

Research Brief:

Date of issue: 07.11.2022

Deadline for submission of a quote: 07.12.2022

Research awarded: 12.12.2022

Final report submitted: April 2023

1. Introduction

Chwarae Teg's vision is a fairer Wales where all 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 remains heavily segregated on the basis of gender and women continue to face inequality, evident in gender gaps in pay, representation, hours worked and rates of employment and economic activity. This inequality is the result of numerous, interconnected issues including the ongoing influence of gender stereotypes, imbalances in caring responsibilities and issues of discrimination, particularly towards women of colour and disabled women.

There is no single solution to deliver equality for all women in the labour market, however, we do know that access to learning, training, skills development and career development support can have a marked impact on women's experiences, progression and rates of pay.

Chwarae Teg's Agile Nation 2 project has been funded by European Social Fund through Welsh Government from April 2015 to May 2023. The project works with women and businesses to promote gender equality, career advancement and improve the position of women in the workforce. We work with employed women to support them to reach their full potential through a programme that not only builds accredited leadership and

management skills but delivers tailored career development, coaching, confidence and personal development sessions. To date we've worked with just over 4,300 women across Wales, just over 2,300 of whom have reported pay increases of £5.97m as a result of increasing their skills and confidence, which led to an improved labour market position.

Significant monitoring, analysis and evaluation of Agile Nation 2 has provided us with rich evidence of the increased confidence, skills and improved labour market positions of the women taking part. Our recent external evaluation exercise evidences a clear difference made to our participants in their work and in their personal lives. In relation to work, over 80% of participants moved to a new job, received a promotion, a pay rise or are now line managing staff. 34% (142) reported a salary increase with an average increase of £7,945 after approximately 3 years. A subset of this group who'd stated their confidence had increased or significantly increased as a result of the programme, received an average pay increase of £8,203 (3% higher than the overall group). The proportion of women who had received a pay increase in this group was higher at 40% in comparison to 34% of the total group.

In terms of so-called 'soft outcomes' we have also begun to identify improvements in confidence, wellbeing and resilience among the women who participated in the programme and how important that has been to achieving an improved labour market position. Just over a quarter (26%) reported an increased sense of health and wellbeing and many also went on to help others as a result of completing the programme.

In light of these emerging findings, we would like to explore the potential link between engaging in a learning experience and improved and sustained confidence, personal motivation, resilience and wellbeing, whether there are any gender differences, and the extent to which the delivery model and inclusion of elements such as coaching, affects these 'soft outcomes'.

2. Background and Research Rationale

The link between engaging in adult learning, job-related training and wider learning with improvements in wellbeing has been the subject of numerous studies.

A briefing from What Works Wellbeing from 2018 states that "recent evidence from systematic reviews of workplace learning and adult learning interventions have demonstrated that participation in these modes of learning can lead to increases in learners' wellbeing and personal resources (resilience)."¹

The Adult Learning Partnership Wales state that "we know from our work that adult learning in the community transforms lives. Playing a vital role in employability, building essential and digital skills, wellbeing; supporting families, promoting integration, and

¹ What works wellbeing (2018) *Adult Education and life satisfaction*

helping people of all ages to live more independent, fulfilling lives.”² In their 2022 impact report they cite the UNESCO Global report on Adult Learning and Education, which showed countries reporting positive impacts on health and wellbeing, employment and the labour market and social, civic and community life.³ They also reference the Marmot Review of Health Inequalities which highlighted “the role of education in the life chances of those most at risk of poor health and suggests a refocus of effort to address the wider social determinants of health – including access to education. It is well evidenced that adult learning fosters: a sense of identity, an ability to cope and a feeling of purpose in life, a greater level of wellbeing, positive changes in mental wellbeing and a sense of purpose.”⁴

What is not clear from an initial review of some of the literature is whether there are any notable gender differences in the impacts of learning on wellbeing, resilience and confidence.

As outlined above, from the interim evaluation of the Agile Nation 2 project we have seen improvements in confidence, wellbeing and resilience among the programme participants, with engagement in the programme identified as the reason behind this by participants.

