



Response to:

Enterprise and Business Committee inquiry into apprenticeships in Wales

March 2012

Introduction

Chwarae Teg exists to promote, support and develop the role of women in the Welsh economy. We do this by raising awareness of the positive contribution women make to economy and society and sensitising Welsh Government strategy and policy to the barriers confronting women who wish to fully participate in the labour market. The persistence of occupational segregation in the workforce is one of the main causes of the gender pay gap. Reducing this gap requires encouragement for young people to progress into non-traditional routes. Chwarae Teg has extensive experience of working with women and girls to challenge stereotyping and encourage them to consider non-traditional careers. Our Ready SET Go project (2004 – 2007) is a prime example of work we have undertaken to achieve this aim.

Our current project, Agile Nation, continues this good work, supporting Sector Skills Councils in the STEM sector to develop strategic plans to address the barriers women face accessing apprenticeships in non-traditional sectors. Our Fair Foundations programme is working with teaching practitioners in the Foundation Phase to raise awareness of gender equality issues and our Get

on with Science project will work with teachers at Key Stage 2 to help them to understand the barriers facing girls in Science.

Chwarae Teg welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Enterprise and Business Committee's inquiry into apprenticeships in Wales and will focus on gender differences and solutions to these.

Consultation response

Data

There is very little gender disaggregated data available on apprenticeships in Wales to measure the extent of gender segregation. However, analysis of data at a UK level shows that in 2010 only 3% of Engineering apprenticeship starters were women. Likewise, female starters on Construction apprenticeships accounted for 2% of the total.¹ To fully understand gender issues in apprenticeships in Wales, data should be collected and monitored as a matter of priority.

Recommendation 1: Ensure that gender disaggregated apprenticeship data is collected and monitored.

Occupational segregation

Despite action to challenge stereotypes and increase the number of girls entering male-dominated sectors, gender segregation persists in our economy. Of the growth sectors identified in the Welsh Government's Economic Renewal Strategy, the majority are male dominated (e.g. Manufacturing) and the others are sectors in which low incomes prevail (e.g. Tourism).

A paper from the YWCA shows that girls are often steered towards apprenticeships in typically low-paid female occupations such as hair and beauty or care.² The paper also suggests that of those girls that do take up non-traditional apprenticeships, not all of them complete due to a lack of

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http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/statistics/statisticalfirstrelease/sfr_supplementary_tables/Apprenticeship_sfr_supplementary_tables/

² YWCA (2010) *Girls, Women and Skills: YWCA's response to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills consultation on the future direction on skills policy: Skills for Sustainable Growth*, YWCA, Oxford

support and role models in a male-dominated world. A further report by the YWCA in partnership with the TUC shows that whilst there has been an increase in female apprentices, this is a result of new opportunities being created in female sectors such as Retail and Business Administration.³ Figures also show that, overall, the proportion of women completing apprenticeships is in decline.

Feedback from our partners suggests that the number of apprenticeships available in Wales is falling. For example, Tata Steel has reduced the number of placements they offer by approximately 50%. This means that competition for apprenticeships is high, particularly in the priority sectors. GE in Nantgarw provides another example with nearly 900 applicants for just 25 places. The likelihood of women and girls accessing non-traditional apprenticeships is greatly reduced by the current scarcity of these opportunities. Our work with Sector Skills Councils and employers suggests that businesses could do more to increase diversity in the workplace. Greater efforts should be made to encourage employers in the engineering, manufacturing, science and technology industries to increase diversity in apprenticeships. Further support is also needed to help disadvantaged young women to access these opportunities. Those furthest from the labour market find themselves facing greater exclusion when competition for placements is high. Pre-apprenticeship courses should be available to help young women to gain the confidence and skills they need to secure an Apprenticeship. This training would provide opportunities for those currently not in employment, education or training (NEET) to help them prepare for entry into the labour market.

Recommendation 2: Provide pre-apprenticeship support for disadvantaged young women.

Skills gaps

The recent skills audit for Wales, carried out by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills highlights the relationship between occupational segregation and skills gaps:

“The distribution of employment by occupation and sector is strongly gendered. For example, men occupy the vast majority of skilled trades and operative employment while women dominate in administrative / secretarial and personal service occupations. This will be a particular issue where

³ YWCA and TUC (2010) *Apprenticeships and Gender*, available at: http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/Apprenticeships_and_Gender.pdf

occupations with high levels of gender segregation have significant existing and / or future skills shortages.” (UKCES, 2011)

The report also draws attention to the vast under-employment of many in low level jobs in the service sector, many of which are held by women. Apprenticeships are a valuable tool for addressing skills gaps in the priority sectors. The recommendations we set out in this paper would increase the number of females entering and completing apprenticeships in these sectors.

Gender Pay Gap

The apprenticeship pay gap between males and females currently stands at 21%.⁴ Evidence shows that even within the sectors, a gender pay gap exists. For example, female apprentices in Retail receive 16% less than males. Women also dominate in the sectors offering the most unpaid apprenticeships such as Retail, Health and Social Care and Customer Service. In comparison, the sectors dominated by male apprentices are least likely to offer unpaid apprenticeships.

The chart below shows the proportion of female apprentice starts and they average pay they receive. It is clear from this chart that females are severely under-represented in the higher paying Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) sectors.

Sector	% of women apprentice starts (L2 and L3) in 2007/8	Average pay (per week) 2007
Electrotechnical	1 %	£210
Engineering	3%	£189
Construction	1%	£174
Automotive industry	0%	£170
Retail	69%	£168
Business Admin	81%	£168
Health and Social Care	92%	£157
Childcare	97%	£142
Hairdressing	92%	£109

Source: *Statistical First Release 2007/8* and [DIUS Apprentice Pay Survey 2007](#)

⁴ TUC (2010) *Hard Hats and Hair Driers: The apprentices gender gap scandal*, available at: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace/tuc-18454-f0.cfm>

Women with caring responsibilities can find the financial arrangements for apprenticeships prohibitive. This is particularly due to the high costs of care services. Steps should be taken to support these women by providing financial or care support to help them access valuable training opportunities.

Recommendation 3: Increase financial support available for carers entering training positions.

Careers advice and stereotypes

Despite some positive steps, stereotyping remains a major barrier for women accessing apprenticeships. Many educators and advisors have a limited understanding of the opportunities apprenticeships can offer. Pay information for the different sectors should be provided to all potential apprentices as this is proven to be a successful mechanism for encouraging more girls into non-traditional areas. Advice should highlight the wide range of opportunities available to women in non-traditional sectors and counteract the view that apprenticeships have low academic status. Recruitment and promotional materials need to show a diverse workforce and work harder to confound stereotypes. Chwarae Teg's recent research into women and STEM careers has highlighted the need for better and earlier careers education, especially in primary schools. This should include raising awareness of the different routes young people can take to gain employment in these industries.

Apprenticeships in non-traditional sectors such as Construction and Engineering are still not seen as a desirable route for many women and girls. There is a certain perception that apprenticeships in all sectors are a 'second-class' opportunity, reserved for those who cannot progress into conventional higher academic study. The introduction of more high-level apprenticeships (Level 4) may go some way to addressing this. Figures show that many girls prefer to continue to study STEM in university settings rather than apply their knowledge in the workplace. Overall, 1/3 of STEM undergraduates are female.⁵ Level 4 apprenticeships will allow females to access a good quality job whilst studying their chosen subject at an advanced level.

⁵ Kirkup, G., Zalevski, A., Maruyama, T. and Batool, I. (2010). *Women and men in science, engineering and technology: the UK statistics guide 2010*. Bradford: the UKRC.

Recommendation 4: Ensure the provision of informed careers advice which challenges stereotypes. Measures should include gender equality training for Careers Advisers, Career Co-ordinators and teaching professionals (including early years).

Recruitment

Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are best placed to promote and support apprenticeships in their sectors. They form a crucial link between training providers and employers and best understand the skills needs of their sectors and the wider labour market. Senta, Cogent and Construction Skills, the Sector Skills Councils representing the science, engineering, manufacturing, technology and construction sectors, all absolutely recognise and support the need to increase the number of female apprentices employed in their footprint. Several positive action programmes run by the SSCs, funded either through the Sector Priorities Fund pilot or the Employer Investment Fund, have had a positive impact on engaging more women in non-traditional apprenticeships. However, these programmes are small in scale and further steps should be taken to mainstream gender equality across the full range of STEM apprenticeships. All STEM apprenticeship programmes that receive Welsh Government support should have some gender-specific targets for engaging under-represented groups. Funding for specific positive action programmes is often extremely short term and this hampers the ability of this work to make a sustainable impact. Consideration should be given to awarding funding over longer timescales with a complimentary increase in expected beneficiary numbers.

Recommendation 5: Introduce targets for the recruitment of female apprentices in the priority sectors.

Recommendation 6: Provide gender specific funding and support for Sector Skills Councils to help them increase diversity in the sectors.

Employment practices

Training and support should be provided to employers and training providers to ensure that they are able to effectively support and retain their female apprentices. This would include equality and diversity training to ensure that they follow best practice in monitoring the progress and welfare of their female

apprentices. Employers may need to address their working practices and company cultures in order to recruit and retain female apprentices and this support should be easy and affordable for them to obtain.

Too few apprenticeships are offered on a part-time or flexible basis which can be a barrier for both women and the businesses that may wish to employ them. Shared apprenticeships have proven to be an effective solution for some employers who find cost is a barrier to employing a full time apprentice, and more effort should be made to encourage the use of flexible, shared and part-time apprenticeships.

Recommendation 7: Promote the benefits of a diverse workforce to employers.

Recommendation 8: Increase the number of part-time positions available so that women can meet work and domestic responsibilities.

Role models

There is a vast body of research that proves the importance of role models in increasing women's representation. Most recently, the TUC and YWCA, in their report on apprenticeships, make the case for 'better role models and positive images of women in industry'.⁶ Research from the National Skills Forum in 2009 stresses the power of the media in challenging 'individual's assumptions about gender roles in the workforce'.⁷ This research interviewed a sample of female employees and discovered that participants felt that women working in non-traditional occupations were often portrayed 'unsympathetically' by the media. This report concluded that 'Broadcasters should ensure that programmes include positive portrayals of women working in science, engineering and technology'.⁸

Recommendation 9: Ensure female role models are visible and encourage positive portrayal of women in STEM careers in the media.

⁶ YWCA and TUC (2010) *Apprenticeships and Gender*, available at: http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/Apprenticeships_and_Gender.pdf

⁷ National Skills Forum (2009) *Closing the Gender Skills Gap*, available at: <http://www.policyconnect.org.uk/fckimages/Closing%20the%20Gender%20Skills%20Gap.pdf>

⁸ Ibid.

Mentoring and support

“Even those who are determined to undertake a higher-paid, non-traditional apprenticeship can feel too intimidated to enter male-dominated training environments. Once there, many young women feel unable to complete their training due to a lack of support, female mentors, and some even experience bullying and harassment.”
(YWCA, 2010)

As we find in many other areas where women are under-represented, those that overcome barriers to entry often find themselves unsupported in the workplace. Mentoring and support schemes should be provided for women to ensure that they are able to succeed in their chosen profession.

Recommendation 10: Create mentoring and support networks for women in non-traditional roles.

Procurement

The inclusion of Equality and Diversity clauses in procurement contracts has been very effective in increasing good practice amongst employers. Incorporating a Community Benefits clause would be an excellent mechanism for increasing the number of apprentices. If the apprenticeships are in roles that are traditionally segregated, the Community Benefit clause should also insist that a minimum number of all apprentices are drawn from under-represented groups.

Apprenticeship places

As far as we are aware, apprenticeships in social enterprises are not common. As a growing sector of employment, there may be opportunities to increase the number of apprenticeships available. We suggest that this sector is already providing training and employment opportunities for those furthest from the labour market and may not have additional capacity to provide apprenticeships. We also see a danger of further segregation if this sector were to offer this type of work-based training. If apprenticeships were to be offered by the sector it would be important to ensure that this was not seen as a way to increase access by those from under-represented groups. Feedback from SSC's tells us that there are many micro-businesses in the priority sectors unable to offer full apprenticeships. Chwarae Teg believes

that efforts to increase the number of apprenticeships available should be concentrated on shared apprenticeships to allow micro-businesses to participate.

Conclusion

Increasing diversity in apprenticeships would allow employers to reduce skills gaps and allow women to reach their potential. Women's skills are under-utilised in the Welsh economy as many of them find themselves in low-paid occupations. This paper outlines the main steps that should be taken in order to increase the number of females entering apprenticeships in the growth sectors. These steps include data collection and monitoring; gender equality training for education and advice professionals; pre-apprenticeships support for those furthest from the labour market; and funding for targeted support programmes. There is a wealth of evidence to show that women face barriers to economic participation. Increasing the number of females accessing apprenticeships in non-traditional sectors will increase the contribution of this group to economic growth. This would allow them and their families to benefit, reducing poverty now and in the future. We hope that the Enterprise and Learning committee will promote the recommendations set out here and encourage the Welsh Government to address the issues we have raised in order that we can see the positive change that the Welsh economy needs to thrive.

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