

Addressing Women's Poverty in Birmingham: Local Labour Market Initiatives

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Foreword

As Cabinet Member for Equalities and Human Resources for Birmingham City Council, equality of opportunity is at the heart of my vision for Birmingham, which means to ensure that all men and women have access to employment opportunities. This is achieved through fair recruitment processes and opportunities for both men and women to develop their careers. As one of the largest employers in the city, carrying out such an approach not only achieves fairness and improves morale but also results in better quality service delivery to the benefit of both employees and the communities they serve.

Over the last three years, Birmingham City Council, the largest local authority within the GELLM partnership, has worked closely with Sheffield Hallam University to undertake an important piece of research into *Gender and Employment in Local Labour Markets* (GELLM).

Following the successful launch of the *Gender Profile of Birmingham's Labour Market* last spring, I am now pleased to launch the three follow-up studies that have been carried out in Birmingham:

- *Challenges in Meeting Demand for Domiciliary Care in Birmingham*
- *Connecting Women with the Labour Market in Birmingham*
- *Addressing Women's Poverty in Birmingham: Local Labour Market Initiatives.*

These three studies have identified the aspirations of local women, what opportunities are available to them, and what constraints hold them back. The wider GELLM research programme has also explored some of the factors leading women to accept low-paid work and part-time work, and has examined how local employers' recruitment strategies have affected certain groups of women. These research studies, and the wider work of the GELLM partnership, provide us with a concrete base to bring any required changes. Therefore I commend the outcomes of these studies strongly.

Councillor Alan Rudge

Cabinet Member for Equalities and Human Resources

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Members of the GELLM Team contributed as follows

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Key findings

This study has explored the scale and experience of women's economic disadvantage in North West Birmingham. It also examined barriers to paid employment and the extent to which current regeneration and labour market initiatives have supported women in accessing employment opportunities.

Women's economic disadvantage in Ladywood and Soho

- The locality is diverse, with residents of Indian, Pakistani and Black Caribbean origin representing the majority of the population.
- Recent migration into the area mainly involves households living on very low incomes.
- Over a third of dependent children in the area live in families with no working adult.
- Lone mothers were less likely to be in paid work than in Birmingham as a whole.
- Among men and women of working age, poor health and limiting long-term illness is high.
- There is a high level of private renting in the area; the majority of residents live in terraced properties or flats.

Women's position in the local labour market

Compared with women in Birmingham and England as a whole, women in the two wards are:

- Less likely to be in either full-time or part-time employment.
- More likely to work in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs and, in Soho, less likely to be in professional or managerial occupations.
- If they have caring responsibilities, less likely to work either full-time or part-time.
- More likely to be unemployed or economically inactive, especially women of Pakistani or Black Caribbean origin.
- More likely to work close to home
- Low qualification levels and limited job opportunities are reducing women's employment prospects:
- 38% of women of working age have no educational qualifications and only 18% have degree level qualifications.
- Jobs created in local businesses have not replaced those lost from major local employers, where many men and women living in the locality once worked.
- Local stakeholders and women living in the area feel local residents are not benefiting from higher skilled and better paid employment opportunities available in

Birmingham, despite its close proximity to areas of employment growth in the city centre.

Barriers to labour market engagement

Local women and local organisations identified the following as important barriers to employment:

- Lack of formal qualifications and breaks in employment, particularly among Bangladeshi and recently arrived communities.
- The tax and benefit system is a constraint on women's participation in the labour market.
- The availability and cost of childcare. Although childcare is improving for pre-school children, it remains limited for women seeking to enter or re-enter the labour market. Childcare services for local school aged children before and after school and during holiday periods are inadequate.

Area-based regeneration and labour market initiatives

Analysis of regeneration policies, delivery plans, economic and employment targets and evaluation techniques showed that:

- Women's economic disadvantage in the local labour market had not been addressed as a specific issue in the SRB 6 programme.
- There are few explicit requirements to consider the position of women and men separately in the interventions to reduce economic inactivity, including those promoted through Advantage West Midlands.
- Data used in regeneration documents on the locality, including output data, are not disaggregated by gender and ethnicity.
- Evaluation approaches adopted in existing regeneration initiatives take little account of the key differences in women's and men's economic position and experience of living in the locality.

Services to support local women

Birmingham City Council could do more to assist women. The following are needed:

- A clearer understanding of the employment and training needs of women living in the locality. This will mean working more closely with community based organisations.
- Support tailored to the needs of economically inactive women from diverse ethnic minority origins, including mentoring schemes.
- Childcare provision which reflected the differing childcare needs of lone parents and other low income households in the area.

Impact on women's economic disadvantage

Labour market policy and regeneration initiatives have had limited impact on women's disadvantage:

- Public and private investment in the area has been largely focused on physical infrastructure developments.
- Regeneration schemes have attracted employers, but many of the jobs are poorly paid.
- SureStart has been successful in engaging local women, including Asian women, to undertake child care and early years courses.
- The potential for classes held in community centres involving women in developing skills, including ITC, is constrained by limited, short term funding.
- Local education, health services and community projects could offer an effective route to paid work for local residents.
- Further work with local employers to address job flexibility, hours, pay structures and in-house training for women wishing to enter the labour market is needed.

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify how effective regeneration strategies and initiatives have been in addressing economic disadvantage among women living in two wards in Birmingham. The research was also designed to inform future regeneration strategies undertaken by Birmingham City Council and its partners, to ensure the specific needs of women living on low incomes are directly addressed.

The research was undertaken during 2005 and used a variety of methods, including: statistical analysis of ward level data; documentary analysis of regeneration strategies and evaluations; key stakeholder interviews; and focus groups with women living in the selected wards.

This report presents research undertaken as part of the GELLM research programme (Appendix 1). Parallel studies were also conducted in five other English local authorities and these are published separately. A synthesis report of the findings from all six areas is also available (Escott et al 2006). The *Gender Profile of Birmingham's Labour Market* (Buckner et al 2004) provides the district-wide statistical evidence and context for the study.

Women's poverty and economic disadvantage

In the UK, women are more likely than men to live in poverty. Poverty amongst women remains a persistent feature of some local labour markets, despite recent policy changes. Women's poverty is often hidden, and is exacerbated by widespread assumptions about their financial dependence on men and about their role being primarily as mothers and carers rather than as wage earners. These assumptions contribute to the low pay of many women who enter the labour market and to the low incomes of those who remain outside it. Although there is a relationship between economic inactivity and poverty, employment does not necessarily provide an escape from poverty for women. Women in the labour market face the risk of low wages, insecure work, occupational segregation and lesser access to promotion than men, in jobs that are often fitted around domestic responsibilities.

It is important to recognise the ethnicity dimension of women's poverty, as some ethnic minority women face a particularly high risk of poverty (WBG 2005). Poor health and low self esteem, often associated with the stress of managing poverty has also been highlighted in other recent research (Bradshaw et al 2003; Yeandle et al 2003).

Regeneration initiatives

Over the past 30 years, national, regional and local initiatives, under the broad heading of local economic development or 'urban regeneration', have sought to tackle disadvantage in areas of economic decline. Local authorities and others have invested considerable resources in these initiatives, and private sector urban renewal developments and investment have also been heralded as bringing prosperity to declining economies. This study focuses on area based economic initiatives and developments, and explores their impact on women and on their participation in the local labour market. It was carried out in the context of a broader understanding of regeneration, including Oxfam's research on community engagement, which concludes that regeneration policies often fail to take into account differences between men and women in their experiences of a range of local services including education, transport, care provision and economic development (Oxfam, 2005).

Existing research does not explain why so many women living in communities where there has been significant public and private investment continue to experience economic disadvantage. This study explores how local economic and employment structures continue to disadvantage women, and considers how women can be assisted by future initiatives.

National and regional regeneration policy

The Government has a number of policy initiatives which are directly relevant to this study.

- The national target to engage more women and men in employment (DWP, 2004).
- A skills strategy which ensures fair access to training and jobs, including barriers between welfare and work (DFES, 2005).
- The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001) to improve the quality of life in the most deprived areas of the country.
- The recognition that deprivation can be highly concentrated in neighbourhoods, requiring tailored approaches to providing services, work incentives and promoting self-employment (SEU, 2004).
- The target to significantly reduce the difference between the employment rates of disadvantaged groups and the overall rate by spring 2008 (NRU 2005).
- The target to increase the employment rates for lone parents, ethnic minorities, people aged 50 and over, those with the lowest qualifications and those living in local authority wards with the poorest labour market position (NRU 2005).

To help address these policy issues in Birmingham this study offers a more detailed understanding of the local labour market in which women living on low incomes are located. To date, public policy evaluation and academic research assessing the success or otherwise of regeneration initiatives has only rarely adopted a gender perspective. While targeted regeneration projects are known to have differing impacts on women and men, and some focus on lone parents and ethnic minority groups, most fail to highlight gender issues. In addition, key differences in the experience of particular groups of women facing economic disadvantage, for example, young women, older women and women with disabilities, are often overlooked in the analysis. Stereotyping and problematising the issues facing women, for example through

initiatives focusing on teenage pregnancy, are an added concern.

