

## **Research Brief: Young Women's Experiences of Careers Support**

**Date of issue:** 27/10/21

**Deadline for submission of quote:** 14:00 on the 17/11/21

**Research awarded:** 24/11/21

**Final report submitted:** 30/03/22

### **1. Introduction**

Chwarae Teg's vision is a fairer Wales where women achieve and prosper. We have been working with women, businesses, educators and decision-makers since 1992 to tackle the barriers that prevent women from reaching their full potential. Chwarae Teg's work is focused around three main objectives; women in the economy; women at risk and women represented. Through our programme delivery, research and influencing work we aim to ensure that women achieve and prosper across all sectors and at all levels in the economy, are visible and influential across all sectors of the economy, society and in public life, and are empowered to achieve their potential, regardless of their background, social status, or geographic location.

Chwarae Teg is the leading authority on gender equality in Wales and works with influencers and decision makers to deliver lasting change, shaping the debate to empower women to achieve their potential. Research is a key part of Chwarae Teg's work to build the evidence-base, spark debate and develop practical recommendations for change.

Our labour market is still segregated on the basis of gender. Women continue to be under-represented in senior positions in many sectors and are much less likely to be working in sectors traditionally seen as "male", such as construction, engineering and manufacturing. This inequality and segregation is shaped by the choices that are made early in our lives. Careers advice and guidance is therefore a critical tool in challenging stereotypical ideas about career pathways and tackling gender segregation in the workplace.

In this research we would like to explore how well current careers advice provision in Wales is meeting young women's needs, and consider whether there is a need to adapt as we navigate and recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **2. Background and Research Rationale**

#### ***Gender Inequality in the Welsh Economy***

Our economy remains unequal. Gender continues to affect people's ability to work, their working hours, pay and contract type and the sectors and job roles they are likely to work in.

- The employment rate for women in Wales is 73% compared to 81% for men<sup>1</sup>
- Of those who are economically inactive, 26% of women state this is due to looking after family/ the home compared to 7% of men<sup>2</sup>
- 40% of women in Wales work part-time compared to 12% of men<sup>3</sup>
- 80% of the manufacturing workforce, 66% of the ICT workforce and 87% of the construction workforce are men<sup>4</sup>
- Women account for 40% of managers, directors and senior officials<sup>5</sup>

As a result of this inequality, there is still a gender pay gap of around 12% in Wales.<sup>6</sup>

Women are not a homogenous group, and some groups of women experience greater inequality and different barriers. The employment rate for disabled women is much lower than the rate for women, sitting at 54%.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, for ethnic minority women the employment rate is lower at 72%, although when broken down further we see a significant variation for different ethnic groups.<sup>8</sup>

### ***Tackling gender stereotypes and occupational segregation***

The causes of this inequality are varied and complex. However, one issue remains the gender stereotypes that shape decisions about what subjects to study and what career paths to pursue; decisions that are taken early in our lives. A survey of young women in Wales in 2018 found that 87% believed that gender stereotyping affects women's career choices.<sup>9</sup>

Gender differences in career aspirations have been evident in a number of studies. A report from World Skills UK in 2018 found that young men aspire to a median salary of £1063 more than young women, and that there was a 18 point difference between how likely young men are to say they are considering a job in engineering or IT compared to women.<sup>10</sup>

Careers advice and guidance can therefore play a critical role in addressing gender inequality by supporting career planning and decision-making and challenging gendered assumptions. Support to gain meaningful work experience is a further important role for careers support services; UNESDOC state that high quality employer engagement can be

---

<sup>1</sup> Chwarae Teg (2021) *State of the Nation 2021*

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid/ For more detailed breakdown of employment data for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women please see Chwarae Teg (2019) *Triple Glazed Ceiling – Barriers to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Women Participating in the Economy*

<sup>9</sup> Chwarae Teg (2018) *Bright: Young Women's Career Aspirations*

<sup>10</sup> World Skills UK (2018) *Closing the Gender Gap*

“especially effective in challenging gendered assumptions and other forms of stereotyping about occupations.”<sup>11</sup>

However, research with young women in Wales published in 2018 found a number of challenges with careers provision in Wales<sup>12</sup>:

- 71% of young women (16-25) do not have a career plan
- Of those that do have a career plan, 42% are working on it in isolation
- 64% of young women have not used formal careers advice services
- Of those that are, or have used careers advice services the majority have accessed via their school and 54% say it was helpful

### ***Provision of Careers Advice in Wales***

Careers advice in Wales is delivered in a number of ways. The main, government-funded careers support is provided through Careers Wales, who deliver all-age careers support and guidance aimed at supporting customers to become more effective at planning and managing their careers.<sup>13</sup> This includes online and face-to-face careers advice and support with work experience and employer engagement. Careers Wales are a wholly owned subsidiary of Welsh Government. The work of Careers Wales is shaped by an annual remit letter from the Minister for the Economy.

