University of South Wales
Prifysgol De Cymru

CBI

The 2026 Women's Leadership Benchmark for Wales



Progress, persistent gaps and the next priorities for women's leadership.

Authored by Dr Lauren Josie Thomas, Dr Shehla Khan, and Jayde Howard

Contents

Foreword 3

Executive Summary 5

1 - Flexible Working, Caring and Career Opportunity 7

2 - Leadership Capability, Development and Career Progression 11

3 - Gender Equality, Visibility and Workplace Experience 15

Three actions for employers 19

Methodology 20

About the Authors 21

References 22



Foreword

Foreword by Katie Spackman | Deputy Director, CBI Wales

When we launched the CBI Wales Women in Leadership Group, our ambition was never simply to create another business network. We wanted to bring people together to understand what was really holding women back, share what works, influence policy and, importantly, turn those conversations into practical action.

Our first Unlocking Women's Leadership Potential in Wales report in 2024 gave us an important starting point. It identified some of the barriers women face as they progress through their careers, from caring responsibilities and workplace culture to mentoring, visibility and access to opportunity.

Two years on, this Benchmark allows us to ask a much more important question. Are things actually changing?

The answer is mixed. There is progress, particularly around the acceptance of flexible working and women in leadership. But there are also areas where change is simply not happening quickly enough.
What comes through strongly for me is that women do not lack the ambition or capability to lead. The challenge is making sure that talent and ambition are matched by opportunity.

That means looking beyond whether organisations have the right policies in place and asking how they work in practice. Can people see a clear route to progress? Does flexible working genuinely work for those who want to develop their careers? Are talented women visible to the people making decisions? And do commitments to equality translate into what actually happens in the workplace?

These are questions for all of us.
Through the Women in Leadership Group, we want to continue bringing businesses, policymakers and partners together to find practical answers. Our focus has always been on moving from insight to action and creating a stronger pipeline of women leaders for Wales.

My ask to businesses reading this report is therefore simple. Use it.

Use it to start conversations, challenge assumptions and look again at what happens within your own organisation. Because if we can turn the evidence into action, we can create workplaces where talented women don't just aspire to lead. They have every opportunity to do so.



Executive Summary

The 2026 benchmark draws on 220 responses to examine how women's leadership in Wales has changed since 2024. Flexible working is a clear area of progress: agreement that it enables more people to take leadership roles has risen from 53% to 65%, alongside wider access and growing acceptance of flexible leadership. However, caring pressures remain largely unchanged and 57% believe flexible working can reduce visibility to managers and senior leaders. The emerging Flexibility–Visibility Gap therefore shifts the question from whether flexible working is available to whether it protects access to the relationships and opportunities through which careers progress.

Leadership capability is not the missing ingredient. Respondents continue to report strong ambition and confidence in their ability to lead, while access to advice and development remains relatively strong. Yet the proportion reporting clear promotion pathways has fallen from 44% in 2024 to 39% in 2026, while confidence in the basis of promotion has not improved. The Capability–Progression Gap captures this disconnect; organisations may already have capable, supported employees, but development and mentoring do not consistently connect to a visible and credible next step.

The strongest contrast lies between support for gender equality and confidence in its delivery. In 2026, 79% say their organisation actively supports gender equality, yet only 46% perceive accountability for progress. This sits alongside near-universal acceptance of women's leadership capability but a workplace experience that has not improved consistently. The Values–Delivery Gap therefore highlights the central challenge across the benchmark: converting positive attitudes, capability and organisational commitment into sustainable opportunity, visible progression and equitable outcomes.

Over the next 18 months, three in-depth thematic reports will build on this benchmark to explain where these gaps emerge, why they persist and, crucially, what organisations can do to close them.



1 Flexible Working, Caring and Career Opportunity

1.1 Flexible working has become more established

Flexible working is one of the clearest areas of progress since the 2024 benchmark with uptake continuing to improve. Hybrid working, already the dominant model, continues to grow in popularity, while other flexible working types remain less common and a clear ongoing consideration for businesses looking to ensure flexible provision is not one size fits all.