A further rationale for this study is the contribution it can make to the evidence base for labour market policy at regional level. The policy direction of *Regional Development Agencies* and *Regional Assemblies* and, at sub-regional level, of *Learning and Skills Councils* is increasingly important for economic regeneration, employment and training. Regional Economic Strategies and related sub-regional plans are expected to include 'equalities' as part of their policy framework, but the requirement to improve economic competitiveness and to promote economic development has rarely been enhanced by local analysis which informs the promotion of gender equality.

Birmingham City Council's approach

The Soho and Ladywood wards were selected for the study by Birmingham City Council, which identified them as areas suffering from relatively high levels of unemployment and economic inactivity. BCC had noted that many local residents who had previously worked in manufacturing and processing jobs were still being affected by the results of economic restructuring. Job growth in the district did not appear to be benefiting local residents, many of whom were living on very low incomes, whether or not they were in work. Poverty levels were identified as particularly high among the city's ethnic minority population, which is particularly concentrated in the selected wards.

In its assessment of the first three years of SRB 6¹ funding in the area, Birmingham City Council had reviewed strategic objectives for the area (Birmingham City Council, 2003). This led it to prioritise the development of a Local Labour Agreement aimed at ensuring that employment opportunities generated under the programme would benefit local people. The need for more employment and training related advice, and to raise qualification levels, were also identified as priorities in the £40m programme running until March 2007. Much of the first phase of the SRB programme focused on physical improvements to the area. A community safety programme (SRB 4) and Handsworth Area Regeneration Trust

¹ SRB6 stands for Single Regeneration Budget Round 6 programme which provided funds for regeneration initiatives. It has now been subsumed under Advantage West Midlands (AWM) single programme.

(SRB 5) have also operated in the area. The Birmingham and Sandwell Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder² which has been working in the area since 2003 to address housing abandonment and low demand aims to take socio-economic issues into account.

*Advantage West Midlands*³ is actively engaged in the area through the South Black Country and West Birmingham Regeneration Zone scheme, which funds a series of regeneration projects in the area. Sure Start⁴ has been operating locally since 2001. Neighbouring localities include Aston and Sandwell which have also received substantial regeneration funds. Both these areas have been the focus of other research on women and disadvantage within the GELLM programme (Grant et al 2006a, 2006b).

Aims and objectives of the study

This study has assessed how far area-based regeneration initiatives have addressed women's economic disadvantage and poverty. Its specific objectives were:

- To identify and analyse the nature and extent of women's poverty and economic disadvantage in the Birmingham wards of Soho and Ladywood.
- To develop an evidence base about the relationship between poverty, gender and local labour markets in the neighbourhood.
- To examine relevant area-based public and private sector initiatives and their impact within the wards on women's labour market opportunity.
- To assess local service provision and to identify the service needs, including unmet needs, of women living on low incomes in the locality.
- To make policy recommendations of relevance to Birmingham City Council, and its local partners, including the Local Strategic Partnership, and to regional and national policy makers.

² Nine Market Renewal Pathfinders projects established by ODPM to tackle the most acute areas of low demand for social housing and abandonment of properties in parts of the North and Midlands.

³ AWM is the Regional Development Agency for the West Midlands

⁴ Sure Start is a Government programme which aims to increase the availability of childcare and support parents into employment.

Women's poverty and economic disadvantage in Birmingham: evidence from two wards⁵

The study used a multi-method approach (see Appendix 2), combining qualitative and quantitative data:

- Ward/district level data from the 2001 Census.
- Documentary analysis of council reports and policies.
- Interviews with local organisations.
- Evidence from focus group discussions at three community based meetings.

The neighbourhood⁶

Ladywood and Soho are among the most deprived wards in Birmingham. This is evident from population and housing data about the locality, as well as the labour market and economic indicators presented below. Figure 1 shows the two wards, with the Index of Deprivation 2004 scores for the areas within them.

In both wards, the level of private renting is high. Compared with Birmingham as a whole, far fewer Ladywood (43%) and Soho (54%) residents own their home; 16% of people in Ladywood and 15% in Soho live in rented social housing⁴. The majority of people in Soho live in a terraced property, while in Ladywood most residents live in flats or terraced properties. These figures are well above the average figures for either Birmingham or England. Only 29% of people in Soho and 27% in Ladywood live in a semi-detached or detached property, compared with 51% in Birmingham and 60% in England.

You don't find large housing estates, you find neighbourhoods and a dominant private sector market. (A)

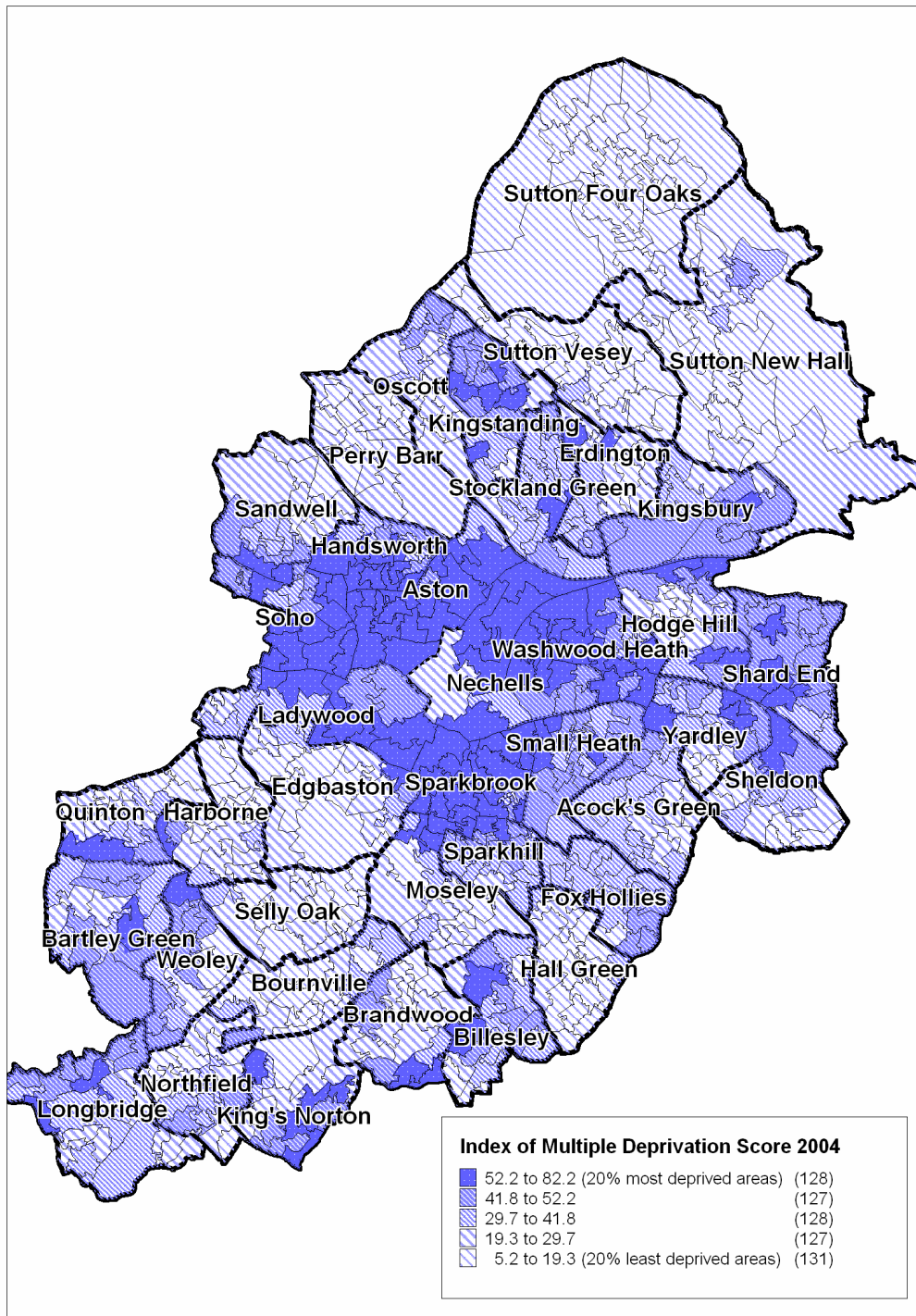
It is very close to the city centre and quite well linked with local areas and local services, but they are getting sub-standard services, and the quality of housing is generally poor. (A)

Local agencies noted that housing needs are varied, ranging from lone parent households to large households which required 4-5 bedrooms.

⁵ Data in this section are from the 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2004 except where specified.

⁶ Quotes in this and following sections are either from interviews with local organisations (marked A), or from focus group participants (marked B).

Figure 1 Index of deprivation (IMD): Soho and Ladywood Wards in Birmingham



Source: ODPM, Crown Copyright 2004, 2001 Census Super Output Areas, Crown Copyright 2004. This work is based on data provided through EDINA UKBORDERS with the support of the ESRC and JISC and uses boundary material which is Copyright of the Crown

Note: This map shows the Index of multiple Deprivation (IMD) score for each sub-ward area, with the total number of areas in each category in brackets. This index covers information relating to income, employment, health deprivation and disability, education, skills and training, barriers to housing and services, crime and disorder and living environment. The data on the living environment (which includes quality of housing, air quality and road traffic accidents), shows that 137 of Birmingham's 641 areas within wards are in the 5% most deprived in the country.

