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Equalities Task and Finish Group

Final Report to the Welsh Government

September 2011

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Executive Summary

The Equalities Task and Finish Group was established in April 2009 to examine a range of issues which influence the educational performance and well being of young people in Wales. The Group met between June 2009 and January 2011. Its work concluded with the production of this Final Report.

The Group's remit is outlined in the terms of reference, which are:

- *a detailed analysis of the reasons for differential educational performances and outcomes between boys and girls;*
- *the impact on their performance of wider socio-economic issues including substance misuse, teenage pregnancies;*
- *the longer term implications of underperformance on their future training and employability outcomes, including stereotypical choices within the workplace.*

The Group's work has recognised both the complexity of and the relationship between the issues covered within its remit. Group members have welcomed the opportunity to focus on issues which are clearly aligned with the priorities of the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning. We are delighted that the Minister has supported this work and has engaged with Group members on the recommendations in the First Report (March 2010).

The Group has developed detailed proposals to address the first objective which it believes have the potential to make a difference in a relatively short period of time. It is clear that addressing the second and third objectives will require a concerted multi-agency approach, and that developing an over-arching strategy is beyond the Group's remit. Our goal with respect to objectives 2 and 3 has therefore been to produce clear evidence-based recommendations which would guide future in-depth work to address these issues.

Objective 1

The differential performance of boys and girls in Wales is rightly a matter of concern.

Studies of successful initiatives to address underperformance reveal that they best develop through a strategic approach involving an initial short-term focus on primary education, subsequently extending into secondary education and beyond. When implementing strategies to improve the performance of boys, it is clear that these also have a positive impact on the learning of girls.

The Group recommends that a strategy to counter underachievement, with a particular focus on boys, is implemented throughout Wales. This report includes suggestions for the essential components that may be included in such a strategy. There is a clear link to the School Effectiveness Framework to address national, local authority and school level considerations.

The Group recognises that there are a range of factors other than gender which impact on achievement. Prominent among these are ethnicity and, most significant of all, socio-economic and cultural disadvantage. Current evidence supports our belief that the strategy proposed in this report will make a significant contribution to countering underachievement in certain ethnic minority groups and learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, as well as underachieving boys.

Objective 2

There are a broad range of socio-economic factors which impact on learners' attainment. However, schools can make a difference by providing levels of support and enrichment which are otherwise unavailable to the learner.

Disengagement from learning is a serious concern with negative outcomes for the young

person and society as a whole. To make a difference, early intervention is required to help learners, particularly those from socially deprived backgrounds, to raise their aspirations.

Research shows that girls who are disengaged from learning, particularly those from lower socio-economic groups, are most at risk of becoming teenage mothers. There are several key areas for consideration. These include breaking cycles of behaviours across generations to reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy and addressing the issues girls face during pregnancy and as young mothers which impact on their educational attainment.

Young people drinking alcohol is a significant problem in Wales, including considerable numbers who are below the legal age to purchase alcohol. The link between alcohol consumption and other risky behaviours, disengagement from education and teenage pregnancy illustrates clearly the relationship between these issues.

The Group believes that further work should be undertaken to lessen the impact of wider socio-economic issues on learners' performance. This includes building upon existing strategies to develop inclusive systems of support around the needs of young people rather than services. This will require co-ordinated multi-agency work at the highest levels within local authorities, the third sector and the Welsh Government.

Objective 3

The Group has looked beyond qualifications to the impact on young people's careers and earning capacity. Our research has confirmed the significance of stereotypical views, in their broadest sense, not just with respect to gender. Subject choice and careers advice in particular can be affected by stereotyping, which can have a significant impact on short and long term choices within education and the workplace. There is particular evidence of the negative impact of gender stereotyping on the choices and destinations of girls.

The Group believes that further work should be undertaken to reduce the extent to which underperformance affects learners' future training and employability, and to reduce the extent of stereotypical choices within the workplace. Learning provided in schools should not promote stereotyping and never tolerate it when it occurs. As part of this it is vital that those who provide subject and careers advice challenge stereotyping and enable learners to know and understand the full range of options available to them.

We are grateful to everyone who generously gave evidence to the Group. The broad range of information provided, along with the expertise and experience of these individuals, has been instrumental in focusing our work and in the development of our recommendations.

A clear picture has emerged from our work. Much has been achieved since devolution and we should be proud of the achievements of teachers and learners in Wales. However, there is more to do to reduce:

- the gap between boys' and girls' attainment;
- the impact of socio-economic and cultural deprivation on educational attainment;
- the extent of stereotypical choices in qualifications and in the workplace.

There is consensus that, even in these challenging times, given the size of Wales and the opportunity to build on a strong foundation, we should be able to put our vision into practice.

Bethan Guilfoyle CBE
September 2011

Introduction

1. The Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (CELLS) established a Task and Finish Group (the Group) in April 2009 to examine a range of issues which influence the educational performance and well being of young people in Wales. (SF/JH/0028/09 refers).
2. The Group has met on fifteen occasions as shown in the table below. The Group completed a First Report on 25 March 2010 (MB/LA/0263/10 refers) and a Final Report on 07 February 2011 (MB/LA/0048/11 refers).

Equalities Task and Finish Group meetings

2009	2010	2011
05 June	12 January	19 January
20 July	05 February	
29 September	04 March	
16 November	18 March	
	27 May	
	25 June	
	06 September	
	08 October	
	04 November	
	01 December	

3. Members of the Group met with the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning (CELL) on 03 February 2010 to discuss initial recommendations (DC/LA/156/10 refers). The main findings of the First Report were presented to the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) on 17 June 2010. Papers requested by the Minister following these two meetings are shown in Appendix C "*A strategy to counter underachievement especially in boys*" and Appendix D "*Practical Suggestions for Countering the Underachievement of Boys*" (MB/LA/0200/10 and MB/LA/0517/10 refer).
4. In September 2009 the Minister indicated that the Group's terms of reference should be extended to enable it to take on relevant parts of the agenda previously worked on by the Ethnic and Cultural Diversity (ECD) sub-group of the Ministerial Advisory Group's Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion (ALNI) Panel. The Equalities Task and Finish Group recognised the importance of this work for learners and the wider community in Wales.
5. There followed detailed discussions between DfES officials (including the Equalities Unit), members of the ECD sub-group and members of the Equalities Task and Finish Group. It became clear that a significant amount of work, culminating in a series of recommendations, had already been

completed by the ECD sub-group. The role of the Equalities Task and Finish Group in progressing these issues was not clear. Jonathan Brentnall (Chair of the ECD sub-group) and Cliff Warwick (Chair of the ALNI Panel) presented a report on ECD issues¹ to the MAG on 17 June 2010. These matters were considered by Policy Board on 16 February 2011.

6. The Final Report was presented to the MAG on 14 July 2011. That report was subsequently updated to include additional information provided by the MAG and reflect Departmental changes following the May 2011 Assembly elections. This is the updated version of the Final Report, which was submitted to the Minister for Education and Skills on 28 September 2011 (SF/LA/6057/11 refers).

Context

7. The differences between what boys and girls achieve and attain² in schools are well documented and are not a particularly Welsh or British matter. Estyn³ notes that *“Although there have been successes in some schools, generally, the gap between boys’ performance and girls’ performance, in Wales and beyond, has stubbornly resisted efforts to close it”*.
8. The Equalities Task and Finish Group has reviewed existing policies and literature, and looked at what fresh thinking and best practice can be brought to this from relevant national and internal experience. Consideration has been given to how the performance of girls can be improved as well as their confidence and ambition to compete for certain higher education and career opportunities, some of which continue to be overly-dominated by men. This involved looking at matters in the round so that the Group is clear about the impact of issues such as stereotyping, alcohol and drug abuse and teenage parenthood.

Terminology

9. In the context of this report, we use the term *school* to include a range of providers including schools, colleges and work-based learning.

¹ *Education for the diverse people of Wales* (CELLS MAG/10/07)

² Estyn defines *achievement* as how well learners are doing in relation to their ability (and the progress they make) and *attainment* as how well learners are doing as measured in national tests and in the qualifications or credits they gain.

³ Estyn (March 2008) *Closing the gap between boys’ and girls’ attainment in schools*

Terms of Reference

10. The Group's work has focused on the differential educational performances between boys and girls and also the wider socio-economic issues which affect their performance. The terms of reference are:
 - *a detailed analysis of the reasons for differential educational performances and outcomes between boys and girls;*
 - *the impact on their performance of wider socio-economic issues including substance misuse, teenage pregnancies;*
 - *the longer term implications of underperformance on their future training and employability outcomes, including stereotypical choices within the workplace.*
11. The terms of reference further directed the Group's work by stating that "A key output will be evidence-based advice on improvements which could be made in the shorter and longer terms".
12. The First Report provided a strategy to address the first objective of the terms of reference, and set out the Group's proposed approach to the second and third objectives. This Final Report addresses the Group's whole terms of reference.
13. Although the work of the Equalities Task and Finish Group has had an educational focus, the Group recognised that addressing these issues will have much broader benefits for the individual and society as a whole. As Michael Marmot⁴ notes, "*Inequalities in educational outcomes affect physical and mental health, as well as income, employment and quality of life*".
14. Whilst there is a clear link between many of the issues considered by the Group, the use of three separate objectives in the terms of reference gave focus and clarity to its work. In this report, each objective is considered in turn. Where appropriate, links with the other objectives are highlighted, and it is worthwhile noting at the outset that many of the Group's recommendations impact on all three objectives.

⁴ Professor Sir Michael Marmot (2010) *Fair Society, Healthy Lives*, The Marmot Review. Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England post-2010

Objective 1 – a detailed analysis of the reasons for differential educational performances and outcomes between boys and girls

Evidence reviewed

15. The Group has sought evidence from a variety of sources. Verbal and written evidence has been provided to the Group by:
 - Chris Tweedale (School Effectiveness Framework)
 - Helen Arthur (Literacy Strategy)
 - Toni Schiavone / Peter Harding (Basic Skills Cymru)
 - Professor David Egan (Chair of the Task and Finish Group on 8-14 education provision in Wales), and
 - Jonathan Brentnall (Chair of the ECD sub-group of the ALNI Panel).
16. Additionally, a selection of local authorities have been contacted regarding their Children and Young People's Plans and a range of statistical data has been used to inform debate on the nature and extent of the issues under discussion. Group members have contributed papers, data and sources of external information in order to support discussions at the meetings.

Background

17. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child includes the right to have a comprehensive range of educational and learning opportunities. This rights-based approach is set out in *Children and Young People: Rights into Action*⁵ which brings together children's rights under seven core aims that now make up the statutory definition for the well-being of children and young people in Wales. Core aim 2 states that children and young people have the right to education, training and work experience - tailored to meet their needs; basic skills which open doors to a full life and promote social inclusion; and independent, specialist careers advice and guidance, student support and counselling services.
18. *The Learning Country: Vision into Action*⁶ states that to maintain the improvement in standards in schools in Wales "...it will be necessary to focus increasingly on the relative under-achievement of boys compared to girls".
19. The outcomes of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2006 confirmed that Wales had made some progress in children and young people's achievement. However, in relation to the age, ability, gender and socio-economic circumstances of the children and young people of Wales, this progress is uneven and needs to be advanced. Furthermore, the outcomes of PISA 2009 reveal that 15-year-olds in Wales are not attaining as well as their peers in other parts of the United Kingdom.

⁵ Welsh Assembly Government (2004) *Children and Young People: Rights into Action*

⁶ Welsh Assembly Government (2006) *The Learning Country: Vision into Action*

20. Estyn's report on *Closing the gap between boys' and girls' attainment in schools*⁷ and, more recently, the *2008 Children and Young People's Well-being Monitor for Wales*⁸ provide further evidence of the issues that need to be addressed.
21. The data in Annexes 2, 3 and 4 show a clear difference between girls' and boys' achievements from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 4. Annex 5 confirms the trend at A Level, even though the cohort at this stage is clearly different.
22. Annex 2 shows that the differences up to and including KS3 have generally increased over time. There are marked differences at GCSE: well into double figures in some subjects as indicated in Annex 3. It is important to note that although the differences appear smaller for GCSE science and GCSE mathematics than for other subjects, the fact that overall performance in mathematics and science is lower than the 'all subjects' average may be a contributory factor here.