Women stated that the women only environment with peer support and building a network was the most important thing about the programme. The evaluation concluded *that “there is clearly something special when skill development and confidence building within a supportive environment are put together which allows women to thrive”* and that *“building women’s confidence is vitally important for them to be successful in the workplace.”*

Over 80% of participants said their confidence had grown because of the programme. 27% of women who participated in the focus groups and interviews stated that building confidence was one of the reasons they took part in the programme. Many of the women talked about imposter syndrome and 10% stated that confidence to undertake the programme was a barrier. Confidence was by far the most common response when women were asked *‘overall what difference has the programme made to you in your working life?’* Furthermore, confidence was by far the most common answer to what difference it made to you in other areas outside your work life.

Often, measurement of programme success focuses on hard outcomes, such as qualifications gained, salary increase, promotion or an improved labour market position. While these are important measures, they only tell part of the story. The impact of engaging in learning on so-called soft outcomes, such as confidence, resilience and wellbeing, is less explored. Given the emerging findings from the interim evaluation of Agile Nation 2, we would like to further explore this topic.

² Adult Learning Partnership Wales (2022) *Adult Community Learning Impact Report 2022*

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

3. Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to further explore whether there is a link between engaging in learning and improved and sustained confidence, wellbeing and resilience among women.

For the purpose of this research project, we are taking a broad definition of 'learning' that incorporates adult learning, job-related training, skills development and career development support and coaching.

The research aims to gather further data to understand the extent to which learning can affect these so-called soft outcomes, whether there are any gender differences, whether particular features or delivery models affect them, and whether these outcomes are achieved for women.

While an exhaustive exploration of the topic is not possible in the project timescales, we would like to bring together qualitative evidence and a rapid review of existing evidence, to inform discussions and recommendations for future design and delivery of learning and training for women in Wales.

4. Research Questions

The principal research question is:

What impact does engaging in learning have on women's confidence, resilience and wellbeing?

Secondary questions should include:

- Does gender affect any link between learning and improved confidence, resilience and wellbeing? Are there any intersectional differences?
- Do particular delivery models affect any link between learning and improved confidence, resilience and wellbeing? Consideration should be given to factors such as inclusion of coaching, individual vs group settings, women-only settings and in-person vs virtual delivery.

5. Research Methods

We anticipate the research having two distinct elements.

1. Rapid Systematic Review

Desk-based review of the existing literature exploring the links between engagement in learning and improved confidence, resilience and wellbeing, identifying any gender differences or gaps in the literature.

2. Qualitative evidence collection

Interviews with providers and participants to explore whether engagement in learning affects confidence, resilience and wellbeing or any further 'soft outcomes'. Interviews will also explore whether participants can measure the impact of learning on their own confidence, resilience and wellbeing.

In the given timescales we suggest:

- Review of existing data gathered through the interim evaluation of Agile Nation 2
- Four further interviews with Agile Nation 2 participants
- Interviews with three providers of learning, skills training and/or career development support in Wales
- Interviews with twelve participants (four from each provider interviewed)

Limitations

Given the scale of this project we don't foresee being able to explore gender differences or carry out comparative gender analysis through the qualitative element of the research, and as such suggest that the interviews are with women participants to focus on their experiences and what they gained from their learning experience.

Through the rapid review of existing literature, we would expect consideration to be given to any evidence related to intersectional impacts, i.e. differential impacts related to gender and how gender intersects with other characteristics such as ethnicity, disability etc.

We also do not expect the qualitative interviews to enable a comprehensive exploration of how different delivery models of learning and training affect these soft outcomes, but would expect the interviews to explore whether participants link any particular element of their learning experience with improved confidence, resilience or wellbeing.

6. Audience and use of research findings

The main audience for this research is policy-makers, funding organisations, training, education and career practitioners and third sector organisations. 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 future grant-making bodies and business leaders.

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

7. Research budget, publication and timescale

The budget of this research is up to **£20,000 (inclusive of VAT)**.

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)

The final report must be presented in plain English. We would not expect the final report to be translated into work, but would expect any fieldwork (surveys, online promotion etc.) to be carried out bilingually. Any costs for translation related to this activity would need to be covered within the bid and agreed budget.

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

Stages	Timeline
Date of issue	07.11.22
Submission of a quote	07.12.22
Research awarded	12.12.22
Inception meeting	Commencing the week 12.12.22
Submission of literature review and fieldwork plan	30.01.23
Fieldwork	February – March 23
Submission of the draft report	31.03.23
Submission of the final report	24.04.23

The payment schedule would be:

- 30% following inception meeting
- 30% following submission of draft report
- 40% following submission of final report

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 by

Any queries should be directed to Dr Hade Turkmen via Hade.Turkmen@chwaraeteg.com.