Low income households

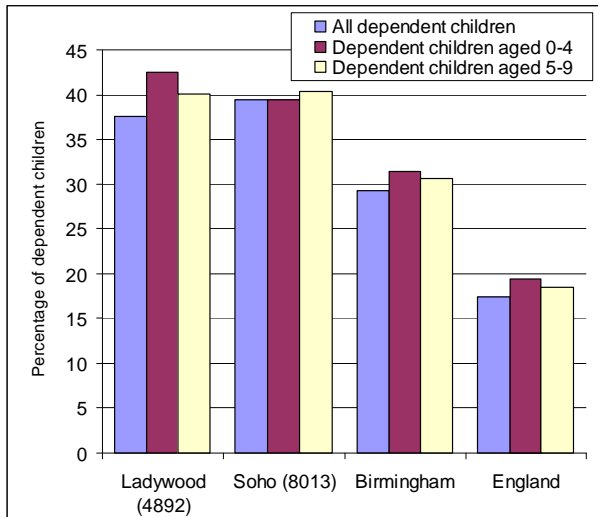
Many women, especially lone parents and pensioners, are living hand to mouth.(A)

There are families where three generations have been trapped in poverty.(A)

People want jobs because of the poverty - they want money and a better life. They want jobs straight away, and don't want to think about the skills. They need money.(A)

The locality has a relatively young population (28% of Soho's population and 18% of Ladywood's population is aged 0-15), and fewer people aged 50 and over compared with the city and national rate. Almost 40% of dependent children live in families with no working adult, considerably more than in Birmingham, or in England as a whole, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Dependent children in households with no working adult



Source: 2001 Census Standard Theme Table, Crown Copyright 2003.

Almost 3,000 female lone parents lived in the wards in 2001, representing 8% of all female lone parents in the city. In both wards 11% of female lone parents said they were unemployed, compared with 8% in Birmingham and 6% nationally. Economic inactivity rates for lone parents were high, reflecting the city rate. There were also lower rates of part-time working among female lone parents in Ladywood.

Over a fifth of women of working age in Soho and 18% in Ladywood claim Income Support, well above the city average⁷. This represents over

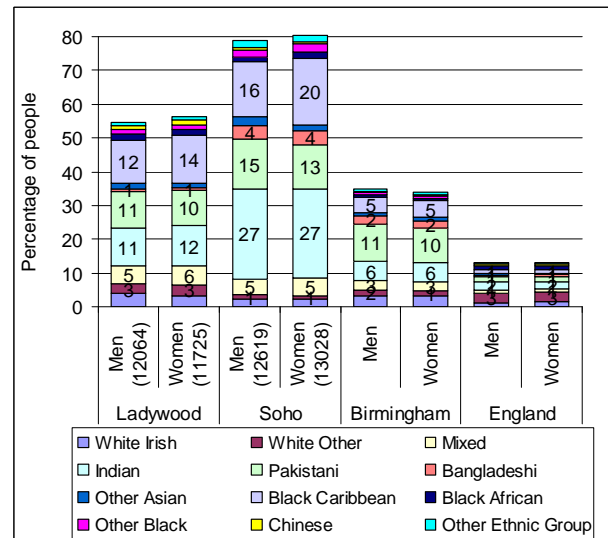
2,900 women of working age in the locality, and almost two-thirds of all claimants.

Limiting long-term illness among women of working age is higher in both Ladywood and Soho wards than in Birmingham or England as a whole and women in both wards reported higher levels of poor health.

Ethnicity

As we showed in the *Gender Profile of Birmingham's Labour Market* (Buckner et al 2005), a third of Birmingham's residents are from ethnic minority groups. The ethnic mix of Soho and Ladywood is much more diverse than the city. Over half of women living in Ladywood, and 80% in Soho, are from ethnic minority groups. The largest ethnic minority groups are people of Indian, Pakistani and Black Caribbean origin, together representing the majority of the population in the locality, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Ethnicity of resident population



Source: 2001 Census Standard Table, Crown Copyright 2003.

Our interviews highlighted the high levels of economic disadvantage found among ethnic minority groups living in the area, and our focus group participants drew attention to the changing demography of the locality with many new migrants, including Polish and Iraqi groups, facing high levels of deprivation.

⁷ Source: DWP, 2003

Residents' views of the neighbourhood

Our focus group discussions revealed a strong sense of 'community'. Participants felt there was a good relationship between ethnic groups - 'people mix really well'. The more established migrant communities had originally been attracted to the area by job opportunities.

Participants said they felt safe in the area, and despite its reputation, crime had reduced, helped by a more visible police presence on the streets. Shopping was convenient, and the general view was that the physical state of schools in the area had improved, though this was not necessarily reflected in increasing standards of attainment.

Focus group participants felt local health services had deteriorated in recent years, and noted major environmental health problems, including rubbish on the streets and poor refuse collection services. In spite of these problems, all those participating felt committed to the area and concerned about long term improvements.

Women are the ones that get involved and keep the community together. They are the ones that make things happen.(B)

Women's position in the local labour market

We reported elsewhere (Buckner et al 2005) the large increases in part-time employment affecting both sexes between 1991 and 2002. In these years, there was a large fall in the share of employment in manufacturing, an increase in employment in banking, finance and insurance, and a small reduction in employment in public administration, education and health for women living in Birmingham.

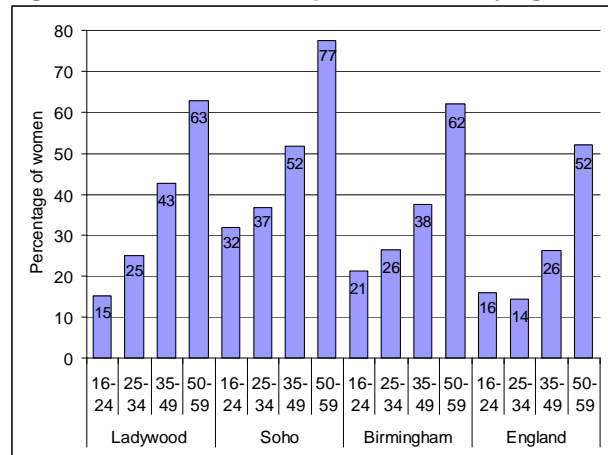
Qualifications and skills

A higher proportion of women in the two wards have no qualifications than in Birmingham and England (Figure 4). This is particularly marked among the older age groups. Nearly 80% of women aged 50-59 in Soho have no qualifications. Remarkably, in Soho more women (over 30%) than men aged 16-24 have no qualifications, and in the 25-34 age group almost 40% are completely unqualified.

As elsewhere, those with higher qualifications are most likely to be in employment. However, only 13% of women living in Soho have a degree, while 45% of women have no qualifications. Nearly half of women living in Ladywood have

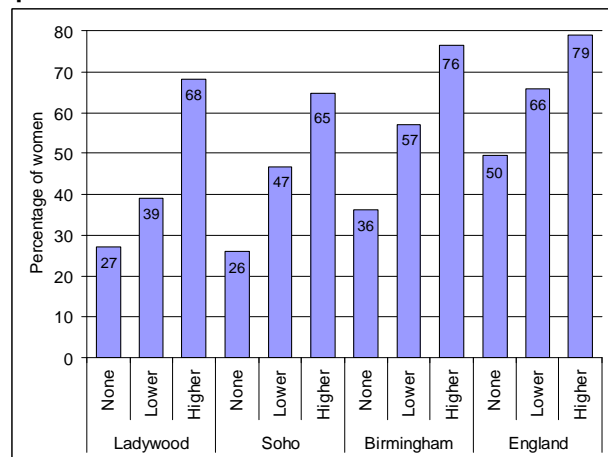
'lower' qualifications, reflecting the large student population. In this ward, 37% of women with these qualifications were students.

Figure 4 Women with no qualifications, by age



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003

Figure 5 Women in employment, by level of qualification



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003

Note: 'Lower' level qualifications are those equivalent to 'A' level and below; 'higher' level qualifications are equivalent to a university degree and above.

Women with degree level qualifications are less likely to be in employment in Ladywood and Soho than in Birmingham or nationally (Figure 5), although nevertheless around two thirds of them were in work. By contrast, among women with no qualifications, only 27% in Ladywood and 26% in Soho were in employment, compared with 36% for this group in Birmingham and 50% in England as a whole. Thus women in the neighbourhood are both less well qualified and when qualified have lower rates of employment.

Figure 6 Economic activity for men and women of working age

	Ladywood	Soho	Birmingham	England
Economically Active	57	51	61	71
Employee full-time	29	24	33	36
Self-employed full-time	2	1	2	3
Employee part-time	10	14	18	23
Self-employed part-time	1	1	1	2
Unemployed	9	4	4	3
Full-time student	6	7	4	3
Economically Inactive	43	49	39	29
Retired	1	0	1	1
Student	14	10	9	6
Looking after home or family	14	21	17	14
Permanently sick or disabled	6	8	6	5
Other	7	10	6	4

Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003

Figure 7 Main occupations and industries of women in employment in the locality

	Ladywood	Soho	Birmingham	England
Occupation				
Managers, senior officials	9	6	9	11
Professionals	13	7	11	10
Associate professionals & technical occupations	16	12	14	14
Administrative and secretarial occupations	19	19	24	23
Elementary occupations	16	19	13	12
Industry				
Manufacturing	9	14	9	9
Wholesale, retail, restaurants and hotels	22	20	21	24
Finance and real estate	20	15	18	18
Health and social work	21	24	21	19

Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003

Women's employment patterns

Women in the two wards are less likely than women nationally to be in either full-time or part-time employment. While female employment rates in Birmingham are lower than the national rate, the level of full-time and part-time working among women in the locality is even lower (Figure 6). Over a fifth of women in Soho look after their home and family full-time, well above the rate at national level (14%).

