

FEMINIST SCORECARD 2019:

TRACKING WELSH GOVERNMENT ACTION
TO ADVANCE WOMEN'S RIGHTS
AND GENDER EQUALITY



FOREWORD

The Welsh Government has made some strides to becoming a feminist government and a feminist nation: in terms of practical action we have seen the new First Minister make good his promise for a gender balanced cabinet. And from a legislative point of view, Wales passed ground-breaking legislation in 2015 to combat the scourge of violence against women and girls.

But despite robust legislation and good intentions to advance gender equality, there has often been a lack of funding, a lack of strategy, and lack of a sense of urgency to see them through. We welcome the Gender Equality Review but it must result in real action, with sufficient budget in place to make gender equality a reality in Wales.

This feminist scorecard shows what could be done now to move Wales forward on its path to equality – on the gender pay gap, taxes and 50:50 representation and other areas. Oxfam Cymru and Women's Equality Network (WEN) Wales now calls on Welsh Government to make bold decisions to make the funding available and put the action in place so we not only have a feminist government but a feminist Wales.

Catherine Fookes
Director, WEN Wales

Rachel Cable
Head of Oxfam Cymru

INTRODUCTION

The barriers that women face, and the opportunities they lack, stem from complex and long-entrenched systems of inequality and discrimination. A holistic approach that addresses many interconnected factors is therefore required to make real progress towards equality.

The National Assembly for Wales's founding legislation, the Government of Wales Act 1998, required the new institution to 'make appropriate arrangements with a view to securing that its functions are exercised with due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people'¹.

This 'mainstreaming equality duty' places a responsibility on Welsh Ministers to report annually on the Welsh Government's progress. Many Assembly Members, including Ministers in successive Welsh Governments, have taken this duty seriously, and have made admirable efforts to secure progress towards equality, including for women.

On International Women's Day 2018, Wales' former First Minister Carwyn Jones announced a Rapid Review of Welsh Government gender and equality policies. The remit of the review included identifying how to:

- Move gender to the forefront of all decision-making;
- Deliver gender balanced public appointments;
- Better use procurement powers to promote equality;
- Ensure that the new Economic Action Plan and Employability Plan 'deliver on the rhetoric in relation to gender';
- Make Wales 'the safest place to be a woman in the whole of Europe'.

This welcome announcement provides a benchmark against which to measure recent and future Welsh Government action to advance equality for women and girls in Wales.

Oxfam Cymru and the Women's Equality Network (WEN) Wales have worked together to produce this Feminist Scorecard as a follow-up to the Women's Manifesto 2018². This Scorecard focuses on six areas that are vital for women's equality, and are areas in which the Welsh Government has power to make a significant difference:

- Caring responsibilities;
- Ending violence against women and girls;
- Equal representation and leadership;
- Global responsibility;
- Jobs and pay equality;
- Taxation and budgets.

The Scorecard does not attempt to offer a comprehensive analysis of every policy area, nor of all decisions the current government has made that have an impact on women and equality. Rather it is, in the simplest of terms, a snapshot of Welsh Government performance in six areas of key concern to women, over the period from the election of the 5th Assembly in May 2016 to February 2019. It is a call to action for Welsh Government to examine where it has done well and where more work is needed to achieve equality for women and girls in Wales.

FEMINIST SCORECARD 2019

TRACKING WELSH GOVERNMENT ACTION TO
ADVANCE WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY



Green = Significant Progress



Amber = Some Progress



Red = Little Progress

WOMEN AND CARING RESPONSIBILITIES



Welsh Government has made incremental progress, but more work is needed for example, extending the Childcare offer to younger children and non-working parents and ensuring carers can access respite and reasonable breaks.



ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS



The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 was ground breaking legislation, but implementation has been slow. Provision of services remains very patchy, and immediate action is needed to ring-fence sustainable funding.



WOMEN AND EQUAL REPRESENTATION AND LEADERSHIP



Welsh Government is increasingly a strong advocate for women's leadership, demonstrating this through, for example, its gender balanced cabinet. However, legislation is needed to ensure 50:50 representation in the Assembly, and especially at local government level.



GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY AND WOMEN



Wales continues to show leadership through its Nation of Sanctuary approach. Further progress is needed to cement global responsibility at the heart of the Welsh Government's international strategy, and to ensure Wales meets key climate change targets – a global challenge which impacts on women disproportionately.