The extent of the differential performance of boys and girls aged 5–18 in Wales

23. The differential performance of boys and girls has been a matter of concern since the early 1990s. Over the last 17 years boys have been slipping further behind girls in educational achievement.
24. The table below illustrates the extent of the difference in Wales at Key Stage 3 in the period from 1998 to 2010. The gap between boys and girls has continued, despite the improvement in the performance of both. By 2009/10 girls were moving further ahead of boys in both mathematics and science, subjects where in the past the boys had traditionally done better. Also, fewer boys stay in the system. Since the expansion of Universities over the past two decades in all four countries of the UK, the proportion of girls going to university has increased significantly and now makes up 56.2% of entrants⁹.

Relative percentage of boys and girls in Wales achieving level 5 or higher at Key Stage 3

	1998/1999			2001/2002			2009/2010		
	English/Welsh	Maths	Science	English/Welsh	Maths	Science	English/Welsh	Maths	Science
Boys	54/62	61	59	53/63	62	67	65/68	74	74
Girls	70/78	62	61	70/79	62	67	80/85	77	80

⁷ Estyn (March 2008) *Closing the gap between boys' and girls' attainment in schools*

⁸ Welsh Assembly Government (November 2008) *2008 Children and Young People's Well-being Monitor for Wales*

⁹ Data reported in <http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php/content/view/1650/278/>

25. The situation at Key Stage 3 is also reflected at Key Stages 1 and 2, in GCSE (level 2) and, to a lesser extent, A level (level 3) results. In 1998/99 the number of girls achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A–C was 11% higher than that of boys. This rose to 11.6% in 2005/06. The difference between girls and boys achieving the level 2 threshold¹⁰ in 2010 was 10.2%.
26. At Key Stage 1 in 2010 the difference in achievement of the expected level of attainment between boys and girls was 3.7% in science but 9.8% in English and 6.2% in Welsh. At Key Stage 2 in 2010 this difference was 3.6% in mathematics, 4.1% in science, 9.8% in English and 10.1% in Welsh.
27. At level 3 girls continue to outperform boys. In 2010, 93.4% of boys achieved the level 3 threshold¹¹ in comparison with 96.0% of girls. These are overall differences.
28. The gaps are greater within certain ethnic minorities. For example, at Key Stage 4 (2005), Pakistani heritage boys were significantly behind Pakistani heritage girls: the Core Subject Indicator (CSI) difference of 17.3% was almost three times the national average. However, there are significant variations in other Black and ethnic minority groups.
29. The aims originally expressed in *The Learning Country*¹², particularly chapter 4: *learning and equality of opportunity in Wales*, seek to remove the barriers to learning which underpin these variations.
30. The examples given above demonstrate that the differential between the achievement of boys and girls has continued over the last decade and is present at all levels from Key Stage 1 onwards.
31. The differential educational performance of boys and girls has been a feature of educational attainment in Wales for several decades. Boys have traditionally performed less well than girls in the arts and languages, while girls have traditionally performed less well than boys in science and mathematics. However, from the late 1980s onwards, the performance of girls in mathematics, science, technology, business studies and IT improved considerably, while the performance of boys in languages and the arts has not improved to the same extent. In humanities at Key Stages 3 and 4, girls get better results in history and geography whereas, before the introduction of GCSE, boys traditionally did better than them.
32. The growing awareness of this phenomenon, together with the introduction of national assessment, has led to acknowledgement of a gender gap and an increasing concern about the impact of the gap between what girls and boys achieve in school. This has implications not only for the boys concerned but their families and society at large.

¹⁰ Equivalent to 5 or more GCSEs at A* to C but includes all pre-16 approved qualifications

¹¹ Equivalent to 2 or more A levels at grades A* to E but includes all 16-18 approved qualifications

¹² Welsh Assembly Government (2001) *The Learning Country*

The gender gap in Wales compared to other countries

33. In general, the research available on the comparative achievement of boys and girls in countries outside Wales and the rest of the UK indicates a similar situation to that which pertains in Wales. However, the gap at GCSE is greater in Wales than in either England or Northern Ireland; (Annexes 3 and 4 show the 'all subjects' difference in 2010 was 7.5% in Wales, in comparison with 7.2% in England).
34. The PISA 2009 results of 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science are a cause for concern in Wales and provide further evidence of the gap between boys' and girls' performance in literacy.

Reasons for the differential performance between boys and girls

35. There is a considerable body of opinion and much research evidence that boys and girls learn differently. In general, girls work harder over longer periods, spend more time over coursework and homework and also read and write considerably more than boys. More girls review their work and have a better appreciation of what they have achieved and what they need to do to satisfactorily complete a task or assignment. In short, girls are better organised, more persistent and better focused. They are generally more conscientious than boys. Many more girls than boys are also able to achieve well academically even when they are not finding the teaching interesting or engaging, or in cultural settings to which they find it difficult to relate. This is not the case for a significant proportion of boys, particularly from Year 8 onwards. Yet, where schools plan accordingly boys can do better, resulting in a more appropriate gender balance in achievement.
36. There are significant cultural, structural and pedagogic issues which profoundly affect the learning of boys and girls, for the challenges and opportunities of life outside the school walls. A majority of girls learn, from their early years of schooling, how to make the most of opportunities offered to them. A significant minority of boys, from as early as 8 or 9 years of age, feel that school is a place where they are undervalued, their efforts are not appreciated or recognised, and there are few experiences which excite their imagination and help with their advancement to further or higher education and the labour market. It is from this significant minority that underachievement arises and becomes seriously manifest in the early part of secondary education, as evidenced by the Keele University surveys over the past 20 years.
37. In general boys are good at taking risks; they are doers rather than talkers; they think speculatively and want to be the centre of attention. They also need a positive context if they are to succeed. Schools often find it very difficult to accommodate the qualities, attitudes and behaviours of boys, and do not consider how they may need to modify their teaching styles and methods of pastoral support in order to cater more appropriately for the learning needs of boys, especially those who are not in the most academically able third or so.

38. Overall, therefore, there are tensions between the ways in which schools provide educational experiences for their pupils and the learning requirements of a significant minority of boys.
39. Analysis of specific learning difficulties with respect to gender reveals significant variations. According to the British Dyslexia Association¹³ about three times as many boys as girls are diagnosed as dyslexic in British schools. There are often other factors involved. Richardson¹⁴ (2001) notes that *“Despite their separate diagnostic labels, the clinical overlap between dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD and ASD is very high and ‘pure’ cases are the exception, not the rule.”* There are obvious consequences for achievement, and increasingly learners with dyslexia and/or other learning difficulties may fall behind in achievement compared with their peers.

Implications of raising the educational performance of boys

40. It is clearly a cause for celebration that more girls have achieved well over the past 20 years and that increasing numbers have gone on to university. It is also a cause for celebration that more boys than ever before are reaching attainment levels that enable them to make similar progress. The issue is that the gap between what is attained by boys and girls is not reducing. It should also be recognised that the high performance of girls does not currently translate into career progression and remuneration at the same rate as for boys. Factors in education affecting this have been considered under the third objective of this Group.
41. When considering strategies to improve the performance of boys, it is important to recognise that this would not be a zero sum: if a higher proportion of students felt valued and appreciated for their efforts and achievements, their schools would become more cohesive and the learning of girls would also be improved. The result therefore may not be the elimination of the gap but rather a reduction of the gap and the raising of standards for boys to a more acceptable level.
42. The possible strategies for improving the performance of boys do not require teachers to work harder or longer. In some schools they have already succeeded in refining their methods in order to work differently and focus on aspects of their teaching in ways which have due regard for the learning styles of many boys.

¹³ www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

¹⁴ Alexandra Richardson (2001) *Fatty Acids in Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, ADHD and the Autistic Spectrum*

Implications of underperformance

43. With reference to the third objective in the terms of reference, ‘*the longer term implications of underperformance on their future training and employability outcomes, including stereotypical choices within the workplace*’, all the evidence shows that underperformance reinforces low aspirations about future choices. Whilst the longer term implications of underperformance are considered in more detail later in this report, the following points are particularly relevant in the context of the underperformance of boys.
44. The NBAR Report¹⁵ notes that young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) are likely to have higher rates of persistent truancy during Years 10 and 11 (15.4%) than young people in general (3.3%). They are up to eight times more likely to have a statutory statement of special educational needs and are much more likely to have no or low qualification levels than the population as a whole. The Report reveals that 32% of the population that is NEET has no qualifications in comparison with only 7% of the general population.
45. It comes as no surprise that the underperformance of boys from an early age has significant implications for their future education/training and employability. The evidence suggests that boys struggle with literacy from an early age. This is reflected in GCSE English and English Literature outcomes. Results in Wales for 2010 show that (in terms of achieving a grade C or above) girls led boys by 16.5% and 12.4% respectively. The equivalent figures for Welsh First Language and Welsh Literature are similar: 14.1% and 11.8% respectively.
46. Underperformance in GCSE English or, in particular parts of Wales, GCSE Welsh First Language, has significant implications beyond success in the subjects themselves. English and Welsh are often regarded as gateway qualifications for entrance to more advanced learning or employment. The CBI report *Working on the Three Rs*¹⁶ notes that “*There can be no doubt of the importance of reading, writing, (and) functional use of English... They are important for the employment prospects of individuals, for their ability to participate in the wider society, and to meet the needs of business for an increasingly skilled workforce to match international competition.*” In the same report the CBI acknowledge the fundamental importance of numeracy and ICT skills.
47. Studies of successful initiatives to address underperformance reveal that they best develop through a strategic approach involving an initial short-term focus on primary education and subsequently extending into secondary education and beyond. The long-term benefits for society are self evident, in social, educational, cultural and economic terms.

¹⁵ Professor Ken Reid (2008) *National Behaviour and Attendance Review (NBAR) Report*

¹⁶ CBI (2006) *Working on the Three Rs – Employers’ priorities for Functional Skills in Maths and English*, p7

48. In his foreword to the CBI Report¹⁷, Richard Lambert provides a succinct summary of the main issues. *“Poor basic skills damage people’s lives and their employment prospects. Weak functional skills are associated with higher unemployment, lower earnings, poorer chances of career progression and social exclusion”*.
49. The Prison Reform Trust¹⁸ reports that, as a group, young offenders have poor literacy and numeracy skills. Just under a third of those in this group have basic skills deficits (with a heavy predominance of boys). In the prison population as a whole, 48% of prisoners are at, or below, the level expected of an 11-year-old in reading, and 82% in writing. These data illustrate the potential for savings, in social and economic terms, of raising standards in boys’ literacy at an early stage.

Strategies for countering underachievement in boys

50. Over the years several initiatives have been developed and implemented with the aim of countering underachievement in boys: some have been strategies in a particular area of the curriculum (e.g. English or modern languages); others have been action research projects covering pedagogic, cultural and structural areas. The most recent major action research project (2005) was based at Cambridge University Faculty of Education and was funded by the then DfES in England. Four types of strategies with the potential to raise boys’ achievements were identified: organisational, individual, pedagogic and socio-cultural. The primary and secondary schools involved in the project did not just focus on one approach but tended to employ a range of strategies (see Appendix A). Although the research suggested that achievements had risen, the Cambridge team were unable at the time of publishing their research findings¹⁹ to state which of the strategies deployed in the schools were the most effective.
51. A precursor to the Cambridge research project was initiated in 1997 by Cardiff University and three LEAs in West Wales and was funded by the Post Office and West Wales Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). This action research project was based in 25 primary schools and four secondary schools with the support of Neath Port Talbot, Swansea and Carmarthenshire LEAs. The intervention was piloted in these schools in 1997–98 and the report was published in December 1998²⁰.

¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸ Bromley Briefings Prison Fact File (June 2009) available at www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk

¹⁹ J. Gray, J. Ruddock, M. Warrington and M. Younger (DfES, 2005) *Raising Boys’ Achievement*

²⁰ A. Evans (School of Education, Cardiff University, 1998) *Report on Combating Underachievement, Especially in Boys*

52. Early in the life of the project, strategies which would be likely to raise achievement were identified through a consultative process with the project schools and their respective LEAs and facilitated by the Cardiff University research team. From a range of working groups involved in the discussion, 23 strategies for countering underachievement in boys emerged covering structural, pedagogic and cultural aspects of school life (see Appendix B). Each school involved in the project elected to implement a minimum of three strategies and to commit at least three school INSET days during the academic year to furthering the aims of the project in raising the achievement of boys.
53. It was the view of all parties in the intervention that the strategies were effective in raising the levels of literacy and achievement among pupils directly involved in the project. While the strategies were effective in raising the performance of boys, they were equally or more effective in raising the performance of girls. Other benefits to the pupils were increased motivation and feelings of self-esteem, and a wider interest in the arts and humanities.
54. There is clear evidence of success in other parts of the United Kingdom, where authorities have implemented specific interventions to improve literacy. A pertinent example is the West Dunbartonshire Literacy Initiative (1997-2007), which aimed to address underachievement and illiteracy over a ten-year period. Results *showed “year-on-year gains on all tests and across all age groups, with sustained post-intervention gains in later years”*²¹.
55. At the commencement of the programme 28.5% of boys and girls were leaving their respective primary schools with a reading age of no more than 9 years, 6 months, which was some 18 months or worse behind their chronological age. The project aimed to identify the difficulties in acquiring literacy skills in the early years of the pupils’ schooling and to address these difficulties as early as possible. The programme was very successful and by 2007 the under and low achievement in literacy had been turned around to such an extent that only a handful of pupils left the primary schools of West Dunbartonshire with a reading age significantly lower than their chronological age.
56. This experience demonstrates that significant improvements for large populations can be achieved in a relatively short time scale with a comprehensive and, critically, sustainable strategy.

²¹ Professor Tommy MacKay (2007) *The Final Research Report of the West Dunbartonshire Literacy Initiative*

57. Throughout Wales there is evidence of successful work to improve boys' literacy at both local and national level. Short television programmes have been broadcast on the success of specific strategies employed by Barry Comprehensive School and Ysgol y Pant. Basic Skills Cymru have supported a number of key initiatives aimed at improving literacy, and which will therefore have impacted on the boys, including:
- book bags for all children at nine months and two years of age;
 - promotion of language through play in the early years;
 - family literacy/language/numeracy programmes;
 - catch-up programmes for children falling behind in their reading and number work in primary and secondary schools;
 - basic skills training for teachers across the curriculum;
 - better strategic planning to identify and support basic skills learners in all settings through promotion of the all-age Quality Standard;
 - targeted support for priority groups – e.g. young people in danger of becoming disaffected and disengaged;
 - recent initiatives to better motivate more boys to enjoy reading, for example, involvement of sports stars and musicians to promote reading for interest and pleasure.
58. Specific initiatives and campaigns have also been launched in response to identified needs. One such example is the Boys' Literacy initiative launched in November 2008. The popular Basic Skills initiative *Read a Million Words Together in Wales* was extended into a campaign targeting the underachievement of boys in literacy with a focus on boys aged 9-14 years who are reluctant and failing readers. Part of this was the publication of *"Me Read – No Way!"* adapted from influential work in Ontario. This was accompanied by further guidance on resources that were seen as useful to raise boys' interest in reading.
59. These strategies have had a positive impact, but more needs to be done if we are to make significant improvements in the overall standard of boys' literacy at a national level. If Wales were to adopt a comprehensive gender-focused national framework and afford a major priority for improving literacy skills many more learners, boys and girls, would achieve their full potential; and Wales would become a World-leader by the end of the decade. A successful and effective intervention to improve literacy would put Wales alongside the current world leaders in literacy: Lithuania, the Netherlands, Flemish Belgium, the Canadian Province of Alberta and Hong Kong²².

²² Fenton Whelan (2009) *Lessons Learned*, MPG Books

Recommendation

The Group recommends that a strategy to counter under-achievement, with a particular focus on boys, is implemented throughout Wales.

60. This section proposes the essential components that may be included in a strategy which addresses national, local authority and school level considerations. This aligns with the vision for tri-level reform within the School Effectiveness Framework, as schools, local authorities and the Welsh Government working collaboratively and in alignment on this strategy will maximise benefits for all. This forms the basis of the paper “*A strategy to counter underachievement especially in boys*” included with MB/LA/0200/10 and shown in this report at Appendix C.

Proposed Strategy

61. Our proposed strategy places responsibilities on the Welsh Government, local authorities/consortia and schools.
62. The **Welsh Government** should:
- agree a **mission statement** at a national level and promulgate a national vision for improving the educational performance of boys and girls in Wales. There should be a clear focus in the mission statement on improving literacy both in English and in Welsh as well as in the subsequent steps of the strategy set out below;
 - commission **research** as to why the outcomes of teacher assessment usually result in a wider gap between what boys and girls attain than is the case in other forms of assessment;
 - set **national targets** from the Foundation Phase, through key stages 2 to 4 and post-16 for the reduction of the underachievement of boys. These targets should address the improvements that would be expected in the short, medium and longer term, e.g. 3 year, 5 year and 10 year periods. They should also incorporate literacy standards for both boys and girls. In order to establish the starting point and subsequently measure achievement against the targets, a nationally standardised assessment will need to be adopted for use in all schools at the end of the Foundation Phase and at the end of each key stage;
 - establish a **national steering group** to oversee implementation of the framework with responsibility for ensuring the delivery of the related training programme, the development of strategies at

a local level and for monitoring and evaluating progress towards the national targets;

- develop a **national training programme** to train specialist teams to be deployed to work alongside local authority staff to support schools in developing a strategic approach to combating underachievement. The training programme should incorporate initiatives for improving literacy, taking into account successful initiatives in other countries at local and national level;
- produce a **training presentation** on countering underachievement in boys, addressing the cultural, structural and pedagogic issues involved in improving the performance of both boys and girls;
- produce **guidance** on the development and implementation of strategies to counter underachievement in boys and distribute to schools to support them in the development of their strategies;
- publish (alongside the above guidance) a number of **case studies** on schools that have successfully implemented strategies to counter underachievement in boys.

63. **Local authorities/consortia** should:

- establish **local steering committees** to oversee the initiative;
- develop **plans**, to be submitted to the Welsh Government, to counter the underachievement of boys, taking account of the mission statement and national targets.

64. **Schools**, supported by the guidance, case studies and training presentation, as well as awareness raising sessions on countering underachievement, should:

- set out an **initial three-year strategy** for countering underachievement, linked to school effectiveness and school development planning. At the core of schools' strategies will be an action plan for countering underachievement in boys;
- reinforce the implementation of the strategies by making sure **governing bodies** afford a high priority to the strategies and ensure that procedures for monitoring and reviewing performance against the strategies are put in place.

65. On-going consultancy and training support would be an integral feature of the implementation of the strategy, with specialist workshops and meetings on cultural, structural and pedagogic strategies to counter

underachievement being held in regions across Wales, as deemed necessary in relation to progress against the plans.

66. The National Steering Group would meet the leading officials of each local authority consortium twice yearly to consider progress in implementing the policy in their respective authorities and agree amendments and adjustments to their respective plans where appropriate.

Launching and maintaining the impact of the strategy

67. If the strategy is to be afforded the status and priority required to ensure its effective implementation and the ultimate achievement of the national targets, it would require the full endorsement and support of the Minister. This would be required in terms of the initial launch which would need to be a high profile event; and there would also need to be sustained commitment from the Minister to emphasise the priority status of the initiative in the Assembly Government's overall education policy.

Links to Welsh Government and other developments

68. The Welsh Government is committed to ensuring all children in Wales reach their full potential. The strategy proposed by the Group would integrate with other Welsh Government initiatives to help achieve their goals. Raising literacy levels, so that every child becomes a competent and confident citizen, is central to the Welsh Government's social justice agenda.
69. **One Wales** acknowledges the empowerment of education. **The Learning Country: Vision into Action** supports the objectives of raising standards in schools and equality of opportunity for all learners. **14-19 Learning Pathways** seeks to develop the skills learners need for life and work and increase engagement in education. Core Aim 2 (Teaching and Learning Opportunities) in the **Children and Young People's Plans** promotes the development of basic skills.
70. Throughout the **Foundation Phase** children between the ages of three and seven are immersed in language experiences and activities. These form the bedrock for the development of reading and writing skills. The **Skills framework for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales**²³ provides guidance about continuity and progression in communication, one of four skills that *"...need to be firmly embedded into the experience of learners across all their learning"*.
71. Communication skills have been given an even stronger focus in the **Estyn inspection framework** that has been in place since September 2010.

²³ Welsh Assembly Government (2008) *Skills framework for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales*, p4

72. The Group's proposal has clear recommendations for central government, **local authorities and schools**. This aligns with the vision for tri-level reform within the **School Effectiveness Framework**, as schools, local authorities and the Welsh Government working collaboratively and in alignment on this strategy will maximise benefits for all.

Investment and Resources

73. The Group is aware of the significant implications for the public sector of the present economic conditions. All members welcome the commitment shown by the Minister in supporting the Equalities Task and Finish Group, and recognise that any new strategy will need to demonstrate clear benefits in order to justify future investment.
74. It is important to note that the costs will be relatively modest for the potential benefits. The transfer costs of not doing enough at an early stage are significantly higher – in social, educational, cultural and economic terms.
75. Improvements in learners' literacy skills generated by the strategy would lead to a substantial reduction in the number of learners on schools' SEN registers, enabling a significant redistribution of resources to other educational priorities.
76. The Group acknowledged, in paragraph 47, the link between basic skills deficits and offending. A recently published Communities and Culture Committee report²⁴ notes that there are high levels of basic skills needs among Welsh juvenile offenders (paragraph 215). The report notes advice from Estyn (paragraph 217) that *"Even if they go on work-based and vocational training, they still need literacy and numeracy skills, and ICT skills... They can then engage in vocational education in a meaningful way that might help them gain employment when they go back into the community."* Again, the potential for significant savings is clear.

²⁴ National Assembly for Wales (February 2010) *Youth Justice: The experience of Welsh children in the Secure Estate*

Conclusions

77. The Group acknowledges that in addition to gender there are a range of factors which impact on achievement, especially aspects of ethnicity and most significant of all, socio-economic and cultural disadvantage. However the current evidence supports our belief that the strategy proposed in this Report will also make a significant contribution to countering underachievement not only in gender terms but also by certain ethnic minority groups and learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.
78. The national strategy to counter underachievement, especially in boys, would establish a framework which draws on the educational experience, commitment and resourcefulness of the education community in Wales at national, local and school level. The strategy would promulgate a national vision and programme for improving the educational performance of boys and girls in Wales.
79. This national framework would be the cornerstone on which to base an all-Wales approach, underpinned by targets, action plans and supported by nationally-provided training, guidance and monitoring. This tri-level, comprehensive approach together with appropriate resources organised and deployed strategically should, over seven years, reduce the gap in achievement between boys and girls to a level which will enable boys to realise their full potential without detracting from the progress and achievement of girls.