As at national, regional and district level, there is a gendered pattern in men's and women's jobs (Figure 7). Women living in the two wards are even more likely to work in lower level jobs, and in Soho are less likely to be in skilled, technical, professional or managerial occupations than at other levels. Fewer women are employed in administrative jobs than in the city and nationally.

A higher proportion of women work in elementary jobs or operative positions (Figure 6), than the national figure (15%). Only 7% of women in Soho work in professional jobs, compared with 13% in Ladywood, 11% in Birmingham and 10% nationally. This is particularly true for Indian women in Soho. 40% of these women are in

lower level jobs and only 9% are in professional and managerial positions. In Ladywood, 28% of Indian women are in elementary or operative jobs, but there is also a relatively high employment rate in managerial and professional jobs.

Women of Pakistani origin in Ladywood are more likely to be employed in sales and customer services and in managerial positions than in the city as a whole - but less likely to work in personal service occupations. The opposite is true for Black Caribbean women in both Soho and Ladywood. They are more likely to work in personal service jobs, and very unlikely to be employed as managers or professionals.

Local women are also quite strongly concentrated in certain employment sectors (Figure 8). Soho has a high proportion of women in manufacturing (14%) and in health and social work (24%).

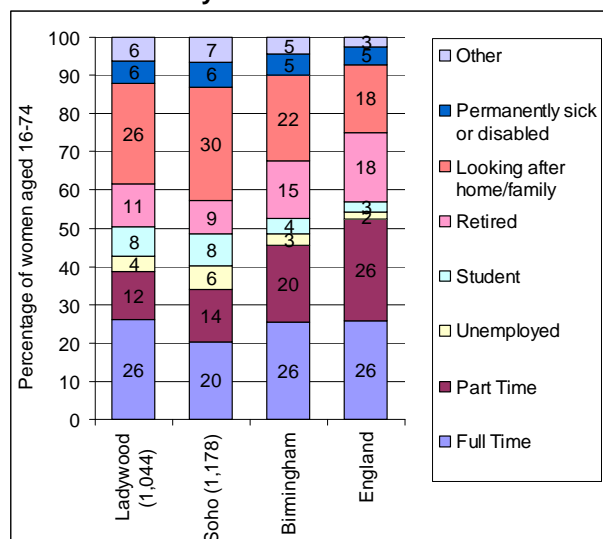
The concentrations by gender and ethnicity are even more stark. As nationally, Black Caribbean women are far more likely than any other group to be employed in health and social work. In Soho 37% of Black Caribbean women were employed

in that sector. Pakistani and Indian women are more likely to work in wholesale and retail in Ladywood and Soho than other groups. Indian women are particularly concentrated in manufacturing in Soho, with 27% in this area of employment, compared to a national rate for Indian women of 14%.

Caring responsibilities

In the locality, women who have unpaid caring responsibilities⁸ are less likely to be in paid work (either full-time or part-time) than in Birmingham or nationally. This is particularly marked in Soho, where only 20% of women who are carers work full-time, and just 14% work part-time (Figure 8).

Figure 8 Women aged 16-74 who are carers, by economic activity



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003

Unemployment and economic inactivity

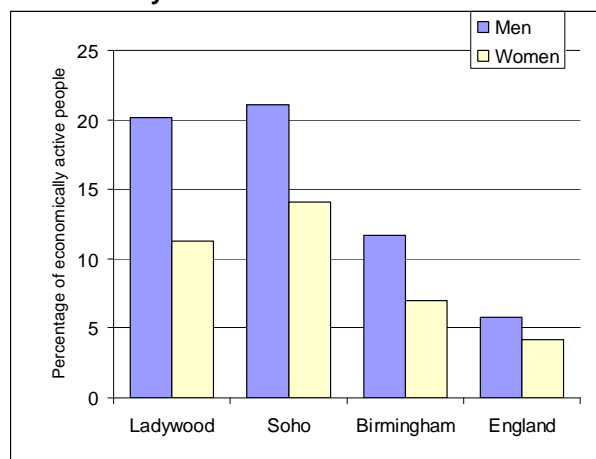
Local unemployment rates are considerably higher for both men and women than in Birmingham and nationally (Figure 9). Ladywood's rate of male and female unemployment (14% and 6% respectively) and Soho's rates (14% and 7%) decreased between 1991-2001 but remained relatively high, particularly for the ethnic minority groups living in the area. Unemployment among Pakistani women (at over 30% in Ladywood and 26% in Soho) was higher than for Pakistani men, and double the national rate for women in this group. Compared with the district and national picture, a high

⁸ The 2001 Census included a question asking people about help or support which was not part of their paid employment which they gave to family members, friends or neighbours with long term physical or mental ill-health or disability.

proportion of unemployed or economically inactive women in the locality had last worked in elementary jobs or as process, plant and machine operatives

Women who had become unemployed or economically inactive tended to have previously worked in manufacturing or in health and social work in Soho, and in hotels and restaurants in Ladywood.

Figure 9 Unemployed men and women of working age, as a proportion of those who are economically active



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003

Economic inactivity increased between 1991 and 2001 across the country. It remains higher among women than men, especially for women of Pakistani origin. Over 40% of women of working age in Ladywood, and almost half in Soho, were economically inactive, compared with a national rate of below 30%. Over three-quarters of Pakistani women in the locality were economically inactive. The high rates of economic inactivity among women in Ladywood are partly attributable to the high proportion of students living in the ward. One fifth of women in Soho, and 17% in Ladywood were economically inactive because of their own sickness or disability.

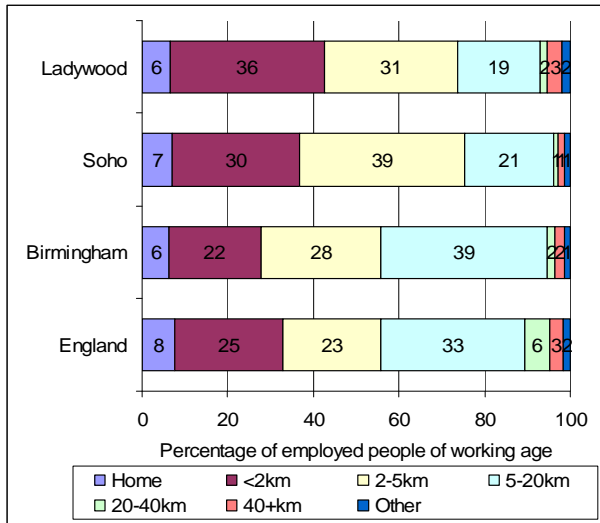
Transport and travel to work

Many residents in the locality live and work in close proximity, and this is particularly true for women. 67% of women in Ladywood, and 68% in Soho, travel less than 5km to work, compared with only 48% nationally (Figure 10). Associated with this, a high proportion of women in the neighbourhood walk to work (Figure 11).

In contrast to the national picture,, under a third of women go to work by car or van. Bus use is

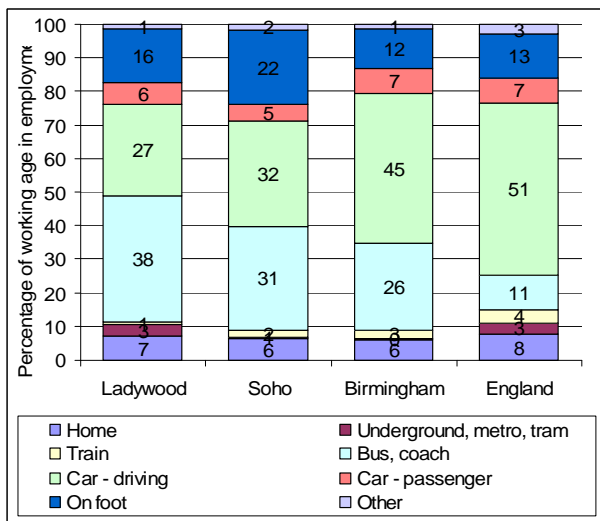
higher among women living in Soho than in Birmingham and triple the national rate of 11%. This is also true for women who work in Ladywood but live outside it, who have high levels of bus and train use.

Figure 10 Distance travelled to work by women of working age



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003

Figure 11 Travel to work by women of working age, who live in the area



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003

Views of the local labour market

City and regional level changes have impacted adversely on many households living in the neighbourhood.

The area has a unique profile - it has strong history based around manufacturing, and a unique cultural diversity. (A)

You don't get that many opportunities round here, and wages are very low. (B)

The jobs that are available are not very good quality. Some of them are minimum wage, and some are below that. (B)

Local people explained that the loss of local manufacturing employment was just one of the factors in the lack of job opportunities, as much of this job loss happened over a decade ago. Economic inactivity rates were thought to be rising in the area, particularly in Ladywood, even though job opportunities in the city were increasing. Interviewees noted that chronic unemployment remained, despite improving skills and qualifications levels.

