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# 'Fifty voices are better than one'

Combating social exclusion and gender stereotyping in Gellideg, in the South Wales Valleys



GELLIDEG FOUNDATION GROUP



Oxfam

This report is a joint production between the Gellideg Foundation Group and Oxfam GB. It was written by Helen Buhaenko, Charlotte Flower and Sue Smith of Oxfam GB and based on the work carried out by Mark Connolly, Lauren Type and Colette Watkins of the Gellideg Foundation Group.

The report was edited by Nikki van der Gaag and printed by Oxfam GB.

With thanks to the residents of Gellideg, without whose participation this report would never have been written.

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For further details and copies of the report contact:

Claire Furlong  
UK Poverty Programme  
Oxfam Cymru  
Market Buildings  
5-7 St Mary Street  
Cardiff  
CF10 1AT  
Tel: 029 2080 3293

[ukpp@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:ukpp@oxfam.org.uk)

[www.oxfamgb.org/ukpp](http://www.oxfamgb.org/ukpp)

[www.oxfam.org.uk/cymru/](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/cymru/)

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# Executive Summary

This report tells a story; the story of the people of Gellideg, a housing estate in Merthyr Tydfil in South Wales. The county borough has the highest percentage of unemployment in Britain and some of the highest levels of multiple deprivation in Wales. Gellideg itself suffers from both of these, and as such typifies the situation in which many thousands of people in the South Wales Valleys find themselves.

When a survey revealed that the best thing about Gellideg was ‘the road out’, the people of Gellideg decided to take action to improve their situation. In particular, mothers living in the area felt frustrated by the lack of opportunities available to their children. They formed the Gellideg Foundation Group, and, with Oxfam’s help,<sup>1</sup> began to ask some fundamental questions of the community. How did men and women living in Gellideg experience poverty differently? How could they be involved in improving their situation? What was needed to bring about change?

The assessment involved a wide range of people from the estate. It led to a successful bid for nearly £500,000 of European Union Objective 1 funding (out of total funding of £721,000) and also raised awareness and support for the Foundation amongst the community.

This report documents

- the process the Foundation went through and
- their findings and recommendations for action at local, regional and national levels.

It provides insights that might be of use to other, similar communities, and for those interested in gender and equal opportunities issues and participatory ways of working. The methodology used in the assessment could be used more widely among other communities. As well as providing an important community profile, it strengthens community involvement and can help to improve the impact of services tackling social exclusion.

Colette, the Foundation’s Co-ordinator, has lived in Gellideg all her life.

**‘At first it was difficult to get people to believe that things could change,’** she explained. **‘But now people are starting to believe something**

**can be done.’** Karen, a resident on the estate, agrees: **‘We thought the Foundation would just be a flash in the pan, but it’s getting better all the time. Now people are seeing that something can be done. Fifty voices are better than one.’**

## The gender needs assessment

As part of the application for Objective 1 funds, the Foundation took part in an assessment of the different needs of men and women on the estate – also known as a gender needs assessment.

This, they felt, would ensure that the needs of both sexes were taken into account when it came to finding ways of combating social exclusion. But they also wanted the community to be involved at all levels. The exercise needed to belong to the people of Gellideg – or it would fail.

The assessment, which involved lengthy individual interviews, took place over four months in 2001 and looked at issues around training and employment, childcare, stereotyping, low self-esteem and low expectations. What made it particularly unique was its focus on participation through what are known as ‘participatory appraisal’ (PA) tools. These tools are part of a methodology known as ‘Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) that was developed overseas, and is now being used in communities in Wales and across Britain.

It soon became clear from the assessment that although women and men of all ages have similar concerns and face similar problems, their ‘take’ on these is different. Known as a ‘gender contract’, this unwritten – and often unspoken – contract is that a woman’s job is primarily to be the carer in the family, and a man’s is to be the breadwinner. Christine, who has four sons and is now doing a

<sup>1</sup> see Annex A on the Oxfam UK Poverty Programme

university degree, puts it bluntly: ***'I think most Welsh women get a bad deal. I think Welsh men are living in the Stone Age – they think women should do as they're told. It's still very much the women's role to do the housework and look after the kids... It's not like that for everyone... It's like that for women on this estate.'***

This stereotype is still particularly strong in the South Wales Valleys. Even though the reality of men's and women's lives and work is very different, this 'gender contract' helps shape men's and women's self-image and guides their expectations and aspirations.

## Recommendations

As a result of its experience, the Foundation recommends that

- gender analysis be a requirement of project development for all agencies involved in tackling social exclusion
- men and women in poverty should be actively involved in the development of anti-poverty policy and project formulation.

The Foundation itself has already changed things for the better for the people living on the estate – activities for people of all ages are now in place, there are community workers for the estate, both men and women are more aware of gender issues, and the process has built people's confidence in themselves. But there are still societal and structural barriers which are beyond the scope and power of a community group to overcome. Karen, one of the residents, said: ***'Tony Blair should come to places like this and see what's happening. It maddens me a bit. We keep coming up against a brick wall. The authorities should take responsibility for this estate. We shouldn't always have to get the Foundation to help us.'***

For this reason the Gellideg Foundation Group calls on the local authority, the Welsh Assembly

Government and the British Government to help it to challenge the policies and practices which prevent the men and women on Gellideg – and elsewhere – from having more choices in their lives. The Foundation makes a number of practical recommendations for change at all these levels, from the local authority improving the condition of the estate and playing a lead role in beginning the momentum to change stereotypical notions of gender in today's Welsh society, to the British government reviewing its benefit systems.

## Conclusion

The story of Gellideg is, to date at least, a success story. It is the story of how a group of people in a deprived area, with few resources and little education, training or money, came to build a real community. They not only raised large sums of money to provide job training, restore and equip community buildings, create an outdoor sports area, a café, a crèche, and employ community workers, but in the process of doing so came to understand the nature of the factors that were holding them back and to analyse the power structures both within their own community and in the world outside.

Questioning their own assumptions at all levels – about gender, about young people if they were old, and old people if they were young, was not easy. Nor was sticking to the first principle that for the initiative to succeed, it must belong to, and be shaped by, the people of Gellideg themselves rather than by outsiders. But stick to it they did, and it has changed the shape of their community, their confidence in themselves, and the nature of many of their lives.

Real change on Gellideg will take time. But improvements have already been made. Mark, one of the youth workers who did the interviews for the assessment, notes: ***'People are feeling positive and there is a real feeling that there is light at the end of the tunnel.'***

# Crynodeb Gweithredol

Mae'r adroddiad hwn yn adrodd stori; stori pobl Gellideg, ystâd dai ym Merthyr Tudful yn Ne Cymru. Mae'r ganran uchaf o ddiweithdra ym Mhrydain i'w chanfod yn y sir hon, yn ogystal â rhai o'r lefelau uchaf o amddifadedd lluosog yng Nghymru. Mae Gellideg ei hun yn dioddef o'r ddau beth yma, ac felly mae'n nodweddiadol o sefyllfa miloedd o bobl yng Nghymoedd De Cymru.

**P**an ddatgelodd arolwg mai'r peth gorau am Gellideg oedd 'y ffordd allan', pederfynodd y bobl i weithredu i wella eu sefyllfa. Yn arbennig, teimlai mamau oedd yn byw yn yr ardal yn rhwystredig gyda'r diffyg cyfleoedd oedd ar gael ar gyfer eu plant, ac roeddent eisiau newid y farn gyffredinol mai'r peth gorau am Gellideg oedd y 'ffordd allan'. Ffurfiodd y bobl hyn Grŵp Sefydliad Gellideg, a gyda chymorth Oxfam fe ddechresant ofyn cwestiynau sylfaenol i'r gymuned. Sut mae profiadau dynion a merched yn Gellideg o dlodi yn wahanol? Sut gallent fod yn rhan o'r ateb i wella eu sefyllfa? Beth sydd ei angen i greu newid?

*Roedd yr asesiad yn cynnwys amrywiaeth eang o bobl o'r stâd. Arweiniodd at gais llwyddiannus am yn agos i £500,000 o nawdd Amcan 1 Undeb Ewropeaidd (allan o gyfanswm o £721,000 o nawdd) ac hefyd at godi ymwybyddiaeth a chefnogaeth tuag at y Sefydliad ymysg y gymuned.*

*Mae'r adroddiad hwn yn cofnodi'r*

- broses yr aeth y Sefydliad drwyddo
- a'u canfyddiadau a'u hargymhellion ar gyfer gweithredu ar lefel lleol, rhanbarthol a chenedlaethol.

*Mae'n cynnig cipolwg allai fod o fudd i gymunedau tebyg, ac i'r rhai sydd â diddordeb mewn materion rhyw a chyfleoedd cyfartal a ffyrdd cyfranogol o weithio. Gellid defnyddio'r fethodoleg a ddefnyddiwyd yn yr asesiad yn ehangach ymysg cymunedau eraill. Yn ogystal â darparu proffil cymunedol pwysig, mae'n cryfhau cyfranogiad cymunedol a gall helpu i wella effaith gwasanaethau sy'n mynd i'r afael ag eithrio cymdeithasol.*

*Mae Colette, cyd-drefnydd y Sefydliad wedi bod yn byw yn Gellideg ar hyd ei bywyd.*

**'I gychwyn, roedd hi'n anodd cael pobl i greu y gallai pethau newid,'** esboniodd. **'Ond nawr mae pobl yn dechrau credu y gellir gwneud rhywbeth.'** Mae Karen, un o drigolion y stad, yn cytuno: **'Roedden ni'n meddwl mai rhywbeth**

**byrhoedlog fyddai'r Sefydliad, ond mae'n gwella trwy'r amser. Nawr mae pobl yn gweld y gallwn wneud rhywbeth. Mae hanner cant o leisiau'n well nag un.'**

## Yr asesiad o anghenion merched a dynion

*Fel rhan o'r cais am nawdd Amcan 1 yr Undeb Ewropeaidd, cymrodd y Sefydliad ran mewn asesiad o anghenion merched a dynion ar y stad. Roedden nhw'n teimlo y byddai hyn yn sicrhau bod anghenion y ddau ryw yn cael eu hystyried wrth geisio dod o hyd i ffyrdd o fynd i'r afael ag eithrio cymdeithasol. Ond roeddent hefyd am i'r gymuned fod yn rhan o'r asesiad ar bob lefel. Roedd angen iddo fod yn eiddo i bobl Gellideg – neu fe fyddai'n methu.*

*Cynhaliwyd yr asesiad, oedd yn cynnwys cyfweiliadau unigol hirfaith, dros gyfnod o bedwar mis yn ystod 2001, ac roedd yn edrych ar faterion yn ymwneud â gwaith a hyfforddiant, gofal plant, stereoteipio, diffyg hunan-barch a disgwyliadau isel. Yr hyn a'i gwnaeth yn arbennig o unigryw oedd ei ffocws ar gyfranogiad trwy'r hyn a elwir yn dechnegau 'gwerthuso cyfranogol' (GC). Mae'r technegau hyn yn rhan o fethodoleg o'r enw Dysgu a Gweithredu Cyfranogol (DGC) a ddatblygwyd dramor, ac sydd bellach yn cael ei ddefnyddio mewn cymunedau ym Mhrydain.*

*Yn fuan, fe ddaeth yn amlwg o'r asesiad bod gan ferched a dynion o bob oed bryderon tebyg a'u bod yn wynebu problemau tebyg, ond bod eu 'safbwynt' ar y rhain yn wahanol. Mae yna gytundeb anysgrifenedig – ac nas lleferir yn aml – yn bodoli, a elwir yn 'contract y rhywiau', sy'n nodi mai gwaith merch yn bennaf yw gofalu am y teulu, ac mai gwaith dyn yw ennill cyflog. Mae Christine, sydd â phedwar mab ac sydd bellach yn astudio am radd brifysgol, yn dweud yn ddi-lol:*

**'Rydw i'n credu bod y rhan fwyaf o ferched Cymru'n cael bargaen wael. Rydw i'n credu bod dynion Cymru'n dal i fyw yn Oes y Cerrig – maen nhw'n credu y dylai merched wneud**

**fel y maen nhw'n ei ddweud. Rôl y ferch yw gwneud y gwaith tŷ ac edrych ar ôl y plant o hyd...Nid fel yna mae pethau i bawb...fel yna mae pethau i ferched ar y stâd yma.'**

Mae'r stereoteip yma'n dal i fod yn arbennig o gryf yng Nghymoedd De Cymru. Er bod realiti bywydau a gwaith merched a dynion yn dra gwahanol, mae'r 'contract y rhywiau' yma'n helpu i ffurfio delwedd dynion a merched ohonyn nhw'u hunain ac yn arwain eu disgwyliadau a'u dyheadau.

