

**Enterprise and Learning Committee**

**Young people not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)**

**To: Clerk of the Committee  
Enterprise & Learning**

**Re: Written evidence from Chwarae Teg**

**Date: 10 June 2010**

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The Welsh Assembly Government acknowledges there is an imperative to develop successful inclusion and support strategies to reduce the number of young people who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET). However, the Welsh Assembly Government NEET strategy **does not have a gender perspective**. There are only 1.5% less females in this category in Wales (13.5% males compared with 12% females). Gender must be considered in future work to make sure girls receive support that meets their needs.

Care is a major factor influencing outcomes for young girls. Overall, for ‘**Looked After**’ 16 year olds in 2007-08, the average external qualifications point **score was 123**, compared with **342 for all 16 year olds**.<sup>1</sup> The Millenium Cohort Survey (MCS) on teenage mothers and NEET status found that 84% of teenage mothers in Wales who were under 21 were NEET.<sup>2</sup> In addition, **50% of care leavers are NEET on their 19th birthday**.

Being a care giver is also common characteristic of those who are NEET. Evidence suggests that caring responsibilities prevent nearly 1 in 10 of the NEET group from staying on at school. This compares with only one in twenty young people overall.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> WAG (2009) *Reducing the Proportion of Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training*

<sup>2</sup> Using definition of teenage mother as a mother of the Millenium Cohort child who was no older than 20 at the time of the first interview almost all of whom would have been teenagers at the time of the cohort birth. WAG (2008) *Reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in Wales*

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*



There are approximately **29,000** young mums aged 18 and under in England and Wales.

84% of young mothers in Wales are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET).<sup>4</sup>

Many young mothers drop out of school with no qualifications. Barnardo's research on teenage pregnancy shows that young mothers have often "*had poor experiences of education and are disillusioned with school well before*

*pregnancy*".<sup>5</sup> In many cases, their attendance at school before becoming pregnant was poor and after having the baby, keeping to a timetable is even more difficult.<sup>6</sup> The Welsh Assembly NEET strategy document recognises that 'household worklessness'<sup>7</sup> is one of the main factors of young people becoming NEET. Helping young mothers to secure a place in the economy will help to prevent their children becoming NEET in the future.

Dropping out of school increases the chances of an individual turning to crime. 84% of women in prison left school at 16 or younger in 2002.<sup>8</sup> A review of vulnerable women in the criminal justice system in 2007 found that a high number of women in prison have children or are expecting a baby. Female prisoners are far more likely than males to be primary carers of young children and around a third are lone parents. In the 2007 study, around 2/3 of the mothers lived with their children before prison and 1/3 had a child under 5. Some of the women had no idea who was looking after their children. This creates a great deal of stress and unhappiness. The research also found that women in prison are more likely to take their own lives than men, potentially leaving families with no mother or, in the case of single parent families, no parents at all. In 2003, women represented only 6% of the prison population but accounted for 15% of suicides.

Many education professionals mistakenly believe that young mothers are not interested in education. Research shows that having a baby makes young mothers more interested in getting an education so that they can get a good job

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<sup>4</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8565993.stm>

<sup>5</sup> Evans, J. and Slowly, M. (2010) *Not the End of the Story: Supporting Teenage Mothers Back into Education*. Barnardo's: Essex

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> WAG (2009) *Reducing the Proportion of Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training*

<sup>8</sup> YWCA website



and provide for their child.<sup>9</sup> A lack of adequate support, transport and childcare can stop mothers from returning to education. Further to this, **YWCA research shows that education provision is inappropriate for this group in many areas with less than 50% of Local Education Authorities in England and Wales able to provide the full national curriculum to young mums.**<sup>10</sup>

In Wales in particular, recent research from **Barnardo's** has found that there is little support available for teenage mums in Wales and little or **no funding** available to pay the **childcare costs** that are vital in supporting this group back

into education or training. This makes young mothers in Wales more vulnerable as they are less likely to return to learning. Researchers believe that this group has resigned themselves to a life on benefits.<sup>11</sup> The Government plans to make education compulsory for young people in the UK up to the age of 18. In this case, education provision for young mothers must be improved to enable them to continue learning.

Chwarae Teg:        Katy Chamberlain (Chief Executive)  
[Katy.chamberlain@chwaraeteg.com](mailto:Katy.chamberlain@chwaraeteg.com)

Beverley Pold (Policy & Business Development Manager)  
[Bev.pold@chwaraeteg.com](mailto:Bev.pold@chwaraeteg.com)

Contact address:

Chwarae Teg  
Anchor Court  
Keen Road  
Cardiff  
CF24 5JW

Date: 10 June 2010

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<sup>9</sup> Evans, J. and Slowly, M. (2010) *Not the End of the Story: Supporting Teenage Mothers Back into Education* Barnardo's: Essex

<sup>10</sup> YWCA (2004) *Survey of English Local Education Authorities into the educational provision for pregnant teenagers and young mothers up to the age of 16*. Unpublished.

<sup>11</sup> Evans, J. and Slowly, M. (2010) *Not the End of the Story: Supporting Teenage Mothers Back into Education*. Barnardo's: Essex