunities Statement

4.8 Each action under the EQUAL programme in Wales will:

- acknowledge that the primary responsibility is on society and its institutions to find ways of including people rather than on the individual to overcome societal barriers.
- value social diversity, recognising that there are differences between people, groups and communities that must be addressed in any policy or strategic development
- promote policies that positively encourage and enable participation by all sectors of the community.
- work towards removing physical, institutional and attitudinal barriers to participation in social, economic and political activities, taking into account the different access, information, communication and participation needs of individuals.

4.9 In particular, the EQUAL programme will:

- ensure that all information is available in appropriate languages and in accessible formats
- ensure that all premises and venues used by EQUAL participants are accessible
- ensure that all application, evaluation and management procedures are accessible
- address HAC (human aids to communication – e.g. language interpretation, BSL interpretation, palantype etc) requirements
- address participation requirements of parents and carers.

Wales Priorities for EQUAL

EMPLOYABILITY

Rationale

4.10 There are important problems in the Welsh labour market which inhibit the prospects for economic development and growth, and these are particularly concentrated in West Wales and the Valleys and the more urban areas of East Wales. Economic inactivity rates are high compared to the UK and unemployment is higher in most of Wales. Pockets of high long-term unemployment remain, particularly in deprived communities across Wales.

4.11 In addition many people in the working age population lack the basic and generic skills to gain and retain employment and there is underachievement in terms of qualifications. A significant proportion of the workforce has poor basic skills.

4.12 Labour Force Survey data shows that the excluded groups to be targeted under EQUAL are particularly vulnerable to unemployment and inactivity and that their relative position in the labour market in Wales is worse than the GB average. Skill levels are also generally lower, particularly amongst disabled people and older workers.

4.13 EQUAL can help to improve the effectiveness of existing labour market interventions such as the New Deal and also inform the development of new approaches to community regeneration such as Communities First, which will target some of the most deprived communities across Wales.

Theme A: Facilitating Access and return to the labour market for those who have difficulty in being integrated or re-integrated into a labour market which must be open to all.

Aims

1. To combat discrimination faced by individuals from excluded groups and promote equality in the workplace. Activities could include:
 - Exploring new ways of developing positive attitudes towards citizenship in pre 16 education by providing guidance officers and learning practitioners with more effective tools to promote social inclusion and equality of opportunity.
 - Developing more effective personal development programmes aimed at raising aspirations amongst excluded groups.
 - Innovative approaches to tackling youth and adult illiteracy and reducing the number of young people who drop out of the school system early. Particular attention will be given to young people with learning difficulties and with educational problems.
 - Developing a suitably accredited, comprehensive equal opportunities training framework targeted at employers and co-workers and to explore new ways of supporting training delivery.
 - Conducting research into the real and perceived barriers faced by excluded groups in accessing the workplace and to develop innovative ways of overcoming these.
2. To test support mechanisms to help excluded groups integrate/re-integrate into the labour market. Activities could include:
 - Piloting ways of improving dependent care to enable carers to access and return to the labour market and helping employers to develop more carer friendly employment practices.
 - Developing models for supporting sustainability of childcare provision, particularly in deprived communities and rural areas.
 - The Development of new methods and frameworks for measuring "distance travelled" and "soft outcomes" as part of integrated approaches to improving the employability of

excluded groups.

- Exploring new ways of ensuring guidance and learning providers promote equality of opportunity in career selection amongst excluded groups pre-16 and before they access the labour market.
- New approaches to raising the awareness of guidance and learning providers of equality issues and the needs of excluded groups.
- New ways of improving access to and participation in vocational education and training for excluded groups.
- Exploring new ways of using volunteering opportunities as a means of re-integrating excluded groups into the labour market, with a particular emphasis on older people.
- New approaches to progression/development work linked to achieving equality through recruitment, selection and induction systems.
- Exploring new ways of ensuring systems of transition into the labour market offers effective support for young people leaving care.

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Theme B: Opportunities to promote potential for ethnic minorities within the world of work.

Aim: To improve the employment prospects of ethnic minorities. Activities could include:

- Exploring new ways of developing positive attitudes amongst young people (including pre 16) towards citizenship and diversity in our society
- Providing guidance officers and learning practitioners with more effective tools to

promote social inclusion and equality of opportunity.

- Exploring innovative ways of engaging communities/families in supporting language training for ethnic minorities through partnership arrangements with learning providers and the development of mentoring approaches.
- Improving employers, business and employment agencies awareness and perceptions of qualifications, knowledge and skills acquired from outside GB
- Piloting ways of improving skill levels in ethnic minority communities.