JOBS AND PAY EQUALITY FOR WOMEN



Women still hold the majority of low paid jobs in Wales, and the gender pay gap persists. Welsh Government should set ambitious targets to reduce the gender pay gap and devise a framework for monitoring decent work for women.



TAXATION AND BUDGETS IMPACT ON WOMEN



Gender neutral taxation is not the right approach – a gender positive approach is needed. Welsh Government should improve its Equality Impact Assessment process, as well as introduce gender budgeting as a priority.



WOMEN AND CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

! SCORE: AMBER

As well as their heavy and unequal responsibility for domestic work and often being the main providers of care for their children, women are also more likely than men to provide unpaid care for other family members. Welsh Government has made a good start towards achieving a more equal distribution of care and support but has a long way to go.

Childcare

'Having children has a life-long effect on women's employment rates, career opportunities and income. A startling proportion of women either do not go back to work after having children, or return to lower-paid, part-time jobs to fit around childcare. The same impact is not felt by fathers.'
- Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee of the National Assembly (July 2018)³

The statistics underline this reality: the employment rate for women with dependent children in Wales is 75%, but 91% for men with dependent children.

The Welsh Government has recognised the importance of childcare and has committed to providing 30 hours a week of government-funded early education and childcare for working parents of three and four year olds, for up to 48 weeks of the year.

The offer is to be available across the nation by 2020, but likely problems have been identified.

Childcare availability varies across Wales – typically, there is higher capacity in urban and affluent areas, lower in rural and disadvantaged areas.⁴ Such capacity problems could constrain the reach of the new offer as they have done for the Flying Start scheme: 44% of children from disadvantaged backgrounds live outside of Flying Start areas, according to the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

Some groups, such as disabled and black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) women, can need additional support to access appropriate childcare.⁵

Experts say that offering it from age 3 is too late to support many women back to work, as is limiting it to parents who work 16 hours or more a week. The Children's Commissioner has called for the offer to be extended to children of non-working parents, emphasising the long-term benefits of quality early years provision to children from the poorest backgrounds.

To make its childcare plan a gold star service Welsh Government should:

- Offer affordable and accessible childcare for all from six months, including to non-working parents;
- Provide funding to ensure disabled children can access childcare;
- Support groups such as disabled and BAME women to access appropriate childcare;
- Provide childcare hubs for asylum seeker families;
- Ensure childcare providers have good pay and conditions and access to training;
- Allow registered child minders to care for their relatives and receive the offer;
- Allow older women, who currently provide much informal childcare, to claim the childcare offer.

Unpaid Care

A sector of society that contributes £8.15bn to the Welsh economy every year deserves attention, praise and nurturing by government - even more so when the social contribution is considered.

At least 370,000 people - equivalent to 12% of the population - provide 96% of care in communities across Wales. The £8.15bn official estimate of the value of their unpaid care work outweighs the value of formal care provided by local government and the NHS.⁶

Women provide a higher proportion of unpaid care than men. A marked gender gap is notable among carers aged 25-49 and 50-64 - when caring duties are most likely to have a negative impact on employment options and earnings. Levels of unpaid care are highest in former industrial areas.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, which came into force in April 2016, offered enhanced rights to carers. In 2017 the Welsh Government announced three national priorities: 1 Supporting life alongside caring – All carers must have reasonable breaks from their caring role; 2 Identifying and recognising carers including ensuring they can access necessary support; 3 Providing information, advice and assistance.

The right to respite has been identified as a priority on which action falls seriously short. Carers Wales calls for *'funding and choice of quality services to enable carers to take the breaks they need'*.

In November 2018 the National Assembly's Health, Social Care and Sport Committee began an inquiry into the Act's impact on carers. The Older People's Commissioner told the inquiry that current systems for monitoring, measuring and evaluating levels of

respite are not fit for purpose *'as they relate to a narrow and one-sided definition of respite'*. Noting that *'national priorities are not as substantial as a national strategy and these priorities do not include specific actions'* she questioned whether the priorities are strong enough to ensure carers' needs are met.

Welsh Government should:

- By 2020 allocate funding to give carers a choice of quality respite services.

'If our carers fall, our public services fall'

- Older People's Commissioner

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

✘ SCORE: RED

With the passing of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 hopes rose for incisive and decisive action to tackle the scourge of violence against women and girls. But implementation has been slow, plans and strategies have been late emerging, and the initial decision to make the statutory National Advisor post part-time exacerbated delays.