## Argymhellion

O ganlyniad i'r profiad, mae'r Sefydliad yn argymhell bod

- dadansoddiad y rhywiau yn rhan angenrheidiol o ddatblygu prosiectau ar gyfer pob asiantaeth sy'n rhan o fynd i'r afael ag eithrio cymdeithasol.
- Mae hefyd yn credu y dylai dynion a merched sy'n byw mewn tlodi gael cymryd rhan weithgar yn natblygiad polisi gwrthdlodi a ffurfio prosiectau.

Mae'r Sefydliad ei hun eisoes wedi newid pethau er gwell ar gyfer y bobl sy'n byw ar y stâd – mae gweithgareddau bellach yn cael eu cynnal ar gyfer pobl o bob oed, mae gweithwyr cymunedol wedi'u neilltuo ar gyfer y stad, mae dynion a merched yn fwy ymwybodol o faterion y rhywiau, ac mae'r broses wedi datblygu hyder pobl ynddyn nhw eu hunain. Ond mae'n rwystrau cymdeithasol a strwythurol yn parhau na all cwmpas a phŵer grŵp cymunedol eu goroesi. Meddai Karen, un o'r trigolion: '

**'Dylai Tony Blair ddod i lefydd fel hyn i weld beth sy'n digwydd. Mae'n fy ngwylltio i braidd. Rydyn ni'n dod at graig rwystr bob tro. Dylai'r awdurdodau gymryd cyfrifoldeb am y stad yma. Ddylen ni ddim gorfod cael y Sefydliad i'n helpu ni bob tro.'**

Am y rheswm yma, mae Grŵp Sefydliad Gellideg yn galw ar eu hawdurdod lleol, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru a Llywodraeth Prydain i'w helpu i herio'r polisiâu ac arferion sy'n rhwystro'r dynion a merched ar stâd Gellideg – ac mewn manau

eraill – rhag cael mwy o ddewisiadau yn eu bywydau. Maent yn gwneud nifer o argymhellion ymarferol ar gyfer newid ar bob lefel, o awgrymu bod yr awdurdod lleol yn gwella cyflwr y stâd ac yn chwarae rhan arweiniol wrth ddechrau'r momentwm i newid syniadau ystrydebol o rywiau yng nghymdeithas fodern Cymru, i awgrymu bod llywodraeth Prydain yn adolygu ei system budd-daliadau.

## Casgliad

Mae stori Gellideg, hyd yma o leiaf, yn stori o lwyddiant. Mae'n stori am sut y gwnaeth grŵp o bobl o ardal ddifreintiedig, gydag ychydig iawn o adnoddau a dim llawer o addysg, hyfforddiant nac arian, lwyddo i adeiladu cymuned go iawn. Fe lwyddon nhw i godi symiau mawr o arian i ddarparu hyfforddiant mewn swydd, i atgyweirio a chyflenwi offer ar gyfer adeiladau cymunedol, i greu man chwaraeon awyr agored, caffi, meithrinfa, ac i gyflogi gweithwyr cymunedol, ac wrth wneud hyn, fe wnaethon nhw hefyd ddod i ddeall natur y ffactorau oedd yn eu dal yn ôl a dadansoddi'r strwythurau pŵer o fewn eu cymuned eu hunain a'r byd y tu allan.

Nid oedd cwestiynu eu rhagdybiaethau ar bob lefel – ynglŷn â'r rhywiau, ynglŷn â phobl ifanc pe baen nhw'n hen a hen bobl pe baen nhw'n ifanc, yn beth hawdd. Nid oedd yn hawdd chwaith glynu at yr egwyddor cyntaf bod rhaid i'r fenter, er mwyn llwyddo, fod yn perthyn i, a chael ei ffurfio gan bobl Gellideg eu hunain yn hytrach na gan bobl o'r tu allan. Ond fe wnaethon nhw lynu ati, ac mae hyn wedi newid siâp eu cymuned, eu hyder ynddyn nhw eu hunain, a natur bywydau nifer ohonynt.

Bydd newid gwirioneddol yn Gellideg yn cymryd amser. Ond mae gwelliannau eisoes i'w gweld, meddai Mark, un o'r gweithwyr ieuenctid a gynhaliodd y cyfweiliadau ar gyfer yr asesiad.

**'Mae pobl yn teimlo'n gadarnhaol ac mae yna deimlad go iawn bod yna olau ym mhen draw'r twnnel.'**

# 1. Introduction – how it all happened

The Gellideg Foundation Group is a small, locally run community group based on a housing estate in Merthyr Tydfil in South Wales. Colette, who now works for the Group, explains how it began: *‘The Foundation started with six women – all mothers. We were doing a course together about how children learn at school. We got talking about the problems on the estate. Then, there was no community spirit here – no-one talked to each other about the problems or what to do about them. We thought we’d have a go and see if we could do something.’*

The Foundation’s aim is to improve the quality of life of the men, women, children and young people living on the estate. The problems facing the residents of Gellideg are replicated across many of the housing estates in the urban valleys area, where similar groups are working towards regenerating their areas. The Foundation is particularly interested in being responsive to the key concerns of the residents. This has meant an emphasis on providing services that respond to youth nuisance, crime prevention and environmental improvements.

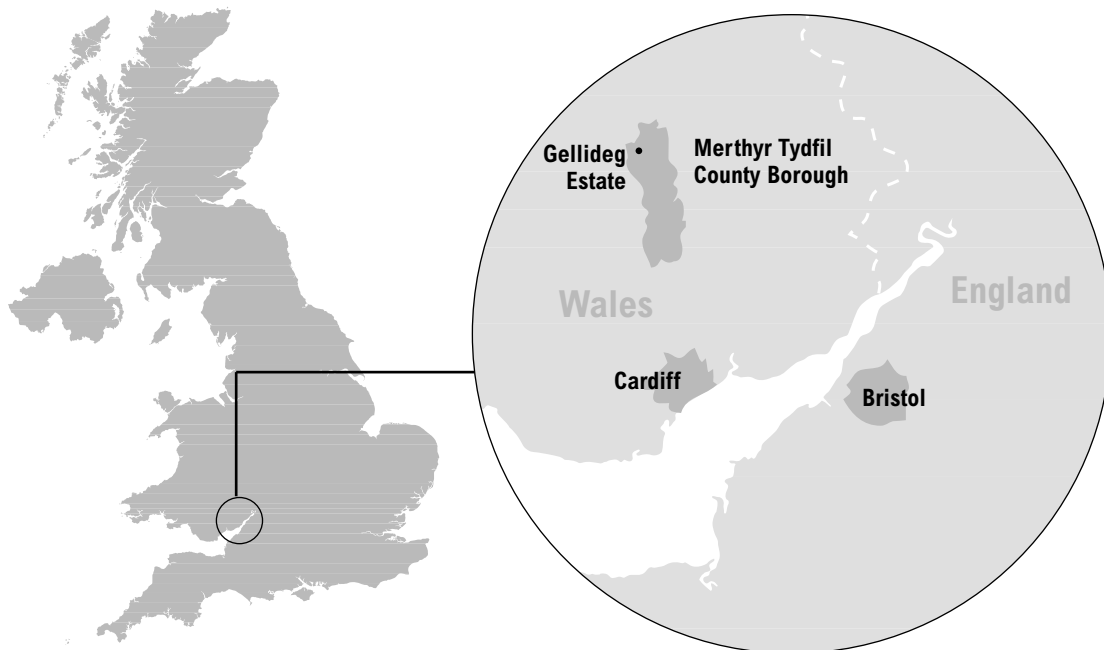
## Poverty in Wales and Merthyr Tydfil

- Wales has the lowest household incomes in Britain, and low levels of skills and qualifications.
- It has the highest levels of child poverty in the UK.
- The earnings of Welsh employees lag more than 10 per cent behind the British average, making the Welsh workforce one of the worst paid in the country. Earnings are especially poor for male non-manual workers.
- Wales has high levels of economic inactivity, with significant pockets of persistent unemployment. There are sectors (such as tourism and catering) where levels of casual or short-term employment are high.

- Overall, gender is a more significant determinant of occupational life chances in Wales than it is in Britain as a whole. Almost half the women in employment work part-time compared with one in 12 men.
- In the 2001 census, a third of the population of Merthyr Tydfil reported long-term sickness.
- Since 1991, the population of Merthyr Tydfil has fallen by 6.5 per cent – the biggest decline in Wales.
- More than 40 per cent of the population in Merthyr Tydfil aged between 16 and 74 do not have any qualifications.

*Taken from consultation document on National Economic Development Strategy, July 1999; statistics quoted in The Guardian July 2001; and ONS 1997. Merthyr Tydfil statistics come from The Western Mail, 14 Feb 03*





In 1999, West Wales and the Valleys qualified for Objective 1 status, the European Union's highest level of regional aid. This qualification was based primarily on the poor economic performance of the area, where Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was only 71 per cent of the European Union average.

With this official recognition of the depressed economic situation of the area, the Foundation began to ask questions about the wider social and economic conditions that were driving the lifestyles and behaviour patterns of the residents of the estate.

There is plenty of empirical and statistical evidence available to show that Gellideg is a pocket of deprivation in the Cyfarthfa ward of Merthyr Tydfil. For example, the National Assembly for Wales document Mapping Social Exclusion in Wales 1999 consistently highlights Merthyr Tydfil as having some of the highest levels in Wales for the following: youth unemployment, economic inactivity, limiting long term illness, mortality, respiratory illness, depression and anxiety, teenage pregnancies, educational underachievement, adults with no qualifications, unfit housing, lone parents, and households with no earner, divorce, no savings, living on housing benefit and with no car.

### **European Funding in Wales**

Wales' strategy to create a strong, sustainable and inclusive economy is assisted by significant financial support from the European Union. With backing from all of Europe's major structural funds, organisations in Wales undertake a wide range of innovative and ambitious projects to promote economic regeneration and revival. These range from skill building and job creation projects to initiatives designed to strengthen communities and promote environmental improvement. The funding is accessible via programmes, known as Objective 1, Objective 2, Objective 3 and the Community Initiatives. The largest of these is the Objective 1 programme, where between the years 2000 and 2006 a large part of North and West Wales plus the Valley areas qualify for aid. This special status is regarded as a major opportunity to realise the full potential of the Welsh people and lay the

groundwork for future prosperity and a better quality of life.

The aim of Objective 1 is to reduce job differences, remove barriers, reduce job segregation, increase earnings, collect better data and bring Welsh GDP up to UK norms. Reaching everyone in the community and ensuring equality of opportunity are two of the essential criteria. The groups who particularly need to be targeted in order to achieve these goals include men and women facing multiple disadvantages, for example women, including lone parents (90 per cent of them being women) and women returning to work after having children. Also part-time, low-paid workers (mostly women), those with outdated skills, people from former industrial areas, disabled women and men, and those in poor health.

Source: Wales European Funding Office  
[www.wefo.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wefo.wales.gov.uk)

The Gellideg Foundation Group wanted to apply for Objective 1 funding but was unsure what would actually make a difference to the livelihoods of Gellideg residents. A thorough analysis of the barriers and opportunities – structural, social and personal – facing the men and women of Gellideg would be needed to understand the underlying causes behind the current socio-economic situation.

The Foundation approached Oxfam for advice on how it could most effectively work with the community to identify these barriers and opportunities.

Staff from Oxfam then worked with staff from the Foundation to develop the skills and approaches needed to undertake a gender needs assessment of the most marginalised men and women from the ages of 16 to over 50 living on the estate. The process took four months and the analysis of the information gathered was used to formulate a gendered programme of activities – one that catered for the needs of both men and women.

### **The Gellideg Foundation Group**

Gellideg is a housing estate with approximately 1,200 households that lies to the north of Merthyr Tydfil town centre. The Gellideg Foundation Group is a community group staffed and managed by local people and located on the housing estate that it serves.

Set up in 1998, the group first came together when mothers living in the area felt frustrated by the lack of opportunities available to their children, and the rising levels of drug dependency in the area.

