

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru	National Assembly for Wales
Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau	Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee
Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau	Priorities for the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee
EIS 15 Chwarae Teg	EIS 15 Chwarae Teg

Chwarae Teg response to EIS Committee consultation:

Priorities for the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee

August 2016

Chwarae Teg are working to build a Wales where women achieve and prosper. We do this by working with women to broaden their horizons and build their confidence and skills, and by working with employers to create modern workplaces that gain success through harnessing everyone's contribution. We also work with influencers, educators and decision makers to build a society that values, supports and benefits women and men equally.

We are very pleased to submit a response to the above consultation. The committee has a broad remit which covers a number of key policy areas that can contribute to building a Wales where women achieve and prosper. Below we set out a number of potential inquiry topics which we would like to see considered as part of the work plan for the EIS Committee over the course of the Fifth Assembly.

1. Improving Wales' childcare infrastructure

- 1.1. Childcare continues to be a prominent topic in Wales, featuring in all party manifestos heading into the Assembly election and the priorities for the first 100 days of government, set out by the new Welsh Government.
- 1.2. Plans have been made to expand the provision of free childcare for parents of 3 and 4 year olds to 30 hours per week. While this is a welcome move, gaps in provision will remain, notably for those with children aged between 1 and 3.
- 1.3. Evidence from the Family and Childcare Trust also showed that in 2015 just 18% of councils in Wales had enough childcare for working parents.¹ This raises questions about how the additional provision can be delivered.
- 1.4. Effective childcare infrastructure is as important to Wales' economic development as physical infrastructure, such as roads and railways. We believe that there is scope for the Committee to carry out an inquiry to consider how a world class childcare system that delivers for parents, children and the wider economy can best be achieved in Wales.
- 1.5. Such an inquiry could consider what gaps there currently are; what works; what doesn't; what change is needed and how best to deliver this.
- 1.6. Engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including but not limited to parents, employers, childcare providers and third sector organisations would deliver a comprehensive picture of what change is needed and areas that should be prioritised by the Welsh Government.

¹ Family and Childcare Trust *Election Factsheet – Childcare in Wales 2015*

2. Transport

- 2.1. During the Fourth Assembly, the Enterprise and Business Committee carried out a number of inquiries into transport in Wales. A recommendation from the inquiry into community bus services was to set a deadline of 2018 for implementation of an all-Wales integrated ticketing system for bus, rail and metro, which was accepted in principle by the then Minister.
- 2.2. We believe that there is scope for the new Committee to re-visit this topic as 2018 approaches to evaluate progress towards implementing integrated ticketing. The inquiry could also explore what opportunities integrated ticketing offers for flexible and discounted rates as a means of improving access to employment and training opportunities, particularly for groups with higher rates of unemployment or economic inactivity, such as women and young people.
- 2.3. Another option in relation to transport policy could be to investigate the impact of commuting methods and provision of public transport on those who are economically inactive. A recent piece of work by Chwarae Teg looked at women's commuting patterns and found that there is a need for more research into this topic.²
- 2.4. Against a backdrop of stubbornly high rates of economic inactivity in Wales, increased conditionality for those in receipt of out-of-work benefits and well documented transport barriers in rural areas, this inquiry could support the development of transport policy that more effectively supports employment and economic development.

3. An economic strategy that delivers for all

- 3.1. The Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure has recently launched an informal consultation process to explore what Welsh Government's economic priorities should be. It seems likely that this that will feed into the development of an economic strategy for Wales that delivers prosperity, but also supports Wales meeting the other well-being goals set out by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.
- 3.2. We believe that it's crucial for any economic strategy to consider how it can secure economic growth that delivers equally for everyone and supports both men and women to achieve and prosper.
- 3.3. The EIS Committee will have an important role to play in scrutinising any economic strategy but also supporting its development. The Committee could consider an inquiry into how best to ensure that economic policy in Wales delivers prosperity for all, recognises the contribution of both men and women and allows everyone to reach their full potential.

We would be happy to discuss any of the above in more detail.

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² Chwarae Teg *Working Women's Journeys* 2016