A National Strategy on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence emerged in November 2016 as a high level strategic document, but without an accompanying detailed action plan with responsibilities and timescales for delivery.

In August 2017 the Wales Audit Office noted the funding challenges facing the Act's implementation: *'The plethora of funding streams and their short-term nature make it challenging for public bodies to develop a longer-term strategic approach to tackle violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.'*⁷

In the three years following enactment of the legislation (2016-2018), at least 31 women in Wales have been killed through fatal male violence,

compared to 14 women killed between 2013-2015⁸. The National Advisors reported at the end of 2018 that *'the picture is complex, the provision of services is patchy across Wales and the challenges are significant. ... As a first step to meeting these challenges, it is imperative that there is better join up, collaboration and integration within and across Welsh Government...'*⁹

Long-term sustainable funding for the specialist sector continues to be a major problem¹⁰. The Welsh Women's Aid 2018 State of the Sector report noted that, while Welsh Government had committed to ensuring sustainably funded specialist services, delivery of long-term sustainable funding on the ground has been slow.

Meanwhile there has been a rise in referrals into community-based specialist services, waiting lists for support continue, and at least 431 survivors needing refuge support were unable to be accommodated by the service due to insufficient resources and capacity last year. Specialist services report *'a corresponding increase in survivors impacted by multiple disadvantage and more complex support needs'*¹¹.

Welsh Women's Aid also flagged up another growing problem: the UK Government's austerity policies are causing an extremely challenging climate for survivors – particularly for disabled, migrant and BAME survivors – and for specialist services, which are predominantly used by women and children. They argue that *'there is a clear legal and strategic context for sustainably funding specialist services in Wales'* to counter the worst of the austerity measures.

In November 2018 the then First Minister, Carwyn Jones, announced an expert-led review into refuge provision and sexual violence services *'to transform the support provided to victims of sexual assault and domestic abuse'* and *'develop a made-in-Wales model that provides a world-leading standard of support'*¹² to victims of sexual violence and domestic abuse.

We would expect the review to engage fully with all the specialists providing these services in local communities across Wales and to put survivors' experiences and their recommendations at the heart of the proposed 'made-in-Wales' model.¹³

In 2018 the First Minister also announced¹⁴ that Wales had ratified the Istanbul Convention¹⁵, which expects a state to meet a set of minimum standards¹⁶ for tackling violence against women. Welsh Government claimed they had *'already met all the obligations of the Istanbul Convention within our powers'*. Whether or not this is so, only sovereign states can ratify the convention; Wales has not gone through the process of assessing compliance; and has not published a report to show how they are meeting the convention, as is required for ratification.¹⁷

Online abuse is an extension and continuation of gendered violence. However, Welsh Government's action plan and online initiatives are not gendered and do not recognise the disproportionate impact on girls and young women of online abuse. Noting that articles in the Istanbul Convention, such as those on psychological violence, stalking and sexual harassment, can be applied to online violence, Welsh Women's Aid has urged Welsh Government to embed the Convention's good practice into its response to online abuse.¹⁸

Sexual harassment is prevalent in all our work places and public institutions, including the National Assembly for Wales. The TUC found that over half the women they asked had experienced sexual harassment in the work place.¹⁹

Modern slavery exists in Wales and is increasing. Official figures released in August 2018 revealed a 56% increase in cases of modern slavery in Wales from 2016-2017, although the number of known victims is comparatively low.²⁰ In March 2017 Welsh Government launched a new Code of Practice for Ethical Employment in Supply Chains in the Welsh public sector, offering guidance to enable staff to identify and assess which spend areas are at higher risk of modern slavery and human right abuses. In these cases it is **migrant women** who are at increased risk of violence and exploitation. Welsh Women's Aid is concerned about the risk to women whose asylum applications are refused. The majority of women interviewed by Bawso said they had suffered some kind of vulnerability before experiencing modern slavery.²¹

There are also alarming examples of landlords advertising for sexual favours – 'sex for rent' – in exchange for accommodation in Wales.²² Shelter Cymru found that 3% of women private tenants (an estimated 6,900 women) in Wales had been asked for 'sex for rent' in the last five years.²³ We welcome Welsh Government's commitment to clamping down on 'sex for rent' in Wales by amending the Code of Practice for landlords and we call for action to ensure that this code is enforced effectively so women have safe and equal access to housing.²⁴