An estate-wide questionnaire established that the rest of the 3,500 people living there felt that the best thing about Gellideg was **‘the road out’**, with youth nuisance, crime, the dilapidated state of the area and a lack of community spirit being the major sources of concern.

The Foundation set to work – a series of fundraising activities took place; there were negotiations with local authority officers to hand over empty flats for the Foundation’s premises; and more support from local residents was sought to ensure that the men and women of Gellideg took part in the development and growth of their own community group.

At first the Foundation relied heavily on the support of the local voluntary sector. Partnership applications were made for European funding for physical improvements to the central shopping area.

It soon became apparent that what the majority

of residents wanted was activities for young people. Gellideg has a high proportion of youth; at one point on one street alone there are 100 children living with parents or grandparents, but there were no youth clubs, community halls, cafés, or other entertainment or distraction – apart from taking drugs and throwing stones at cars as they passed in the night.

The Group’s first priority was to employ two youth workers to work with the local youth from ages six to 20, to set up their own youth club and committee and to determine their own activities. Two years later, the Foundation’s youth project has been nominated for an award of excellence given by the Welsh Youth Agency. Colette, the Foundation’s co-ordinator, notes: **‘Now nearly every child on the estate is involved in the Foundation’s youth activities. We’ve got teams in football and netball for under 18s, under 16s, under 10s... Even a game of football can make a big difference to people.’**

The Foundation also responded to the residents’ requests for improved security and council services on the estate, negotiating with the Local Authority, getting a housing officer based in the community flats to respond to tenants’ queries, and two community officers to be seen to have a presence and interest in the estate. Sub-groups were formed to develop the local football team, the local tenants’ group and to support the old-age group.

The Foundation has made a successful application to transform the derelict heart of the estate into a multi-purpose sports area, and another successful application for after-

school clubs.

Through negotiating and demanding recognition and respect from local voluntary sector organisations and in particular the Local Authority's Regeneration Team, the Gellideg Foundation Group is also forcing these bodies to change the manner of their relationships with local community groups.

Colette herself sees a big change: **'At first it**

***was difficult to get people to believe that things could change. At the moment we're organising a car boot sale as a fundraiser and we asked everyone to give some of their bric-a-brac to sell. The Foundation flat is full of stuff. Before, people wouldn't have given anything – they would have just said it would be stolen and sold for drugs. But now people are starting to believe something can be done and they are getting***

## **Why a gender needs assessment in Gellideg?**

The Foundation found that using a gender perspective gave a deeper understanding of the complex relations that create a community. It showed how men and women can sometimes act similarly and sometimes react wholly differently in similar circumstances. These differences are significant in a development context. For example, where a group is planning to introduce project interventions to their area with the aim of benefiting both men and women, a gendered analysis of community relations will enable them to tailor these interventions to fit the needs of both groups.

The danger of being 'gender blind' is that unconsciously an intervention can revert to gender stereotyping. So it is possible that pre-school child provision becomes, for example, a 'mother and toddler' group – which can be excluding for men. It is only too easy to make assumptions about how 'people' manage and what they think, without recognising that men and women think and do different things at different times in their lives. The Gellideg Foundation Group was clear that in order to have a deeper understanding of the forces directing the life choices of residents on the estate, it was important to ask men and women questions separately and to build a programme around an understanding of these differences.

## **Sex and gender**

Sex is the biological difference between men and women e.g. women bear children, men do not. Gender is about how the experience of being a man or a woman is different in different times and places. For example, the roles and responsibilities of a male farmer in North Wales would be different from those of a woman living on an estate in the Welsh Valleys.

Gender relations means the relationship between men and women. Gender relations are one form of power relations – which determine who is boss, who holds what resources, and who makes the decisions.

They are determined by current, often unspoken, rules about what is appropriate behaviour for men and women. This differs in time and place. What it is to be a 'good woman' or a 'good man' is internalised, determines how the sexes relate to each other, and is different in different countries – or even parts of a country.

Gender analysis explores and highlights the inequalities in gender relations by asking who does what, who has what, who decides, and who gets the benefit. It looks at how power within the family and the household affects what men and women can do in the public sphere – for example, in the community, at work, in the legal system, and in the government.

## 2. The gender needs assessment

The aim of the assessment was to understand the barriers that different groups in Gellideg faced when looking for opportunities to making a living. With this information, the Foundation would be able to focus the application for Objective 1 funding on a thought-through programme of activities which could make a real impact on the lives of marginalised men and women in Gellideg.

This was to be done by carrying out a survey with a representative sample of marginalised residents on the estate. The methodology used (known as participatory appraisal or PA)<sup>1</sup> had been developed with groups overseas as part of the Participatory Learning and Action process. PA is a community-based way of working through which the views of local people can be heard, and by which local people can be involved in decisions about their community. It is now being used in a UK context as well, and in Gellideg the use of such tools was one of the things that made the gender needs assessment unique.

***‘The tools were useful as a starter,’*** said Mark, one of the two youth workers involved in the interviews. ***‘They helped to find a way into the discussion, to get it going. We didn’t write anything down during the interviews, otherwise it would set a barrier straight away. We went out and wrote things down immediately afterwards.’***

The community’s participation was key, so the discussions carried out were open and unbounded by a pre-designed format such as a questionnaire. The survey focused on issues at personal and community level that affected people’s lives and determined the choices that they made in terms of taking up training or employment opportunities within and outside Gellideg. Both men and women were involved in the survey and a key focus was to understand what was different for men and women within the community, and how this varied with age.

The assessment aimed to produce a socio-economic snapshot of the residents of Gellideg – who they are, what they do, how they survive, what they want to do and what is preventing them from achieving this.

The needs assessment was managed by the Foundation Co-ordinator, the interviews were carried out by the two youth workers and the whole process was supported by Oxfam. Seventy three

residents on the Gellideg estate were interviewed, mostly on a one-to-one basis, for as long as three hours per interview. Interviewees were approached personally to be involved, rather than randomly selected. They do not represent a cross-section of the Gellideg community, but they do represent a sample of the most marginalised within that community. This was checked by:

- Personal knowledge of the area.
- Knocking on doors during the day, to make contact with new people.
- Checking the geographical spread of the interviewees across the estate.
- Checking the profile of the interviewees against the groups identified in the Objective 1 guidance notes as most marginalised, for example single parents, disabled men and women, unemployed people, ethnic minorities and drug users.

In addition, care was taken to ensure that there was balance between the number of men and women interviewed, and that young, middle and older aged people of both sexes were included.

The two youth workers who carried out the survey were at first concerned that people would not like to talk about their lives and the problems that they faced, especially within the context of a survey. However, whilst people are reluctant to attend meetings, or even drop-in or evening classes for fear of ‘being laughed at’ or ‘showing themselves up’, the interview format seemed to be much more attractive. The tools that were used helped to start discussions and people seemed to welcome the format and the opportunity to lead the conversation. The information provided was extremely personal and powerful, and issues of confidentiality and ownership of the results of extreme importance. Taking such sensitivities into account throughout the process was a very high priority.

<sup>1</sup>see Annex B for more detail on the methodology

# 3. The analysis

**In the interviews, there was much that women and men said in common. Both sexes highlight difficulties with self-esteem, worries about their education, low expectation of their lives and a dislike of the stigma attached to living on the estate.**

Both feel that the major barriers to 'getting on' include poor transport and a lack of advice and facilities on the estate. Both say that although work is available, mostly it is low paid, low quality, and insecure. They feel that the risks attached to giving up long-term benefits are not worth the insecurity of employment. It is also clear that family support is of primary importance throughout the different stages of a lifetime, though this is particularly true for women.

Mark again: *'The exercise enlightened us all to the needs of the people on the estate. It was a real eye opener. People's needs vary a lot – some people don't need anything, have lots of support from friends and family, others have very little. Personally, it gave me an insight into the estate that I hadn't had before.'*

Men and women of different ages often face similar issues with different perspectives and can be affected differently. In order to better understand the interplay between self-image and societal and structural opportunities, the information gathered was divided into three levels of barriers and opportunities – structural, social and personal. These work separately and together to create a complex set of constraints on people who are trying to tackle their marginalisation. Ideas about gender stereotyping run through all categories. While women and men of all ages have similar concerns and face similar problems in their lives, their 'take' is different – this is called the 'gender contract'. This unwritten – and often unspoken – contract is that a woman's job is primarily to be the carer in the family, and that a man's is to be the breadwinner. This stereotype is still particularly strong in the South Wales Valleys, even though the reality of men's and women's lives and work is very different. This stereotyping helps to shape men and women's self-image and guides their expectations and aspirations.

The results of the interviews<sup>1</sup> were divided into three categories, or barriers to advancement – structural, social and personal.

**Structural** – forces that people have little control over, such as the job market, the benefits system, the services and facilities provided by the council

and others on the estate.

In the case of Gellideg, structural barriers were:

- The low wages and poor labour conditions in the area.
- The difficulty of living on benefits but the problems of trying to move into employment which often made benefits the more secure option.
- The lack of services, such as the poor public transport system, poor childcare provision, lack of local health services, and the lack of local advice services, combined with lack of support.
- The poor physical condition of the estate and lack of physical resources (no pub, no café, no crèche, and few parks for children).

**Social** – for example, other people's thoughts and actions; ideas and beliefs that divide people from each other or bring them together – such as what people in the outside world think of Gellideg and ideas people have about what women and men do and should be doing.

In Gellideg, men and women are put under pressure by:

- A lack of trust within the community.
- A lack of social capital within the community.
- Fear of crime.
- Poor environment.
- The stigma of living on the estate.

**Personal** – forces that people can have some control over, such as their training and education, their health, their confidence levels and feelings about themselves and others.

In Gellideg these were:

- Psychological factors such as low self esteem, gender stereotyping and fixed roles of behaviour.
- The difficulties of finding appropriate and affordable training.
- Family factors such as complicated family units and caring responsibilities.
- Health issues, particularly mobility and mental health and depression.
- Low levels of literacy and numeracy, and other educational underachievements.
- Use and abuse of drugs and alcohol.

<sup>1</sup>See Annex C for detailed spider diagrams on the findings from different groups

## 4. Structural barriers

### a) Employment

*Men* have a good overview of the local job market, and assess it from what they feel is their role – to bring home enough wages to provide long-term security. For them, this central importance of work to bring money into the household cannot be stressed enough. The bare minimum they are actually able to get from employment does not encourage them into work. Agency and temporary work do not offer security.

A belief in a 'jobs for the boys' culture also undermines faith in finding secure employment.

*Men* between 25 and 50 look to local and central government for reasons behind the economic downturn in the Valleys. There is a lot of dissatisfaction about the allocation of public resources, and the choices made. Public money is seen as being wasted on firms who have no long-term commitment to remain in the area. With the loss of the mines and other associated industries, no viable alternatives have been developed. Few opportunities exist on the estate, and too few jobs are available.

Unemployment for men is seen as the norm. It makes economic sense for men and women to combine benefits with formal and informal employment in order to make a joint livelihood.

Many *younger men* show a strong desire to start their own business, although their interest focuses on the state of being self-employed rather than on a business idea. When explored further, this desire often comes from a fear of being unemployable by others, sometimes because of the stigma of being an ex-offender. Lack of business experience and little knowledge of finances are the primary obstacles to pursuing this interest. There is a strong feeling that jobs are often given to '*who you know*' and that '*family looks after itself*'. Young men also feel that factories are more likely to take on women before men because women are cheaper to employ.

*Older men* have a stereotypical view of what comprises men's work – often manual labour and

heavy industrial jobs, that are either not available today or are not suitable for their standard of health. This notion of what is 'man's work' and what is 'woman's work' is limiting their life options.

*Older men* feel on the margins of the economy, believing that there is little point in retraining and that it would be humiliating to do so. Their perception is that the computer-literate young get the chances, and that their own plentiful experience in both formal and informal employment is not valued in the job market. Many felt that '*you must have a degree to get a decent job today*', an unattainable goal.

*Women* need to find employment that fits around the needs of their children – men on the whole do not take a part in childcare responsibilities. Women caring for children look for job opportunities that fit around school hours – these jobs are invariably low-paid and part-time and do not make going to work pay. To access a better paid, full-time job, women require the right qualifications and appropriate childcare. Young women feel that the lack of sound advice is preventing them from accessing training, education and employment opportunities.

