

Issued: 2 January 2008

Welsh employers urged to give higher priority to closing gender pay gap in 2008

Marcella Maxwell, Chief Executive of Chwarae Teg, the organisation that promotes the role of women in the Welsh economy, said it was disappointing but not surprising that the latest Labour Force Survey has revealed that women will take on average five years longer to repay student debts. She said:

“This is another consequence of the continuing disparity in earnings between men and women and means that in effect a generation of women are being kept in debt for longer. Within three years of graduating, over 40% of men are earning over £25,000, compared to just over a quarter of women. Although progress has been made in certain areas in the 30 years since the Equal Pay Act 1975, it is clear from our research that there is much more to be done.

“There is simply no excuse for the lack of parity between working men and women but until women and men are given genuinely equal status, pay and reward in the workplace, this disparity looks set to continue. Longer repayment periods for female student debt is just one of many far-reaching social and economic consequences of the gender pay gap.

“Eighteen months ago Chwarae Teg launched *Bridging the Gap Together: A collaborative approach to addressing the gender pay gap in Wales*, one of the most comprehensive pieces of European-wide research into the reasons for the continued gender pay gap in Wales.

“The report found that while awareness of the gender pay gap appears to be high among workers in Wales, with more than three quarters of respondents acknowledging that a marked pay gap does exist, many organisations still have not formalised equal opportunities policy or undertaken proper Equal Pay Reviews and so have no basis on which to make informed decisions about fairness of pay.

“We found that some of the reasons for the continued earning disparity in Wales are attitudinal, which means these are not insurmountable barriers. However, it is vital that people clearly

understand the causes and effects of continuing to treat women unfairly, the fact that women take longer to clear student debts being one of these effects.

“We want to provide proactive and positive measures that employers in Wales can adopt and take forward, to reduce the gap between men and women’s earnings in Wales. Gender equality makes good economic sense for Wales.”

ENDS

For more information contact Sara Robinson at Working Word PR on 02920 488 778
E: sara.robinson@workingwordpr.com