To deliver on its pledge of a made-in-Wales model with world-leading standards of support Welsh Government should:

- By 2020 provide adequate ring-fenced sustainable funding for the long-term for specialist services, including for survivors impacted by multiple disadvantage and more complex needs;
- Within a year publish a report in accordance with Istanbul Convention procedures showing how they are meeting the Convention's obligations;
- Ensure the provision of support and advocacy through the family courts for survivors of abuse and delivery of safe child contact for children impacted by violence against women;
- By end of 2019 ensure adequate funding is available to support disabled women;
- The Dignity and respect policy in place at the National Assembly for Wales must include:
 - A clear set of sanctions for those that breach the policy

- Complaints that date back over 12 months must be permitted
- Those dealing with sexual harassment cases must have the expertise to deal with them
- Ensure that the commissioning of support for modern slavery survivors is long-term and gender informed, and that the services working with women who have vulnerabilities due to trauma, disability or mental health needs understand the risks and the warning signs of modern slavery;
- Welsh Government must ensure amendments to the Code of Practice for landlords bring an end to 'sex for rent' in Wales.

'One in three women in Wales will experience physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives'

- WEN Wales Manifesto

WOMEN AND EQUAL REPRESENTATION AND LEADERSHIP

! OVERALL SCORE: **AMBER**

✓ ASSEMBLY: **GREEN**

✗ LOCAL GOVERNMENT: **RED**

On some measures Wales is already a leader in political representation, but serious gender gaps persist, particularly at local government level. Wales' new First Minister, Mark Drakeford, has demonstrated his commitment to women's leadership by delivering on his campaign promise to appoint a gender balanced Cabinet. This is most welcome, but more is needed to achieve the stated aim of a feminist Welsh Government.

The gender balance among Assembly Members, at 47% women, is better than in any other UK parliamentary body, but it is important to recognise that this is not a result of government policy. In comparison, just 28% of Welsh MPs and 28% of local councillors are women. The Assembly's Llywydd and Deputy Presiding Officer are women, and women chair 47% of Assembly Committees. However, to date there has not yet been a BAME woman Assembly Member.

In 2017 an expert panel on Assembly reform, appointed by the Llywydd of the National Assembly for Wales, recommended introducing a gender quota for the 2021 elections. If that does not happen, the panel said, political parties should be expected to *'take steps to ensure their candidate selection processes support and encourage the election of a gender-balanced parliament for Wales'*.²⁵

This presented an opportunity for Welsh Government to bring forward legislation²⁶, but it has not done so. Nor has the Assembly Commission, which has laid legislation to implement some of the expert panel's other recommendations. Such Assembly legislation would require a super majority of 40 AMs and the Llywydd considers that further work is needed to develop political consensus in favour of a legal requirement for quotas.²⁷

Local government remains an unreconstructed bastion of inequality. The proportion of women contesting and being elected to local government remains stunningly low. Just 28% of local councillors, four of the 22 council leaders (18%) and 27% of Council Cabinet members are women. Two local authority cabinets are 100% male. At the rate of change to date, gender balance in Welsh councils is unlikely before 2073.

The Welsh Government's diversity in democracy programme (2014-2017) appears to have had little impact: just 30% of all candidates in the 2017 county council elections were women - marginally higher than in 2012 - and 33% of wards had no women candidates at all.²⁸

It may be argued that ensuring balance among candidates is the duty of political parties. But that ignores the fact that a high number of councillors, possibly more than 25%, sit as independents. Transforming local authorities so that they become more representative of society is a major challenge that requires early Welsh Government attention.

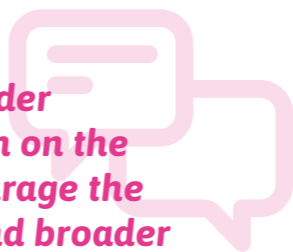
Women are also under-represented in senior public sector roles, but there has been progress. Some 60% of chief executives of NHS health boards and trusts, and 60% of head teachers, are women, as are the four Commissioners appointed by Welsh Government. In 2017, 34% of board members of major Welsh Government sponsored bodies were women.²⁹ Welsh Government moves to centralise public appointments, with a focus on consistency and diversity, are welcome.