With these restrictions in place, the likelihood of women finding employment that provides a good income and fits around the family's timetable is high on impossible. It is felt by all groups that everyone is struggling to survive. People focus on themselves because life is hard. One woman said: '*When everything has been paid out on the household I have about £20 a fortnight left. When food or other necessities are short I just go without.*'

### b) Benefits

*Men* see benefits as very basic, not enough to meet immediate needs, and not sufficient in times of crisis. Benefits cannot provide for a comfortable retirement, or contribute to savings. But moving from benefits to employment is hard – there is no

hope of starting a business without capital, and when benefits stop, **'you struggle for finances as there is no back up and no leeway from the government'** – for example, rent starts straight away, pay may not.

However, *both men and women* note that state benefits do provide a security of livelihood that is not readily available locally from employers, where the work on offer is often for low skilled, low pay jobs on short-term contracts.

*Women* see life on benefits as a struggle, in which you deprive yourself for the needs of the family, and it is hard to manage if there is no other income or support. Combining a low-paid job with top-up benefits does not make sense to the many living alone with children. The sums do not add up. Working Family Tax Credit is considered inadequate to run a home. Women speak of increased chances of going into debt – not something highlighted by men.

*Young people, both women and men*, do not have strong views on the benefits system, and have few thoughts about the future. They live from week to week, and do not share the longer-term worries of those with family responsibilities.

It is harder for young people with children to make the transition from benefits into work. Some jobs are only available for a day or so at a time, and have no prospects – which means they are judged not worth the risk of moving away from benefits. There is a mistrust of the benefits agency.

*Young men* say that living on benefits incurs fewer costs than working; there is no need for new work clothes, travel expenses, lunches, and so on. Debt is another disincentive to work. When the pay cheque comes in the debt repayments go up – swallowing up the small profit to be had from the wage packet.

*Both men and women* recognise and use the fact that they are entitled to different benefits based on their responsibilities and on social norms. Around 90 per cent of lone parents are women, and therefore more women than men claim lone parent benefit. It is socially more acceptable for men to be

on employment-related benefits than caring-related benefits. And it is seen as more dignified for men to be on long-term sickness benefit and there is less stigma attached to this than to unemployment benefit.

### **c) Children and childcare support**

Many *women* view life through the lens of childcare responsibilities, with paid work being an additional rather than a central concern. The most significant support required by women is childcare. Formal childcare is inflexible and scarce, and takes up a big percentage of any wage. Apart from being prohibitively expensive, most women distrust childminders and would only consider a crèche as an option for childcare.

There is no crèche on Gellideg, so this role is usually fulfilled by a grandmother or close female family friend. It is rarely the domain of the father of the child/children. Young mothers are therefore very dependent on their family networks. But government initiatives only provide childcare expenses for registered childminders, so grandmothers almost always go unpaid for this work.

### **d) Other issues**

*Women* mention a range of other barriers that are not highlighted by men – maybe because many men spend less time on the estate, and either their needs are not so pressing, or they are less willing to seek help than women. Women highlight the poor standard of housing on the estate, the apathy of the council towards their needs, and the lack of information available on the estate, on, for example, benefits, training, credit, and the lack of support facilities such as doctors, solicitors, credit unions.

*Men* are concerned for the wellbeing and future of their children and worried about the levels of drug abuse and crime on the estate.

## 5. Social barriers

### a) Social capital

*Women* in general comment on the lack of 'social capital' on the estate, which means that people, both women and men, do not support each other. The women also talk about 'cliques' who only interact within themselves, and about conflict between the cliques. Consequently there is jealousy when others are seen to be getting on, and so people **'keep themselves to themselves'**. There is a lack of sharing of information and a lack of good quality advice. People are mistrustful of each other for fear of being shopped for being on benefits. One respondent said: **'No-one trusts anyone else and this has led to community breakdown.'** Another said: **'What is community? There is no community anymore.'**

*Older men and women* blame social problems on the young. Older men say the young **'do not want to work'** and **'take drugs all day'**. Both groups say that the parents are partly to blame, as they do not control their children and have handed down the values of not working for a living, being on benefits and drinking. Men in this category are fathers themselves, but they do not reflect on their own behaviour and lifestyles, focusing instead on making general comments about others.

Both *younger and older women* feel that some young women are **'breeding for money'** – that they have children in order to get extra benefits.

In general, although *men* have strong views on some issues such as crime and parenting, they make little comment on how social attitudes on Gellideg affect them. This may be because relationships are not their top priority. They see their way out as getting away from the estate, either temporarily or permanently.

### b) Poor environment

Lack of facilities is mentioned by all age groups – old age pensioners say there is nothing to do on Gellideg and the small club space they can use is far too small. Young men say there is nothing to do on the estate and note that boredom is a direct route to drug and alcohol abuse. Younger men find it hard to unpack the social barriers that prevent them realising their potential. They do not blame anyone else for their problems, and do not suggest many solutions.

People moving onto the estate from elsewhere have no opportunities to get to know new people. There is agreement that newcomers must feel especially isolated because there is a generally prejudiced view against outsiders coming on to the estate.

Public transport is another issue, being too infrequent, too expensive and too limited. *Women* are particularly affected by the physical environment of their area. Gellideg has nowhere for children to play safely, and the houses and general environment are shabby. They tend to walk around the estate more, visiting the shops, the school, standing at the bus stop, going to the post office. The built environment impacts on their wellbeing and can be threatening, especially at night. Women's dependency on an inadequate public transport system limits their ability to leave the estate, to access different facilities and to interact beyond the community in the immediate street.



### **c) Crime**

*Women* between 25 and 50 say that different levels of crime are accepted and acceptable. Crime, such as theft, against a family member or close friend is not acceptable. But theft from a public place may be viewed differently. *Women* are aware that crime inhibits progress in the area and prevents opportunities from developing. However, there is a real fear of repercussions from reporting crime to the police. Crime breeds fear and increases isolation and *women* are aware that they are more vulnerable than men. Many feel intimidated by the fear of crime.

*Women over 50* report that they are often too afraid to leave their homes because of crime. Some older people are thinking of moving because of the fear of crime – mostly from youth nuisance. They say crime levels have escalated over the decades. Young men say they fear theft of their possessions and property, and are more likely to stay indoors to protect their things, although this leads to boredom and isolation. A criminal record is also a disincentive to looking for work, however minor the offence, for example, fines for non-payment of TV licences. Many young ex-offenders consider themselves unemployable because of their status.

### **d) Stigma**

*Women* feel the stigma of using outside agencies, particularly Social Services, and feel stigmatised by these agencies when they are dealing with them. They feel outsiders have a negative attitude towards people from Gellideg; *women* feel their social standing is small. *Men* too feel stigmatised if they are on benefits, fear the unknown, and seem

afraid of what they don't understand. Men between 25 and 50 also mention the stigma associated with being unemployed that they feel from outside agencies. They say being unemployed saps their self-esteem and undermines their confidence. There is little opportunity for them to interact with others outside the family circle and this compounds their feelings of isolation and depression.

There is real concern from all age groups and both sexes about the shabby nature of the estate, which has progressively deteriorated over the years. Older *women* say that families have moved away and newcomers have arrived, not necessarily families but vulnerable single people. *Women* between 25 and 50 are concerned that they have no control over the type of residents who are introduced onto the estate – this is at the discretion of the local authority. When problem families, ex-offenders, and others are housed on the estate, the *women* are concerned about the perceived threat to their families from drugs, increases in crime and other illegal activities. *Young women* said they are affected by anti-social behaviour. Speeding drivers, for example, make roads unsafe. Vandalism is also an issue with existing facilities, already inadequate, being repeatedly broken and covered in graffiti. The general shabby and run-down nature of the estate is depressing and gives the area a bad name.

*Young men* say the estate itself is not considered attractive – **'this place is a dump!'** Consequently they do not value it and it becomes vulnerable to abuse. Cars are dumped in the streets and bus stops are vandalised as a matter of course.

## 6. Personal barriers

### a) Training

*Men* are very clear that any training has to be work-related. They fear that sickness benefit will stop if they want to take up training opportunities. Merthyr Tydfil was criticised as having a limited choice of training activities. The cash incentives to take up training in the first place are also criticised as being too low.

Another important barrier to accessing training was the fear of mixing with men from other areas. Bullying, rivalry and conflict were mentioned as consequences of putting men from different areas on a course together.

*Older men* see no point in changing career when they feel they face age discrimination. Training, and its association with academic qualifications, is also intimidating. In the past, educational achievement was not a priority for finding employment in the mines. Many older men have literacy and numeracy problems that they do not want exposed in a public training environment.

*Young men* are the government's target category for New Deal training schemes. But experience has shown them that training does not give any guarantee of immediate employment, although perceived false promises may have encouraged them to take up courses in the first place.

***'There is a Catch 22 situation where after training no-one will employ you without experience, but how do you gain experience if you can't get employment?'***

Many young men are not thinking for the long term but for the here and now, and so if a job comes up half way through a training scheme, the training is dropped and the qualification is sacrificed, as cash now is a more attractive option. Many feel that there is little point in bettering themselves in the first place, because of the general lack of jobs on offer. Young men also fear losing benefits if taking

up training and are self-conscious about their low levels of educational achievement.

*Women* focus on the practical difficulties to accessing training and automatically accept responsibility for childcare. The cost of materials and transport as well as course fees, combined with training not being flexible around school hours, childcare and part-time work, prevents them from taking it up. Women's barriers to training also include low educational achievement that creates low self-esteem and confidence levels in a classroom environment. Many women are drawn to stereotypical training opportunities in catering or childcare as they are seen as safe, non-threatening options. However, these training opportunities often perpetuate the status quo by leading women into low paid, part-time work.

Other issues associated with training in this age group of *young women* are similar to issues raised by young men. Training is seen as time consuming, and **'slave labour'**. The money offered to take it up is inadequate to cover the costs of living or pay for equipment needed. And there is a general lack of easily accessible and understandable information on rights and entitlements. Young women also note a lack of financial support for personal development skills such as driving lessons.

### b) Family

Family is the centre of women's world and their horizons are determined by the boundaries of the estate. The fact that *women* see caring as their job, and men do not, is a critical factor holding women back from better training and employment, and men from greater involvement with their families.

Women are often stressed and exhausted by juggling the roles of mother and provider. However,

these roles also give them a purpose in life. Women between 25 and 50 welcomed the opportunity to talk about the circumstances of their lives and the barriers and opportunities that affect them. They understood that they had adopted a caring role that was preventing them from realising their full potential. They felt that many demands were made of them, as mothers, grandmothers and wives. However the family was the focus of their attention and they knew their role was important in keeping the family together.

### **c) Self-esteem**

*Men, and young men* in particular, are poor at finding support from others. They are more vulnerable to isolation, and to feelings of inadequacy and hopelessness. Young men are struggling to find their role and purpose in today's world.

This low self-esteem and low self-confidence prevents many from achieving their potential and seizing life opportunities that could come their way. They feel that there is little support from within the community or from outside agencies to encourage them to achieve in their lives. Generally, society expects little from them and this undermines their self-worth. A general lack of motivation and ambition characterises many young men.

*Women* report that the vicious circle of getting into high-interest debt, and then not taking up employment because of increased repayments when off benefits, impacts on their self-esteem. Women with young children can quickly find the framework of their lives shrinking to the confines of their home and immediate surroundings. This also applies to older women and those looking after disabled relatives. One older woman in this situation said: ***'I haven't been to Merthyr town***

***centre for two and a half years.'***

A lack of confidence, coupled with high levels of boredom, can sometimes lead to drug and/or alcohol dependency.

Women between 25 and 50 have very low expectations of their potential. Many women had left school early with few qualifications and started a family. Being out of the job market for a while has undermined their self-confidence and self-belief and they are not motivated to be employed out of the home on more than a very part-time basis.

### **d) Health**

A significant number of *women* between 25 and 50 suffer from ill health, including back, respiratory, mobility and coronary problems, being overweight and lack of general fitness. Some, but by no means all, are on sickness benefits. *Older men* face major problems with disability and illness; many have mobility, respiratory and coronary problems. *Women over 50* also suffer from lack of mobility from the house and immediate environment of the estate, for a variety of reasons. Firstly, because of caring responsibilities for grandchildren and others, secondly, because of their own illness and disability problems, and thirdly because of the fear of crime and theft.

### **e) Other issues**

Drugs are a concern and daily reality for young men and women. Older men say that alcohol and drugs offer a way out for many men faced with today's social and economic climate.

