



CHWARAE TEG ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE

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CONFERENCE REPORT

WOMEN AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

A Life Journey through Opportunity and Choice



Chwarae
teg Fairplay

Chwarae Teg's 2003 conference sought to take delegates on a journey, a welsh woman's journey through life, opportunity and choice.

At an early age young women are often stereotyped into traditional career choices, later on, restrictive employment practices make it particularly difficult for women to gain promotion in the workplace. As motherhood approaches the lack of affordable quality childcare can mean that women must give up work. Later in life caring for an elderly relative can prevent a woman from working. Even in retirement the pensions gap between men and women means that women continue to be disadvantaged in old age.

It seems that at every point in her life a woman faces barriers that can prevent her reaching her full potential. Chwarae Teg seeks to overcome these barriers and promote women's role in the welsh economy. Two hundred delegates from private, public and voluntary sectors attended Chwarae Teg's Annual National Conference in Llandudno and came up with some interesting proposals for tackling this issue of national importance.

Thank you very much to the conference sponsors,



Keep an eye on the Chwarae Teg website chwaraeteg.com for information on future Chwarae Teg events and seminars in your area.

Ruth Marks – *Chief Executive Chwarae Teg*

"We know that women still face huge discrimination in the workplace and inequality in every aspect of their lives which stifles their journey through opportunity and choice. Our conference sought to identify which aspects of the policy agenda we need to influence in order to allow women to have a successful life journey."



Elan Closs Stephens, Sian Thomas, Ruth Marks, Yvonne Thomas and Shaheen Akram – Conference Speakers

Renowned broadcaster, Sian Thomas, hosted this year's conference. She steered us through the day expertly, introducing the three key note speakers; Elan Closs Stephens, one of the most well known names in welsh broadcasting, and chair of the board of Chwarae Teg, Shaheen Akram a diversity specialist at the Ford Motor Company, and Yvonne Thomas, BT's Director Wales.

Elan Closs Stephens



Elan said,

"The world has changed, we have moved on. For example in my mother's generation, married women teachers were still subject to losing permanency and to be on temporary contracts.

"But have we moved on enough? Some statistics from the world of education are depressing. The vast majority of primary teachers are women; yet 50% of primary Heads are women. The picture worsens in secondary education, and tertiary education seems even more intractable.

"As importantly, women form the backbone of Parent Teacher Association activities yet there is an under whelming minority of them as Chairs of Governors. It is in this very arena that policies and attitudes are fostered that impact on pupils and on the employment of teachers.

"Chwarae Teg is working with Estyn and Accac to address the issue of women's involvement as governors and Chairs of Governors, Heads and Principals throughout the education sector. Women have to be encouraged to see themselves as leaders and not simply as participators. Much remains to be done in this area and many others if women are to reach their full potential.



Ruth Marks and Shaheen Akram

Shaheen said,

"Women represent a major labour opportunity! Ford have realised the business case for equality in terms of age, disability, race and gender. Women's participation in the labour market continues to increase but women are still under utilised. Ford has put policies in place to support women, including work life balance. We know that work life balance, benefits our employees, customers and our company."



Yvonne Thomas

Yvonne said,

“So what can we do? All of you are here because you care. Everyone in this room who recruits staff, who manages people, or who deals with public and private bodies should have this issue (equal opportunities for women) on their agenda.

Would you push for compulsory short-listing of women in your organisation? If not, why not? Do you take time out to mentor and advise young women with promise? If not, why not?

We have not achieved equality, and we will not achieve it if we do not take ownership and leadership of the issues surrounding discrimination, overt or covert.

It is our responsibility to act and to act now. My call to action to you is to leave this hall and write down three things you can do to change an inequality in your workplace, and then go and change it.”

Conference Workshop 1

Health and Housing – links to the poverty trap

Facilitated by Clifton Robinson

The discussions during the workshop focused on the following areas;

Race

There is a good track record on community relations in Wales, however we have become complacent over the last 10 years. There have been developments in England and Scotland during this time, now Wales needs to catch up.

The Economy

- A high number of women in Wales, work part-time in low pay sectors. There is a perception by some European manufacturers that “labour is cheaper in Wales”
- Reference also to jobs moving out of Wales to the Far East.
- Pay gap – women in Wales earn less than men

Labour market exclusion

- Disability barriers, both physical and attitudinal
- Sex discrimination – steady increase in Tribunals in Wales

Care

The right number of day care places are not readily available

Expectations

Why we are the nation we are? Jobs for pin money? Women's expectations low. Where do women see themselves? Even younger women in Wales have low expectations

Education

- Focus on education especially girls' expectations
- Need to work with schools/teachers/governing bodies to get message across
- Children need to think they are a “person”
- Skills training – other problems (rural Wales, transport)

Comments

“Excellent facilitator - made sure all were included in debate”

“Very stimulating”

“Clifton Robinson is an excellent facilitator”.