We concluded that legislative interventions—such as gender quotas— [...] and enabling candidates to stand for election on the basis of job sharing arrangements, will support and encourage the election of a diverse Assembly, both in terms of gender and broader diversity characteristics

– National Assembly Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform

Welsh Government should:

- By 2021 ensure a 50:50 National Assembly for Wales, including increased representation of BME, LGBTIQ+, disabled and working class women;
- Introduce legislation as recommended by the Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform, including:
 - By 2021 gender quotas integrated into the electoral system so that all political parties put forward at least 50% women candidates
 - Job sharing
- Require local authorities to collect and publish diversity data from all candidates;
- Commit to setting up an Access to elected office fund in time for the 2021 elections to ensure disabled women, BME women and those from all protected characteristics can access political office;
- By 2020 implement an action plan to increase the involvement of BAME women in public and political life, including continued support for the WEN Wales and other mentoring programmes;
- Review the public appointments process to ensure it does not disadvantage women and can deliver diverse appointments, including a 50:50 gender balance on public boards.



GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY AND WOMEN

! OVERALL SCORE: AMBER

Wales aims to be a globally responsible nation. This is one of the seven goals enshrined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. It requires the Welsh Government to work towards Wales becoming 'a nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether this makes a positive contribution to global well-being'.³⁰ In this section we look at three of the areas on which progress towards this goal may be measured, each of utmost importance to women.

Refugees and asylum seekers

✓ SCORE: GREEN

The Welsh Government's claim to be a leader within the UK in provision for refugees and asylum seekers is backed by policies and actions. Although the UK Government controls migration and asylum policy, successive Welsh administrations have supported integration for asylum seekers and refugees from the moment they arrive in Wales, including access to free healthcare.

A proactive approach to Syrian refugee resettlement, alongside communities and all 22 Welsh local authorities, has helped Wales welcome close to 1,000 Syrian refugees.

The United Nation's High Commissioner for Refugees has endorsed the Welsh Government's new 'Nation of Sanctuary – Refugee and Asylum Seeker Plan', launched in January 2019.

Women's particular needs are not always clearly recognised, however. For example, as noted earlier, migrant women are at greater risk of violence and exploitation. As women seeking asylum are amongst the most vulnerable people in our society, greater attention to their specific needs would raise standards even further.

To strengthen its overall positive approach Welsh Government should:

- Introduce a monitoring and evaluation framework that includes clear gender focused performance indicators, success measures, and a review structure;
- Establish a fund to enable asylum seekers and refugees experiencing violence to access refuge.

International development

! SCORE: AMBER

The Welsh Government has recently announced its intention to develop a new international relations strategy, which offers an opportunity to place global responsibility at the heart of future international work.

To date, the Welsh Government's contribution to international development has been delivered through its Wales for Africa programme, which supports projects that benefit both Welsh and African communities. The programme requires grant applicants to demonstrate how they will ensure gender is considered in the work they undertake. Although no data is publicly available, this appears to be working well in Wales: the sector has a high proportion of women in leadership roles, and organisations consciously monitor women's participation, have recruited more women onto their boards and implement policies to help women stay in work.

The impact on women's lives in Africa is harder to assess but appears to be positive and comparatively inclusive. Wales for Africa funding for projects in Uganda suggests a concern to tackle issues that impact on women and girls e.g. providing reusable sanitary pads to teenage girls to help them stay in education; supporting development of a culturally and age appropriate sexual health education curriculum. Because of projects such as these women have been well represented overall, but they may have less of a voice or leadership roll in mixed projects.

There is a belief within the international development sector that Wales lags behind comparable nations in budget and strategy for international development, and that the globally responsibility goal in the Well-being of Future Generations Act has not yet had a noticeable impact.

Most seriously, there is no publicly available evidence that global responsibility is a consideration when trade or other promotional decisions are being taken, or that the impact on women is a consideration in such decisions.

The recently appointed Minister for International Relations is engaging with business and selected voluntary organisations on a new strategy. Although this process is not a formal public consultation, it may offer an opportunity to introduce global responsibility and gender considerations into policies and processes.

Welsh Government should:

- Conduct human rights and gender equality assessments of trade policies;
- Invest in gender training for international trade staff;
- Commit funding to increase women's leadership in projects supported by Wales for Africa.

Climate change

SCORE: RED

Climate change threatens everyone on the planet, but poses greater challenges for women, who make up the majority of the world's poor. Natural disasters, which are occurring more frequently and with greater severity due to climate change, have a disproportionate impact upon women. This should provide an additional spur to serious action on climate change by Welsh Government.