# 7. Opportunities and suggested solutions

Despite saying much more about the problems they face than about ways out of them (hardly surprising given the economic disadvantage on Gellideg), both men and women have ideas about what offers them opportunities and practical suggestions to improve the estate.

Men say that there are jobs to be had, if of poor quality. Training is available, although it is stereotyped in nature (such as hairdressing for women, or carpentry for men). Some women and men do have qualifications that can be built on. Women say that family support enables them to take up education and training. They are interested in moving up the job market, and helping their children educationally so that they can do the same. Men are willing to do training, provided it is seen to pay and lead to employment. They want short, practical courses that will lead to better jobs; women emphasise more how they want to get on in their career but find this difficult to balance against their childcare responsibilities.

The results of the survey show just how important the family is in providing support for survival strategies. During the preparation phase of the assessment process a number of exercises were carried out to explore issues of poverty and social exclusion within the community. One exercise with a group of teenage girls and boys looked at what it was to be 'OK' and 'not OK' on the estate. To be 'OK', required a decent job and good family support; those most marginalised were identified as those without family support.

Both men and women say that family connections and support allow them opportunities. Young people comment that **'your life chances are much stronger if you have family'**. Older men and women feel secure that they would be looked after in times of need by **'family, friends and neighbours'**. Grandmother care is a key element in allowing women to go out to work, and enables them to accept low wages because costs of childcare can be low or covered by mutual acts of support and sharing resources. Families can be relied on to help out in emergencies and crises.

The Gellideg Foundation Group is seen as a positive step:  
**'The estate is starting to improve since the**

**Foundation was formed'**, commented one man. Christine, a resident on the estate with four sons, agrees: **'The Foundation has really made a difference around here. It is pulling the community to work together. They hold meetings where people can come together to talk about issues – everyone comes. And the youth club keeps kids off the street.'** Karen, another resident, notes how the Foundation fulfils a need for all members of the community: **'We started talking about the drug problem on the estate – just a few of us. Now most people on the estate come to the Foundation. They come to find out how to get repairs done to their houses. The kids come to tell someone about their problems – sometimes it's easier for them to talk to someone outside the family and get advice. The kids come to play football. The old people come once a week for a social.'**

People often raise ideas about what should be done about some of the problems that they describe. These include:

- Providing more services on the estate (doctor's surgery, welfare-rights advice centre and drop-in training centre).
- More activities for children, including a crèche, safe play areas and a football pitch. A parent and toddler group.
- The Club to be reopened for community activities, with a café and other facilities.
- There should be sports activities on the estate.
- There should be a recycling centre and a local library.
- More facilities for disabled people.
- There should be rubbish bins and benches for people to sit on.
- There should be more for the old age pensioners to do and a place for them to meet.

- Dog mess, speeding traffic, graffiti and vandalism should all be combated to prevent anti-social behaviour.
- Drug abuse needs to be combated, as does theft and burglary. Drug and alcohol counselling and women's aid should be provided.
- Housing repairs, benefit processing and house allocation need to be improved.
- Training should be better targeted and financed and there should be more after working hours.
- There should be increased police presence on the estate to prevent crime.
- Speed bumps around the estate would prevent dangerous speeding cars.
- Better lighting on the estate at night would make people feel safer.

## 8. What the Foundation has done since the assessment

In March 2002 the Gellideg Foundation Group received funding for three years under Objective 1. With this money, the Foundation aims to make opportunities available and accessible to men and women who have previously found the transition from welfare dependency to paid employment insurmountable. It aims to develop a programme which:

- Develops new skills that can lead to well-paid jobs
- Builds self confidence
- Creates an environment of possibility not hopelessness
- Provides advice and information
- Ensures care provision is available on the estate
- Challenges gender stereotyping

Objective 1 funding aims to achieve a shift in how the community functions, its belief systems and general health and wellbeing. Without a confident skilled workforce there will be no rise in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the area. However, changes to the macro environment require target interventions at the household and individual level. They also require deeper changes in self-perception, confidence and social skills.

The Gellideg Foundation Group acts as the voice of the men and women of Gellideg and strives to reflect the needs and wishes of the community.

Interventions by outside agencies have difficulty in accessing the most marginalised members of the community – the Foundation can help with this process of connection and ensure that activities organised by other sectors and bodies are relevant to the circumstances of the men and women living in Gellideg.

Ideas of gender roles need to change to fit today's world and today's opportunities, and men and women of all ages and abilities need the belief in themselves that they can learn and develop and take calculated risks and opportunities. This type of work is best suited to a local community group. It is here that the momentum for change will be initiated.

As a result of the gender needs assessment the Foundation has taken on board what it means to involve residents in a truly participatory way in the design and implementation of activities. ***'In the interviews, people had many different ideas and solutions,'*** said Mark.

Residents have formed sub-groups around areas of work and lead on areas of interest and expertise. The group is gender aware and questions its own assumptions and asks itself: ***'What this will mean for men and women on the estate?'*** One woman noted: ***'We don't recognise ourselves, we're so gender aware now, we even heckled the stand-up comic on our Christmas night out for sexual stereotyping!'***

But there is still a way to go, as Colette notes: ***'The hardest part is making the project sustainable. It's all very well having plans, but we need to make sure everyone will get involved. I'm optimistic though – things are definitely improving. Even over the last six months I've seen so much difference. For example, the Foundation's treasurer is a single mum who had never worked in her life. Now she's taking an accountancy course. She'd never have done that without the Foundation.'***

Between March and December 2002 the Foundation has implemented the preparatory phase of the programme. It has:

1. Employed a finance officer
2. Employed an extra youth worker
3. Undertaken renovations on the former Church
4. Started negotiations on the Club
5. Recruited an adult education/gender officer

**1.** The finance officer is the former treasurer of the Foundation, and one of the founder members. She is a single parent who lives on the estate and through her involvement in the Foundation developed the confidence to take a business administration and accountancy course. Her motivation was to help the Foundation have a solid financial base from the start and keep its books in order. Now she is a qualified accounting technician and is working towards being a chartered accountant.

**2.** From the beginning the Foundation responded to the requests of all residents to give young people on the estate something to do. The Foundation provides clubs and activities for under-eights up to 25, including after-school clubs, a teenage drop-in flat, multi-sports training sessions and a football team. To further develop the scope of their activities, the group needed to recruit another youth worker. The Gellideg Youth group were involved in this from the beginning. The boys and girls wrote the interview questions, sat on the interview panel, scored the interviews and had final say over the selection of candidates. The 15 and 16 year olds had to have special permission to be released from school to

do this. They showed great maturity in their selection, asking questions such as: ***'But will this person get on with the little ones? – we've got to think of them too'***.

**3.** The run-down church hut in the centre of the estate is no longer used as a Christian building and has stood as a wasted resource for many years. The Foundation negotiated a free lease of use with the church in exchange for the renovation of the building. With the involvement of the residents, and the youth group, the hut has been gutted and decorated – (the youth group tiled their hanging out room and had a lesson in basic plumbing). The former church now has the facility for a community café, will be the location of a community crèche, houses the computer suite, and is a space for dance, aerobics and other classes.

**4.** There is another larger derelict building in the heart of the estate – the Club, a former social club that has suffered a series of bankruptcies. The Foundation has formed a sub-group of residents who formerly worked in the Club and know how best to turn it into a self-sustaining community business. The Foundation is preparing a feasibility study to determine whether to purchase and renovate the Club and develop it into a community asset.

**5.** The Foundation have recruited an adult education officer to work with the residents to implement the findings of the assessment. They have the flexibility and resources to provide a wide range of activities, including appropriate, flexible training opportunities, with crèche and other supporting care facilities. To start with there will be computer and IT sessions that meet the needs, interests and abilities of the residents. The adult education officer will also be the Foundation's gender lead, ensuring that all activities mainstream gender in their delivery. The Foundation will be supported by Oxfam through gender training and by linking the Foundation with other organisations concerned with gender and urban regeneration.

# 9. Recommendations

## **For future gender needs assessments**

As a result of its experience, the Foundation recommends that gender analysis be a requirement of project development for all agencies involved in tackling social exclusion. It also strongly recommends that men and women in poverty should be actively involved in the development of anti-poverty policy and project formulation. Other recommendations include:

- The process of producing such an analysis needs to be participatory, involving all sectors of the community including the most marginalised, if it is to work effectively.
- When addressing issues that are very much at the personal and household levels, it is important to ensure that interviews or meetings are held in circumstances that are considered to be 'safe' by interviewees.
- Confidentiality is important, and therefore there needs to be trust and rapport between the interviewees, interviewers and their organisation and an understanding within the community of what the process is about and aiming to do.
- Time is important; this type of work cannot be done quickly. Gaining trust can take time. In addition, there needs to be a longer-term vision than just the 'assessment', that considers how the process will continue to work with interviewees to take the issues that they have raised forward.
- There are also a number of different factors that need to be addressed to ensure that the participatory process is gendered:
- Ensure both men and women are involved, across different age groups.
- Understand the different needs of these groups of people in terms of how they would best participate with the process. Flexibility and creativity are required to ensure that different people feel able to participate.
- Ensure that the analysis looks at the relationship between the sexes and issues raised by them.

## **At policy level; local, regional and national**

The Gellideg Foundation Group is not able to tackle all the different barriers that conspire to keep people marginalised, and in particular many of the social and structural barriers. Much of the information and analysis of the Gellideg Foundation Group gender needs assessment illustrates the need for more holistic and community-centred approaches to tackle poverty. It also illustrates how extraordinarily difficult it is to achieve and how complex it is to work with marginalised people. It is no easy thing to work with 'the community' when low self-esteem and low levels of trust exist within that community. Without substantial change at all levels, the ability of the Foundation to achieve any lasting impact in Gellideg will be seriously limited. These changes need to be made at different levels – local authority, Welsh Assembly and British Governments, and they refer to the many anti-poverty policies and practices within those institutions.

However, it is also important that in developing anti-poverty policies due consideration is taken of the social and personal barriers that face people, and face men and women differently.

## **Local authority and statutory agency level within Merthyr Tydfil**

Respect for the men and women in receipt of social benefits and social and other statutory services is needed. Men and women, and particularly young men, are suffering from poor self-esteem, anxiety and a lack of self-confidence. These feelings are often felt more strongly when individuals come into contact with professionals from the statutory and voluntary services. Many men and women reported feeling stigmatised and labelled by professionals for being in receipt of benefits or Social Services. Agencies and Local Authorities should be aware of the power relations at play when they are interacting

with vulnerable people and adopt a code of conduct with guidance on acceptable standards of behaviour towards the men and women using their services. Care should be taken at all times to ensure that no-one is being marginalised by inappropriate attitudes.

**Transport** within the local area is very limiting; after 6.00 pm it is difficult for people to get off or back to the estate on public transport, and during the day the timetable is inadequate. This limits access to work, education and social opportunities for people on the estate. An affordable, flexible, accessible public transport service would be a great asset to Gellideg and remove one barrier affecting both men and women, young and old. The train service from Merthyr Tydfil to Cardiff is also too slow and infrequent to stimulate commuting to the capital city. This resource requires investment to assist access to a wider jobs market.

**Crime** and 'problem families'; the lack of a police presence, and the practice of moving 'problem families' into the area are of deep concern to people on the estate. In more affluent areas, mortgage prices self-select the right type of neighbours – on a local authority owned housing estate the residents feel vulnerable and powerless over decisions that affect the security of their neighbourhood. There are no simple solutions to these problems, but there does need to be an open decision-making process that engages the community with honesty. The local authority has a duty to ensure that any vulnerable people who are housed on the estate are provided with all the necessary back-up support they are entitled to, to ease their integration into the wider community.

The poor physical appearance of the **housing stock** and built environment concerns people living on Gellideg, and the lack of investment in these areas contributes considerably to the problems of the area. Issues of note include poor street lighting, dog mess, and the appearance of the houses.

#### **Local jobs and economic development**

This is obviously not the sole responsibility of the local authority, but the lack of secure jobs in the area and the predominance of work controlled through agencies makes it very difficult for people in the area to move away from dependency on benefits.

The local authority has a lead role to play in beginning the momentum to change **stereotypical notions of gender** in today's Welsh society. A gender audit of gender stereotyping within the local authority and local agencies would be a good start to identifying where stereotyping could be challenged. The local authority can also help to set an example of a dynamic and flexible workforce by ensuring that all employment-related training is aware of gender issues and tailored to ensure that the needs of men and women of different ages are catered for.