Positive attitudes towards flexible working continue to grow, with substantial shifts in agreement that flexible working enables more people to take, and work effectively in, leadership or management roles. Many respondents continue to agree that flexible working benefits both their career and personal lives.

Flexible working benchmark	2024	2026
No flexible-working arrangement	15%	8%
Hybrid working	72%	77%
Flexible working benefits careers	80%	81%
Flexible working benefits personal life	96%	98%
Enables more people to take leadership roles	53%	65%
Enables more people to take management roles	52%	66%
Flexible working should be encouraged among leaders	88%	91%

While respondents were already very positive in 2024, flexible working continues to embed itself in workplace culture. More workers now see flexible working as part of leadership and management itself, rather than an accommodation that helps people remain in employment.

The question is no longer about the value of flexible working. It is instead: can people who work and lead flexibly do so on equal terms, with access to the visibility, relationships and opportunities through which careers progress?

1.2 Access is no longer enough

While access and attitudes remain overwhelmingly positive, taken alone by an employer they would be a poor measure of success. The 2026 benchmark looks more deeply into the quality of flexible working, finding that flexible working appears particularly effective at giving employees greater control over how work fits around wider life responsibilities.

However, clear concerns are emerging among employees regarding potential downsides. A substantial number of respondents reported worrying about the loss of less formal career development processes.

Flexible working helps...		But respondents worry about...	
Personal life	98%	Reduced informal learning	59%
Work-life balance	94%	Reduced visibility to managers and senior leaders	57%
Control over when and how people work	94%	Reduced access to important informal networks	48%
Sustainable balance over time	84%	Reduced sponsorship and advocacy	43%

The findings highlight an emerging Flexibility–Visibility Gap: while flexible working can support participation, perceived risks remain around informal learning, senior visibility, networks and advocacy. Weber et al. (2025) highlight how hybrid working can limit the informal interactions that support learning and development, reinforcing the importance of effective leadership particularly intellectual stimulation in sustaining these opportunities across flexible working environments.

For organisations of every size, this matters. Learning from colleagues, being known by decision makers, building relationships and receiving advocacy can all influence whose potential becomes visible. In organisations with fewer formal progression systems, informal processes become especially important. Larger organisations in particular may need to consider whether flexible employees experience informal career development opportunities consistently across teams and managers.

1.3 Caring remains a leadership constraint

While attitudes towards flexible leadership have moved, the reported consequences of caring responsibilities are far more resistant to change. A largely static picture is not a neutral result. Flexible working has become more widespread and more accepted as compatible with leadership, yet there is no corresponding evidence that the pressures associated with caring have substantially receded.

Flexibility may help people remain in employment and manage competing responsibilities without necessarily changing how leadership opportunity itself is organised. CIPD evidence highlights that flexible working benefits for career prospects are less clear, with the organisation emphasising the need to consider how flexible working affects progression for those with caring and additional support needs (CIPD, 2026).

Impact of caring responsibilities	2024	2026
Negatively affects ability to lead or manage	43%	41%
Negatively affects willingness to pursue leadership	34%	35%
Increased stress or lack of personal time	78%	77%
Unable to attend events outside work	70%	68%

For employers, the practical question is whether development, networking, high-profile activity and relationship-building depend on evenings, short-notice attendance or physical presence. Where they do, apparently optional activities can become unintended informal conditions of progression.

This is relevant to businesses of every size. The issue is not whether an organisation has an extensive leadership programme, but whether people with caring responsibilities can access the experiences and opportunities through which responsibility and advancement are earned.

1.4 Why this matters for Wales

Flexible working is now an established part of working life for many respondents in Wales, with attitudes towards its compatibility with leadership becoming substantially more positive since 2024. For employers, the challenge is no longer simply to expand access, but to ensure that flexible working is high quality and does not weaken career opportunity. Where flexible employees have less access to informal learning, senior visibility, networks or advocacy, organisations risk retaining skilled employees without fully using their capability or leadership potential. This matters in organisations of every size, whether progression depends heavily on informal relationships or on consistency across larger teams and structures.