Wales has legislation and regulations that, if appropriately interpreted and implemented, could make a real contribution to climate change mitigation. Two Acts are central to this: the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 'places climate change at the heart of the government, requiring a whole government approach'³¹ and The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 complements this, fully recognising the central importance of climate change and placing a duty on Ministers to set carbon budgets and targets for reducing greenhouse emissions.

Overall, however, reality falls short of ambition. Welsh greenhouse gas emissions have been rising since 2009 and increased by 5% in 2016. Key natural resources are being depleted faster than they can be replenished, biological diversity is declining, and no ecosystems in Wales have all the features needed for resilience.³² It remains to be seen what impact the Planning Policy Wales 2018³³ restrictions on mining, oil and gas extraction and fracking will have.

The Committee on Climate Change, the UK-level advisory body, recommended new interim Welsh emissions targets, including scaling back to 27% the original Welsh target of a 40% reduction on 1990 levels by 2020.³⁴ The Expert Reference Group to the Assembly's Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee suggested that the new targets 'demonstrate a lack of ambition and could be interpreted as a reward for a lack of Welsh Government progress to date'.³⁵

Welsh Government should:

- Ensure that targets reflect the ambitions of Welsh legislation and take account of the Paris Agreement commitments;
- Place a duty on all ministers to make the changes necessary to meet targets;
- Ensure that ministers and staff understand and are guided by the global responsibility goal of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and that they understand the fact that climate impacts more strongly on women.

Welsh emissions reduction targets 'do not adequately take into account the commitments made under the Paris Agreement (and) should be more ambitious if Wales is serious about its global responsibilities'

– Expert Reference Group to the Assembly's Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

JOBS AND PAY EQUALITY FOR WOMEN

SCORE: RED

Women are less likely than men to be in good quality employment and continue to earn less than men on average. Women form the majority of the lowest paid staff in most organisations, and women hold only 6% of chief executive posts in the top 100 businesses in Wales.³⁶ Recently the UN Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty came to the UK. In Wales he found that 25% of jobs pay below the minimum wage, and low-paid, part-time or insecure jobs are often disproportionately taken up by women, due to difficulties in balancing work and caring responsibilities.³⁷

In 2018 the gender pay gap in Wales averaged 13.5%, a 1.3% reduction compared with the previous year³⁸ - but these statistics fail to reveal the whole picture. While the gender pay gap is narrower in Wales than in England, this is mainly because average hourly earnings of male full-time employees are much lower in Wales.³⁹

Part of the discrepancy can be explained by the fact that women are more likely to work in occupations such as caring, sales, leisure and other service occupations. Research for Oxfam Cymru in 2018⁴⁰ confirmed that the domiciliary care and food and drink sectors are characterised by low pay, insecure contracts, and limited opportunities to progress.

The Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales both implement equality policies and have won diversity awards. Yet the gender pay gap for Welsh Government staff was 8% on 31 March 2017, slightly larger than a year earlier⁴¹. Actions have been taken to address the gap including larger pay increases for staff at lower grades, the majority of whom are women, and an initiative that aims for a gender balanced Senior Civil Service by 2020.

But to date Welsh Government has made inadequate use of the levers available to it for influencing positive action by the wider public sector or private companies. It needs to focus more sharply on making pay and work opportunities for women fairer across sectors and regions.

In March 2018 the former First Minister Carwyn Jones committed to ensuring that the new Economic Action Plan and Employability Plan would 'deliver on the rhetoric in relation to

gender'. 2018 also saw the welcome establishment of a Fair Work Commission, in the form of a small independent panel of experts, to make recommendations on how to encourage fair employment practices across Wales, find out what fair work means to businesses and employees, and how to improve. Whilst both plans mention gender inequality, neither provide solutions.

Public procurement (worth more than £6 billion annually) offers an obvious opportunity for Welsh Government to influence companies wishing to bid for contracts. The Future Generations Commissioner, however, found a mismatch between legislation and practice: 'The Procurement Policy Statement for example does not reflect the Act and the extent to which the National Procurement Service and Value Wales are embedding the Act is not clear.'⁴²

Following the Commissioner's intervention, in September 2017 the then Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Mark Drakeford, initiated a review into the National Procurement Service and Value Wales⁴³. One year later Mr Drakeford reiterated his aim of using the £6bn annual procurement spend to, amongst other aims, support fair work and employment practices⁴⁴ - but this needs to include strong measures to end the gender pay gap and improve women's conditions and prospects in firms winning public contracts.