Since our research in 2018, Careers Wales have implemented *Changing Lives: A vision for Careers Wales 2017-2020*. This strategic plan set out how Careers Wales intended to achieve its vision for “all young people to move smoothly and successfully into employment and for adults to be inspired to take control of their lives.” It set out a new, blended approach to delivery for young people, the Career Discovery Model. A new strategy is in place for 2021-26, *Brighter Futures*, which sets out Careers Wales’ purpose as being “to support young people and adults in Wales to create brighter futures...through access to high quality, impartial careers support that makes apposite impact on individuals’ education, economic and wellbeing outcomes.”<sup>14</sup>

A further significant change in context since our previous research is the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic has had a significant impact on all elements of our lives – how we work, how we learn and how we engage with friends and family. The impact has not fallen equally, with women, people of colour, disabled people, people on low incomes and young people all more vulnerable to the health and/or economic impacts of the crisis. It’s projected that young people will be hit hardest by job losses as they dominate in sectors that were forced to remain closed during lockdowns.<sup>15</sup> Interruptions to schooling, periods of home-schooling

---

<sup>11</sup> UNESDOC (2019) *Investing in Career Guidance*

<sup>12</sup> Chwarae Teg (2018) *Bright: Young Women’s Career Aspirations*

<sup>13</sup> Careers Wales (2020) *Career Choices Dewis Gyfra Careers Wales Annual Report 2019-20*

<sup>14</sup> Careers Wales (2021) *Brighter Futures: Our Vision 2021-26*

<sup>15</sup> J. Rodriguez, Wales Fiscal Analysis (2020) *Briefing Paper Covid-19 and the Welsh economy: shutdown sectors and key workers*

and challenges with accessing work experience opportunities as a result of restrictions all pose a significant risk to young people in Wales.

Moreover, Wales is keen to achieve a green and fair economic reconstruction after the Covid-19 pandemic. Investing in low-carbon infrastructure, renewable energy projects and sustainable homes are among the focus areas of Welsh Government's economic recovery plans.<sup>16</sup> Sectors such as construction, heating, electrical installation, manufacturing, engineering and natural restoration are at the core of the 'green recovery' agenda<sup>17</sup>, and are likely to see job creation as a result. It is estimated that over 45,000 new jobs can be created in these sectors<sup>18</sup>; yet, there is a recognisable skill shortage in all these areas and they have largely male-dominated workforces with few women in skilled and technical roles. In this context, when exploring provision of careers advice and support in Wales, it's also important to consider whether women have the opportunity, skills and support to engage with green recovery plans and the jobs and training opportunities created as a result.

It is therefore timely to revisit the issue of careers advice, as we enter a new Senedd term, to consider whether provision is effectively reaching and informing young women from diverse backgrounds about the future of work and the labour market and whether there is a need to adapt careers advice and guidance in the context of the pandemic.

### **3. Research Objectives**

The main objective of this research is to explore whether current careers advice and support in Wales is meeting the needs of diverse women and preparing them for the future, particularly in the context of the pandemic and likely economic impacts.

The research aims to amplify young women's voices and offer practical recommendations to Welsh Government, providers of careers advice and employability programmes and wider stakeholders to ensure support in responding to young women's needs.

The research will also consider how the pandemic has affected young women's career aspirations and plans for the future, any concerns they may have and consider how careers support can best respond to these.

Proposals should consider how experiences differ among young women, reaching a diverse range of voices from across Wales. Proposals should also offer a critical analysis of current careers advice and support provision in Wales, to provide context to the responses from girls and young women and inform the development of recommendations.

---

<sup>16</sup> Welsh Government (2021) *Our Economic Resilience & Reconstruction Mission*.

<sup>17</sup> Future Generation Commissioner for Wales (2021) *Skills through Crisis: Upskilling and (Re)Training for a Green Recovery in Wales*.

<sup>18</sup> TUC Wales estimated quoted in Future Generation Commissioner for Wales (2021) *Skills through Crisis: Upskilling and (Re)Training for a Green Recovery in Wales*.

#### 4. Research Questions

The principle question of the research is:

- Are careers advice and support services effectively reaching out and informing girls and young women from diverse backgrounds about the future of work and the labour market?