Links with the Employment Action Plan

Potential Partner Organisations include:

National Council for Education and Training in Wales; Employment Service; Local Authorities; FE and HE Institutions; secondary schools; other public sector bodies; careers companies; NTOs; voluntary and community organisations; the private sector and trade unions.

Potential Transnational partners include:

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Financial Allocation

40% of the Wales EQUAL allocation.

Theme A – 30%; Theme B – 10%

Matched Funding

Potential sources of matched funding include: the National Assembly for Wales, Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies, the Employment Service, local authorities, the National Council for Education & training, Careers Service Association for Wales, voluntary sector, National Lottery Funds, NTOs and the Private Sector.

Final Beneficiaries:

Development Partnerships

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Field of Intervention:

21

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Rationale

4.14 Wales needs to create an environment where, through the right support and encouragement, all people have equal opportunity to become entrepreneurs. Sustainable business development is the key to the creation of jobs, enhanced competitiveness and the generation of wealth. However, Wales has the second lowest business start-up rate of any region in the UK.

4.15 The proportion of the working population in self-employment is 7.4% for Wales compared to 8.3% for GB and we know that the figure for many of the excluded groups is significantly lower.

4.16 Activity under the EQUAL Initiative will need to complement and build upon the framework for action which has been developed to encourage enterprise across Wales through the Entrepreneurship Action Plan. The Plan recognises that certain groups such as disabled people, women, older workers and ethnic minorities are currently underrepresented in enterprise creation. It could also complement developments in the social economy linked to Communities First.

4.17 It will also be important to develop community based enterprises to act as a bridge for those in disadvantaged areas currently excluded from the economy, to move back into mainstream economic activity.

Theme C : Opening up the business creation process to all by providing the tools

required for setting up in business and for the identification and exploitation of new possibilities for creating employment in rural areas.

Aim: To test approaches to ensure that mainstream business support is developed to meet the needs of excluded groups. Activities could include:

- New approaches to awareness raising and training for business support advisers to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the principles and practical application of equal opportunities and a better appreciation of the needs of excluded groups by allowing excluded groups to participate in the development and delivery of services.
- Developing new ways of promoting an entrepreneurial culture amongst young people in education with an emphasis on longer-term engagement.
- Exploring the use of women-only pre-start up business training, support and advice and the use of women's business networks and mentoring
- Exploring the use of targeted ethnic minority pre-start up business training, support and advice and the use of ethnic minority business networks and mentoring.
- Exploring new ways of promoting and sustaining entrepreneurship in rural areas amongst excluded groups.
- Conducting research into the real and perceived barriers to business start-up amongst excluded groups and to develop innovative ways of overcoming these.
- Innovative ways of tailoring enterprise support provision to meet the needs of excluded groups, including the use of peer-group links and networks.
- Initiatives involving the financial institutions designed to address barriers to accessing business finance facing excluded groups. Research into Innovative financing (e.g women's banks, small business grants targeted at excluded groups).
- Developing links between higher education institutions and their surrounding area as a means of encouraging entrepreneurship within communities.

Theme D : Strengthening the social economy (the third sector), in particular the services of interest to the community, with a focus on improving the quality of jobs.

Aim: To develop a common understanding of the way in which the Social Economy can encourage labour market integration. Activities could include:

- Exploring the development of Credit Unions as a stepping stone towards entrepreneurial activity within communities.
- New approaches to developing the management and business skills of individuals involved in the community regeneration and providing them with toolkits to facilitate effective engagement with communities.
- Developing new models for encouraging communities to become empowered and socially sustainable, through capacity building and multi-agency partnership working.
- Developing reliable indicators of change in communities as a basis of measuring and evaluating progress in tackling social exclusion and supporting community regeneration in disadvantaged and deprived communities.
- Exploring models for engaging the private sector more effectively in supporting the development of the social economy and community enterprise activity.

Links with the Employment Action Plan

Potential Partner Organisations include:

Welsh Development Agency; Enterprise Agencies; Local Government; FE and HE Institutions; Employment Service; other public sector bodies; NTOs; Wales Co-operative Society; voluntary and community organisations; the private sector and trade unions.

Potential Transnational Partners include:

Financial Allocation

20% of Wales EQUAL Allocation.

Theme C – 10%; Theme D – 10%.

Matched Funding

Potential sources of matched funding include: the National Assembly for Wales, Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies, local authorities, Employment Service; voluntary sector, National Lottery Funds, WDA and the Private Sector.

Final Beneficiaries:

Development Partnerships

Field of Intervention:

24

ADAPTABILITY

Rationale

4.18 Wales needs to develop a skilled, enterprising adaptable and healthy workforce capable of meeting the needs of knowledge based, faster growing businesses. Success will depend upon adequate long-term investment in education, a culture of enterprise and a new emphasis on re-skilling and up-skilling the workforce. It will also be important to encourage diversity in the workforce by creating an environment whereby individuals can balance their work and personal lives.