The pressure on women to earn money through paid work had intensified, as traditional jobs declined. Local retail jobs in small outlets were difficult to obtain because employment was often kept within a family business. There was thought to be a 'grey' economy operating, but it was difficult to quantify this. Generally, opportunity in the immediate area was limited for many groups, especially women, who may have worked in sectors such as textiles and packaging. Some of our focus group participants regretted the lack of opportunities for homeworking. Job opportunities for women were felt to be limited to cleaning, domestic and care jobs.

The transition from a manufacturing to service based economy had proved very challenging for those living in the locality. Many higher skilled jobs were thought difficult to access, and better skilled jobs in the city were expected to go to people from outside the locality:

There is no easy transition for people to go into other occupations, and as a result many cannot access work because they don't have the skills. (A)

Many of the low paid and unskilled jobs were often not attractive:

I don't think the area is expected to be aspirational. You get everyone talking about basic skills - skills

needed for low paid, low quality jobs. It's all about getting them a job, and not about the type of job.(A)

Yes there are skills shortages, but people shouldn't have to accept low paid, anti-social jobs just so they have a job.(A)

New staff are often recruited through agencies, and many posts are part-time and temporary.

Disability and long term ill health were also mentioned as important problems for older members of the community wishing to work.

The majority of focus group participants had been in employment, typically low paid, prior to having children. Returning to employment was considered difficult, and those in training sometimes felt overwhelmed and out of place the first time they attended college:

Due to my age I was very scared to go back to college, but I had to go back there to do my NVQ.(B)

Barriers to labour market engagement

Most women in the focus groups either worked part-time or would like to work. Barriers to employment included aspects of the tax and benefits system, which can only be resolved at national level. Others relate to the economic, social and physical infrastructure of the locality, which can be influenced by regional and local agencies as well as by central government or private investment. Our interviewees also noted discriminatory practices by employers on the basis of ethnicity and post code as a further barrier faced by people in this community.

Focus group participants pointed out that whilst some childcare costs are paid, the costs of re-entering employment go beyond this: rent, council tax, travel and school dinners were cited as costs which they would find hard to meet if they accepted low paid employment.

They're saying that they want you to come off benefit and get a job, but it's hard. It's the additional costs, you have to pay the school dinners for your children if you're on benefit, full tax, full rent.(B)

I was getting £50 to work and they were taking that out of my Child Tax Credit.(B)

Stakeholders were also concerned that there was not a clearer understanding of the barriers women in the locality face:

I know there are incentives -.but there is a long way to go just to get to grips with the barriers they face.(A)

They have been relatively successful in engaging people on incapacity benefit but it is a slow, slow process.(A)

Others pointed out that in such a diverse community, women of different ethnicities, age and caring responsibilities face a range of barriers which need to be understood more clearly.

Tax Credit and the benefits system

Focus group participants criticised the government for exerting pressure on women to rejoin the labour market even when it is not financially viable. Focus group participants felt that the Tax Credit system made returning to work complicated:

Even though they're encouraging single people to go into work, when they work out your tax credit they turn around and say it's not worth you going to work.(B)

I want to go to work. It's not worth it going in for 5 hours a week and having that deducted from your money.(B)

The vast majority of those claiming Income Support as lone parents are women. Respondents felt some of the Tax Credit regulations should be relaxed.

Many participants felt dependent on benefits, and several were economically inactive because of their childcare responsibilities. Some were aware that community-based organisations now encouraged women to start working 15 hours a week to avoid benefits being affected.

Childcare

Childcare responsibilities were identified as one of the principal factors preventing women from re-entering the labour market.

Skills, experience and limited part-time opportunities are key. If you have childcare responsibilities you have to be able to respond. Heavy reliance on public transport is also a constraint on how far you can travel.(A)

Interviewees stated that although the area had seen some improvement in childcare for pre-school children, there were a number of continuing problems:

- The cost of childcare is prohibitively expensive for those in low paid occupations, which were often part-time.
- Childcare provision is poor for school age children. There is a lack of after school clubs that would enable women to commit to longer working hours.
- School holiday periods posed a major problem for women in paid employment.
- College crèche provision was considered an important service for those seeking to gain qualifications. However, there were insufficient places to meet local demand.

There was also a heavy reliance on voluntary sector provision and informal arrangements. Some existing after school clubs only run one day a week. Clubs seem to be run informally by volunteers, and are subject to closure if the volunteer can no longer commit to running the club. There are few official childminders in the area, and while many women used friends and family, even this was now felt to be complicated by the fact that childcare should be provided by registered providers.

SureStart (and by implication the work of the locality's planned Children's Centres) was regarded as extremely important, as it had opened up more choices for women with children, particularly lone parents, who wished to return to the labour market. Some focus group participants were involved as service users or volunteers in childcare projects.

The attitude of employers also affected employment opportunities and benefits. Apart from community based organisations such as HACH, employers were not regarded as particularly helpful, and were thought to offer little flexibility and understanding, for example when children were ill. The participants felt childcare was their responsibility, and that the situation was entirely different for their male partners.

It's easier for a man, because if your partner's going to work, if you're married and got kids, your partner's going to work. He isn't going to turn around and say to his boss, 'I'm taking the day off because my son's ill.' It's up to the mother to do it.(B)

Work related skills and experience

Women participating in the focus groups also felt constrained by their lack of recent work experience and qualifications:

When they get an interview they often don't get (the job), especially when they don't have experience.(A)

Opportunities for training in local venues had increased, and focus group participants felt that bringing training into the community was important. Local Asian women in particular prefer to be in HACH than at college.

Outreach education services through Sure Start and Learn Direct were considered particularly important for women in the locality.

Some women who had worked in low skilled jobs were now looking to find better paid work. Attending college and training was seen as a way to improve their chances of better employment.

I went to Handsworth to my course, because there were people my own age there. I got on well with them.(B)

Some felt they lacked experience which workplace based training would overcome.

If you have no experience in what they're doing, you're not going to get a job. Some people have kids and stay at home with their children until the children are old enough to go to school. But by then you've got no experience in anything. They need to offer more training.(B)

They need to give the chance to people who haven't got qualifications.(B)

Previous work experience may not be useful, as it can be dated and in most cases is not entirely relevant.

I've been out of work for 5 years and I can't find anything. I'm looking for anything, anything at all, but you need qualifications now. They're looking for level 2 qualifications.(B)

Those with qualifications and experience have found a lack of jobs that offer flexible hours. Some ethnic minority women were constrained by lack of spoken English, and said they would prefer to be employed in home-based work. Longer term training provision which linked ESOL, qualifications and work experience was required, rather than one-off services, were recommended.

Public service providers

Stakeholders identified problems for residents in the locality in accessing services and jobs:

Statutory organisations have created barriers themselves to specific groups, and these groups have not engaged with them.(A)

In some cases this affected the types of jobs local residents considered applying for. The employment and recruitment practices of public service agencies and providers were not considered to reflect the local community. The health and care sectors were regarded as important potential employers, but required formal qualifications which posed a challenge for many women in the locality.

The loss of apprenticeship schemes was also mentioned as a retrograde step. Community based initiatives were an important method for local residents to link up training, skills and employment, but this needed to happen on a much larger scale. The irony of statutory agencies unable to fill vacancies in an area of high unemployment was highlighted by several stakeholders.

Some services for ethnic minority groups in the locality were provided by women working in a voluntary capacity. Soho Elders Association and Age Concern, for example, trained volunteers in catering and care to provide services to older members of the community. It was felt that these skills could be translated into paid employment, but that many women lacked the support and resources to move into the labour market.

Women have a harder time finding a job. A lot of lone parents don't understand the systems set up to help them, and they live hand to mouth.(A)

It was felt that services had to improve, to enable women in the area to understand their entitlements and how to access proper training and employment. Regeneration project managers highlighted the education attainment gap between the wards and the rest of Birmingham.

Transport and travel time

Women in the locality walk or use the local bus service as their primary form of transport. The bulk of new job opportunities are in close proximity to the area.

There was a willingness to travel further afield to find work, and some focus group participants had worked in other parts of the city before

parenthood. However travelling time posed women with the dilemma of trying to balance employment and practical needs.

Most women would prefer to work in the area. The transport system is not always reliable, and you can't be late for work because that affects your salary.(B)

Aspirations and expectations

The aspirations of focus group participants varied according to previous labour market experiences. Many women were highly motivated, but lacked the support they needed to progress.

In this area you find issues such as low self-esteem because you can't find a job. You know, the feeling of being worthless, of not being good enough and this contributes to what is happening in the community.(B)

Before I had my children I worked in a factory because at that time my English was not so good. I came from India. I felt that because of my English I couldn't get work in a good place, so I worked in a factory. After having children I realised I had to improve myself for my children.(B)

Participants also highlighted the broader benefits of employment. Although employment may not provide a very noticeable increase in household income, it was felt that health and well-being, may improve.

Mental health problems were identified as an issue for many women from ethnic minority communities in the area, especially those with heavy domestic responsibilities. Staying at home can cause depression and isolation:

That's why a lot of people get really ill from depression. Sitting at home with their kids and they've got nobody to talk to. It's really, really hard.(B)

Many aspire to working in schools, but childcare qualifications are needed to work in such an environment. Women also wanted improved opportunities for the younger generation and better chances for their children. They did not want to feel they were discriminated against by a Handsworth address and the stereotyping attached to the area.