Some signs are emerging of a growing understanding that government business support policies can help to change behaviours. A new Economic Contract, announced in May 2018, requires businesses seeking Welsh Government support to accept conditions that include a commitment to fair work. As with procurement, this should include targets to end the gender pay gap and improve women's prospects.

Also welcome was the announcement of a cross-Government Delivery Board, to ensure the principles of the Economic Action Plan are embedded across Government. Progress towards understanding and implementing these principles in a gender-sensitive manner across departments should be monitored closely and transparently.

Regional pay differences for women

Work is a postcode lottery for women in Wales. There are stark regional pay differences across Wales: women's salaries are as much as 25% less than men's in some areas. The gender pay gap ranges from over 25% on the Isle of Anglesey to -0.5% in neighbouring Gwynedd, and -8.5% further along the coast in Conwy.

Welsh local authorities are not legally required to report on their gender pay gaps under UK Law⁴⁵, however they should be publishing a more comprehensive analysis of gender equality under the Welsh Specific Equality Duties and as part of the Well Being of Future Generations Act 'A more Equal Wales' goal. However, only nine of the 22 local authorities have published their gender pay gap data so far, and there has been little consequence of this lack of action.

Those reports reveal notable differences: Pembrokeshire County Council's median pay gap is 23.30%, and women make up 91% of the lowest earning quartile of its staff. In Newport City Council, at the other extreme, women earn on average 3% more than men, while 77% of the lowest paid quartile are female.

It is likely that the discrepancies also signal significant regional differences in economic opportunities - making a strong case for policies to end gender and other inequalities to be integral to Welsh Government economic strategies and decisions.

It is also likely that the internal dynamic and a paucity of clear legal obligations to tackle gender inequalities are at play in councils. Women account for 73% of local government staff but just 14% of chief executive posts. This chief executive gender deficit combined with the imbalance at the elected level suggests that tackling the stagnation in opportunities and pay facing female local government staff may remain off the radar unless Welsh Government prioritises it.

Full gender equality could add £13.6bn to Welsh GVA forecasts for 2028. Just matching the current best performing region of the UK on key gender equality measures could see an increase of £4.4bn to Wales' GVA.

– 'State of the Nation' report, Chwarae Teg

Double disadvantage

The Welsh Government is required⁴⁶ to carry out Equality Impact Assessments in respect of protected groups, across its proposed policies and practices, those it has decided to review, and the changes it proposes to make. It has identified a lack of evidence for particular protected characteristics.⁴⁷

The data that is available about employment is not heartening. Average earnings vary by gender, disability, ethnicity and religion or belief.⁴⁸

In apprenticeships, strong gender segregation remains, BAME women are under-represented and the representation of disabled women is particularly low.

The disability employment gap for women in Wales was 35.1%⁴⁹ for the year ending 31 March 2018 and was substantially higher in some areas. The disability pay gap in the period 1997-2014 in Wales was 7% for women.⁵⁰ Welsh Government is currently consulting with stakeholders over setting an aspirational target to increase the numbers of disabled people in work and thereby reduce the disability employment gap in Wales. In England & Scotland, respective governments are aiming to halve the gap in 10 years.⁵¹

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women fare badly: the employment rate of white females in Wales is 69.9%, but only 48.1% for BAME women.⁵²

Welsh Government should:

- By 2021 introduce a framework for monitoring decent and fair work for women in Wales, including national well-being indicators;
- Sanction local authorities that don't report on their gender pay gap to help map where actions are needed and to monitor progress, and set targets to close the gaps;
- Legally require and enforce all the public bodies listed in the Well-being of Future Generations Act report on their gender pay gaps, as part of their contribution towards the equality goal of the Act;⁵³
- Develop a strategy for identifying and tackling the barriers to employment facing BAME women;
- Set a target for the numbers of disabled women in work by the end of 2019;
- Monitor and report annually on the effectiveness of the Economic Action and Employability Plans and Economic Contract in narrowing the gender pay gap and overcoming barriers to fair employment, including for women with other protected characteristics.

Experiences of employment in Wales are not only gendered but also ethnically segregated. BAME women are more likely to be unemployed, have trouble finding a job, and are more likely to be economically inactive.

