



# FIVE ACTIONS FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

We want to see a Wales where women, of all backgrounds and experiences, are empowered to achieve and prosper.

Women continue to experience barriers in the economy and their workplaces that men do not. We know that women in Wales continue to earn less than men because of the nature of their employment or because of caring responsibilities which disproportionately fall to them.

Women remain underrepresented in the places where decisions are made. Without diverse voices in the room, many issues risk being ignored and the impact of decisions on marginalised groups overlooked.

Women continue to experience unacceptable levels of violence and harassment, affecting every aspect of their lives including decisions about what to wear, where to go, and how to get there.

Tackling the root causes of gender inequality is everyone's job. With local government playing a vital role in the day-to-day lives of people in Wales, local authorities have multiple tools to tackle many of the structural inequalities experienced by women.

Placing gender equality at the centre of every decision is simply good policy-making. Although bringing about a gender equal Wales will take time, we are calling for local authorities to focus on the following five areas over the next five years to make a real difference to women's lives in Wales and move us closer to a gender equal Wales.

## 1 Representation

Women continue to be underrepresented at all levels of government, but particularly at a local government level. Prior to this year's elections, just 29% of Wales' local councillors were women<sup>1</sup>. We wait to see the outcome of this year's elections, but since estimates show that roughly a third of all candidates are women, it is vital that actions are taken to diversify local representatives.

### Local government leaders must improve women's representation by:

- Committing to a gender-balanced cabinet
- Creating and publishing a clear action plan on how they will guarantee more diverse representation in local government
- Retaining the ability to join council meetings remotely
- Funding and delivering projects to increase the number and diversity of women standing in local government elections

## 2 Childcare

A lack of affordable, accessible childcare continues to be a critical barrier to women entering and progressing in work. Local authorities have a vital role in ensuring childcare provision meets parent's needs and that information about childcare is accessible.

### Local authorities must lead by example by improving their own policies and support for parents, alongside improving access to information about childcare support to all parents by:

- Producing comprehensive family friendly policies applicable to both councillors and staff to support more parents into elected office and employment
- Properly funding Family Information Services so it is able to provide comprehensive information on all childcare support that parents are eligible for
- Ensuring that Flying Start health visitors are fully aware of the Childcare Offer and all other support that is available to the families they work with

<sup>1</sup> Chwarae Teg (2022) State of the Nation 2022

- Ensuring that information on childcare support is accessible, particularly for those whom Welsh or English is not their first language



### 3 Social care

Women make up the majority of the social care workforce. Despite being essential to our lives and the economy, as a society we do not properly value social care or those who work in it. Local government has the tools to ensure that social care and those who work in the sector are valued and appreciated.

#### Local government must recognise the importance and value of social care by:

- Adopting an ethical commissioning charter for social care that includes requirements for basic terms and conditions, including payment of the real Living Wage, limits on zero hour contracts, improved job security, improved collective bargaining, improved access to training and better progression pathways
- Applying the same principles of ethical commissioning to council-run social care services

## 4 Transport and Planning

Women use public transport and experience public spaces differently. All too often, transport and planning decisions are taken based on the idea of a “neutral” male user, ignoring the needs, interests and routines of women and girls. Women are more dependent on public transport, take shorter journeys, multiple times a day and are less likely to have access to a car<sup>2</sup>. We also know that public spaces are designed in a way which reinforces gender inequality by making it harder for women to feel safe, and access employment and education.

#### Local authorities must ensure that women’s lived experiences and safety are central to transport and planning decisions by:

- Improving the safety of public transport vehicles and stations, informed by women’s needs, alongside training those who work in public transport on how to monitor, report and prevent incidents of sexual harassment or abuse on public transport
- Ensuring that ticket fares and discounts do not only favour ‘traditional’ working and travel patterns
- Reforming procedures to make sure that planners and decision-makers hear from women and girls to better understand their concerns and ensure their needs are considered from

the very beginning of the planning process

- Ensuring that all new developments include well-lit streets, parks, train stations and bus stops and stations

2 Chwarae Teg (2016) Working Women’s Journeys



## 5 UK Shared Prosperity Fund

With local authorities to soon gain new powers and responsibilities over how the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is spent, it is vital that local government prepares for this new duty and recognises the role that funding streams such as this can have in tackling gender inequality.

#### Local authority leaders should prepare for administering the UK Shared Prosperity Fund by:

- Recognising the unique role of third sector organisations in delivering specialist support and services to people and communities across Wales
- Prioritising interventions that reduce inequality for specific groups of people and communities, as well as places
- Establishing working relationships with the other local authorities and voluntary sector organisations within

a local authorities’ region to avoid duplication of effort and work

- Creating a plan for how to fund and deliver pan-Wales projects
- Engaging with third sector partners who have a track record of successful delivery with marginalised and disadvantaged groups
- Mainstreaming equality into their plans to ensure that all projects actively contribute to tackling inequality



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