Young women are often motivated to move beyond the poverty faced by their parents and grandparents:

I don't want to live like that, and in order not to I have to develop myself and get qualifications.(B)

Stakeholders and focus group participants identified a series of barriers to achieving these aspirations including:

- Lack of suitable employment opportunities
- Spoken English
- Care responsibilities
- Lack of family support
- Lack of qualifications and continuous employment
- Poor health, including mental health problems
- Lack of relevant support from statutory agencies
- Lack of information on local services and available courses and employment opportunities.

Area based public and private regeneration: gender perspectives

The equalities dimension of regeneration strategies was examined through stakeholder interviews and documentary analysis⁹. The full version of this documentary evaluation has been made available to Birmingham City Council. This found that while equalities and gender are mentioned in relation to more recent schemes, there are few policy developments, delivery plans, economic and employment targets and evaluation techniques which specifically address women's economic disadvantage in the labour market.

Policy aims and objectives were geared to addressing neighbourhood problems, but they were generally weak on strategies which are required to address the unemployment, economic inactivity, low pay and financial hardship expressed by women (including lone parents, women who are in part-time and/or casual employment and ethnic minority women who may be doubly disadvantaged). Previous initiatives relevant to the SRB6 area include the Handsworth Area Regeneration Trust formed from five housing associations, which promoted regeneration through six themes including neighbourhood participation in service management and employability. The Handsworth Renewal Area, which commenced in 1991, was primarily concerned with housing regeneration and did not highlight labour market issues.

⁹ The documents evaluated in Birmingham are listed below the references.

The report of the Regeneration Public Policy Review Panel (2000) was primarily a response to an uncoordinated regeneration legacy in the city, and did not highlight a gender dimension to policy development. However the issues raised by the Panel included recommendations to reduce unemployment and create employment opportunities.

A number of recommendations were made which have also emerged from our research, including:

- Easing the transitional costs of taking a job, by guaranteeing run-ons of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.
- Engaging long-term jobless people living in deprived areas through outreach learning and employment advice.
- Gaining better information of employment levels in deprived neighbourhoods to improve targeting of existing programmes.
- Providing support to enhance confidence.

There was, however, no specific recognition that these policies might affect men and women differently.

The Birmingham Partnership (2004) report provides an extensive delivery plan for the SRB6 area. The plan's sensitivity towards gender issues is demonstrated through commitment to childcare provision and to a young women's participation officer post. The lack of specific targeting may reflect a lack of gender disaggregated data.

Intended SRB6 beneficiaries include young people and unemployed people living in the area, and basic skills training is targeted at ethnic minorities, but there was no specific focus on young, unemployed or ethnic minority women.

Many of the project delivery outputs and outcomes were economic development criteria. For example, the SRB6 programme initiated projects designed to provide: advice, training and employment; grants and loans for enterprise development; and support for neighbourhood facilities and projects. However, the wider themes relating to basic skills and labour market opportunities are not addressed in relation to specific challenges facing women living in the wards.

Apart from the commitment to encourage lone parents into work and to provide childcare

facilities, there is no identifiable gender focus in the proposed interventions to reduce economic inactivity. Targets are not disaggregated by gender and ethnicity.

Evaluation approaches take little account of the key differences in women's and men's economic position or of their experiences of living in the locality.

Local views of regeneration

Our focus group participants generally felt that regeneration had not greatly changed the area. Both groups associated regeneration with physical improvements such as roads, speed humps, lighting and parks. No specific funding was mentioned, and participants were unable to identify employment projects which had specifically assisted women.

There aren't many opportunities within this area for women, so there is a lot more work to be done on regeneration.(B)

Stakeholders repeated this view:

The problem for Ladywood ward was that it should have benefited from city centre developments, but local residents simply didn't.(A)

The Bullring development deliberately attempted to provide local jobs for local people, but there is limited evidence to show that residents of the locality (the two wards) will benefit in the longer term.(A)

Stakeholders reported limited targeting of women though the regeneration funds in the area.

We target ethnic minority groups, but have not done any monitoring by gender, because we are not required to.(A)

The perception among local organisations was that skills levels had recently increased through a number of training programmes. Many of the employment and skills projects had, in practice, proved more attractive to young men.

Locally relevant improvements were considered crucial to the future success of regeneration schemes. Stakeholders identified the important work carried out by local organisations seeking to strengthen community cohesion. It was felt that measures used to assess the benefits of area based initiatives often overlooked this work in making funding decisions.

Community projects had been assisted by SRB funding, but more work was required to support local residents in accessing services. Long term sustainability for regeneration projects was a constraint.

Many local people are disenfranchised and living below the poverty line. They need help and information.(A)

These views were confirmed by local organisations, who explained that investment had concentrated on upgrading the physical infrastructure of the area. Reduction in the unemployment gap and the associated skills gap were also key priorities, as were community safety and housing improvements.

It's getting better, as the council has been more proactive. There isn't the general assumption that if we build something close to an area, local residents will access employment there. We are aiming to work with employers before developing schemes so we get local people the skills they need to access these jobs.(A)

The employment hub project is about local people identifying what skills employers need and creating customised training.(A)

The culture of people working for themselves was an important dimension in the locality, but was largely overlooked in area based schemes. A project worker explained that the intentions of SRB are right, but there have been problems in reaching out to the community:

You can bring environmental change, introduce CCTV, make the place safer and cleaner. Up-skilling people is still a problem, and getting them into jobs is still a problem.(A)

An example of this was that ICT suites had been provided, but with insufficient funding for tutors.

They forget the journey to developing skills. Some people will take longer, and then getting into jobs depends on what is available.(A)

Local services and support

The qualitative research discussed the types of services available to economically disadvantaged women living in the wards. Focus group participants were aware of the advisory services through the Job Centre, the local authority and Connexions, but did not always find these services relevant or appropriate to their needs. The Job Centre Plus services were also reported to be inadequately equipped to assist women who were not fluent in English. This was endorsed by one regeneration manager's concern for ethnic minority women:

They are often excluded, even within the local community. They are unaware of what is required and what is needed to prevent further isolation.(A)

Supporting economically inactive women was regarded as a major challenge for local agencies. Many face long term illness and difficulties of returning to employment.

I think the voluntary sector in that sense plays a bigger part in accessing women, because Job Centres don't have those links with the community based organisations.(A)

Interviewees from local agencies felt that engaging women who are not economically active in training and education initiatives, was often more effective on a one-to-one basis. The continuity of an advisor providing mentoring support, and regular intervention, were important for a scheme's success. Payments supporting local residents in the transition to employment were important factors.

I think you need to understand the barriers these individuals are facing, and provide a service which is reflective of the community. Offering some incentives to enable these people to work over a relatively long timescale.(A)

The proposal for a skills centre in Ladywood was supported.

Addressing disadvantages faced by ethnic minority women

Several interviewees stated that service providers needed to address local needs to prevent a worsening institutional gap between statutory organisations and the local community. For example, the lack of English speaking among some ethnic minority women was a barrier to training and employment. Further ESOL provision targeted at groups of women living in situations of

high economic deprivation was needed in the locality. More translation and language services for new people coming into the area were also identified as important. Better advertising and promotion of these services was needed. ESOL provision was a starting point, but would not necessarily assist women into work without further, more specific training.

Problems were also identified for particular groups, for example, Indian young women who often achieved very high grades at school but were still not accessing employment. This was reinforced by stakeholders who explained that these groups required targeted forms of assistance.

Impact of initiatives on women's employment

Measuring the employment impact of area-based regeneration in a locality is notoriously difficult. This study has examined qualitative evidence to consider whether women living in the wards have benefited from local labour market initiatives.

Quality of employment and low pay

Public and private investment in the area had attracted employers, but many of these jobs were regarded as poorly paid.

Invariably a lot of people from this area are on low pay - I would say between £9-13,000 per year, and what can you do on that?(A)

The view was that work available to local people was in low paid jobs in supermarkets, for the post office and in private sector companies. Moving out of the poverty trap had traditionally been achieved by one of three routes:

Working your way up through a low paying industry, training to become professionally qualified, or self employment.(A)

These approaches were not possible for many local residents.

Support for women with children

The SureStart model was regarded as a positive one as it was targeted, simple to access and supported women directly. SureStart has been successful in attracting a small group of ethnic minority women to undertake childcare and early years courses, supported by assistance with childcare expenses. Some of these services are outreach centres in community venues which help

parents into training. This is expected to be enhanced by the work of the new Children's Centres and closer links with schools.

The HACH Centre includes a SureStart outreach service, but the centre itself is now expected to run as a commercial venture.

The government is expecting that all childcare should pay for itself, so the only way that will happen is to charge, up to £130 a week.(A)

Focus group participants identified a number of new service areas:

Childcare, after school clubs and breakfast clubs are needed because schools and nurseries start around 9 o'clock. And obviously most workplaces expect you to be in by 9.(B)

I think holiday time is really important, and schemes need to be open all the holiday. Schemes open for the first couple of weeks - then nothing.(B)

These gaps in childcare provision are important considerations for policy makers and labour market projects.