The interaction with caring makes this especially important for Wales. Caring responsibilities remain the primary reason for economic inactivity for 21% of women, with women more than three times as likely as men to be out of work for this reason (Office for National Statistics, 2026; WEN Wales, 2026). Childcare availability and affordability also continue to create barriers to women's labour-market participation (Welsh Government, 2026a), echoing the childcare barriers to career progression identified in the 2024 benchmark (Thomas, Howard, and Khan, 2024).

For Wales, the opportunity is therefore to move from flexible-working access towards flexible-working quality. If employers can combine flexibility with equitable access to learning, visibility, relationships and progression, flexible working can support both workforce participation and a stronger leadership pipeline.

Coming March 2027:
The Flexibility-Visibility Gap: Flexible Working, Caring and Career Opportunity will take this analysis further, examining when flexible working protects career opportunity, where the gap emerges, and how flexible-working and caring experiences shape sustainable work, visibility and progression.



2 Leadership Capability, Development and Career Progression

2.1 Progression clarity is moving in the wrong direction

The 2024 benchmark identified considerable leadership ambition and capability alongside much weaker confidence in how progression worked. Two years later, the issue has worsened, with fewer employees believing that promotion pathways in their organisation are clear, and that promotions are based purely on qualifications and performance.

Progression benchmark	2024	2026
Promotion pathways are clear	44%	39%
Promotions are based solely on qualifications and performance	49%	48%

The emerging picture is one of tension. Ambition is not declining, in both benchmarks around 6 in every 10 respondents outside current leadership or management roles expressed future leadership aspirations. Perceived capability is also strong. In 2026, 81% feel capable of making the decisions expected of leaders, and 86% feel capable of influencing others towards shared goals. Employees continue to see themselves as capable of leadership, but confidence in how capability translates into progression has not strengthened.

For employers, unclear progression creates a practical talent problem. Employees may possess the capability and ambition an organisation needs while remaining uncertain about what advancement requires, what opportunities are available or how decisions are made. Westover (2026) argues that unclear progression pathways can create a significant talent drain when ambitious employees cannot see a credible route for advancement. Similarly, Ng et al. (2024) find that skill-building initiatives are less effective in reducing turnover intentions when not accompanied by transparent career pathways. This matters whether an organisation has ten employees or ten thousand. Leadership development delivers limited value if capable people cannot see where it leads.

While the 2024 benchmark identified the need to support leadership development, the 2026 benchmark moves the question on. When capability and development are present, is there a clear and navigable route through which they can translate into progression?

2.2 Development exists, but the route through it is less clear

The expanded 2026 evidence provides a clearer picture of how employees experience leadership development and progression. Interpersonal support is relatively strong, with many respondents able to identify senior colleagues or people they can approach about progression. Clarity weakens further along the journey, particularly around understanding development routes, accessing support and seeing how development connects to advancement.

2026 leadership development experience

Interpersonal support	
Confident approaching senior colleagues	75%
Know who to speak to about progression or promotion	66%
Support and navigation	
Organisation provides leadership-development opportunities	69%
Know where to access development support	61%
Understand available leadership-development routes	54%
Development support is easy to access	48%
Information about support is clear and easy to find	44%

There is a clear gap opening up between interpersonal support and organisational navigation. Knowing who to ask can help employees move through a system, but it does not necessarily make that system transparent. The challenge for employers is to ensure that development opportunities are easy to understand and access, and that employees can see how they connect to progression and realistic next steps.

The benchmark comparison reinforces this pattern. In 2024, 62% of respondents said they knew who to approach for help developing as a leader or manager, compared with 61% in 2026. Confidence in seeking leadership advice internally has remained relatively strong and increased from 67% to 72%. By contrast, the proportion reporting clear promotion pathways has fallen from 44% to 39%. Access to people and advice has therefore remained broadly stable, while clarity about the organisational route forward has weakened.