Objectives 2 and 3

Evidence reviewed

80. In addressing the second and third objectives of the terms of reference, the Group has sought evidence from a variety of sources. The following publications provided background information:
- *Shaping a Fairer Future*²⁵
 - *Still more (better paid) jobs for the boys*²⁶
 - *The Education Of Pregnant Young Women And Young Mothers In England*²⁷
 - *Young Mothers not in Learning: A Qualitative Study of Barriers and Attitudes*²⁸
 - *Not the End of the Story: Supporting Teenage Mothers Back into Education*²⁹
 - *National Behaviour and Attendance Review (NBAR) Report*³⁰
 - *A qualitative research study to explore young people's disengagement from learning*³¹
 - *Experiences of illegal school exclusions in Wales: a qualitative study*³²
 - *A drinking nation? Wales and alcohol*³³
 - *You, your child and alcohol, Guidance on the consumption of alcohol by children and young people*³⁴
 - *Breaking the cycle of disadvantage – The role of education in combating poverty, inequality and social exclusion*³⁵
 - *The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults. The report of the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances*³⁶

²⁵ Women and Work Commission (2006) *Shaping a Fairer Future*

²⁶ TUC (2008) *Still more (better paid) jobs for the boys – apprenticeships and gender segregation*

²⁷ Nona Dawson, Alison Hosie et al (2005) *The Education Of Pregnant Young Women And Young Mothers In England*

²⁸ Sally Dench, Anne Bellis, Siobhan Tuohy (2007) *Young Mothers not in Learning: A Qualitative Study of Barriers and Attitudes*

²⁹ Evans, J. and Slowly, M. (2010) *Not the End of the Story: Supporting Teenage Mothers Back into Education*, Barnardo's: Essex

³⁰ Professor Ken Reid (2008) *National Behaviour and Attendance Review (NBAR) Report*

³¹ Dr Sarah Lloyd-Jones et al (2010) *A qualitative research study to explore young people's disengagement from learning*

³² Victoria Butler (October 2010) *Experiences of illegal school exclusions in Wales: a qualitative study - A partnership research project by Barnardo's Cymru and SNAP Cymru* Commissioned by DCELLS

³³ Andrew Misell (November 2010) *A drinking nation? Wales and alcohol* (for Alcohol Concern)

³⁴ Welsh Assembly Government (2010) *You, your child and alcohol, Guidance on the consumption of alcohol by children and young people.*

³⁵ Council of the European Union (2010) *Breaking the cycle of disadvantage – The role of education in combating poverty, inequality and social exclusion* (Presidency discussion paper, October 2010) available at <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/news/16921.aspx>

³⁶ Frank Field (December 2010) *The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults. The report of the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances* (for HM Government)

- *Fair Society, Healthy Lives. The Marmot Review*³⁷
- *Early Intervention: The Next Steps*³⁸
- *Narrowing the gap in outcomes for young children through effective practices in the early years*³⁹
- *Improving development outcomes for children through effective practice in integrating early years services*⁴⁰
- *Improving children's attainment through a better quality of family-based support for early learning*⁴¹
- *Grasping the nettle: early intervention for children, families and communities*⁴²

81. Evidence was provided by two DfES officers:

- Paul Morgan (RAISE Programme Leader), and
- Graham Davies (Head of Pupil Engagement Branch).

The following met with the Group to discuss their perspectives and experiences:

- Howard Williamson (Professor of European youth policy, University of Glamorgan)
- Karl Napieralla (Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning, Neath Port Talbot), and
- Aled Evans (Head of Schools, Inclusion and Lifelong Learning Development, Neath Port Talbot).

82. With respect to objective 1, the Group has put forward a detailed strategy for countering the underachievement of boys. We believe this strategy has the potential to make a difference in a relatively short period of time. It is clear that addressing objectives 2 and 3 will require a concerted multi-agency approach, and that developing an over-arching strategy is beyond the remit of this Task and Finish Group. Our goal with respect to objectives 2 and 3 has therefore been to produce clear evidence-based recommendations which would guide future in-depth work to address these issues.

³⁷ Professor Sir Michael Marmot (2010) *Fair Society, Healthy Lives*, The Marmot Review. Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England post-2010

³⁸ Graham Allen MP (January 2011) *Early Intervention: The Next Steps*, An Independent Report to Her Majesty's Government

³⁹ Misia Coghlan et al (March 2010) *Narrowing the gap in outcomes for young children through effective practices in the early years*, Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO)

⁴⁰ Iram Siraj-Blatchford et al (March 2010) *Improving development outcomes for children through effective practice in integrating early years services*, Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO)

⁴¹ Iram Siraj-Blatchford et al (March 2010) *Improving children's attainment through a better quality of family-based support for early learning*, Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO)

⁴² Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO), (2010) *Grasping the nettle: early intervention for children, families and communities*.

Objective 2 – the impact on their performance of wider socio-economic issues including substance misuse, teenage pregnancies

83. There are a broad range of socio-economic factors which impact on learners' attainment, of which substance misuse and teenage pregnancies are just two. Michael Marmot⁴³ notes that "...reducing educational inequalities involves understanding the interaction between the social determinants of educational outcomes, including family background, neighbourhood and relationships with peers, as well as what goes on in schools".
84. Addressing socio-economic issues is a complex matter which requires the concerted effort of a number of agencies. The Council of the European Union⁴⁴ has noted that "Education policy alone cannot remedy the situation. What is needed is a careful mix of preventative and remedial cross-sectoral policy measures, coupled with a culture of policy evaluation and long-term planning..." The findings of Coghlan et al⁴⁵ support the need for "A more strategic approach, including better alignment of initiatives and longer-term funding... if children are to reach their potential".
85. However, education policy is a fundamental part of this. Effective schools make a difference by having good relationships with the learners (who feel engaged and supported), with families and with external agencies. Effective schools offer support and enrichment where the learner's background does not.

Disengagement

86. The People and Work Unit has undertaken research⁴⁶ in response to a commitment in the *One Wales* agreement to establish an "enquiry into disengagement from learning amongst children and young people to look at evidence of what works". The Report notes that "Disengagement from learning is a serious concern. It is associated with a range of negative outcomes for both individual young people and for society as a whole, including lower levels of achievement, an increased risk of being not in employment, education or training (NEET), an increased risk of anti-social and criminal behaviour, substance misuse and teenage pregnancy".

⁴³ Professor Sir Michael Marmot (2010) *Fair Society, Healthy Lives*, The Marmot Review. Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England post-2010

⁴⁴ Council of the European Union (2010) *Breaking the cycle of disadvantage – The role of education in combating poverty, inequality and social exclusion* (Presidency discussion paper, October 2010, available at <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/news/16921.aspx>)

⁴⁵ Misia Coghlan et al (March 2010) *Narrowing the gap in outcomes for young children through effective practices in the early years*, Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO)

⁴⁶ Dr Sarah Lloyd-Jones et al (2010) *A qualitative research study to explore young people's disengagement from learning*

87. This research found evidence of the negative implications of stereotyping: *“There was some evidence from the young people that these chronic problems [e.g. challenging behaviour, poor attendance] are seen by teachers as running across generations and siblings. Young people talked about being seen by teachers as sharing the characteristics of their parents or other family members.”*
88. Our review of literature has shown that some of the causes of disengagement occur before the learner starts formal education and there are clear benefits in intervening early.
89. Misia Coghlan et al⁴⁷ report that *“Children aged under five require supportive learning environments that are sensitive to their needs, culturally relevant and support them in making the transition from pre-school to mainstream education. This is particularly important for poor children and those with language difficulties”*.
90. The People and Work Unit⁴⁸ notes that causes can be *“...rooted in problems that precede enrolment in schools and that links with early intervention work with families is vital in helping schools identify and plan for support needed”*. Michael Marmot⁴⁹ cites the work of Jane Waldfogel⁵⁰ to support his contention that *“Later interventions, although important, are considerably less effective where good early foundations are lacking”*.
91. Additionally, it is possible to identify critical stages during a young person’s education. *“Particular attention must be given to key transition points. Disengagement and [Early School Leaving] are more a process than an event, but there are critical points within that process”⁵¹*. Transition from primary to secondary school is worthy of particular attention.
92. Other evidence suggests that some learners become disaffected / disappointed towards the end of year 8. They begin to feel unappreciated and unrecognised by this time. Some will ‘coast’ and will not reach their full potential. There may be as many as 25-30% in this group.

⁴⁷ Misia Coghlan et al (March 2010) *Narrowing the gap in outcomes for young children through effective practices in the early years*, Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People’s Services (C4EO)

⁴⁸ *Ibid*

⁴⁹ Professor Sir Michael Marmot (2010) *Fair Society, Healthy Lives*, The Marmot Review. Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England post-2010

⁵⁰ Jane Waldfogel (2004) *Social mobility, life chances, and the early years*, CASE Paper 88, London: London School of Economics

⁵¹ Council of the European Union (2010) *Breaking the cycle of disadvantage – The role of education in combating poverty, inequality and social exclusion* (Presidency discussion paper, October 2010)

93. Disaffection and disengagement need to be recognised and tackled early through information sharing and coherent planning involving all the relevant agencies. Victoria Butler⁵² makes a key point *“All interventions should be implemented quickly to curb the downhill trend to disengagement, low self esteem, isolation and permanent exclusion,”* whilst Graham Allen⁵³ suggests that *“The economic benefits of Early Intervention are clear, and consistently demonstrate good returns on investment”*.
94. Some learners who cause difficulties are encouraged, implicitly or explicitly, to leave education. There is considerable anecdotal evidence of schools negotiating unofficial exclusions, which is a cause for concern.
95. It is important to recognise that certain children may have a wide range of issues with varying degrees of complexity and that these require a continuum of support. C4EO⁵⁴ makes the point that; *“The problems experienced by some children and families will respond to a single intervention, others will require longer term support; some will be complex and may even cross generations. It is, therefore, essential that a continuum of support is available with the capacity to meet specific needs at a particular time”*.
96. This continuum can be described with reference to four tiers:
- **Tier 1** – mainstream universal service
 - **Tier 2** – universal with some time-limited targeted input
 - **Tier 3** – specialist input
 - **Tier 4** – acute and intensive input.
97. Good practice within the mainstream can reduce the incidence of disengagement. Early intervention, with effective Tier 1 or Tier 2 support may prevent issues from escalating. There are, however, a smaller number of learners with more complex issues, and addressing these issues needs cooperation between agencies. To achieve this, the key challenge is *“... changing mindsets and cultures within a workforce that is used to working within the boundaries of particular professions and institutions”*⁵⁵.

⁵² Victoria Butler (October 2010) *Experiences of illegal school exclusions in Wales: a qualitative study* - A partnership research project by Barnardo's Cymru and SNAP Cymru Commissioned by DCELLS (Recommendation 8)

⁵³ Graham Allen MP (January 2011) *Early Intervention: The Next Steps*, An Independent Report to Her Majesty's Government

⁵⁴ Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO), (2010) *Grasping the nettle: early intervention for children, families and communities*.

⁵⁵ Iram Siraj-Blatchford et al (March 2010) *Improving development outcomes for children through effective practice in integrating early years services*, Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO)

98. In his evidence to the Equalities Task and Finish Group, Professor Williamson identified the following groups of young people:
- the temporarily confused
 - the temporarily sidetracked (e.g. caring for a sick parent)
 - the deeply alienated (both purposeless and purposeful).

The third group poses the greatest challenge. The individuals that fall into this category may need specialist and/or intensive support from a range of agencies.