Local training initiatives

Training provision identified by local women includes Handsworth College's work with local schools in offering pre-NVQ courses and the UK Asian Women's Centre's courses. Nevertheless focus group participants felt that positive moves for more community based learning were sometimes constrained by differing levels of quality, and a lack of consistency in the courses on offer. Since many of these projects do not result in participants gaining formal qualifications, current funding arrangements are short term and limited.

Many women living in the area like dropping in to local centres. The EDAS centre, whose client base is mainly Bangladeshi, works closely with the community to attract women into educational schemes:

It is very difficult work and that's why a lot of colleges struggle to reach women from ethnic minorities and there is a very low intake.(B)

Some women participate in educational classes at EDAS several days a week:

They are really helpful here and offer advice.(B)

It's very close and near the school so you can drop your kids off and then come here.(B)

EDAS has interpreters on site and can help bridge the language gap with progression to training in, for example, IT skills.

New approaches to employment

Direct employment of local residents in local services and projects was often felt to be more effective than relying on employers to take on trainees from a training project. Jobs became more sustainable in the long term if training and support was provided in-house. Specialised and targeted provision in the community, linked to employment opportunities, was regarded as an essential pre-requisite to engaging women in the locality.

Health and social care employment were felt to be important for the locality, providing further opportunity to retrain and upskill the workforce and increase qualification levels. For local residents to be skilled and job ready for future employment opportunities, a strategic approach was needed which took on board their experience of community based education. Financial support for local residents who wished to raise their educational attainment in order to access jobs in the longer term was identified as a key requirement.

Many of the focus group participants were volunteers, and volunteering was seen as having a value in its own right. Some had used voluntary work at the HACH project as a stepping stone and confidence building opportunity. Volunteers found HACH staff to be understanding, in contrast to many employers and training/learning providers who did not address women's needs.

I'm doing my NVQ2 and when I get that course finished I would like to work in a school nursery. I'll be having the same holidays as the children do.(B)

Higher quality employment supported by training and better pay was regarded as essential to improving the economic status of local residents. Regeneration workers were concerned to ensure that employment in public sector agencies reflected the local community.

Community provision

Stakeholders identified the importance of community provision, arguing that work with women at this level required peers and mentors to work closely with diverse groups.

Regeneration is about communities and it's about putting them first. If you can't do that, you are never going to succeed.(A)

This message was reinforced by staff at EDAS, who felt that employment targets would not be met unless community organisations provided long term mentoring support. This required funding and service delivery which was differently organised.

Without significant help and resources and without local people playing a bigger role in how money is spent, it isn't going to get any better. Community groups and faith groups need to play a bigger role in the process.(A)

HACH is funded through a variety of sources.

We don't get an awful lot of funding, to be honest. We get some from Early Years, the Council, Children in Need. That's it. There's a lot of voluntary work.(B)

The UK Asian Women's Centre approach was considered effective:

We outreach to get people training, upskilled and into jobs. We knock on doors, approach faith groups, publicise by word of mouth. Then we signpost them for different training, and support them, including taking women to interviews.(A)

EDAS and HACH have also helped those women involved in the centres:

I've got a lot more confidence since I came here, I wouldn't have spoken out like this before.(B)

Smaller scale, local facilities were required for the management of regeneration schemes where women are supported into work by matching skills with vacancies, rather than simple job creation.

We need a localised strategy that focuses on local need.(A)

Conclusions and policy recommendations

This section provides key policy messages and practical suggestions for Birmingham City Council and partner local and regional agencies responsible for public service delivery and regeneration investment in the locality. Some recommendations have a wider remit, as they are the concerns of central government departments, including those related to the tax and benefit systems.

Women's economic disadvantage

The relative economic position of women living in the wards is considerably worse than in the city as a whole. Strategies encouraging more women to gain paid employment need to recognise and understand the scale of women's non-participation and distance from labour market opportunities in the city. Appropriate action is required to address low incomes among many groups of women. These problems are also a key challenge for the district's economy. Local employers will need to be able to access the experience and skills of women living in the area, and to retain staff and fill job opportunities in the coming decades. Women in the neighbourhood need specific support to improve their education and skills levels to enable them to access jobs and improve their employment potential.

Understanding local labour market barriers

Employment strategies and project development need to recognise the barriers women face in the locality. These include addressing restricted training and employment opportunities, variable support services, limited childcare provision and high childcare costs, and recruitment and employment practices amongst employers.

- *Create employment projects which bring together training provision, childcare support, work experience supported by effective local services.*

Regeneration initiatives

The question of whether women have benefited from regeneration investment cannot be answered, since baseline data, and monitoring and evaluation systems are not particularly gender sensitive. Our qualitative research shows that women are the beneficiaries of some community regeneration initiatives.

- *Strengthen working relationships between senior policy makers, community based*

organisations and regeneration agencies in the locality.

- *Establish explicit employment targets for public and private sector schemes designed to enhance job opportunities for local residents.*
- *Ensure gender equality is taken into account in commissioning and contracting regeneration programmes by Advantage West Midlands and Birmingham City Council.*
- *Introduce gender impact assessment for all future regeneration and area based initiatives.*

Delivery of area based projects

Labour market projects undertaken in the area did not target women as an identifiable and diverse group. The practical delivery of regeneration and labour market initiatives, including those administered through Birmingham City Council and Advantage West Midlands, needs to ensure that the differentiation between men and women's position is reflected in local projects.

- *Integrate gender equality measures in regeneration policy making and delivery programmes.*
- *Use statistical evidence and qualitative information from those who work and live in the area to improve understanding of the neighbourhood.*
- *Identify baseline data and project delivery targets, including outputs and outcomes, in terms of the specific impact on women and men.*
- *Include measures which are directly aimed at addressing women's poverty in the locality in monitoring and evaluation of regeneration schemes.*

Taking advantage of employment potential

In the context of inward investment and employment growth occurring in the district and region, many women living in the wards aspire to be trained and job ready for new investments. The more limited employment opportunities, particularly in Soho, need to be taken into account in planning for local employment.

- *Develop explicit support for young women and women who wish to return to paid employment in regeneration objectives.*
- *Establish self-employment schemes, including mentoring, to directly assist women who wish to develop businesses.*

- *Maintain employment sites in areas of physical regeneration and housing redevelopment to prevent the further loss of manufacturing and service employment in the locality.*

Supporting women with care responsibilities

Services are required at the neighbourhood level which address the specific needs of women who provide care to dependants. Childcare provision is improving, but remains particularly difficult for those mothers whose children are at school.

- *Invest in pre-school, after-school and holiday care services.*
- *Build on good practice found in employment and family projects operating in the locality.*
- *Ensure that the success of SureStart and community based family services are maintained and developed in targeting disadvantaged women living in the wards.*

Employer responsibilities

Interviewees stated that greater flexibility in working practices amongst local employers would benefit women living in the area. More work is needed to convince employers that job sharing and other flexible modes of employment are mutually beneficial.

- *Engage employers in labour market projects which encourage clearer routes to work for women in the locality.*
- *Explore the role of public sector service providers (local government, health, education and related agencies) as local employers, and review their employment strategies.*
- *Identify public, private and voluntary sector employers who are facing skills shortages and problems in recruiting and retaining qualified and skilled staff in the locality and wider district.*
- *Provide resources and long term project development to support women to engage in non-traditional and higher paying sectors.*
- *Encourage local employers to reconsider new ways of advertising and recruiting local jobs.*

Local schools were felt to be an employment option for women with caring responsibility as they were local, had shorter working days, and were local. This model could be identified among other employers to:

- *Encourage flexible working patterns to accommodate women in the workplace. This would include greater responsiveness by employers to vary patterns of work, introduce annualised hours and explore the potential for term time only working.*

Qualifications, skills and advice

The research has shown low levels of formal qualifications among women in the locality. Strategic approaches should include:

- *Mainstreaming successful skills and employment initiatives into the work of the Regeneration Zone and statutory services operating in the area.*
- *Closer working between skills partnerships including funding agencies (LSC, Job Centre Plus, Further Education) and voluntary sector training providers with schools and community based organisations.*

Initiatives to assist local women should include:

- *Clearer guidance for women returners on training options, work experience opportunities, preparation for job applications, confidence building in preparing for job interviews and information on childcare support.*
- *Targeted education, skills initiatives, mentoring and support for young women, who may be constrained by their social and household situations.*

Limited post-19 careers advice is a constraint for women in the locality.

- *Target careers advice at the needs of women of different ages and ethnicities with differing care responsibilities.*
- *Introduce work experience schemes, including placements, which are clearly planned and supported.*
- *Support women returners, building on their previous employment and experience, through access courses and job related schemes.*

Promote and support schemes which:

- *Encourage women in the locality to consider access courses and degree level qualifications through higher education initiatives.*

- *Introduce bursaries and other forms of financial support to access further and higher education, targeting women living in the locality.*

Working at the neighbourhood level

Community based projects have proven success in working with women from a range of backgrounds and ages. Many women are volunteers working to improve local services, such as childcare, activities for the elderly and young people. The skills and experience of voluntary work should be more clearly acknowledged in employment projects.