2.3 Mentoring cannot compensate for unclear progression

Our 2025 research gave particular consideration to mentoring within leadership pipelines. It found that mentoring could help people build confidence, navigate workplace culture, expand networks and support progression, while also demonstrating that needs differ across career stages (Thomas, Howard, and Khan, 2025). The 2026 benchmark develops this picture by examining how accessible mentoring and sponsorship appear within the wider progression system.

Mentoring and progression	2026
Comfortable asking for mentorship or sponsorship	60%
Organisation encourages mentoring and development	59%
Mentors are available	56%
Know how to find a mentor or coach	51%

Mentoring can help employees interpret opportunities, build relationships and understand organisational expectations. However, sponsorship performs a distinct role by using organisational influence to increase visibility, secure developmental opportunities and advocate for advancement (Gröschl et al., 2024). Neither can, however, make an unclear progression system transparent. Their value is likely to be greatest when they help employees navigate a visible route, rather than compensating for the absence of one.

For employers, this means positioning mentoring as part of a wider progression system rather than as a standalone solution. Employees should be able to understand what mentoring is intended to support, how it connects to development and career opportunities, and what realistic progression may follow.

This year's benchmark therefore raises the issue of The Capability-Progression Gap. Leadership capability, development and interpersonal support can all be present without a clear, accessible and credible route through which they convert into career progression.

2.4 Why this matters for Wales

This matters particularly for Wales because the ability to develop and progress at work sits directly within wider national ambitions for fair work, skills and equality. The Welsh Government's Fair Work framework identifies "opportunity for access, growth and progression" as a core characteristic of fair work, including accessible learning and development and the removal of barriers to progression (Welsh Government, 2024). This aligns with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, under which *A Prosperous Wales* includes developing a skilled population able to benefit from fair work, while *A More Equal Wales* seeks to enable people to fulfil their potential regardless of background or circumstances (Welsh Government, 2025a). Business Wales similarly links opportunities to develop and grow at work with employment and earnings potential and greater social mobility (Business Wales, 2026). The 2026 benchmark suggests that meeting these ambitions requires more than providing leadership development alone: if employees can access support but cannot see how it connects to advancement, Wales risks investing in skills and leadership capability without fully converting that investment into career progression, stronger organisational leadership and wider economic value.

Coming October 2027:
The Capability–Progression Gap: Leadership Development and Career Progression will examine how leadership capability, development, mentoring and sponsorship connect to progression, where organisational pathways remain difficult to navigate, and how employers can better convert leadership potential into visible career opportunity.



3 Gender Equality, Visibility and Workplace Experience

3.1 Recognition of inequality is outpacing workplace change

The case for gender equality in leadership was already strongly established in 2024 and remains so in 2026. Agreement that organisations benefit from gender equality is overwhelmingly high, while perceived organisational support remains similarly stable with room for growth.

Recognition of bias has strengthened too, with more employees now believing that unconscious bias could affect whether women received leadership or management roles, and also whether it could affect women putting themselves forward in the first place.

Attitudes to gender equality and bias	2024	2026
Organisations benefit from gender equality in leadership	92%	93%
Organisation supports gender equality in leadership	80%	79%
Bias can affect whether women receive leadership roles	89%	94%
Bias can affect whether women put themselves forward	89%	95%

The attitudinal message is therefore unusually clear. Respondents did not need convincing in 2024 that gender equality mattered, and recognition of the influence of bias is even more widespread in 2026.

Awareness is not the principal unresolved problem. However, the data reveals that workplace experience has not moved consistently in the same direction.

Gender-related workplace experience	2024	2026
Received negative gender remarks	49%	41%
Viewed negatively because of gender	35%	31%
Unfair task allocation	38%	37%
Overlooked for leadership or management	26%	26%
Experienced gender discrimination	30%	38%
Worried about career advancement	33%	45%

While awareness of gender equality and unconscious bias remains high, concerns about discrimination and career progression have increased. The challenge for employers is ensuring that equality commitments translate into fair and visible progression opportunities. The 2024 benchmark established recognition of gender equality and unconscious bias. The 2026 benchmark therefore asks how equality commitments can translate into the decisions and experiences shaping progression.