**A commitment to local provision.** In this assessment, it was clear that the residents of Gellideg favoured local provision delivered in a familiar setting over accessing services from another area. Although the distances involved may be only a matter of miles, accessing service provision, particularly educational and training opportunities, in an unfamiliar setting, can be prohibitively intimidating.

### **Regional level: the Welsh Assembly Government**

The Welsh Assembly Government's strategy for tackling poverty and social exclusion is principally through the Communities First Programme, a comprehensive approach to area-based regeneration which applies to many of Wales's most deprived communities.

If this is to succeed, these communities need to be actively involved, not only in designing and planning the approach which works in their area, but in taking the lead in such programmes, and if necessary making their own mistakes along the



way. Without such an emphasis on process as well as product, such schemes will not succeed. Lasting and real change takes time and investment of resources in people – it is important that in implementing this strategy this is understood when allocating resources. Real change cannot be imposed but must be grown from the bottom up; this involves a shift in power as it is handed over to the communities, something that is not always easy for local authorities or statutory bodies to do. But only such a radical shift will lead to successful programmes.

### **Other issues include:**

- Wales has an inadequate number of **childcare places** per child – enough to cover around 22 per cent of children under five on a part-time basis. In Merthyr Tydfil there are no local authority places, and only enough private places for 11 per cent of under-fives.<sup>1</sup> It is imperative that the Welsh Assembly Government actively works towards ensuring that the number of affordable childcare places available is adequate to meet the needs of parents in Wales. Without underpinning childcare support, women in particular are not going to be able to access training and job opportunities.
- The need to understand the **impact of policy** on the lives of poor people is imperative; this is not just within Communities First, but also in health and in economic development. ‘Poverty proofing’ policy decisions, especially with an understanding of how these decisions impact on the lives of poor people that can only come through an analysis carried out with those people, will ensure that damaging decisions are avoided and poverty reduction does become effective.
- **Equal opportunities:** The Welsh Assembly Government has a duty to promote equal opportunities. The Welsh Assembly Government has demonstrated its commitment by making equal opportunities a particular focus of the

Objective 1 Programme. The Gellideg gender needs assessment confirms the analysis undertaken by the Welsh European Funding Office. The strategies adopted by women and men to survive and create a livelihood are complex. Supporting them to achieve more long term and sustainable livelihood strategies will require a range of responses and inputs. Adopting a gender-aware approach to policy development and implementation will be a prerequisite to achieving equality of opportunity in Wales.

### **The British Government**

The central plank of the British Government’s anti-poverty strategy is work; however, unless employment ensures real and secure jobs for people, it cannot provide a way out of poverty and will perpetuate a dependency on benefits. Short term and temporary contracts ensure that the labour pool remains poorly motivated, poorly skilled and exploits the government benefit system. This not only means that the government subsidises the profitability of the companies concerned, but most significantly, that this is done at the expense of individuals’ self-esteem, security, and civil rights, as they may be forced to ‘fiddle’ and therefore exist outside the law. This has a considerable knock-on effect to the community and perpetuates and escalates social exclusion.

The men and women of Gellideg, like so many of the men and women in Wales, need the right kind of social welfare provision to enable them to access training, education and employment opportunities. They need a flexible benefits system that they can exit and enter as required and that encourages them to access training opportunities without penalties. Only when men and women feel it is safe to leave the security of the benefits system for the uncertainty of temporary work, will welfare dependency become less of an issue.

<sup>1</sup>Figures taken from Welsh Assembly Government website at: [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)

# 10. Conclusion

***‘At first it was difficult to get people to believe that things could change,’*** said Colette, the Foundation’s Coordinator.  
***‘But now people are starting to believe something can be done.’***

The story of Gellideg is, to date at least, a success story. It is the story of how a group of people in a deprived area, with few resources and little education, training or money, came to build a real community. They not only raised large sums of money to provide job training, restore and equip community buildings, create an outdoor sports area, a café, a crèche, and employ community workers, but in the process of doing so came to understand the nature of the factors that were holding them back and to analyse the power structures both within their own community and in the world outside.

***‘People can see movement,’*** says Mark. ***‘They are saying lots of positive things – everyone has noticed the difference among the young people now that we have a kick-about area for recreation.’***

The tools they used were developed with other groups living in poverty in other countries, and this is part of what makes their initiative unique in Wales. Questioning their own assumptions at all levels – about gender, about young people if they were old and old people if they were young, was not easy. Nor was sticking to the first principle that for the initiative to succeed, it must belong to, and be shaped by, the people of Gellideg themselves rather than by outsiders. But stick to it they did, and it has changed the shape of their community, their confidence in themselves, and the nature of many of their lives. Says Colette:

***‘I hope my children will benefit from the work I’m doing. I hope they will see that you can stand up and speak for yourself.’***

Mark also feels positive about the assessment and what it has meant for the community: ***‘Change on Gellideg will take time. This is difficult, because people want instant results. But things are getting a lot more rosy and there is a real feeling that there is light at the end of the tunnel.’***

# Annex A: Oxfam

## Background

Oxfam began in 1942 as the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief. It is a non-political, independent organisation, with no religious affiliations.

Oxfam's mission is to work with others to find lasting solutions to poverty and suffering worldwide. It works with local 'partner' organisations on long-term development projects in more than 70 countries. Oxfam's experience at community level is matched by its campaigning and advocacy work, regionally, nationally and globally, to change policies that keep people living in poverty.

Oxfam responds to around 40 emergencies each year; providing appropriate relief to people during conflict or natural disaster, and then working with the affected communities to help them rebuild their lives.

## Oxfam's aims

Oxfam believes that all people are entitled to a life of dignity and opportunity. It strives to further the rights of everyone to be secure, healthy, skilled, safe, heard and equal.

These aims lie behind all of Oxfam's activities: long-term development, humanitarian response, campaigning, and advocacy work. These aims motivate the staff, partners, volunteers and campaigners and donors – in Great Britain and throughout the world – who make Oxfam's work possible. Oxfam's gender policy commits it to tackling the poverty and disadvantage of women. Oxfam is also committed to the full participation of people in poverty.

## Oxfam International

Oxfam Great Britain (GB) is a member of Oxfam International, a growing confederation of 12 autonomous non-governmental organisations that are dedicated to fighting poverty and related injustice around the world. Oxfam GB works both independently and with the rest of the Oxfam family at global level to influence the policy of international institutions and governments.

## Oxfam GB's UK Poverty Programme

Oxfam GB's UK Poverty Programme works with a range of partners at community, national, UK and European level to challenge poverty in the UK through policy and practice changes. This is done through a variety of partnerships in the North of England, Scotland and Wales.

In Wales the UK Poverty Programme work involves supporting community organisations to ensure the participation of men and women living in poverty in key decisions that affect them. It involves working with partners addressing men and women's marginalisation, such as asylum seeker organisations and community groups, and involves developing an understanding of what men and women need in order to secure a sustainable livelihood that lifts them out of poverty. In Wales the UK Poverty Programme is a member of Oxfam Cymru, which works to influence the Welsh public and Welsh decision makers on key issues affecting men and women living in poverty.

# Annex B: Methodology and process

## Preparation and identifying what needed to be done

Before the survey started, a lot of work was done on identifying what it was to achieve, and how it fitted in to the Objective 1 application as well as the wider objectives of the Gellideg Foundation Group. A workshop was held, attended by staff from the Group, the local Councillor, members of the Youth Group, people from Groundwork and also Voluntary Action Merthyr.

## Training

A core team – the Foundation’s Co-ordinator, Project Assistant and the two Youth Workers – undertook training in gender and Participatory Appraisal (PA). This methodology, also known as Participatory Learning and Action (PLA), was developed overseas and is now being used in the UK. There was an intensive three-day initial training at the start of the process, with review and extra training days throughout the process. The whole process was tailored to the objectives of the survey, the resources that the Foundation had, the time available and what would work within the community.

## Who carried out the survey?

The two Youth Workers (one female and one male) did all the survey work; on the whole they carried out the interviews singly. In total they held 46 interviews, involving 73 people, as follows:

Age group	Women	Men
16-25	16	6
25-50	25	12
50+	8	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>24</b>

## Who did they speak to?

Whilst this was not a randomised sample, which would have been difficult to undertake, the Youth Workers needed to have ways in to the community. There are such high levels of mistrust and low levels of self-esteem that going directly to the most marginalised was not possible.

At first the Youth Workers asked people they knew to interview and also to suggest people that might be willing to be interviewed. They asked each interviewee if they could suggest someone else that might want to be involved, and they also went around knocking on doors, explaining about the programme and asking if they could do an interview. Half way through the survey they realised that they had few young and middle-aged men in the survey, and made a proactive effort to address this. They continued random door knocking, but also stood outside the shops and canvassed men as they passed by. This worked well, and they were able to arrange a number of interviews; they did not carry out interviews on the street, but rather arranged to meet at a later time.

The people with whom they worked all fell into one or a number of the following categories: single parents (only women), disabled (men and women), unemployed (men and women), ethnic minorities (only one man) and drug users (men and women).

## How did they speak to them?

The Youth Workers estimated that on the whole about 90 per cent of the interviews were carried out using diagrammatic tools, and in each interview three or four different tools were used. Most of the tools used were ones that they had gained experience of during the training. As the interviews progressed, to ensure that they were able to gather more in depth understanding of resident’s lives, they began to modify, adapt and invent tools that were more suited to this cause.

The tools included PA tools such as:

- **Problem wall and solution tree:** in almost every interview, two particular tools were used, the problem wall and solution tree. The purpose of using these tools so frequently and at the beginning of every interview was that they are tools that would give an insight into the way that residents viewed the estate. These also made the conversations open and flowing into the more personal direction that was required.
- **Time trends analysis:** this was another very useful tool for opening the discussion, especially with older residents. It gave people the opportunity to talk a bit about the estate's history and the problems that it has encountered over the decades. The time trends analysis looked at various aspects of community life, i.e. facilities, transport, housing, crime, safety, drugs, sports, health services, community spirit etc.
- **Mobility mapping:** this was used to establish what facilities people used on the estate and where they would have to go to use services that were not available there.
- **OK / not OK line;** this was used to establish where people felt that they were in terms of wealth and conversations were made around how they felt they can progress up the line. The same exercise was done using what they regarded as an ideal wage, where they felt they were on the line and again what would move them up to their ideal income. Many of the barriers to achieving became apparent during these exercises.
- **Managing wheel:** this was used in a number of interviews to determine how people managed their income on either a weekly or monthly basis. It showed what people would need as a basic wage to get by on and how difficult it was surviving on benefits after all their expenses had been paid out.
- **Impact and flow diagrams;** these were used to determine people's thoughts on a range of issues. Examples of this are training, education and employment. They looked at the

benefits and barriers to taking up such opportunities and what would encourage or discourage people to or from them. Many issues and much information came from using these tools and gave a greater understanding surrounding these issues.

The interviews went on for between one and three hours. People had a lot to say because they rarely get the opportunity to talk about these issues. Most of the interviews were with individuals, but often informal groups formed in the household as the interviews progressed. These additional responses would usually be recorded as well.

Efforts to get people together at larger meetings were very unsuccessful; they did hold a meeting in the church, having made an open invitation to the community to attend and be involved in the survey. One or two young people turned up, but no-one else.

## How was the information recorded?

During each interview, notes were taken down on flipcharts and Post-It notes as the exercises progressed. If no exercise was used, notes were recorded by the interviewer, and checked with the interviewee at the end of the interview.

Back at the office, the interview was documented using a standard format; this was to ensure that all relevant information was documented. Once all the information from the interviews had been collated in this way, all the clusters that had emerged were examined and summarised on another chart (still by personal/social/structural and barriers/opportunities). The team then began to examine similarities and differences between men and women in each age group, and then between age groups, and began to ask why there were these differences and what they might mean in terms of the services that Foundation could provide.

## Verification

The verification process was attempted two ways:

1. A letter was sent to all interviewees, informing them of the community day and inviting them to attend. It also contained a summary of the 'outcomes of the survey'.
2. A community day was held; there were activities for children and the Foundation had a stall. The findings were displayed using the same spider diagrams and people were invited to review the findings and add their comments. About 20 people looked over the diagrams; two were interviewees.

As expected, it was difficult to get people to engage with this process. Those that did speak with staff of the Foundation at the community event were very much in agreement with the survey outcomes.