4.19 The challenge for EQUAL will be to ensure that the groups with the lowest skill levels and those who face the biggest barriers to participating in lifelong learning are no longer excluded.

4.20 Wales must compete in an information age where the acquisition, analysis and use of knowledge will be key to sustained competitiveness and again it will be vital to ensure that those facing particular barriers are not left behind.

4.21 Activity under EQUAL will need to complement the National Learning Strategy for Wales, developed on the basis of the Learning is for Everyone Green Paper. The aim is to develop Wales as a 'Learning Country' by providing better access to information and provision and new measures to increase and widen participation.

4.22 EQUAL activity will also need to take into account the recommendations of the Skills Task Force which has been submitted to the National Assembly and published in October 2000.

Theme E : Promoting lifelong learning and inclusive work practices which encourage the recruitment and retention of those suffering discrimination and inequality in connection with the labour market.

Aim: To test innovative approaches to attract non-traditional learners to improve their basic and new skills. Activities could include:

- Piloting ways of improving access to basic and key skills in the workplace.
- New approaches to maximising the opportunities for people from excluded groups to acquire basic IT skills.
- Exploring the barriers (physical and psychological) which prevents excluded groups from accessing learning, and testing ways of overcoming these barriers (eg. Mentoring and use of alternative learning media and learning venues).
- Developing "employee sharing" practices and shared apprentice schemes as a means of overcoming barriers to training in SMEs and research into the feasibility of establishing a 'human resource skills pool' within particular business sectors.
- Innovative ways of providing training and personal development which is easily accessible for the employee and less disruptive for the employer.
- Innovative approaches to enabling social partners to develop workplace learning and pilot schemes to promote lifelong learning in SMEs.
- Exploring new ways of engaging SMEs and their employees in order to improve basic and new skills amongst micro businesses.
- Conducting research into the real and perceived barriers faced by excluded groups in accessing learning and to develop innovative ways of overcoming these.
- Developing effective recruitment guidelines and monitoring systems which allow a confidential system of self-identification of impairments and other potentially stigmatising or culturally exclusive labels.

Theme F : Supporting the adaptability of firms and employees to structural economic change and the use of information technology and other new technologies.

Aim: To promote inclusive working practices and adaptability, with a particular

emphasis on work/life balance and the use of ICT. Activities could include:

- Developing schemes and toolkits to persuade and help employers to adopt more flexible work/life balance employment policies.
- Research into the potential for developing homeworking practices amongst excluded groups as an option to supplement workplace employment.
- Exploring the use of flexible/progressive retirement policies as a means of retaining/transferring key skills within businesses
- Exploring models for developing sectoral and learning networks to support the training needs of groups of small and medium sized enterprises.
- Piloting ways of improving access to training in the workplace and elsewhere for excluded groups (eg. more imaginative and effective use of ICT and ICT training focusing specifically on the needs of older workers).
- Innovative ways of working with employers to support job retention for disabled people and those with work limiting illnesses; older people with health issues and people with caring responsibilities, including the use of technologies in work.
- Exploring positive measures to maintain the working capacity and skills of older workers and to raise employers' awareness of the potential of older workers.
- Piloting the placement of young people with IT skills into SMEs as an accessible means of expanding the IT skills of small firms.

Links with the Employment Action Plan

Potential Partner Organisations include:

National Council for Education and Training in Wales; Welsh Development Agency; Employment Service; FE and HE Institutions; other public sector bodies; Enterprise Agencies; NTOs voluntary and community organisations, the private sector and trade unions.

Potential Trans-national partners include:

Financial Allocation

25% of Wales EQUAL Allocation.

Theme E – 12.5%; Theme F – 12.5%

Matched Funding

Potential sources of matched funding include: the National Assembly for Wales, Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies, the Employment Service, local authorities, the National Council for Education & Training, voluntary sector, Careers Service Association for Wales, NTOs, WDA, trade unions and the private sector.

Final Beneficiaries:

Development Partnerships

Fields of Intervention:

23, 24.

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Rationale

4.23 There is an urgent need to remove barriers to education, training, employment, higher education and enterprise for women. Gender segregation is more marked in Wales than in the UK as a whole, with women concentrated in a narrower band of occupational sectors and in mainly low paid, low status work. Economic activity rates for women are also significantly below the GB average. Wales has one of the lowest levels of childcare provision in the EU. The absence of good quality, affordable and accessible childcare and responsibility for dependant's care can deny access to training and employment opportunities, particularly for women.