99. The need for Tier 3 or even Tier 4 support should be acknowledged and relevant action taken promptly. To be able to contribute at all tiers, teachers need appropriate information, for example, about medical conditions or home circumstances.
100. The Welsh Government's *Integrated Family Support Services* (IFSS) and *Families First* policies link to different aspects of the four-tier model. The IFSS has been set up to address concerns that services are not sufficiently meeting the needs of children whose families have complex problems. The IFSS recognises that for families with complex problems there is an increased likelihood that the child's physical, social and emotional development will be impaired.
101. It is intended that multi-agency *Integrated Family Support Teams* (IFST) within IFSS will work to provide targeted support where required. These teams will make the connections with disadvantaged families and communities and promote access to services available more widely such as *Flying Start*, *Cymorth* and *Communities First*. Such multi-agency working is essential to address complex issues because schools alone cannot deal with all of the problems faced by some learners.
102. The fundamental principle of the *School Effectiveness Framework* (SEF): schools, local authorities and the Assembly Government working collaboratively and in alignment is clearly vital if we are to address such complex issues. As the SEF itself states⁵⁶, "*Collaborative working across services within and between local authorities builds capacity to find shared solutions to challenges. This is particularly important in achieving greater equity of performance and in breaking the link between disadvantage and poor learning outcomes*".
103. There is evidence that *Children and Young People's Partnership* (CYPP) plans are providing better clarity of purpose and shared priorities in multi-agency work, with education having a high priority. They have an important role to play as they ensure strategies are built around the child rather than a single agency. However, there is variability across Wales. Estyn has noted that the structures are often not mature enough yet to enable all partners to share information and to contribute to the decision-making process as equals.

⁵⁶ Welsh Assembly Government (2008) *School Effectiveness Framework*

Conclusions

104. To make a difference, we need to help learners (particularly those from socially deprived backgrounds) to raise their aspirations – to believe that by their own efforts they can progress to higher education or training.
105. Many young people who are disaffected and disengaged receive little or no support and enrichment from their families. Agencies should aim to provide this necessary support and enrichment to combat disadvantage.
106. Close partnerships between the relevant authorities will help foster a more integrated and effective approach: the importance of hybrid, multi-agency teams cannot be underestimated.
107. Policies and initiatives within the Welsh Government need to be effectively managed to ensure they are joined up in a strategic way. A corporate approach is needed for the core aims, driven by senior management.
108. There is evidence of some practitioners unwittingly stereotyping learners on the basis of their families and siblings. This is addressed in paragraphs 151 to 168.

Teenage pregnancy

109. The Group has considered matters including:
 - the factors underlying the reasons for early motherhood; why these are more prevalent in some socio-economic groups and whether they are also prevalent in other sections of society;
 - the role of sex education;
 - the impact of motherhood on school life, including the availability of childcare to enable the mother to attend;
 - the impact of stereotyping on advice given in respect of subject choice and career aspirations.
110. Chris Bryant⁵⁷ notes that the wide variation in teenage pregnancy rates between different social groups means it should be relatively straightforward to identify those most at risk. These include learners who under-achieve at school, have poor attendance or leave at 16 with few qualifications. Research shows that young women from lower socio-economic groups are twice as likely to become teenage mothers and that young mothers are likely to come from deprived areas, inner cities, coastal or industrial areas.⁵⁸ Young women from professional backgrounds are less likely to become teenage mothers.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ *Teenage Mums* (<http://teenagemums.org.uk>)

⁵⁸ YWCA (2009) *Teenage Pregnancy and Young Mum's Fact File*. Available at: <http://www.ywca-gb.org.uk/downloads/resources/infosheets/youngmumsinfosheet.pdf>

⁵⁹ *Ibid*

111. The Social Exclusion Unit's report⁶⁰ identified three contributory factors common to countries with high rates of teenage pregnancy:
- **Low expectations:** Whilst teenage pregnancy is an issue across Wales, it is far more prevalent in areas with greater levels of social exclusion, which score highly on indicators such as low income, high unemployment, poor health, low educational attainment, living in a poor physical environment, and high levels of crime.
 - **Ignorance:** Findings from the 1999 Welsh Youth Health Survey suggest that a substantial number of young people in Wales were either not using, or were not consistently using, reliable forms of contraception.
 - **Mixed messages:** A lack of consistency exists in the messages young people receive about sex.
112. Whilst a lack of consistency in the messages young people receive about sexual behaviour and its consequences may be a contributory factor in the high number of teenage pregnancies in Wales, the main challenge will be to change mind sets and break long-standing cycles of behaviour.
113. Some researchers have suggested that not all teenage pregnancies are unwanted or unintended⁶¹. There is evidence that girls' motivation for getting pregnant can be to enrich their lives: the baby can be a way of strengthening the bond between the mother (grandmother) and daughter (young mother). This is especially true in the case of girls with low educational achievement and very limited career expectations.
114. Research suggests that few young women get pregnant simply to access social housing and benefits.⁶²
115. There is a clear link between disengagement from education (as discussed in paragraphs 86 to 108 above) and the incidence of teenage pregnancy. Young mothers are often disillusioned with school before pregnancy. Dench⁶³ found that a minority of young mothers "*...were positive about their full-time education; however, most had not enjoyed school and their attendance had been poor.*"
116. The research of Dawson, Hosie et al⁶⁴ supports this view "*...the findings show clearly that for many of the young mothers disengagement from education began much earlier and was often a key factor in their pregnancy. Policies to encourage the re-engagement of young mothers must, therefore, address the problems experienced prior to their pregnancy.*"

⁶⁰ Reported in National Assembly for Wales (1999) *A strategic framework for promoting sexual health in Wales*

⁶¹ National Assembly for Wales (1999) *A strategic framework for promoting sexual health in Wales*

⁶² Evans, J. and Slowly, M. (2010) *Not the End of the Story: Supporting Teenage Mothers Back into Education*, Barnardo's: Essex

⁶³ Sally Dench (2007) *Learning Provision for Young Parents - A survey of learning providers*

⁶⁴ Nona Dawson, Alison Hosie et al (2005) *The Education Of Pregnant Young Women and Young Mothers In England*

117. Research undertaken for Barnardo's⁶⁵ notes the risk of exclusion from school during pregnancy, sometimes on unofficial health and safety grounds. The findings suggest these are often not registered as exclusions: concern for the girls' welfare is used as a pretext that they should no longer attend school.
118. Barnardo's⁶⁶ also notes that 70% of young mothers are not in education, employment or training compared with about 10% of 16 to 18-year-olds generally, and that *"At an age when their peers are still in school or college or taking their first steps into work, teenage mothers risk being left behind – struggling to care for a baby on their own, dependent on benefits and constrained by a lack of suitable childcare."* In Wales the figure is higher: 84% of young mothers are not in education, employment or training⁶⁷. Plans to make education compulsory for children up to the age of 18 will impact on this group.
119. Dawson, Hosie et al⁶⁸ report that *"Those young women who were well engaged, enjoying education and succeeding prior to conception are likely to remain so with some small amount of support and some practical adjustments for their safety and comfort. However, for the majority, who were not well engaged and had not enjoyed or succeeded in education prior to conception, there is need for considerable support in a range of settings, offering them choice in the form of provision and in the childcare needed to ensure they can benefit."*
120. Whilst the outcome of teenage pregnancy for the mother and child can be positive, there are a number of negative aspects more usually associated with teenage pregnancy. These include health issues, low income/dependency on benefits and the likelihood that daughters of teenage mothers become teenage mothers themselves.
121. This view is supported by recent research from Barnardo's⁶⁹ which suggested that there is little support available for teenage mothers 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.
122. The Welsh Government disagrees with Barnardo's contention that there is less childcare support in Wales than in England. Nevertheless, many young mothers in Wales remain vulnerable as they do not return to learning. Some researchers are of the opinion that this group have resigned themselves to a life on benefits⁷⁰.

⁶⁵ Evans, J. and Slowly, M. (2010) *Not the End of the Story – Supporting Teenage Mothers Back into Education*, Barnardo's: Essex

⁶⁶ *Ibid*

⁶⁷ BBC News (2010) *'Teenage mothers 'forced out' of education – report'*, 14 March. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8565993.stm>

⁶⁸ Nona Dawson, Alison Hosie et al (2005) *The Education Of Pregnant Young Women and Young Mothers In England*

⁶⁹ Evans, J. and Slowly, M. (2010) *Not the end of the story – Supporting teenage mothers back into education* Barnardo's: Essex

⁷⁰ *Ibid*

123. In commenting on discussions with teenage parents, Iram Siraj-Blatchford et al⁷¹ report that *“Their feedback tells us that they often find it difficult to get access to good information on what to do and where to go for help during and after pregnancy...”*
124. Improving the outcome for young mothers should have a positive influence on the prospects for her child. Misia Coghlan et al⁷² report on several studies which suggest that maternal education has a powerful influence on children’s attainment.

Conclusions

125. Overall there are four key areas for consideration:
 - addressing disengagement among girls in certain socio-economic groups, to break cycles of behaviours across generations and reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy;
 - the great majority of schools give due attention to sex education and the importance of contraception, but this is not consistently effective in influencing behaviour;
 - addressing the issues which face girls and education establishments during pregnancy, to avoid official or unofficial exclusions and promote the pregnant girl’s engagement for as long as reasonably possible before the birth;
 - providing support to promote and encourage the mother’s return to education after the birth.
126. In addressing disengagement, the points raised in paragraphs 86 to 108 are relevant.
127. All pregnant girls, whatever their diverse needs, should remain in school for as long as possible. Schools have a duty to girls of statutory school age. They need clear guidance on how to deal with the health and safety and emotional needs of pregnant girls, together with flexible guidance on how much time young mothers should take out of education/training for maternity leave. Barnardo’s⁷³ suggests that certification of a young person not being fit to attend school should be issued by medical professionals only.
128. Schools and special units should recognise the importance of providing young mothers with the support they need to continue in education, and also the importance of aiming for appropriate qualifications. Where possible, young mothers should return to school and follow an appropriate

⁷¹ Iram Siraj-Blatchford et al (March 2010) *Improving children’s attainment through a better quality of family-based support for early learning*, Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People’s Services (C4EO)

⁷² Misia Coghlan et al (March 2010) *Narrowing the gap in outcomes for young children through effective practices in the early years*, Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People’s Services (C4EO)

⁷³ Evans, J. and Slowly, M. (2010) *Not the End of the Story – Supporting Teenage Mothers Back into Education*, Barnardo’s: Essex

- curriculum. This aligns with the aims of the Welsh Government's National Behaviour and Attendance Action Plans. The success of this will require co-operation between special units and schools. There should be firm recognition that medium and long term planning needs to be in place, not simply catering for the immediate needs of the young mother.
129. The recently publicised success of Cyfle Young Mother's Unit⁷⁴ illustrates what can be achieved. Cyfle encourages reintegration to mainstream schools and this should be an important objective for all.
130. We need to help young mothers make the most of the opportunities available to them. Post 16, we have to recognise the need for a development plan that covers education and/or training as not all girls will wish to take the school-higher education route. This demands a person centred, multi-agency approach to create a regulated personal development plan, with a contribution from all the stakeholder agencies, tailored to the needs of the individual. The plan needs to consider learning and any barriers to learning. There should be a clear expectation that the young mother will return to full-time education.
131. There is evidence that having a baby can place the young mother in a position where her new responsibilities act as a motivator for learning. She may see learning as a route to a good job and the ability to provide for her child. The plan can take advantage of this new motivation so the young mother's attainment is enhanced rather than depressed.
132. Barnardo's⁷⁵ notes that *"...teenage mothers need a range of support to enable them to return to education. Access to the right benefits and suitable housing for girls who have had to move out of the family home are essential prerequisites. Help with transport is also important, but most of all, young women need to be able to access suitable childcare, which they feel confident about using."*
133. These comments illustrate the importance of a co-ordinated inter-agency approach, moving up tiers in the continuum of support described in paragraph 96, as appropriate to the needs of the individual. This will help ensure the correct support is available when needed and should ease pressures on the young mother and her extended family.