## Review of the process and lessons learned

Oxfam carried out a short review workshop with the Foundation to reflect on the needs assessment process. The main lessons learned are summarised below:

- The amount of time that this process will require cannot be overestimated; it cannot be short circuited either – especially in a community such as Gellideg, where people are isolated, there are low levels of self-confidence and trust.
- The 'snowballing' technique used to contact interviewees was very successful, but needed to be tested to see whether it had reached the most marginalised.

- Everyone thought that it would be difficult to talk to people about personal issues, but in fact in a safe environment (their own home) they were very happy to talk.
- Conversely it was nigh on impossible to get people to come to meetings, to talk in 'public' or in groups.
- The Participatory Appraisal tools used were very effective in promoting discussion about personal issues.
- The sensitive nature of the issues raised highlighted a number of key concerns: How to represent this information without jeopardising your relationship with the interviewee and the community as a whole? How to deal with other's perceptions of what you are doing, especially if they feel threatened by it? The need to ensure that everyone knows what you are doing and why.
- Mentoring and support throughout the process are crucial; as the survey rolled out the need for advice and support did not lessen.
- There is a huge amount of ignorance and inertia within institutions to understand what gender and equal opportunities are about, as indeed what participation is about. This makes it difficult for a small organisation such as the Foundation that have developed a much more sophisticated analysis and understanding to achieve what they would like to do, as they are continually having to break these barriers of understanding down to get their ideas listened to.