Conference Workshop 2

The Economic and Social Case for Care

Facilitated by Yvonne Griffith Jones, Stephen Cairns (Scope) and Mair Evans (ACE)

- Care is still very much a barrier to returning to work and retaining employment
- Employment activity would be increased if care provision was better and employers had more flexible working options
- The term flexibility is too wide. There needs to be a minimum standard before employers can call themselves a "good flexible - working employer"
- Employers need to hear the message – even though some good procedures are in place, doesn't always work in practice
- Employers need to work closely with childcare organisations
- Childcare provision needs to be more inclusive for those with special needs/disabilities. Childminders often say they can provide for special needs children but they haven't always got the facilities in practice
- If childcare is left to private industry there will not be adequate service for everyone. Needs to be government funded – how?

Comments

"Needed longer to discuss"

"Interesting workshop"

Conference Workshop 3

Flexible Working and Models of Good Practice

Facilitated by Angela Lodge

Discussions during the workshops centred around:

- What if quality of life is seen through work?
- Work promotes social interaction
- People often gain their self confidence / self esteem from their work
- Work organised activities often exclude women



L-r, Hayley Dunne, Ann Ball, Debbie Bowe, Angela Lodge, Margaret McCabe National Assembly for Wales, Jane Nyhan and Penny Gripper.

Comments

"Excellent workshop good interaction"

"Really good opportunity to identify issues."

"Good networking opportunity"

Conference Workshop 4

Gender in Welsh and International Development

Facilitated by Vikki Butler Oxfam Cymru

This workshop gave an international perspective on women and poverty. Participants received information on the background to Oxfam's UK Poverty Programme, a perspective on Gendering Factors of Poverty and examples of Oxfam Projects. A very interesting quiz revealed facts such as;

- 7% of men work part-time in Wales compared to 46% of women
- A lone parent of either sex in Wales heads 11% of households
- 23.3% of the Welsh population suffer limiting long-term illness
- £4,500 (not including student loans/mortgages) is the average debt per individual seeking advice from CABs

Participants developed interesting ideas for future action;

- Positive action needed for both boys and girls in education. Better managing of talents, confidence building, mentoring
- Action to discourage debt activities and better use of credit unions
- Gender impact assessments by Assembly
- Action to get the facts right in the media

Comments

"Very lively and informative"

"Surprising statistics, well presented workshop"

"Raised awareness considerably, good involvement of group"

Conference Workshop 5

Focus on Enterprise and Self Employment

Facilitated by Linda Smart

Main points highlighted by participants

- Women have a longer period before growing their business and quite often start the business on a part-time basis
- The type of support considered as important – recruitment and employing staff. How/where to network. Mentor support (sometimes just a phone call giving re-assurance or advice)
- Any service provided needs to take into account that women approach things differently to men
- The type of support that women want is often not catered for in a women oriented way

- If a business hits problems when a grant has been given, they will often not refer back to the person who has authorized it, since they are afraid this will highlight issues and jeopardize further help
- Message to nainstream services – don't keep starting up businesses and not helping them grow

Comments

- “Very varied and useful workshop”
- “Highly participative techniques”

Conference Workshop 6

The rural perspective – impact of transport, childcare, etc on women living in rural areas.

Facilitated by Annie O'Reilly and Sally Fawcett

Discussions hinged around three main problems

Public Transport

Generally transport is seen as a problem in terms of poor road systems and exorbitant fuel prices.

Real difficulties in getting around rural counties, particularly if needing to be at centres of employment during traditional 9-5 hours.

Sustainable childcare.

Childcare groups in rural areas are often very small and are considered unviable. Funders need to make sure their interventions are sustained and build capacity over the long term – short term interventions are often unsustainable due to the small numbers involved.

Private childcarers earning potential is limited by how much the parents can pay due to low earnings. Many have been pushed out of business by the cost of recent changes in social service care standards.

Education

Difficulty in getting people to take the first step on the ladder - outreach work is expensive, and it is difficult for courses to attract sufficient numbers to maintain funding. Funding mechanisms don't help individuals to access their training needs due to emphasis on quotas.

There is a danger in assuming that in isolated areas all training needs can be delivered through IT. Computer ownership is one issue as is access to the internet but there is also an element of insufficient basic skills to use a computer effectively.

Comments

"Would have loved longer to talk and find solutions"

"Very interesting workshop, many willing to contribute, a good focus for a future event"

Evaluation Comments

"A truly inclusive and inspirational event, very positive."

"Objectives fully met and with a warm welcome from Chwarae Teg staff."

"I met people with whom I hope to undertake a research project."

Delegates enjoying the conference



Closing Remarks

Ruth Marks;

"This years' conference proved particularly inspiring. The problems of rural poverty and lack of childcare were known to many of us. The conference brought these issues to the forefront of our minds leading to the forging of many new partnerships.

"I have focused on on five principle messages from the conference. These are messages to employers, policy makers and others and will be included in Chwarae Teg's forward work plan for 2004."

- Care – a constant and recurring theme throughout the conference. Action on childcare and elder dependant care is crucial if women are to contribute fully to the welsh economy
- Education – in order to break the cycle of low expectations and low achievement we must take steps to combat stereotyping and to educate people differently
- Work Life Balance – we all need to achieve the correct balance between work and home life, this will bring business as well as personal benefits
- Business growth – women need support to not only start their own businesses but to grow their businesses, the mainstream must consider the specific needs of women
- Partnership - we each have a responsibility to work together to address these issues