⁷⁴ Charlotte Blackwell became the first person in Wales to achieve the Welsh Baccalaureate Foundation Diploma through a Pupil Referral Unit

⁷⁵ Evans, J. and Slowly, M. (2010) *Not the End of the Story – Supporting Teenage Mothers Back into Education*, Barnardo's: Essex

Substance misuse

134. The Group has reviewed evidence on:
- the factors underlying the reasons for substance misuse and whether these sit with a particular socio-economic group or other section of society;
 - the impact of substance misuse on young people's education and aspirations; and
 - the role of schools in creating an environment which minimises the potential for substance abuse and providing a route to a good education and career for those already involved in substance abuse.
135. Misell⁷⁶ reports that Wales has one of the most serious problems of drinking amongst young people who are below the legal age to purchase alcohol. In Wales, 54% of 15-year-old boys and 52% of 15-year-old girls say they have been drunk at least twice. Of the 14,545 referrals for treatment of alcohol misuse in Wales in 2009-10, 1,249 were for patients aged 19 or younger⁷⁷.
136. The World Health Organisation (WHO)⁷⁸ report that in Wales, 7% of 11-year-old boys and 4% of 11-year-old girls said they drank alcohol at least once a week. For 13-year-olds, the figure is 23% of boys and 20% of girls. These figures reveal that Wales has a higher percentage of 13-year-olds drinking alcohol at least once a week than England or Scotland. In fact, of the 40 countries surveyed, Wales had the fourth highest percentage amongst boys and the third highest percentage amongst girls.
137. Whilst a direct causal link between alcohol and sex has not been identified, there is concern that alcohol reduces inhibitions and affects judgement. There does seem to be a link between drinking alcohol and not using contraception⁷⁹ with consequent implications for teenage pregnancies and for sexually transmitted diseases.
138. There is also a link between alcohol consumption and other risky behaviours. Alcohol Concern⁸⁰ notes that *"If a pupil drinks alcohol, smokes or takes drugs, he or she is more likely to do one of the other two as well"*.
139. There is a strong correlation between alcohol misuse and poor educational attainment. Additionally, alcohol is shown to be a contributory factor in many school exclusions⁸¹.

⁷⁶ Andrew Misell (November 2010) *A drinking nation? Wales and alcohol* (for Alcohol Concern)

⁷⁷ Welsh Assembly Government (2010) *Substance misuse in Wales 2009-10*, available from: <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/safety/substancemisuse/stats/?lang=en>

⁷⁸ World Health Organisation (2008) *Inequalities in young people's health: HBSC international report from the 2005/2006 survey*, available from: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/Life-stages/child-and-adolescent-health/publications2/2011/inequalities-in-young-peoples-health>

⁷⁹ Health Education Authority/British Medical Research Board (1998) *Sexual health matters*, London, Health Education Authority.

⁸⁰ Alcohol Concern (March 2009) *Young people and alcohol*.

140. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) has published guidance⁸² for schools which stresses the importance of tailoring alcohol education for different age groups and taking into account different learning needs (including individual, social and environmental factors).
141. The Welsh Government has recently issued guidance⁸³ on the consumption of alcohol by children and young people. The main principles are that:
 - children under 15 should not drink alcohol
 - drinking at 15 and older can be hazardous to health
 - if parents use alcohol responsibly, it is more likely their children will too.
142. The guidance stresses the links between heavy alcohol use and other risks to young people through regretted sexual activity and other substance misuse.
143. The statistics on substance misuse for 2009-10⁸⁴ show that although alcohol has the higher incidence (54% of referrals related to alcohol misuse and 41% of referrals related to misuse of drugs) the median age on referral for alcohol (40) was substantially higher than that for drugs (29). Cannabis is a particular problem for the young. The age profile of cannabis users (median age 21) differed from the profiles for most other drugs for which the median ages were 31 for heroin, 32 for amphetamines and 26 for cocaine.
144. The IFSS policy is initially focused on families where parental substance misuse coexists with concerns about the welfare of the child. The multiagency IFST will work to provide targeted support and more effectively connect children and adult services with a focus on the family as a unit.
145. The plan is outlined on the Welsh Government's website in the following terms: *"IFSS ensures greater accountability and shared responsibility within and across children's and adults' social services and requires greater collaboration between local government and health boards, as equal partners in delivering IFSS in their area"*⁸⁵.

⁸¹ *Ibid*

⁸² National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (2007) *Interventions in schools to prevent and reduce alcohol use amongst children and young people* (Public health guidance PH7)

⁸³ Welsh Assembly Government (2010) *You, your child and alcohol, Guidance on the consumption of alcohol by children and young people.*

⁸⁴ Welsh Assembly Government (2010) *Substance misuse in Wales 2009-10*, available from: <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/safety/substancemisuse/stats/?lang=en>

⁸⁵ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/parenting/help/ifst/?lang=en>

Conclusions

146. We agree with Alcohol Concern's recommendation that, "*All young people should have access to good quality alcohol education in both formal and non-formal settings with the aim that young people make healthy and informed choices*"⁸⁶. To facilitate this "*Further support is needed for parents, teachers and youth workers to spot the signs of early alcohol misuse and provide support and advice*"⁸⁷.
147. The Cambridge University action research project⁸⁸ highlighted the importance of "*An emphasis on good interpersonal relationships between staff and students*" within intervention strategies. This observation is relevant across all three objectives within the Group's terms of reference, none more so than when dealing with substance misuse.
148. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation⁸⁹ reports on two main areas where policy might help to reduce educational inequalities.

Parents and the family home:

- improving the home learning environment in poorer families (e.g. books and reading pre-school, computers in teen years);
- helping parents from poorer families to believe that their own actions and efforts can lead to higher education;
- raising families' aspirations and desire for advanced education, from primary school onwards.

The child's own attitudes and behaviours:

- reducing children's behavioural problems, and engagement in risky behaviours;
- helping children from poorer families to believe that their own actions and efforts can lead to higher education;
- raising children's aspirations and expectations for advanced education, from primary school onwards.

⁸⁶ Alcohol Concern (March 2009) *Young people and alcohol*

⁸⁷ Alcohol Concern (November 2009) *Young people and alcohol in Wales*

⁸⁸ Cambridge University action research project (2005)

[A selected list of intervention strategies from this project is shown in Appendix A]

⁸⁹ Joseph Rowntree (March 2010) *The importance of attitudes and behaviour for poorer children's educational attainment*

Recommendations (objective 2)

149. The Group believes that further work should be undertaken to lessen the impact of wider socio-economic issues on learners' performance. The Council of the European Union⁹⁰ has noted that *"Investing enough and investing early is essential in the effort to break the cycle of disadvantage."* However, there needs to be a continuum of support and we welcome the launch of the *Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan*, particularly given the problems that young people seeking employment face in difficult economic times.
150. The Group recommends that the **Welsh Government** should:
- build upon existing strategies to develop inclusive systems of support around the needs of young people rather than services;
 - require multi-agency work at the highest levels within and between local authorities, the third sector and the Welsh Government;
 - in areas with the greatest socio-economic problems, develop a cross-sectoral strategy to counter the low aspirations prevalent in those areas;
 - implement a strategy to counter disengagement from learning. Such a strategy would provide early intervention, from pre-school, and an appropriate continuum of support which addresses:
 - the different tiers of support needed
 - the need to build the capacity for universality
 - the stages in the lives of children and young people which are identified as critical in tackling disengagement
 - the incidence of unofficial exclusions and the need to work with local authorities to eliminate this practice;
 - review existing provision in all aspects of Personal and Social Education and specifically the support available to:
 - teenage mothers
 - young people who misuse alcohol and/or other substances.

⁹⁰ Council of the European Union (2010) *Breaking the cycle of disadvantage – The role of education in combating poverty, inequality and social exclusion* (Presidency discussion paper, October 2010) available at <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/news/16921.aspx>

Objective 3 – the longer term implications of underperformance on their future training and employability outcomes, including stereotypical choices within the workplace

151. Under Objective 3 the Group has looked beyond educational qualifications to the impact on young people’s careers and earning capacity. The Group’s investigations suggest that while there are clear links between attainment, learner outcomes and employability, there are other factors which need consideration. In particular the role of schools in:
- providing “employability” skills in respect of matters such as interpersonal, communication, ICT and other key skills; and
 - influencing subject choice and career choice (which are closely related). The Group is aware of evidence related to stereotyping in the workplace⁹¹ and around the advice given to girls in respect of subject choice and career choice⁹², and the impact this has on the participation of women in the workplace and the economy as a whole.
152. Research by DCSF⁹³ indicates that learners develop concepts of gender that ‘fit’ social norms in the peer group and in wider society. Beliefs regarding gender difference held by teachers and learners produce different behaviours which impact on achievement. The peer group is of central importance in reinforcing gender stereotypes. A whole school approach to challenging gender cultures is required, which covers the school’s ethos, its teaching practices and its organisation.
153. The longer term implications of underperformance are clear. A poor set of qualifications at the end of Key Stage 4 limits opportunities for further study and employment. While some people take advantage of opportunities to improve their prospects by gaining qualifications later in life, for the majority the cycle of poor qualifications / low-paid jobs (underemployment, intermittent employment and unemployment) is very difficult to break.

Stereotyping

154. The Group has considered evidence related to stereotyping in the workplace⁹⁴ and around the advice given to girls in respect of subject choice and career choice⁹⁵ and the impact this has on the participation of women in the workplace and the economy as a whole.

⁹¹ Fawcett Society (2009) *Just below the surface: gender stereotyping, the silent barrier to equality in the modern workplace?*

⁹² Women and Work Commission (2006) *Shaping a fairer future*

⁹³ Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009) *Gender issues in school – What works to improve achievement for boys and girls*

⁹⁴ Fawcett Society (2009) *Just below the surface: gender stereotyping, the silent barrier to equality in the modern workplace?*

⁹⁵ Women and Work Commission (2006) *Shaping a fairer future*

155. Our research has confirmed the significance of stereotypical views, in their broadest sense, not just with respect to gender. Subject choice and careers advice in particular can be affected by stereotyping, which can have a significant impact on choices within education and the workplace. Advice may be given with the best of intentions, for example a girl might be steered away from a placement with a company where the careers adviser feels she may feel isolated and unwelcome. This approach does little to encourage girls into the career in question, and reinforces established views on the gendered nature of that career. In certain career choices, this can impact on boys as well as girls.
156. The Women and Work Commission notes that the better performance of girls in comparison with boys during education is not fully reflected in economic performance. *“Choices of subjects and occupations are affected by deep-rooted assumptions about the abilities and attributes of men and women, and therefore the jobs which can best be done by women and those better suited to men. Women are often perceived to have attributes more appropriate to the “caring” professions, while men are presumed more “scientific” and suited to more technical jobs. So particular occupations become “men’s jobs” or “women’s jobs””*⁹⁶.
157. An analysis of apprenticeships shows strong gendered patterns, with fewer women on advanced apprenticeships than men. A recent report by the TUC⁹⁷ highlights the gendered nature of Apprenticeships, arguing that while a significant number of Apprenticeship places have opened up for women, this is not the case in the traditionally male dominated sectors, which also tend to be higher paid. The TUC notes that *“...women often miss out on high quality programmes and are more likely to have poor pay and conditions”*⁹⁸.
158. However, it is when considering apprenticeships by sector that stark differences emerge. In the same paper, the TUC lists the percentages of women apprentices in *Construction* as 1.3% and in *Engineering* as 2.6%. By way of comparison, *Hairdressing* is 91.7% and *Children’s Care, Learning and Development* is 97.1%. Comparing these figures from 2007 with data from 2003 reveals there has been little shift in this period, and indeed in some of the most segregated sectors, the situation has deteriorated.
159. There is a need to ensure that the horizons of Foundation Phase learners are not limited by stereotypes of what girls and boys can and cannot do. The cycle has to be broken from learners’ earliest experiences, through Key Stage 2 and transition to Key Stage 3 and beyond.
160. On a positive note, whilst stereotypical views are often deep-rooted, people can be trained to recognise stereotyping in themselves, and to act to mitigate its effects.