## **Annex C:**

# **Summaries of issues raised by different age groups**



Figure 1: Summary of issues raised by women aged 16 to 25

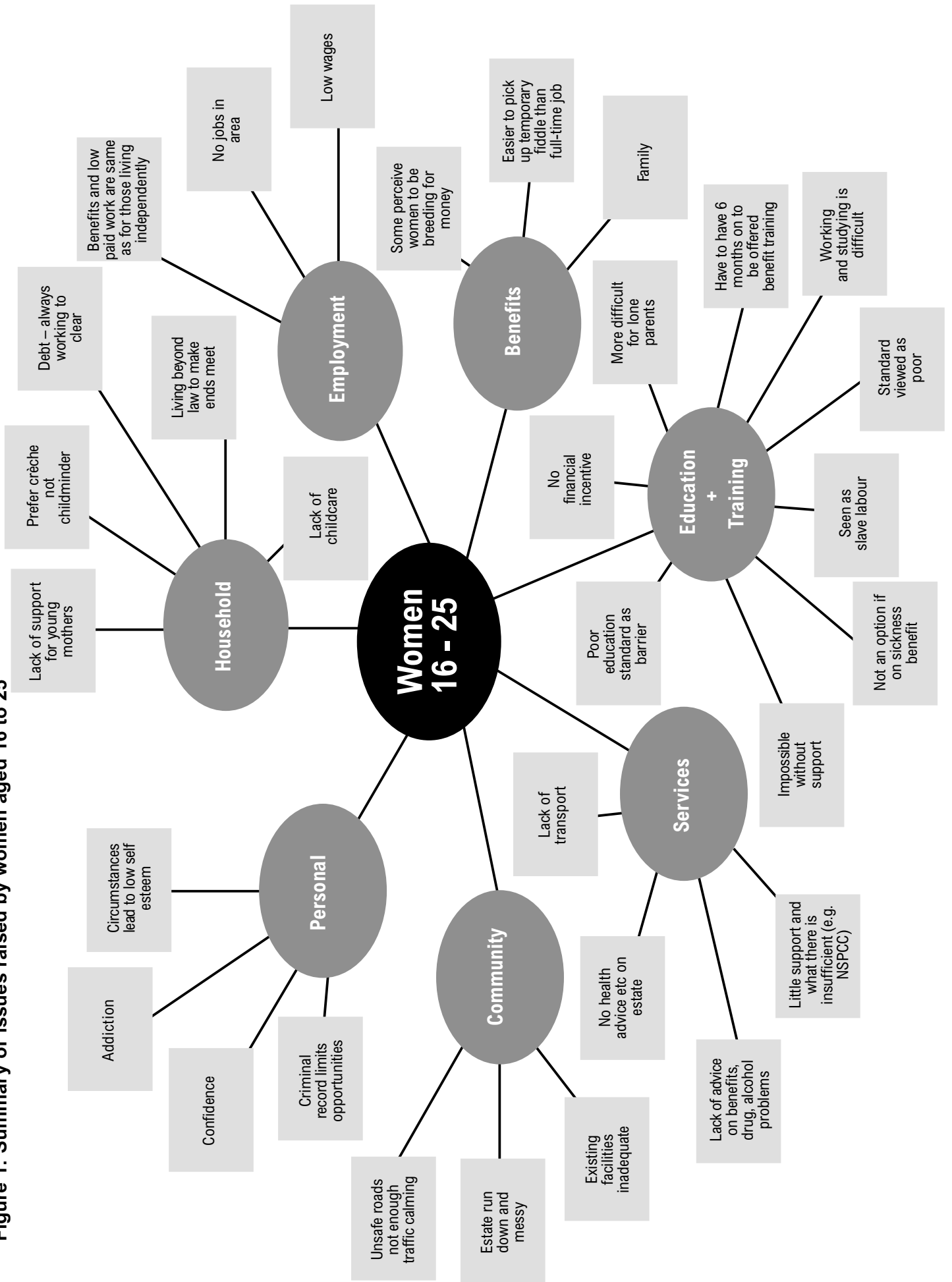




Figure 2: Summary of issues raised by men aged 16 to 25

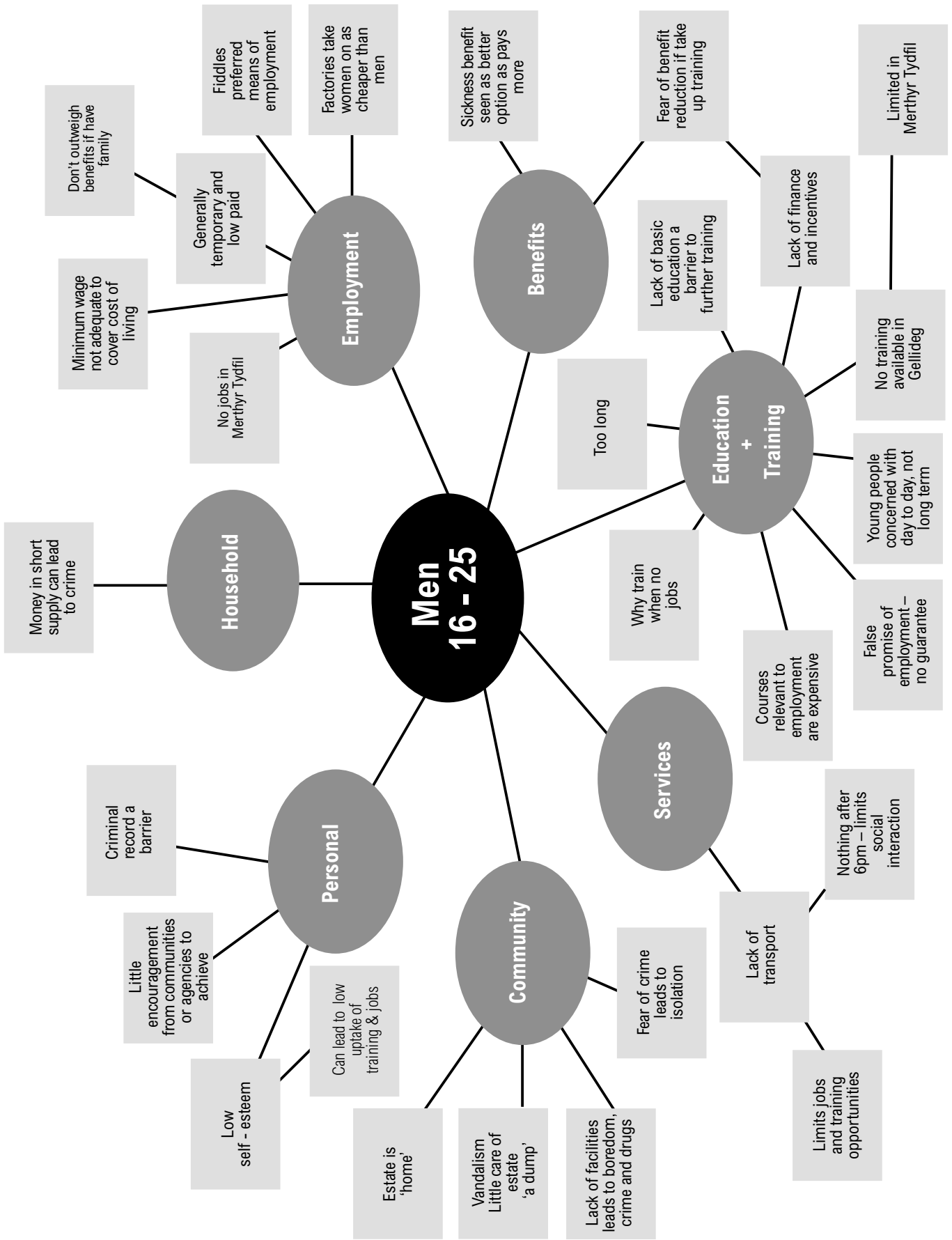


Figure 3: Summary of issues raised by women aged 25 to 50

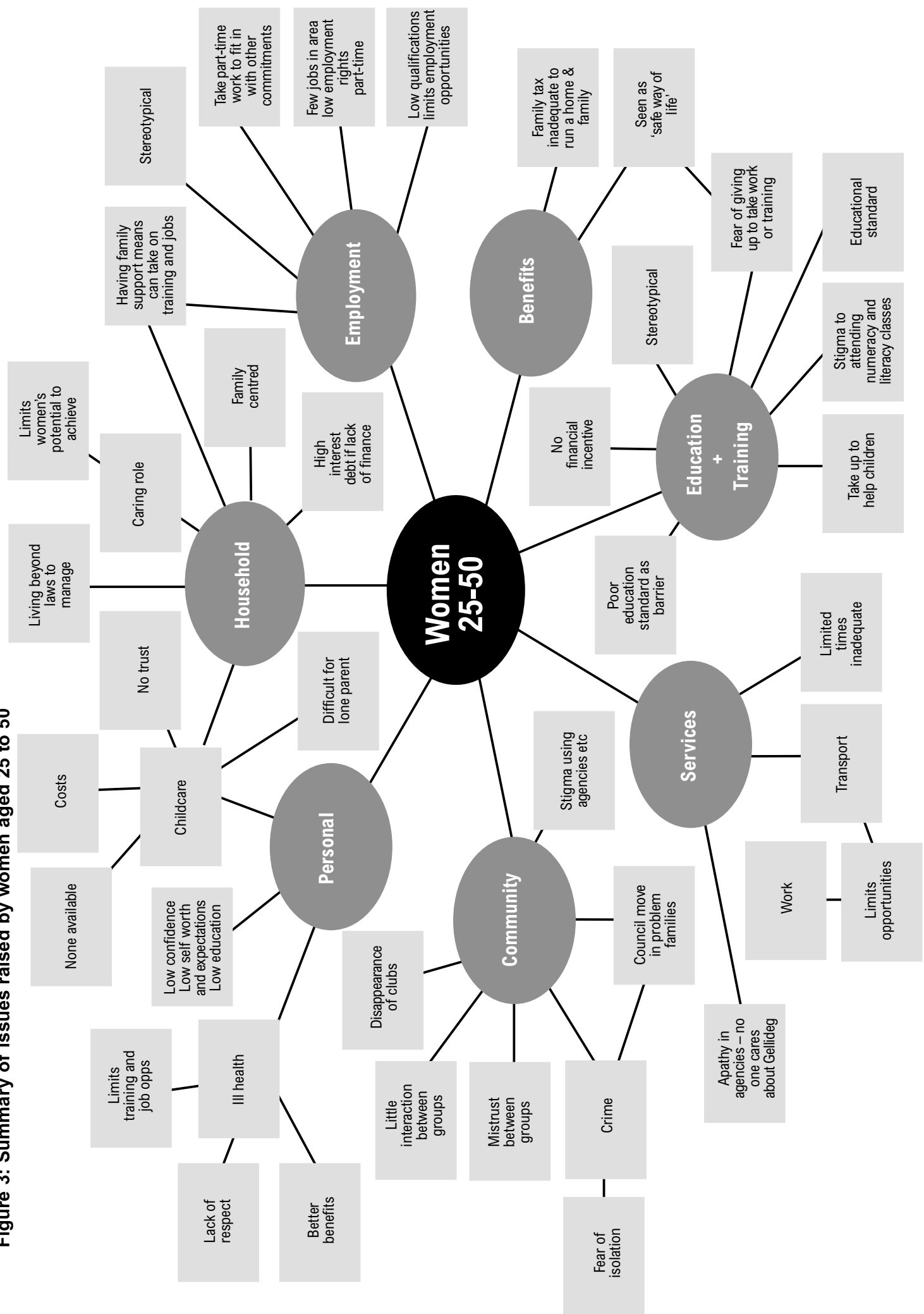


Figure 4: Summary of issues raised by men aged 25 to 50

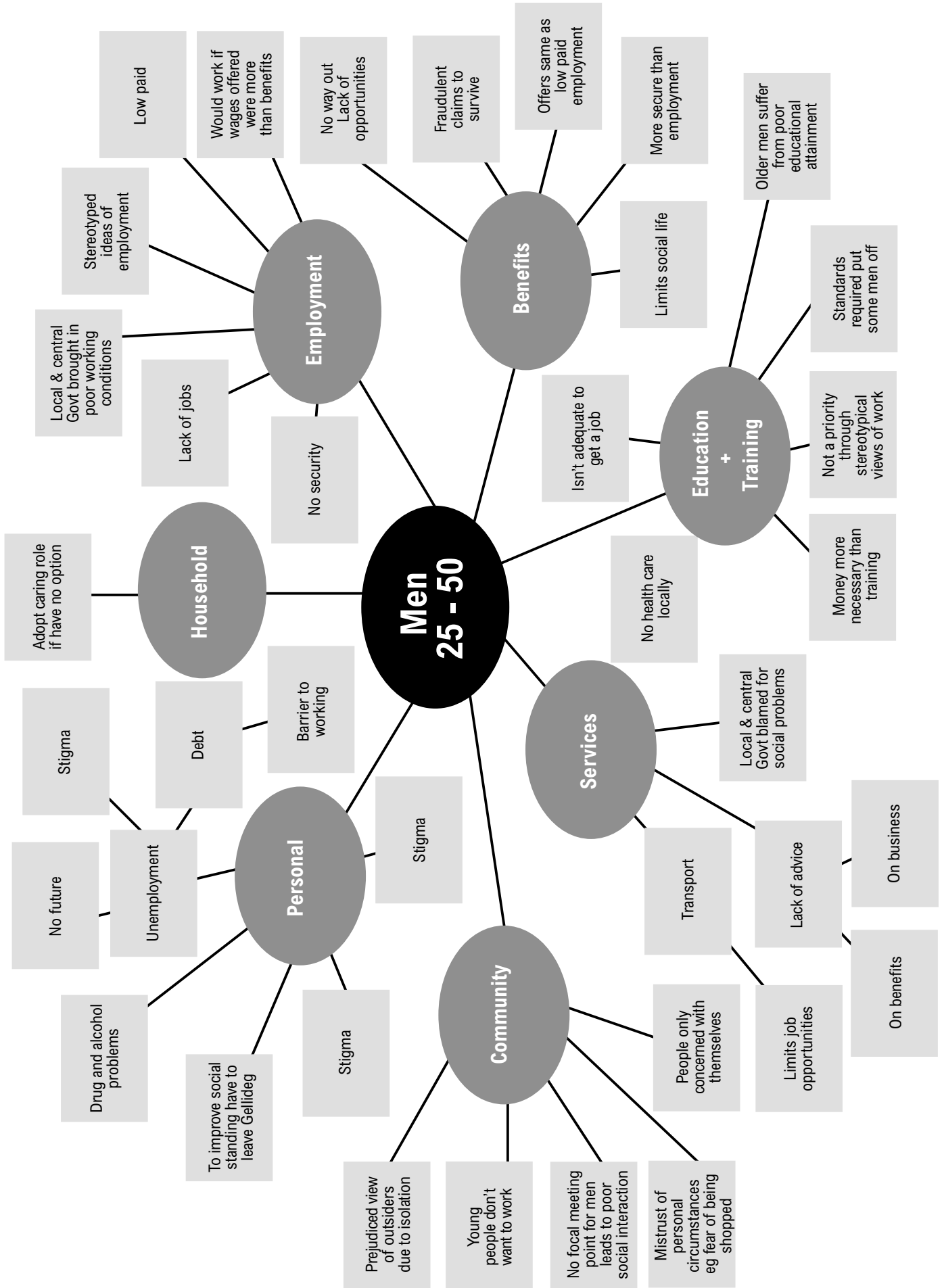


Figure 5: Summary of issues raised by women aged 50 and over

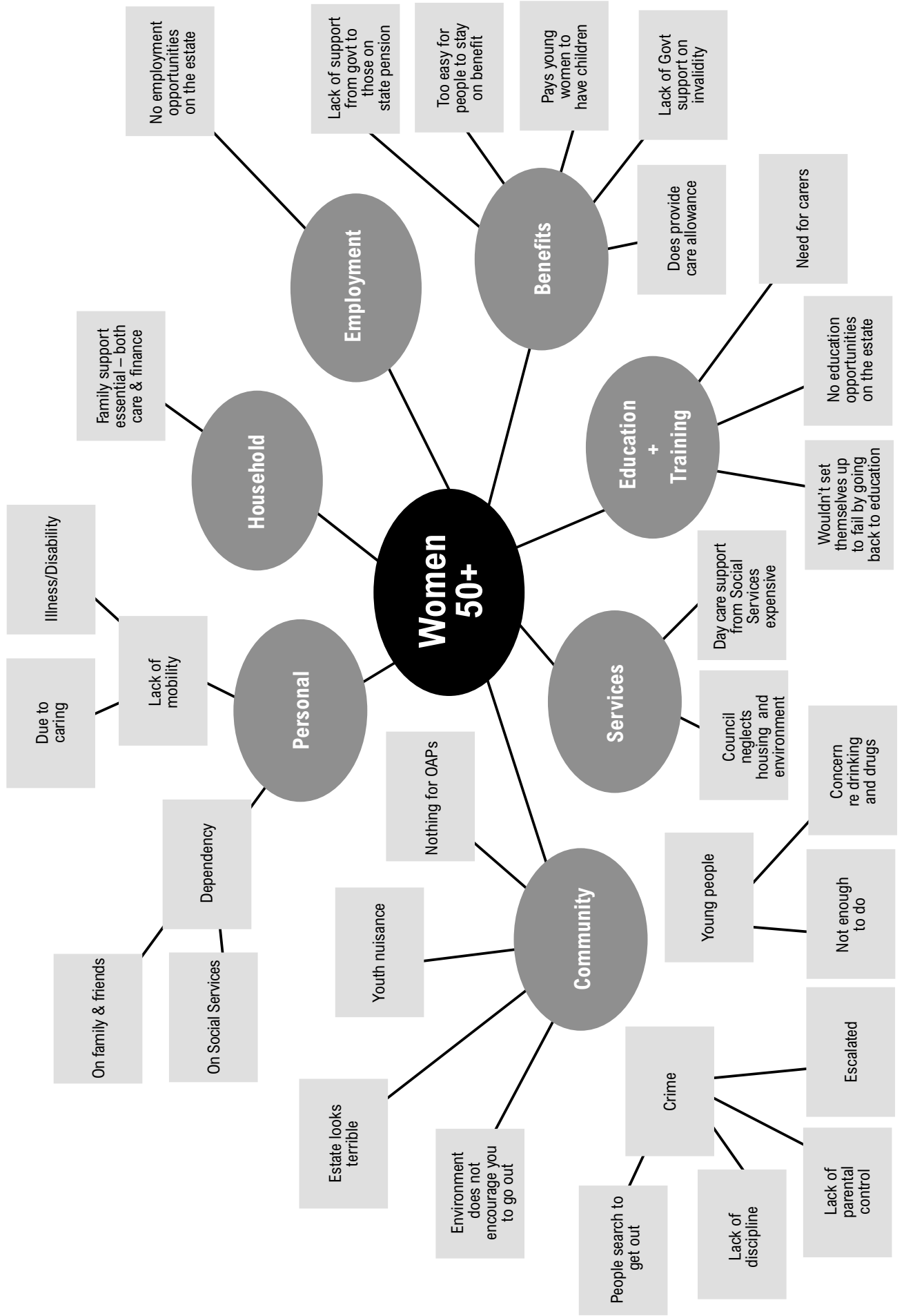
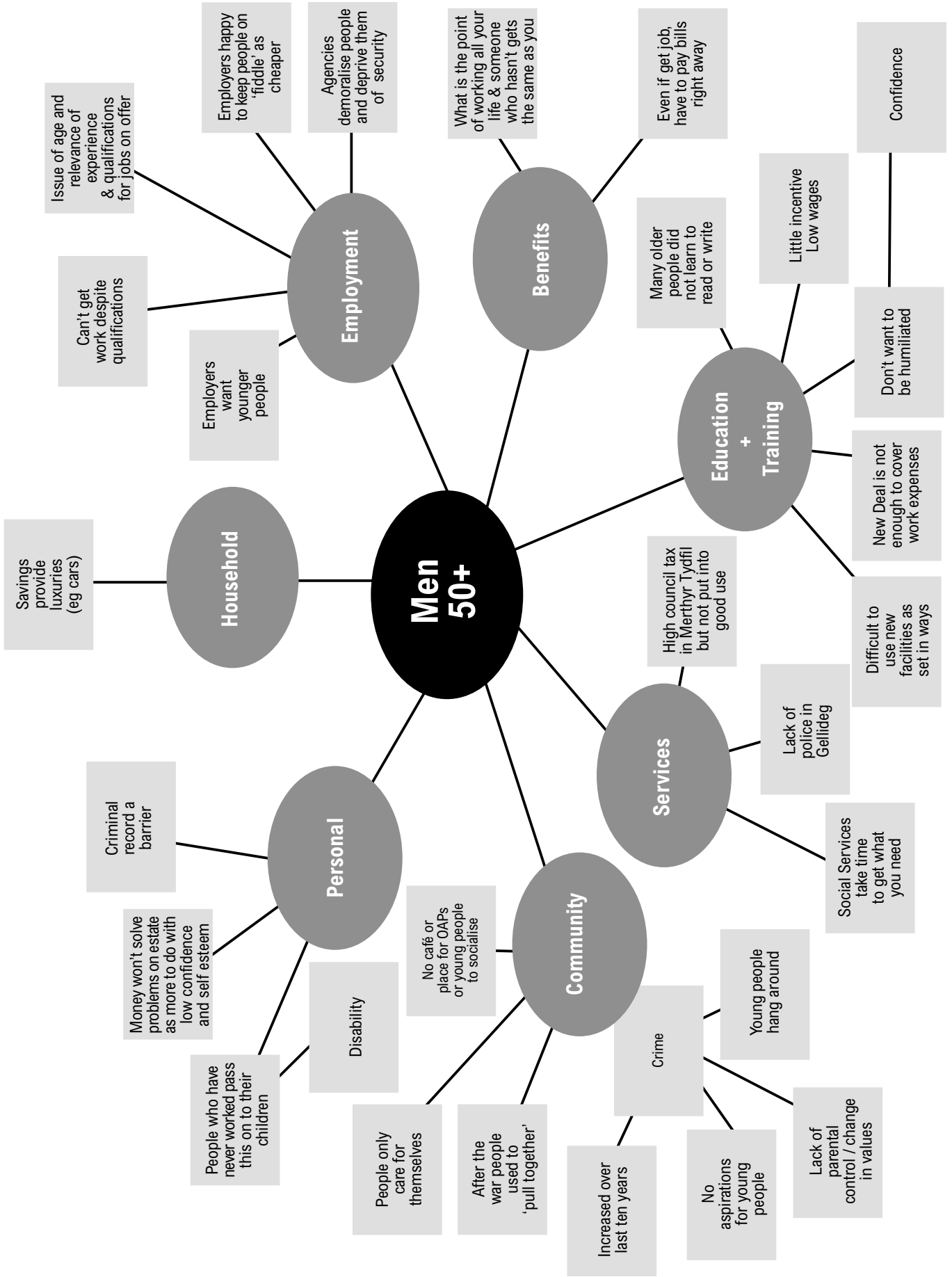


Figure 6: Summary of issues raised by men aged 50 and over





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