



Ein cyf/Our ref: DC/FM/05463/19

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*Dear Eileen Hunter,*

I am delighted to offer my greetings and support to the Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland's 85<sup>th</sup> Federation Conference.

Your theme of 'Think on it' is timely with the ever increasing focus on the importance of well-being and good mental health to an individual's confidence, contentment, engagement and sense of purpose. The impact of these cannot and should not be underestimated. However, there is no 'one size fits all' approach to well-being and mental health.

We know that women and girls still face many barriers and stubborn inequalities which impact every aspect of their lives, including factors such as their career options and earning potential, caring responsibilities, and their likelihood of being a victim of bullying, violence or domestic abuse. Each of these can impact well-being and mental health. As a Government, it is vital that we use all the levers available to us to address these barriers to inclusion.

Across Welsh Government we are taking action. Our Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 Act is a landmark piece of legislation which is making a difference. Upskilling our public services to respond more effectively to those experiencing abuse means we now have 158,500 professionals who are more knowledgeable, more aware and more confident to respond to those experiencing coercive control and Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

We know employment can have a positive impact on a person's confidence, sense of worth and is recognised as the best route out of poverty. Our Employment Plan sets out our ambition to help everyone achieve their full potential through meaningful employment, regardless of their ability, background, gender or ethnicity.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Other activity includes funding a number of employment programmes specifically supporting women; tackling gender bias in apprenticeships; providing 30 hours of early education and childcare to 3 and 4 year olds whose parents are in work, for 48 weeks per year; and working with employers to promote best practice behaviours.

Welsh Government is committed to putting gender equality at the heart of policy making. To ensure we are leading by example and doing the right things, a Review of Gender Equality was launched last year. The Review has been undertaken by Chwarae Teg, a pan-Wales organisation focussed on gender equality, to ensure the recommendations and advice provided to Welsh Government are independent and representative of the views of stakeholders.

Our approach to the Review involved working across different equality strands, including race, disability and age, aiming to ensure that no one is left behind. The aim of the first Phase of the review was to evaluate what we already do well, identify what we can improve, and to look at examples from Governments around the world to learn from their models and practices.

The second phase has built on this work and has included stakeholder engagement across Wales, learning from gender equality experts from Nordic nations and considering the tools and approaches that could be adopted to mainstream equality into policy and decision making in Wales.

The Review is due to complete this month with a roadmap for gender equality in Wales. It will set out a series of recommendations to ensure gender equality is a key consideration in everything that we do and to move towards a more gender equal Wales.

Like you, we are committed to gender equality and to enabling women and girls to aspire, achieve and prosper.

I commend the work you do to make a positive difference to the lives of women and girls both in the UK and around the world. I wish you every continued success and send my best wishes for a successful and worthwhile conference.

Yours sincerely



**MARK DRAKEFORD**