⁹⁶ Women and Work Commission (2006) *Shaping a fairer future*

⁹⁷ TUC: *Still more (better paid) jobs for the boys* (2008)

⁹⁸ *Ibid*

161. Good careers/subject advice is more important today than it has ever been. This is essential if the greater choice provided by the flexibility inherent in Learning Pathways 14-19 leads to learners of all abilities benefiting from clear and appropriate guidance regarding the general and vocational subject choice available to them.
162. However, our efforts need to extend beyond school and educational professionals, as the impact of stereotypical views in the home and community cannot be dismissed. Good teaching and sound advice within the classroom can be undone by the views expressed by parents and the peer group. Frank Field's⁹⁹ observation about England is equally applicable to Wales. *"We imperil the country's future if we forget that it is the aspirations and actions of parents which are critical to how well their children prosper"*.
163. The challenge is to enable young people to reconcile the positive views we want schools to engender with local/cultural experiences which may appear to support traditional views of gender or social class.
164. The mother's aspirations are critical, particularly in low-income families. Goodman and Gregg¹⁰⁰ found that *"...parental aspirations and attitudes to education varied strongly by socio-economic position, with 81 per cent of the richest mothers saying they hoped their nine-year-old would go to university, compared with only 37 per cent of the poorest mothers. Such adverse attitudes to education of disadvantaged mothers are one of the single most important factors associated with lower educational attainment at age eleven"*.
165. They conclude that *"...government policies aiming to change mothers' and children's attitudes and behaviour during primary schooling could be effective in reducing the growth in the rich-poor gap that takes place during this time"*¹⁰¹. If we improve the aspirations of girls, there will be medium term benefits (for the girls themselves) and long term benefits (for their children).
166. A large number of children from disadvantaged backgrounds are affected by poor attainment or engagement. A universal programme (Tier 1 and 2) is needed to address this. Intensive multi-agency programmes (Tier 3 and 4) that target those most in need are also vital. There is a need to ensure that policies in Wales are inclusive.
167. On a wider perspective, for example in considering the issue of substance misuse and teenage pregnancy and the impact of other socio-economic factors, the consequences of stereotyping appears to be a factor which impacts on both boys and girls in certain circumstances.

⁹⁹ Frank Field (December 2010) *The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults. The report of the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances (for HM Government)*

¹⁰⁰ Alissa Goodman and Paul Gregg (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, March 2010) *Poorer children's educational attainment: how important are attitudes and behaviour?*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*

Conclusions and recommendations

168. The Group believes that further work should be undertaken to lessen the instance of underperformance impacting on learners' future training and employability, and to reduce the extent of stereotypical choices within the workplace. The Group recommends that the **Welsh Government** should:
- ensure gender and socio-economic stereotypes are challenged by those engaged in providing subject and careers advice by:
 - reviewing existing provision and establishing a model of best practice
 - implementing a training strategy;
 - ensure learners understand the full range of options available to them by improving subject and careers advice to provide awareness of:
 - career progression opportunities and pay levels
 - employment opportunities resulting from the skills needs of Wales;
 - ensure a greater emphasis in the work of education and training providers on the development of 'employability skills' including interpersonal, communication, ICT and other key skills;
 - further extend efforts to limit the impact of stereotypical views by:
 - providing further guidance for Foundation Phase practitioners and Early Years workers
 - strengthening awareness in environments such as the home, community and workplace;
 - begin a process of longitudinal research on education and employment outcomes, disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background and disability, which recognises the need to look beyond immediate destination data.

List of recommendations

Objective 1

The Group recommends that the **Welsh Government** should:

- 1 set up a literacy initiative to effectively eliminate illiteracy in all primary schools in Wales within ten years;
- 2 implement a national strategy to counter underachievement, especially in boys, in all schools throughout Wales.

Objective 2

The Group recommends that the **Welsh Government** should:

- 1 build upon existing strategies to develop inclusive systems of support around the needs of young people rather than services;
- 2 require multi-agency work at the highest levels within and between local authorities, the third sector and the Welsh Government;
- 3 in areas with the greatest socio-economic problems, develop a cross-sectoral strategy to counter the low aspirations prevalent in those areas;
- 4 implement a strategy to counter disengagement from learning which provides early intervention, from pre-school, and an appropriate continuum of support which addresses:
 - the different tiers of support needed
 - the need to build the capacity for universality
 - the stages in the lives of children and young people which are identified as critical in tackling disengagement
 - the incidence of unofficial exclusions and work with local authorities to eliminate this practice;
- 5 review existing provision in all aspects of Personal and Social Education and specifically the support available to:
 - teenage mothers
 - young people who misuse alcohol and/or other substances.

Objective 3

The Group recommends that the **Welsh Government** should:

- 1** ensure gender and socio-economic stereotypes are challenged by those engaged in providing subject and careers advice by:
 - reviewing existing provision and establishing a model of best practice
 - implementing a training strategy;
- 2** ensure learners understand the full range of options available to them by improving subject and careers advice to provide awareness of:
 - career progression opportunities and pay levels
 - employment opportunities resulting from the skills needs of Wales;
- 3** ensure a greater emphasis in the work of education and training providers on the development of 'employability skills' including interpersonal, communication, ICT and other key skills;
- 4** further extend efforts to limit the impact of stereotypical views by:
 - providing further guidance for Foundation Phase practitioners and Early Years workers
 - strengthening awareness in environments such as the home, community and workplace;
- 5** begin a process of longitudinal research on education and employment outcomes, disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background and disability, which recognises the need to look beyond immediate destination data.

ANNEX 1

Membership and secretariat

Membership

The Equalities Task and Finish Group has a membership of six:

Bethan Guilfoyle CBE (Chair)	Headteacher, Treorchy Comprehensive School, Ministerial Advisory Group member
Darren Bird	Chief Executive, Funky Dragon
Katy Chamberlain	Chief Executive, Chwarae Teg
Alan Evans	Senior Research Consultant, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University and National Coordinator, Aimhigher Associates Scheme
Alun Morgan HMI	Estyn
Cliff Warwick	Adviser for ALN Caerphilly (seconded to Welsh Government), Ministerial Advisory Group member

Secretariat

The secretariat to the Group has been provided by Dr Alun McCarthy and Nia Jones of the Qualifications and Learning Division within the Education and Skills Department.

ANNEX 2

Comparison of Achievement by Gender at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3

Relative percentage of boys and girls in Wales achieving level 5 or higher at Key Stage 3

	1998/1999			2007/2008			2008/2009			2009/2010		
	English/ Welsh	Maths	Science	English/ Welsh	Maths	Science	English/ Welsh	Maths	Science	English/ Welsh	Maths	Science
Boys	54/63	61	58	62/64	71	72	63/67	72	74	65/68	74	74
Girls	71/79	64	60	77/80	74	76	78/83	75	78	80/85	77	80
% diff	17/16	3	2	15/16	3	4	15/16	3	4	15/17	3	6

Relative percentage of boys and girls in Wales achieving level 4 or above in teacher assessment at Key Stage 2

	1998/1999			2007/2008			2008/2009			2009/2010		
	English/ Welsh	Maths	Science	English/ Welsh	Maths	Science	English/ Welsh	Maths	Science	English/ Welsh	Maths	Science
Boys	61/57	68	74	75/72	80	84	76/73	80	84	77/76	82	84
Girls	73/70	70	76	85/82	83	88	87/86	85	89	87/86	85	89
% diff	12/13	2	2	10/10	3	4	11/13	5	5	10/10	3	5

Relative percentage of boys and girls in Wales achieving level 2 or above in teacher assessment at Key Stage 1

	1998/1999			2007/2008			2008/2009			2009/2010		
	English/ Welsh	Maths	Science	English/ Welsh	Maths	Science	English/ Welsh	Maths	Science	English/ Welsh	Maths	Science
Boys	76/83	83	84	78/85	85	88	78/87	85	88	78/87	85	89
Girls	86/91	88	88	87/92	89	92	88/93	89	92	88/93	90	92
% diff	10/8	5	4	9/7	4	4	10/6	4	4	10/6	5	3

Data taken from National Assembly Statistical Release 126/2009 and 122/2010

ANNEX 3

Relative Performance by Gender at GCSE A*-C in Wales 2010

Subject	Boys	Girls	Difference
Art	65.2%	83.6%	18.4%
Business Studies	59.3%	63.2%	3.9%
Classical Subjects	88.9%	80.0%	-8.9%
Design and Technology	56.1%	70.9%	14.8%
Drama	67.6%	77.5%	9.9%
Economics	70.2%	72.7%	2.5%
English	53.4%	69.9%	16.5%
English Literature	62.8%	75.2%	12.4%
French	69.2%	77.3%	8.1%
Geography	65.2%	72.7%	7.5%
German	73.5%	80.0%	6.5%
History	64.8%	69.5%	4.7%
Home Economics	49.5%	59.9%	10.4%
Humanities	42.3%	46.0%	3.7%
ICT	62.6%	70.9%	8.3%
Mathematics	56.4%	54.5%	-1.9%
Mathematics (additional)	64.6%	59.0%	-5.6%
Media/Film/TV Studies	59.6%	74.1%	14.5%
Music	74.8%	80.6%	5.8%
Other Modern Languages	92.9%	93.3%	0.4%
Physical Education	69.6%	71.1%	1.5%
Religious Studies	66.1%	76.8%	10.7%
Science	59.2%	59.7%	0.5%
Biology	93.2%	93.7%	0.5%
Chemistry	93.7%	93.6%	-0.1%
Physics	94.3%	93.0%	-1.3%
Spanish	69.2%	77.7%	8.5%
Statistics	76.3%	79.1%	2.8%
Welsh: First Language	64.2%	78.3%	14.1%
Welsh : Second Language	62.4%	80.6%	18.2%
Welsh Literature	66.8%	78.6%	11.8%
All Subjects	62.6%	70.1%	7.5%

NB - Differences with a (-) are where the boys performed better than the girls.

ANNEX 4

Relative Performance by Gender at GCSE A*-C in England 2010

Subject	Boys	Girls	Difference
Art	66.5%	83.3%	16.8%
Business Studies	65.6%	70.8%	5.2%
Classical Subjects	87.6%	91.5%	3.9%
Design and Technology	55.8%	73.0%	17.2%
Drama	68.4%	79.7%	11.3%
Economics	80.8%	77.0%	-3.8%
English	58.0%	71.8%	13.8%
English Literature	70.4%	81.9%	11.5%
French	67.0%	75.0%	8.0%
Geography	66.4%	73.1%	6.7%
German	70.9%	78.7%	7.8%
History	66.6%	73.4%	6.8%
Home Economics	47.9%	58.4%	10.5%
Humanities	40.3%	53.7%	13.4%
ICT	71.1%	79.2%	8.1%
Mathematics	58.6%	58.4%	-0.2%
Mathematics (additional)	70.3%	63.2%	-7.1%
Media/Film/TV Studies	57.0%	74.1%	17.1%
Music	74.7%	80.5%	5.8%
Other Modern Languages	84.0%	87.5%	3.5%
Physical Education	67.8%	69.2%	1.4%
Religious Studies	66.6%	77.7%	11.1%
Science	59.2%	62.7%	3.5%
Biology	93.0%	92.8%	-0.2%
Chemistry	93.2%	94.2%	1.0%
Physics	93.9%	93.4%	-0.5%
Spanish	70.1%	77.9%	7.8%
Statistics	74.6%	78.0%	3.4%
All Subjects	65.3%	72.5%	7.2%

NB - Differences with a (-) are where the boys performed better than the girls.