Themes for exploration and potential supplementary questions are:

- 1- What career advice programmes and services are available in Wales for girls and young women?
  - What are the main delivery methods of careers advice services in Wales?
  - Are there any career advice programmes targeted at girls and young women?
- 2- What are young women's experiences of careers advice and support?
  - What support are young women accessing and how?
  - At what age have young women accessed/ had access to careers support?
  - Has this support worked for young women?
  - Do young women identify any gaps in the services they have been offered?
- 3- What impact did careers advice and support have on young women?
- 4- What are young women's experiences of work experience and engagement with employers?
  - Have young women had access to meaningful work experience?
    - How did they access it?
    - Did they have any support to do so?
  - Have young women had engagement with employers, e.g. through talks at school, online events, site visits?
    - How did they access it?
    - Did they have support to do so?
- 5- What impact has Covid-19 had on young women's career aspirations, plans and access to careers advice?
  - Has the pandemic affected young women's career plans?
  - Has the pandemic affected access to careers advice and support?
  - Do young women have concerns about their future career paths?
- 6- What support do young women need and when?
  - How could careers advice and guidance better meet young women's needs?

## **5. Research Methods**

We expect the research to largely be delivered through desk-based research and virtual engagement methods. We anticipate the research making use of both quantitative and qualitative data where possible to explore the richness of young women's experiences.

Outlining the available career advice services and critically examining them through a gender lens would be an important framework for better analysing the responses of young women, identifying gaps in current provision and shaping recommendations. We would anticipate this being addressed through desk-based research, and possibly informed by some primary evidence collected from young women.

We would anticipate a survey with girls and young women as a primary means of collating data, possibly supplemented with other online methods such as online forum discussions, focus groups and social media to achieve diversity in responses.

The age group we are keen to focus on in this research is between 14 and 25, to understand how far-reaching career advice services are for different age groups. The probable differences of experiences in this age range may need to be explored with different types of questions and approach.

It is also important to reflect an intersectional lens in the analysis of the research and highlight the differentiated experiences of women from different social, economic and ethnic backgrounds, and geographical areas of Wales.

Chwarae Teg can offer some support with promotion of the survey and other engagement activity across our social media platforms but we would expect the successful bidder to lead on coordinating communications activity and ensuring an adequate response rate to the survey.

## **6. Audience and use of research findings**

The main audience for this research is policy-makers, educators and careers professionals. The Welsh Government and Senedd will be key institutions with whom the findings will be shared. Work may also be undertaken to share the findings with other stakeholder groups, such as young women themselves.

The research will inform Chwarae Teg's policy and influencing work, programme delivery and campaigns.

## **7. Research budget, publication and timescale**

The budget of this research is up to **£10,000 (inclusive of VAT)**.

We aim to achieve a report with practical, evidence-based policy solutions to be implemented in Wales. Whilst we do not wish to pre-determine the structure of the final report, in the report, we are expecting:

- An executive summary
- A literature review
- Explanation of the methods used in the research and the rationale for using them
- Clear numeric presentation of primary and secondary data (if applicable)
- Quotations from research participants about their experience (if applicable)
- Focus on geographical disparities if applicable.

The final report must be presented in plain English.

In submitting your quote, there is an expectation that you will be able to meet the anticipated timeline:

<b>Stages</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Date of issue	27/10/21
Submission of a quote	17/11/21
Research awarded	24/11/21
Inception meeting	26/11/21
Submission of literature review and fieldwork plan	15/12/21 (25% of the payment)
Field work	Dec 21 – Feb 22
Submission of the draft report	17/03/22
Submission of the final report	30/3/22 (75% of payment)

## **8. GDPR and intellectual property**

We expect the successful bidder to deliver the project in accordance with GDPR guidelines and our [privacy policy](#).

All data collected as part of this project shall be the property of Chwarae Teg. We expect the raw data to be provided at the end of the project. It will be handled and stored in line with our [privacy policy](#).

All Intellectual Property in any report, documentation, information, data, software or invention prepared or created by the Supplier to provide the Services in accordance with these terms shall remain vested in Client.

## **9. Contact address and submission of a quote**

Submission should be sent to [PolicyandResearch@chwaraeteg.com](mailto:PolicyandResearch@chwaraeteg.com) by 14:00 on the 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Any queries should be directed to Dr Hade Turkmen via [Hade.Turkmen@chwaraeteg.com](mailto:Hade.Turkmen@chwaraeteg.com)