– H Turkmen, Chwarae Teg research partner

TAXATION AND BUDGETS IMPACT ON WOMEN

! SCORE: AMBER

The Welsh Government has limited tax-raising powers. It can raise some small taxes directly, but the bulk of its revenue comes from the UK Treasury, as a 'block grant' whose distribution across devolved responsibilities is determined in the Welsh budget.

But the balance is shifting: around 20% of the Welsh budget will be raised from devolved taxes in 2019-20. When locally raised Council Tax is included, around £5 billion of devolved and local Government spending in Wales will be funded by Welsh-controlled taxes.

This is an opportune time for Welsh Government to develop the use of tools for analysing the gender impact of taxation decisions and address shortfalls in the budget process. Gender budgeting is an effective tool that shows how decisions affect people differently, thus helping governments

allocate resources more fairly and efficiently and advance gender equality.

In its Tax Policy Framework⁵⁴ the Welsh Government states that it 'will use the tax system to promote fairness and economic growth' and that Welsh taxes should 'raise revenue to fund public services as fairly as possible'. This approach should be applied to all its decisions about taxation and spending, not just its recently devolved powers to set some small new taxes and the limited Welsh income tax.

Tax systems and tax rules can have different impacts on women and men. So-called gender-neutral taxation – which appears to be the approach adopted by Welsh Government - can actually undermine women's economic security. A deliberately progressive tax system can have a positive effect.

The UK income tax system is broadly progressive, i.e. as people move into higher income groups they pay an increasing share of gross household income in income tax. The opposite is true for council tax, even after including council tax reductions: people on low incomes pay a higher proportion of their household disposable income in council tax than those who have higher incomes.⁵⁵ As there are more women in lower income groups⁵⁶ a more progressive council tax would benefit them.

Council Tax levels have risen faster in Wales than in Scotland or England over the past decade⁵⁷, increasing the burden on lower income households, though also easing cuts to local services. Welsh Government has provided local authorities with funding to maintain the Council Tax Reduction Scheme⁵⁸, which is likely to have benefitted women in poorer households⁵⁹. The discounts for carers may also benefit more women.

Welsh Government has committed to making Council Tax fairer and can set policy. But local authorities set the Council Tax levels, although this is in response to Welsh budget allocations.

Budgets are about making choices with limited resources. Gender budgeting, or gender-sensitive budgeting, allows governments to promote equality by considering a budget's differing impacts on the sexes as well as setting goals or targets for equality and allocating funds to support those goals.

An Equality Impact Assessment of Welsh budgets is carried out annually but anecdotal evidence suggests this takes place at the end of the budget process to show compliance rather than at an early stage to inform decisions. This approach acts as a barrier to effective cross-government working on gender equality. A more proactive approach would be to outline how all Welsh Government spending is being used to advance equality.

Welsh Government should:

- Introduce gender budgeting to help determine spending;
- Use its policy-making powers to introduce a progressive Council Tax system;
- Carry out an Equality Impact Assessment of Welsh budgets at an early stage of the budget process to inform decisions;
- Develop tools for analysing the impact of the new Welsh income tax and other taxation decisions on women in Wales.

With its powers to set income tax rates for the first time, the Welsh Government will be able to directly influence post-tax incomes and levels of inequality in Wales. [...] Perhaps using existing powers over Council Tax, which takes a much greater share of income from poorer households, should be first in line for reform.

– Guto Ifan, Wales Governance Centre, Cardiff University⁶⁰

METHODOLOGY

For each policy area under consideration we have looked at relevant Welsh Government statements, legislation, policies and practice; examined evidence from specialists in each field; analysed statistics where available; and considered them in the context of best practice and expert analysis in Wales and elsewhere. Additionally we held a round table discussion with experts in each of the fields and are very grateful to them for sharing their knowledge.

We scored legislation, action plans, strategies and implementation, which together provided an overall score on Welsh Government progress between 2016 and 2019.

We have rated policy areas using a traffic light range (red, amber and green), indicating very little, some, or significant progress towards equality for women and girls in Wales.

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Written by: Lila Haines

About WEN Wales

WEN Wales is a network of organisations and individuals working to advance the rights of women in all spheres of Welsh life. WEN Wales aims to create a fairer society in which women live free from sexism and gender discrimination and enjoy equality in all aspects of their daily lives.

Are you interested in advancing the rights of women in Wales? Join us free today via our website and become a member.

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