ANNEX 5

Relative Performance by Gender at A Level A*-C in Wales 2010

Subject Group	Boys	Girls	Difference
Biological Sciences	68.5%	69.5%	1.0%
Chemistry	74.2%	75.1%	0.9%
Physics	66.4%	75.3%	8.9%
Other Sciences	69.1%	70.9%	1.8%
Craft, Design and Technology	57.8%	68.3%	10.5%
ICT	53.7%	65.6%	11.9%
Home Economics	20.0%	42.2%	22.2%
Mathematics	83.3%	85.6%	2.3%
Business Studies	65.0%	72.1%	7.1%
Economics	72.1%	75.0%	2.9%
Geography	73.8%	78.2%	4.4%
History	84.0%	88.6%	4.6%
Social Studies	60.1%	66.9%	6.8%
Vocational Studies	37.5%	36.4%	-1.1%
Art & Design	73.1%	82.2%	9.1%
Classical Studies	70.6%	82.5%	11.9%
Communication Studies	70.5%	82.9%	12.4%
Drama	70.5%	82.1%	11.6%
English Language	74.1%	74.9%	0.8%
English Literature	76.2%	74.3%	-1.9%
French	78.2%	77.0%	-1.2%
German	76.3%	83.3%	7.0%
Spanish	80.4%	68.4%	-12.0%
Other Modern Foreign Languages	76.6%	87.2%	10.6%
Music	68.6%	74.9%	6.3%
Physical Education	57.8%	67.3%	9.5%
Religious Studies	76.5%	78.9%	2.4%
Welsh	85.7%	79.3%	-6.4%
Welsh Second Language	69.1%	70.3%	1.2%
General Studies	53.6%	54.5%	0.9%

*NB - Differences with a (-) are where the boys performed better than the girls
All figures (boys, girls and difference) are rounded to one decimal place*

APPENDIX A

A selected list of intervention strategies from the Cambridge University action research project (2005)

- Reward and praise
- Formal and informal ways of encouraging a sense of responsibility
- Homework clubs, in which boys were presented with stark choices about their future
- An emphasis on good interpersonal relationships between staff and students
- Additional sessions at lunchtime, twilight and during holidays offering targeted support
- A pastoral system encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning through self-appraisal
- Wider-ranging merit systems rewarding progress and improvement
- Implementing single-sex groups
- Using data to set short-term targets
- Setting 'Challenge Targets' in reading, writing, spelling, mathematics and science
- Channelling resources to provide extra help at an early stage, with daily support in literacy and numeracy
- Developing aspects of the National Literacy Strategy seen as particularly beneficial or appealing to boys
- Introducing initiatives to develop boys' writing
- A shared reading initiative where less confident children act as tutors for a younger child
- Channelling resources towards the provision of books seen to appeal particularly to boys
- Organising groups to engender collaborative learning
- Use of ICT to motivate boys in particular
- Paired classroom observation of teaching to raise awareness of teaching styles and classroom interactions
- A whole-school literacy policy
- Classroom management policies, including seating students in opposite-sex pairs
- Developing questioning techniques to ensure a gender balance
- Setting short, sharply focused tasks with tight deadlines
- Formal or informal behaviour-management schemes
- Working with parents to get boys 'on side'
- Exposing boys to a range of male role models

APPENDIX B

The intervention strategies deployed in the Cardiff University action research project (1998)

- Improving reading and writing by involving parents
- Providing a diet of reading books which appeal to boys
- Reading recovery
- Paired and shared reading – adults (family/mentors)
- Shared reading – peer tutoring
- Improving reading skills and raising reading standards
- Raising the status of reading through the school
- Raising pupil self-esteem
- Positive classroom behavioural and discipline techniques
- Modification of existing rewards system
- Formal catching-up strategy following pupil absence
- Effective group work
- Study support and ‘homework’ clubs
- Single sex groups and classes
- Seating arrangements based on gender
- Additional use of IT
- Structured play at breaktimes
- Extra-curricular activities
- Monitoring strategies in modern languages
- Targeting of individual pupils with special proformas
- Improving learning outcomes
- Raising status of Year 8 pupils
- Mentoring, linking with form tutors

APPENDIX C

A STRATEGY TO COUNTER UNDERACHIEVEMENT ESPECIALLY IN BOYS

The Equalities Task and Finish Group has two main recommendations. The Welsh Government should:

1. set up a literacy initiative to effectively eliminate illiteracy in all primary schools in Wales within ten years;
2. implement a national strategy to counter underachievement, especially in boys, in all schools throughout Wales.

There were inevitably some overlaps in the deliberations of the group, between the need for a literacy framework and the need for a strategy to counter underachievement in boys; but given the remit of the group, this paper deals largely with the latter. The group felt strongly that there was a need to establish a national approach to the collection of baseline data, for example in reading; this would be monitored at a consortium/local authority level and be in line with the current curriculum and assessment programmes in Wales.

The strategy and funding of a national literacy initiative should be developed within an appropriate structural, organisational and funding framework within DfES. The remainder of this paper focuses on the national strategy required to counter underachievement, especially in boys.

Such a strategy could prove to be a relatively low-cost investment which would impact on the education and development of boys and girls at all stages in schools throughout Wales. Successful implementation of this strategy would provide a sound foundation for the development of other initiatives designed to counter socio-economic and ethnic disadvantage.

The National Strategy

It is proposed that the development of the national strategy should involve the following stages.

1. Agree a mission statement at national level to promulgate a national vision for improving the educational performance of boys and girls in Wales. This would provide the cornerstone of a national framework for ensuring a Wales-wide approach, underpinned by targets, action plans and a national structure of training, support, guidance and monitoring.
2. Set national targets at the foundation phase, key stages 2–4 and the 16–19 stage, for the reduction of the underachievement of boys. The aim of these targets would be to reduce the gap in achievement between boys and girls over a seven-year period to a level where the difference in achievement no longer represents a limiting of the opportunities open to

boys. These targets should address the improvements that would be expected in the short, medium and longer term, e.g. three-year, five-year and seven-year periods.

Following the establishment of the initiative the Steering Committee, in consultation with the Welsh Government, would agree realistic indicative targets for the Foundation Phase, key stage 2-4 and the 16-19 stage. In turn the local authorities would, within the national framework, set indicative targets for the several stages for which they are responsible. Once the training to counter underachievement, especially in boys, has been undertaken, each school would, within the first year of the initiative, be requested to agree an action plan to meet its targets over the first three years of the project.

In formulating its action plan and identifying its strategies and policies to meet its targets, each school would be supported by a trained and accredited adviser.

A similar approach would be followed in setting national targets in the medium (5 Years) and long term (7 years).

3. Request the 22 local authorities, in their respective consortia, to prepare a plan to be submitted to the Welsh Government to counter underachievement in boys, taking into account the mission statement, national framework and national targets.
4. Develop a national cadre of specialist teams to be deployed in countering underachievement. These would involve some 50-70 individuals, trained and coordinated centrally, who would work alongside consortium staff to support schools in developing a strategic approach to countering underachievement.

The individuals who would make up the specialist teams would be experienced and suitably qualified practitioners with a sound knowledge of the pedagogic, structural and cultural issues involved and would have the credibility to help the school counter underachievement and improve educational performance within the national framework of the initiative¹.

The specialist teams would ensure that a consistent and effective approach was adopted to developing and embedding the strategy within each school, with the establishment of appropriate action plans and monitoring of progress. A key part of the work of the teams would be to undertake training in countering underachievement for every teacher in

¹ The individuals would be drawn from suitable Head teachers, teachers, advisers, advisory teachers, inspectors and other specialist practitioners. Practitioners would be eligible within the first three years of retirement. Individuals would be able to elect to offer so many days per year as a trainer/advisor and there would also be provision for individuals serving in schools, colleges, local authorities and other institutions to be seconded - part or full time - to the initiative.

every primary and secondary school in Wales. This training would need to take place in the first full year of the implementation of the strategy.

5. Develop national resources to support the specialist teams, consortium staff and schools in implementing the strategies for countering underachievement. These resources, which would be produced bilingually, would include
 - a manual of guidance on countering underachievement
 - case studies
 - a training DVD.

The resources would be available for training sessions for the specialist teams, as well as for briefing and training events for consortia and school staff.

6. Establish a National Steering Committee to oversee the development and implementation of the national framework. The Committee would have responsibility for
 - ensuring the development of strategies at a consortium, local authority and school level
 - requiring monitoring and evaluation reports from each local authority
 - meeting up with representatives from local authorities and their respective consortia to review implementation and progress.

APPENDIX D

Practical Suggestions for Countering the Underachievement of Boys

1. PREAMBLE

- 1.1 The differential performance of boys and girls in the education system of Wales has been a matter of concern for the past two decades. This concern has been documented by several reports and articles including two major HMI reports (1997 and 2008) and an action research report by the School of Education, Cardiff University (1998). In particular, the gap in the performance of boys and girls over the past 12 years has continued despite the improvements in the performance of both.

2. Implementing the strategy to counter underachievement in boys

- 2.1 The first step is for the Minister to appoint a Steering Committee in order to refine and endorse the strategy. This would then be followed by the recruitment, training and deployment of a team of 50 to 70 consultants to train and support staff in schools throughout Wales.
- 2.2 Before commencing on the training of the cadre of consultants, a training manual, including a DVD, would be prepared for them setting out a training programme, involving the knowledge, skills and protocols required by the consultants, as well as activities, exercises and handouts required for the training. During the training, the strategies for countering the underachievement of boys in terms of pedagogic, structural and cultural considerations would be addressed.
- 2.3 A strategy for training teaching staff in schools would be discussed with local authority consortia, as well as the deployment of the consultants into schools in their authorities as trainers and advisers.
- 2.4 In order for the implementation of appropriate strategies to work, experience suggests that more than three-quarters of the staff within the school need to be supportive of the policies and strategies. To gain this support, a training presentation on countering underachievement of boys, addressing the cultural, structural and pedagogic issues involved in improving the performance of both boys and girls, should be prepared for use by the consultants as they are deployed to the schools. This would also be supported by a manual of guidance on the development and implementation of strategies within schools to support the schools in their own development and implementation.

3. Examples of initiatives that have worked successfully in schools

- 3.1 From the Cardiff University and Cambridge University Action Research Projects and other initiatives, the following strategies have been found to work successfully in schools. Some of the strategies are appropriate across age ranges, while others are more appropriate for particular age ranges, eg 7-11, 11-14, etc.

Structural

- Positive classroom behaviour and discipline techniques
- Effective group work
- Seating arrangements based on gender
- Single sex groups and classes (particularly for subjects such as English, Welsh, Modern Foreign Languages)
- Establishing a half-termly meeting during the school day for all learners (yrs 9, 10, 11) with the form tutor and a parent/guardian to review their progress and set out goals for the next half-term
- Providing all learners in a particular year group with a mentor (teacher or learning coach) who meets with them for 20 minutes on a weekly/fortnightly basis to review progress
- Providing additional teaching and study support, for example during lunch breaks, after school, Saturday morning and school holidays

Pedagogic

- Resourceful use of ICT and multimedia
- Using a wide range of reading materials to promote interest in reading, for example sports magazines and programmes, computer game magazines, pop and rock music magazines, manuals (“Magazine Monday” and “Fiction Friday”)
- Setting short, sharply –focused tasks with tight deadlines
- Include competitive activities within the learning
- Setting out homework in written form, with guidance on what is required to obtain a good grade
- Prompt marking and returning of homework, with appropriate feedback mechanisms
- Review the texts used in the study of literature in English and Welsh in light of their likely levels of appeal to boys and girls. Aim to ensure a good balance
- Peer coaching and classroom observation for teachers to raise awareness of teaching styles and classroom interactions which help counter the underachievement of boys
- Structured play at break-times
- Development of study skills, including tutoring and training in skills and strategies required for effective revision, examination technique, etc
- Establish formal catch up strategies following learner absence

Cultural

- Involving male role models in the learning experiences of learners
- Making it ‘normal’ for learners to always have a reading book to hand
- Enrichment programmes and activities to make year 8 the most exciting and challenging year in a learner’s school life
- Raise the expectations of the work and achievements of boys, calling the boys to account for their work and praising them for their efforts and accomplishments.

4. Postscript

- 4.1 The strategies noted above offer a range of approaches which would be likely to appeal to schools throughout Wales. Strategies which might figure more appropriately in the National Literacy Plan have been deliberately excluded. It would, however, clearly be desirable to include strategies for secondary schools which are designed to improve the standard of reading and writing, especially for boys.