3.2 Women's leadership is accepted, but legitimacy still lags

Visible female leadership remains overwhelmingly valued. In 2024, 95% regarded visible female leaders within their own organisation as important and 96% said the same of the wider business community. In 2026, both figures stand at 97%. The expanded 2026 survey also shows near-universal acceptance of women's leadership capability, but the final measure is particularly revealing. Respondents overwhelmingly accept that women are capable of leadership, but substantially fewer believe female leaders are taken as seriously as male leaders once they occupy those roles.

Attitudes towards women in leadership, 2026	
Women are as effective as men in senior leadership	98%
Leadership ability is not determined by gender	98%
No hesitation working under a woman	97%
No concerns about a woman leading a large or complex organisation	98%
Female leaders are taken as seriously as male leaders	78%

This creates an important distinction between acceptance and legitimacy. While the importance of visible female leadership is now almost universally recognised, the 2026 evidence raises a more demanding organisational question about whether women who reach leadership positions are afforded the same credibility as men. Women may occupy senior leadership roles while organisational cultures and wider narratives continue to subject their authority to gendered scrutiny, limiting the extent to which they are treated as fully credible leaders (Williams, 2020; Rimington et al., 2019). The issue is therefore what happens when women are visible in leadership. Visibility is not the end point; representation must also be accompanied by women being taken equally seriously when they lead.

3.3 Support for equality is stronger than confidence in its delivery

Perceived organisational support for gender equality has remained almost unchanged, at 80% in 2024 and 79% in 2026. The 2024 benchmark established whether respondents perceived organisational support for gender equality, but only partly explored how that support translated into practice. The 2026 benchmark deliberately extends this evidence, examining senior leadership commitment, access to leadership opportunities, promotion and appointment decisions, the seriousness and effectiveness of equality policies and initiatives, meaningful action on leadership imbalance, and accountability for progress. This allows the benchmark to move beyond measuring support alone and examine how far organisational commitment appears to translate into delivery.

Gender equality in organisations, 2026	
Organisation actively supports gender equality	79%
Senior leaders demonstrate commitment	72%
Leadership opportunities are equally accessible	70%
Policies are taken seriously	67%
Equality is reflected in promotion and appointment decisions	62%
Initiatives are implemented effectively	54%
Meaningful action is taken on leadership imbalance	49%
Accountability exists for progress	46%

The expanded evidence shows a clear gap between support and delivery. While 79% perceive active organisational support for gender equality, confidence falls across decisions, implementation, meaningful action and accountability. This helps explain the wider benchmark pattern; support has remained stable since 2024 yet concerns about discrimination and advancement have increased. The issue is now whether organisational values are carried through into the processes shaping who receives opportunities, and who progresses.

Although equality initiatives may be widely supported and formally embedded, their impact is weakened when implementation is episodic, inconsistently evaluated, and insufficiently connected to organisational accountability (McCarthy et al., 2021). For employers, the challenge is ensuring that equality commitments are consistently reflected in decisions about development, sponsorship, promotion and progression. Where organisational values are visible but their influence on career opportunities is less clear, a Values-Delivery Gap emerges between stated commitment and employee experience.

3.4 Why this matters for Wales

This matters particularly for Wales because the benchmark identifies a gap between positive attitudes towards gender equality and women's leadership, and what employees experience in practice. Recognition of inequality is high, and women's leadership capability is overwhelmingly accepted, yet workplace experiences have not improved consistently, and women are not always perceived to receive equal credibility once they lead.