4.24 Although the gender pay gap has narrowed over the past 20 years, women's average gross weekly earnings for full-time employees was only 78% of men's in April 2000. Almost half the women in Wales earn less than £250 per week while only a quarter of men earn below this threshold. Conversely, half the men in Wales earn more than £350 per week but only a quarter of women workers come into this category. Women also continue to dominate part-time work, which tends to afford less training and career development opportunities. The Equal Opportunities Commission has published a Code of Practice to help employers develop non-discriminatory pay systems. The 'glass ceiling' is prevalent in Wales, particularly in sectors such as banking and teaching. The EOC published a report early in 2000 which showed that although girls consistently did better academically than boys they were still entering stereotypical jobs which helped to perpetuate the cycle of low pay for women.

Theme G : Reconciling family and professional life, as well as the re-integration of men and women who have left the labour market, by developing more flexible and effective forms of work organisation and support services

[To be delivered through Theme F]

Theme H : Reducing gender gaps and supporting job desegregation

Aim: To identify ways of supporting job desegregation. Activities could include:

- Innovative ways of delivering 'stay in touch' schemes for women, particularly those with higher level skills, who risk losing their up-to-date knowledge whilst outside the labour market or who will face difficulties re-entering the labour market.
- New approaches to facilitating access of women to lifelong learning and in particular to IT training.
- Piloting ways of breaking down and overcoming stereotypes of "women's and men's work" and roles among parents, peers, learning and guidance providers and employers.
- Testing innovative approaches to promoting career progression in sectors/occupations where gender is a perceived barrier (eg ICT, Engineering, Science).
- Research into the working culture of those sectors which are known to be dominated by one gender (i.e. is there a recognition of work-life balance issues in engineering etc). Testing ways in which those particular sectors could become more attractive to both men and women.

Links with the Employment Action Plan

Potential Partner Organisations include:

National Council for Education and Training in Wales; FE and HE Institutions; Welsh Development Agency; Employment Service; Local Government; other public sector bodies; Voluntary and community organisations; the private sector and trade unions.

Potential trans-national partners include:

Financial Allocation

5% of Wales EQUAL Allocation.

Theme H – 5%.

Matched Funding

Potential sources of matched funding include: the National Assembly for Wales, Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies, the Employment Service, local authorities, the National Council for Education & Training, voluntary sector, Careers Service Association for Wales, trade unions and the private sector.

Final Beneficiaries:

Development Partnerships

Field of Intervention:

25

ASYLUM SEEKERS/REFUGEES

Rationale

4.25 Asylum seekers and refugees are two legally distinct groups of individuals, who reside in the UK. EQUAL is required to focus on the needs of Asylum Seekers/Refugees. However one of the factors which has exacerbated the situation for Asylum Seekers/Refugees in the past

who are given permission to work - or become refugees - has been a failure to respond in a co-ordinated and coherent way to the very diverse needs of people within these two groups.

4.26 It is recognised that in order to develop a service which avoids the current pitfalls, EQUAL should enable individuals to be assisted along the continuum from asylum seeker to refugee - with support appropriate to their legal status. Restricting support to the "Asylum seeker" period would limit support and exacerbate rather than address their varied needs. EQUAL provides an opportunity to develop an employment strategy to run parallel to the Refugee Integration Strategy which is being devised by the National Asylum Support Service.

4.27 In view of the Home Office's policy responsibility for Asylum Seekers/Refugees it has been agreed that action will be taken forward on a GB basis for this theme. However, the aim is to ensure that innovative activity takes place in Wales and Scotland which responds to the needs and circumstances of each country.

[DN: Need to include reference to the expected numbers and expected dispersal policies of Asylum Seekers/Refugees in Wales]

Helping the integration of Asylum Seekers/Refugees

Aim: To develop an employment strategy which is appropriate to the needs of Asylum Seekers/Refugees and those allowed to live and work in the UK. Activities could include:

- Piloting new ways of supporting the transition from asylum seeker to mainstream services for those who have been given refugee status.
- Developing new personal development programmes for refugees focusing on social/life skills and workplace culture.
- Exploring innovative ways of engaging communities/families in supporting language training for refugees through partnership arrangements with learning providers and the development of mentoring approaches.
- Developing new approaches to raising the awareness of guidance and learning providers about the needs of asylum seekers and refugees.
- Conducting research and development work, in consultation with employer organisations, to support the recognition of overseas qualifications, acquired knowledge and skills.
- Piloting 'social clinics' as centres for successful transition.

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Links with the Employment Action Plan

Potential Partner Organisations include:

Home Office; Local Authorities; National Council for Education and Training; Employment Service; careers companies; FE and HE institutions; voluntary sector and community organisations;

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Potential Trans-national partners include:

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Financial Allocation

5% at GB level.

Final Beneficiaries:

Development Partnerships

Field of Intervention: