

Cross Party Group on Women

17th October 2019

13:30 – 14:30

Media Room, Senedd

Chairs: Suzy Davies AM & Siân Gwenllian AM (via teleconference)

Secretariat: WEN Wales

Attendees:

Suzy Davies AM (co-chair)
Siân Gwenllian AM (co-chair) – via teleconference
Hilary Watson – WEN Wales (minutes)
Natasha Davies – Chwarae Teg (speaker)
Eleri Cabbage – Women in Europe (Wales) (speaker)
Claire Cunliffe – Oxfam Cymru
Gwendolyn Sterk – Welsh Women's Aid
Catherine Iannucci – Jane Hutt AM's support staff
Lydia Godden – WEN Wales intern/student
Polly Winn – Chwarae Teg
Mat Mathias – ERS Cymru
Sarah Rees – Women's Equality Party
Heddwen Daniel – Welsh Women's Aid
Sioned James – Plaid Cymru AMSS

Apologies:

Julie Morgan AM
Nancy Cavill – AM support staff
Laura McAllister – Cardiff University
Megan Thomas – individual
Debbie Shaffer – FTWW
Frances Beecher – Llamau
Rachel Minto – Cardiff University
Catherine Fookes – WEN Wales
Maria Mesa – Women Connect First
Rhian Connick - NFWI
Ruth Marks – WCVA
Isabelle Michelson – Grayling
Alison Parken – Cardiff University
Beth Thomas – The Big Issue
Cllr Debbie Wilcox – Newport Council

ADDRESS

WEN Wales,
c/o Chwarae Teg,
Anchor Court, Keen Road,
Cardiff CF24 5JW

CONTACT

admin@wenwales.org.uk
wenwales.org.uk

INFO

Charity Number: 1145706
Company Number: 07891533



1. Welcome, Chairs

Chairs welcomed attendees to the meeting.

2. Women in Europe (Wales) – Eleri Cubbage (co-coordinator)

Eleri Cubbage is the joint co-ordinator of the group, alongside Rachel Minto. Eleri is also connected with Wales Assembly of Women. Eleri thanked the Cross Party Group for incorporating the Women in Europe (Wales) network into the group and allowing a regular spot on the agenda. The Women in Europe Wales Network is a relatively new a-political group set up to share information and keep a focus on women's rights during the Brexit process.

Rachel Minto, joint co-ordinator of the Network, recently spoke at the WEN Women's Rights Conference where she emphasised the importance of such networks. She also discussed the importance of Brexit in relation to women's rights and its impact on women. She looked over the EU's gender equality architecture that has been developed over decades of feminist activism in Europe. This includes employment legislation; strategies and policies; funding, e.g. Social Funds, gender-based violence; research and monitoring, including the European Institute for Gender Equality and civil society bodies.

She emphasised that equality advocates need to keep an eye on developments in the EU as they would continue to be relevant to the UK. However, the UK leaves the EU, this will just be the beginning of the negotiations establishing a relationship between the UK and the EU.

She highlighted an interesting European development from a gender perspective. Later this year, there will be a change in key EU leadership roles, including the Commission President. If the candidate is approved by the European Parliament, the Commission would have its first woman head.

German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen has been nominated for EU Commission President to replace Jean-Claude Juncker. It is expected she will be installed in December. She has indicated that she will afford women's rights and gender equality a more prominent place on the agenda. She has insisted upon a gender balanced College of Commissioners and has also created a new Commission portfolio for equality (this is the first time this has happened).

These slides will be shared.

The network's objectives are:

- Legislation
- Funding
- Representation
- Access
- Social Inclusion

Their report 'Women's Voices Matter' will be circulated at the end of the month.

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For information: There is a conference on: "*What has the EU ever done for Women? Assessing the Impact of Brexit on Women and Equality in the UK*" Europe House – London. Friday 25th October 2019, 2 pm-7 pm. The conference will be co-hosted by Maria Noichl MEP, S&D Spokesperson for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in the European Parliament and Jackie Jones MEP, Member of the Committee for Women's Rights and Gender Equality on behalf of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) in the European Parliament. The conference will include a presentation of a new report on the impact of Brexit on women and gender equality in the UK.

Tash Davies from Chwarae Teg will be speaking on a panel at the conference and will feedback on the conference as a whole and share the report that will be launched at the conference.

3. Gender Equality Review – Tash Davies, Chwarae Teg

Tash Davies led the Gender Equality Review (GER) work with Chwarae Teg and put the GER into the context of former First Minister's International Women's Day speech regarding aspirations for Wales to be a feminist government and Wales to be the safest place in Europe to be a women. Phase 1 of the GER was a scoping exercise for the work of Phase 2, which has just reported. While there were great aspirations, there was a lack of shared vision and language for the GER. It was found that capacity for equality within Welsh Government was party.

Phase 2 examined what does a 'feminist government' actually mean in practice?

- Vision and shared language
- Intersectional approach
- Knowledge & exchange with Nordic nations

with engagement with Welsh Government throughout.

Phase 2 reporting was two-fold. **Roadmap** (what we do currently) and '**Deeds Not Words**' (how we do it). The Roadmap – medium time change. This discussion focused on Deeds Not Words doc.

Vision: based on expert advisory board and online, concentrating on equality of outcome for all, as we don't live in a meritocracy now. Principles for a feminist government must align with existing agendas, e.g. Well-being of Future Generations Act. This must be seen in relation to how we 'live and breathe' as a government in Wales.

Findings & Recommendations:

7 areas highlighted. Some with shorter to medium recommendations for improvements. Others with longer term recommendations for a fundamental shift and approach.

1. Vision & Leadership

Equalities mainstreaming approach embedded into core processes. There are many international examples in the full report.

2. Strengthening our legislation

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Alison Parken led on this work in a separate report (also accessible through Chwarae Teg website), regarding specific equalities duties, alignment with existing legislation such as the Well-being of Future Generations Act. This is about bringing the whole process together and equality of outcome (not just equality of opportunity).

3. Assessing impact

Impact assessment tools are not currently used very well. Integrated impact assessment tool is currently being used by Welsh Government. The GER compared this to international practice, specifically to Canada's GBA+ model (gender-based analysis plus). In the medium term, there's a need for guidance and training for officials and clarity of the role of senior leaders in driving behavioural change.

4. More towards evidence-based mainstreaming model

This relates to how external stakeholders are engaged. Alison Parken did mini-tests of an equality mainstreaming model. Speaking to people with lived experience from the very start of the process is the cornerstone of this process.

5. The Budget

The budget is key to delivering change. There are challenges with the current approach at all levels of government. Equality is not considered sufficiently in Welsh Government's budgeting process. In the medium term, the Budget Advisory Group for Equalities (BAGE) needs to be re-evaluated, with learning taken from Scotland with training for ministers and officials. In the long term, there is a need to shift to equalities budgeting, which is similar to gender budgeting but across 9 characteristics, to be delivered as part of a mainstreaming approach.

6. Capacity, expertise & gender competence

Sufficient capacity, expertise and resource matters. Currently, equalities capacity and internal infrastructure within Welsh government is inconsistent and overstretched. The report recommends that equalities leads should be in full time roles and embedded within each department of the Welsh Government.

7. Delivering change

The report calls for Welsh Government as an employer to lead by example. There is a culture of Welsh Government employing a white, middle-class, well-educated work force – not unlike other large employers. There are practices, such as IT rolled out across departments to enable remote working, for example, which could make a difference.

Conclusion:

While there has been a lot of good rhetoric for a long time, the recommendations are radical to some. Chwarae Teg is confident that the recommendations made in the report can deliver significant change and they hope the recommendations will be accepted by Welsh Government, who will respond to the report in November/December.

4. Group discussion

- The group discussed that an integrated approach described in the GER had many similarities to the way that children's rights had been rolled out, and while this can be great on paper, there was a worry that this could become the new, rigid way of assessing. It was acknowledged that there was a risk of implementation issues again. However, the principle of integration is fine but it has to all be brought together and that bend and flex within that system is needed.

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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

While Welsh Government can be good at practice, the change of individual's thought process while following these procedures is not always happening.

- Concerns were raised around mainstreaming and how grass roots organisations and NGOs would feed into this. As those involved in grass roots organisations have lived experience, there was an appetite within Welsh Government to collaborate and engage, similarly to the five ways of working within the Well-being of Future Generations agenda. While the report was unable to get into the review of sustainability of NGOs, it was not omitted deliberately.
- A question was raised as to how the GER will overlap with current strategies, for example the VAWDASV strategy. For example, if one recommendation under VAWDASV were implemented, it would duplicate what already exists (i.e. the list of all specialist VAWDASV services in Wales already on the Welsh Government Live Fear Free Website). Regarding existing strategies in multiple policy areas, the GER overarching strategy should not affect these, but should link these together. Much of this work was stakeholder influenced. Chwarae Teg will make sure going forward that it is clear going forward that regardless of the GER, Welsh Ministers have VAWDASV strategy goals for 2021.
- An example was given that when considering the Childcare Funding Act, the impact assessment found the issue to be gender neutral, despite it being about getting women back into work after having children. There was a call from the group to see clarity around what probable Welsh Government is trying to solve, using a method of trial, error and tweaking, which requires significant maturity from the government. The alternative is doggedly pursuing something, for example, because they said they would or it was in the political manifesto, even if in practice it isn't working.
- There was some discussion around the role of the National Assembly, around Assembly Members, Assembly Members support staff and expertise to scrutinise with a gender lens, at every committee. The number of AMs needed to efficiently scrutinise was raised and the need to convince the people of Wales for the need for more AMs. Clerks should also be equipped to raise where equalities should be scrutinised. If more ministers face equalities questions they'll need to take it more seriously.
- There is a fear of getting it wrong and not giving equal footing to everything, rather than relying on the evidence.
- A question was raised as to what the difference between equalities budgeting and gender budgeting. While the tools are very similar the perspective and who you speak with within the process might be different. Angela O'Hagan was working on the GER and is a gender budgeting expert. A similar system is used in Scotland. There is talk of a pilot of gender budgeting, though a Welsh approach to equality budgeting is needed. Welsh Government must utilise experts, as well as trial, develop, tweak and then roll out the system.
- All documents are online: <https://chwaraeteg.com/projects/gender-equality-review/>

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- Chwarae Teg will be at various events over the next month and can respond to any questions.

5. AOB

Following the visit of former Prime Minister of Australia, Julia Gillard, there has been some discussion amongst women politicians regarding online abuse. Siân Gwenllïan AM raised the Cross Party Group as a forum for having this discussion with women AMs. As the next meeting is a joint CPG with the CPG on Women and Children and Gwendolyn Sterk from Welsh Women's Aid runs training on online abuse as the UK expert of Violence against Women at the European Women's Lobby and also works for Welsh Women's Aid, it was agreed that the chairs would ask the Assembly Commission to approach Gwendolyn about running training on this for women AMs, with both chairs to meet Gwendolyn to discuss further. Welsh Women's aid have also done some work on this and have clear recommendations – including a document on online abuse: [available here](#).

Next meeting: Joint meeting with the Cross Party Group on Women and Children at 12.30-13.30 on Tuesday 3rd December in the Media Room.

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6. Actions

- 1) Eleri Cabbage to circulate the Women in Europe (Wales) group report 'Women's Voices Matter' once ready at the end of month – **Eleri via Hilary**
- 2) Eleri Cabbage to circulate her notes on the Women in Europe (Wales) group from the meeting – **Completed**
- 3) Tash Davies to feedback on conference she's speaking at in London on 'What has the EU ever done for women.' – **Completed**
- 4) Circulate the report that is being launched at the conference – **Completed**
- 5) Circulate Rachel Minto's slides from the Women's Rights Conference – **Completed**
- 6) Circulate Gender Equality Review reports: *Chwarae Teg reports can be found [here](#), as can Alison Parken's reports* – **Completed**
- 7) Circulate Tash's presentation slides – **Completed**
- 8) Circulate reply to letter to First Minister when it is received by group – **Hilary**
- 9) Circulate (available [here](#)) Welsh Women's Aid's document 'Online Abuse: The use of the digital world to perpetrate violence against women and girls' – **Completed**
- 10) Send out press release following the receipt of this letter if it is appropriate to do so – **Hilary**
- 11) Chairs to approach Assembly Commission regarding Gwendolyn Sterk running course on Online Abuse for AMs – **Suzy Davies AM**

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