For employers, this is not only an equality issue. Where capable women remain concerned about advancement, encounter barriers in how work and leadership opportunities are allocated or are afforded less credibility when they reach leadership positions, organisations risk underusing talent and weakening leadership pipelines. At a national level, this matters in a Wales simultaneously pursuing greater equality, stronger progression and higher productivity. The Welsh Government's Strategic Equality and Human Rights Plan commits to reducing discrimination, increasing diversity in leadership and creating fairer workplace opportunities, while wider economic policy seeks stronger businesses and better use of skills and talent (Welsh Government, 2025b; Welsh Government, 2026b).

The employer challenge is therefore increasingly clear: support for gender equality needs to be visible in who receives opportunities, how leadership decisions are made, whether women are taken equally seriously when they lead, and whether organisations are accountable for progress.

Coming March 2028:
The Values-Delivery Gap: Visibility, Legitimacy and Gender Equity in Leadership will examine where organisational support for gender equality translates into lived experience and leadership opportunity, where gaps remain between commitment and delivery, and how employers can strengthen accountability, visibility, and impact.



Three actions for employers

The benchmark identifies three gaps through which leadership potential may be lost: the Flexibility-Visibility Gap, the Capability-Progression Gap and the Values-Delivery Gap. While the forthcoming thematic reports will examine each in greater depth, the findings already point to three practical actions that organisations can take now. Each can be adapted proportionately by employers of any size.

1 - Check whether flexible working protects opportunity

Do not measure flexible working only by whether it is available. Review whether employees working flexibly retain access to learning, visible work, senior colleagues, networks, sponsorship and progression, and whether arrangements remain sustainable alongside workload and caring responsibilities.

2 - Make the route from development to progression visible

Ensure employees can see how development connects to career opportunity. For each leadership-development activity, clarify what capability it develops, how that capability can be demonstrated, what opportunities it prepares people for, what progression criteria apply and what realistic next step follows.

3 - Test whether equality commitments change decisions

Move beyond measuring support for gender equality and review whether it is reflected in consequential workplace decisions. Examine who receives high-value work, development, sponsorship, pay progression, promotion and succession opportunities, whether criteria are applied consistently, and who is accountable for identifying and responding to unequal outcomes.

Methodology

The 2026 Leadership Landscape Survey gathered 220 voluntary online responses from people working across a range of sectors, organisation sizes, career stages and levels of leadership responsibility. As participation was self-selecting, findings should be interpreted as a benchmark of respondents' experiences and perceptions rather than as representative of the Welsh workforce as a whole.

Analysis used descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations and selected statistical tests. Percentages are rounded and bases may vary due to question routing or missing responses; the survey captures experiences at one point in time and does not establish causation.

The dataset is open access at **https://doi.org/10.17632/g2pt5sx84n.1** for employers, policymakers and researchers wishing to explore the evidence further.

About the Authors



Dr Lauren Josie Thomas

Lauren is the Business Research and Innovation Group Lead at USW, where she also oversees the Group's REF2029 portfolio. Her research focusses on sustainability in decision making, production, and consumption, and influences both organisational strategies and consumer behaviours.



Dr Shehla Khan

Shehla is Senior Lecturer in Human Resource Management and a researcher on gender studies. Having completed her PhD on intersectional identities, her research centres on the challenges faced by women in the workplace. Shehla aims to advance understanding of gender dynamics in management and create more inclusive workplaces.



Jayde Howard

Jayde is a single mum of two boys based in the Rhondda Valleys and a Lecturer at USW where she leads modules on HR and Leadership to students on their undergraduate degrees. Jayde's research focuses on women's experiences of the workplace in Wales, particularly their barriers to career advancement. Prior to working in academia, Jayde worked in HR-roles across several industries.

References

Business Wales (2026). Opportunity for Access, Growth & Progression. Available at: **https://businesswales.gov.wales/topics-and-guidance/employing-people-and-improving-skills/fair-work-wales/opportunity-access-growth-progression** (Date published: N/A).

CIPD (2026) *Call for evidence: Equality at work: flexible working and disability inquiry.* London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. Available at: **https://www.cipd.org/uk/about/public-policy/our-calls-for-action/cipd-response-equality-at-work-flexible-working-and-disability-injury2/** (Accessed: 1 September 2026).

Gröschl, S., Gabaldon, P., Hahn, T. and Kelan, E.K. (2024) 'The emergence and effects of sponsors for women leaders', *Gender, Work & Organization*, 32(5), pp. 1786–1796. **doi:10.1111/gwao.13217**.

McCarthy, C., Barnard, S., Thomson, D. and Dainty, A. (2021) 'Understanding gender equality policy and practice gaps through the lens of organisational justice: Development of an employee alignment model', *Frontiers in Sociology*, 6, 681086. **https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2021.681086.**

Ng, T.W.H., Yim, F.H.K., Chen, H. and Zou, Y. (2024) 'Employer-Sponsored Career Development Practices and Employee Performance and Turnover: A Meta-Analysis', *Journal of Management*, 50(2), pp. 637–668. **doi:10.1177/01492063221125143**.

Office for National Statistics. (2026). Annual Population Survey Household Dataset, January - December, 2025. [data collection]. UK Data Service. SN: 9599, DOI: **http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-9599-1**

Rimington, C., Georgiadou, A., and Metcalfe, B.D. (2019) 'Let women take the lead: Insights from the UK defense industry', *AIB Insights*, 19(4), pp. 12–15. DOI: **10.46697/001c.16964**

Thomas, L. J., Howard, J., and Khan, S. (2025). 'From Aspiration to Action: Women's Leadership Pathways in Wales'. University of South Wales. DOI: **10.13140/RG.2.2.20586.38086**

Thomas, L. J., Howard, J., and Khan, S. (2024). 'Unlocking Women's Leadership Potential in Wales'. University of South Wales. DOI: **10.13140/RG.2.2.21725.12006**

Weber, E., Buettgen, M. et al. (2025) *How transformational leadership facilitates employees' informal learning in hybrid work environments. Academy* of Management Proceedings, 2025, Abstract only. Available at: **https://doi.org/10.5465/amproc.2025.20989abstract** (Accessed: 1 September 2026).

Welsh Government. (2024). A Guide to Fair Work. Available at: **https://www.gov.wales/guide-fair-work** (Date published: 15/11/2024)

Welsh Government. (2025a). Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: the essentials. Available at: **https://www.gov.wales/well-being-future-generations-act-essentials-html** (Date published: 07/01/2025).

Welsh Government (2025b). Strategic Equality and Human Rights Plan 2025 to 2029. Available at: **https://www.gov.wales/strategic-equality-and-human-rights-plan-2025-2029-html** (Date published: 16/06/25)

Welsh Government. (2026a). Local Growth Fund: Socio-economic Analysis of Wales. March 2026. Available at: **https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2026-04/socio-economic-analysis-local-growth-fund.pdf**

Welsh Government. (2026b). New economic mission to close Wales' productivity gap with UK and boost pay. Available at: h**ttps://www.gov.wales/new-economic-mission-close-wales-productivity-gap-uk-and-boost-pay.** (Date published: 02/06/26).

WEN Wales. (2026). State of the Nation 2026. Available at: **https://wenwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/WEN_StateOfNation_25_Report_0426_Screen.pdf**

Westover, J.H. (2026) 'Retention Through Growth, Respect, and Fair Pay: Evidence-Based Strategies for Reducing Voluntary Turnover', *Human Capital Leadership Review*, 37(2). DOI: **10.70175/hclreview.2020.37.2.2**

Williams, B.E. (2020) 'A Tale of Two Women: A Comparative Gendered Media Analysis of UK Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 74(2), pp. 398–420. **doi:10.1093/pa/gsaa008.**

Find out more about USW's Business Research and Innovation Group at

https://pure.southwales.ac.uk/en/organisations/business-research-and-innovation-group

Contact the Lead Author:

Lauren.Thomas@southwales.ac.uk

With thanks to Wales & West Utilities for supporting the CBI Wales Women in Leadership Group & Report

To find out more about the CBI, contact Katie Spackman
Katie.Spackman@CBI.org.uk

Images provided by Adobe Images