- *Develop accreditation for voluntary work and community based involvement which can be utilised in job applications and CVs.*

In-work benefits and incentives

Further work on state benefits and greater understanding of the key financial barriers to work were central concerns among local stakeholders. Simplification and greater flexibility in the tax and benefits system were considered crucial. In-work costs include childcare and transport. A particular issue for lone parents and families on low incomes is the increase in childcare costs when moving into work.

- *Introduce better financial incentives for women returning to work, and in-work incentives through the tax credit system.*
- *Develop greater flexibility in the benefits system for those women moving into work and for those taking a break from employment.*
- *Encourage greater take up of Working Tax and Child Credits through support services.*
- *Improve information and advice for women living in the locality.*

The local authority and Job Centre Plus are key agencies in awareness raising and delivering locally based advice and support.

- *Introduce further community based services, including the Job Centre, in order to assist those households facing a benefits trap.*
- *Analyse Job Centre monitoring data by gender and ethnicity and use at local and regional level to inform strategies and local project work aimed at assisting claimants.*

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Appendix 1 Gender and Employment in Local Labour Markets

The *Gender and Employment in Local Labour Markets* project was funded, between September 2003 and August 2006, by a core European Social Fund grant to Professor Sue Yeandle and her research team at the *Centre for Social Inclusion*, Sheffield Hallam University. The award was made from within ESF Policy Field 5 Measure 2, 'Gender and Discrimination in Employment'. The grant was supplemented with additional funds and resources provided by a range of partner agencies, notably the Equal Opportunities Commission, the TUC, and 12 English local authorities.

The GELLM project output comprises:

- new statistical analysis of district-level labour market data, led by Dr Lisa Buckner, producing separate **Gender Profiles** of the local labour markets of each of the participating local authorities (Buckner, Tang and Yeandle 2004, 2005, 2006) - available from the local authorities concerned and at www.shu.ac.uk/research/csi
- 6 **Local Research Studies**, each involving between three and six of the project's local authority partners. Locality and Synthesis reports of these studies, published spring-summer 2006 are available at www.shu.ac.uk/research/csi. Details of other publications and presentations relating to the GELLM programme are also posted on this website.
 1. *Working below potential: women and part-time work*, led by Dr Linda Grant and part-funded by the EOC (first published by the EOC in 2005)
 2. *Connecting women with the labour market*, led by Dr Linda Grant
 3. *Ethnic minority women and access to the labour market*, led by Bernadette Stiell
 4. *Women's career development in the local authority sector in England* led by Dr Cinnamon Bennett
 5. *Addressing women's poverty: local labour market initiatives* led by Karen Escott
 6. *Local challenges in meeting demand for domiciliary care* led from autumn 2005 by Professor Sue Yeandle and prior to this by Anu Suokas

The GELLM Team

Led by Professor Sue Yeandle, the members of the GELLM research team at the *Centre for Social Inclusion* are: Dr Cinnamon Bennett, Dr Lisa Buckner, Ian Chesters (administrator), Karen Escott, Dr Linda Grant, Christopher Price, Lucy Shipton, Bernadette Stiell, Anu Suokas (until autumn 2005), and Dr Ning Tang. The team is grateful to Dr Pamela Fisher for her contribution to the project in 2004, and for the continuing advice and support of Dr Chris Gardiner.

The GELLM Partnership

The national partners supporting the GELLM project are the Equal Opportunities Commission and the TUC. The project's 12 local authority partners are: Birmingham City Council, the London Borough of Camden, East Staffordshire Borough Council, Leicester City Council, Newcastle City Council, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Somerset County Council, the London Borough of Southwark, Thurrock Council, Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council, Wakefield Metropolitan District Council and West Sussex County Council. The North East Coalition of Employers has also provided financial resources via Newcastle City Council. The team is grateful for the support of these agencies, without which the project could not have been developed. The GELLM project engaged Professor Damian Grimshaw, Professor Ed Fieldhouse (both of Manchester University) and Professor Irene Hardill (Nottingham Trent University), as external academic advisers to the project team, and thanks them for their valuable advice and support.

Appendix 2 Research methods

The research included a mix of qualitative and quantitative research techniques:

1. Statistical analysis to assess the nature and extent of women's poverty and economic disadvantage in the selected geographical areas using Census 2001 and other relevant sources.

2. Documentary analysis including:

- A review of relevant academic and other policy literature
- Assessment of existing evaluations for the identified local regeneration initiatives in relation to women's economic circumstances
- An equalities and gender proofing template was used to facilitate the desk based exercise. The template identified equalities and gender sensitive approaches

3. Semi-structured interviews lasting an hour or more were held with twelve representatives from local initiatives, SRB6, and Birmingham City Council. The interview schedule included a number of questions organised under the themes of:

- *Social and economic conditions in the locality*
- *Women's experiences of living on a low income*
- *Locality based regeneration and employment projects*
- *Addressing women's disadvantage in the locality*
- *Local services*
- *The local labour market*
- *Unemployment and economic inactivity*

4. Views of local women through focus groups attended by 23 women living in the area. The groups ranged in age from 21-60 and included women of Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi and Afro Caribbean origin as well as White British. The majority had been in paid employment at some point in their lives but only a minority were currently in paid employment. Most women participants were seeking work or undertaking training. About half the group had some formal qualifications. The discussions held in local community venues included questions on the following themes:

- Views about the neighbourhood – services, job opportunities, childcare, service improvements and regeneration projects
- Experiences of work and unemployment – types of job available, levels of income, opportunities and barriers, problems
- Aspirations for themselves and families
- Ideas and solutions

Appendix 3 Additional data for Ladywood and Soho in Birmingham

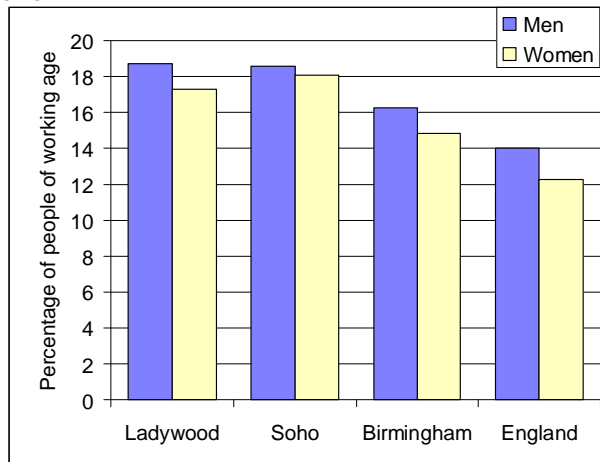
General Information

Figure A1 Population Profile

	Ladywood	Soho	Birmingham	England
All males (numbers)	12,060	12,611	473,267	23,922,144
0-15	18	28	25	19
16-24	18	17	14	13
25-49	40	36	35	36
50-64	14	10	15	18
65-74	6	6	7	8
75+	4	3	5	6
All females (numbers)	11,724	13,027	503,827	25,216,687
0-15	18	28	22	18
16-24	22	15	13	12
25-49	36	36	34	35
50-64	11	11	14	17
65-74	6	6	8	9
75+	7	4	9	9

Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003

Figure A2 Limiting long-term illness in working age population



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003

Unemployment and economic inactivity

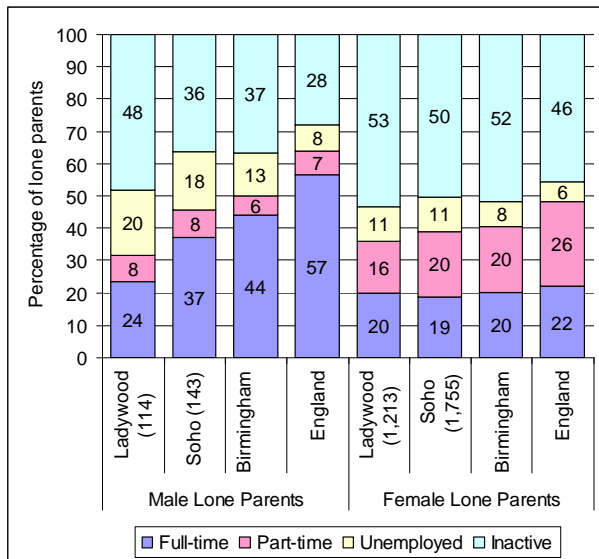
Figure A3 Unemployment rates for men and women from different ethnic minority groups in the wards

	Ladywood		Soho		Birmingham		England	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Unemployment rate as a proportion of people aged 16-74								
All	13	6	13	6	8	4	4	2
White British	12	5	12	6	7	3	4	2
White Irish	9	3	14	4	7	2	4	2
Indian	9	6	11	6	7	4	5	4
Pakistani	9	7	12	5	13	5	9	4
Bangladeshi	17	8	16	3	13	4	10	4
Black Caribbean	22	9	15	7	14	6	10	5
Black African	15	7	17	11	13	6	10	7
Unemployment rate as a proportion of economically active people aged 16-74								
All	20	11	21	14	12	7	6	4
White British	18	8	19	12	9	5	5	4
White Irish	20	8	28	10	13	6	7	4
Indian	13	10	17	12	11	8	6	6
Pakistani	14	31	18	27	20	22	14	15
Bangladeshi	**	**	26	16	22	22	16	17
Black Caribbean	33	14	26	12	21	10	15	8
Black African	23	11	26	20	21	12	14	12

Source: 2001 Census Standard Statistics, Crown Copyright 2003

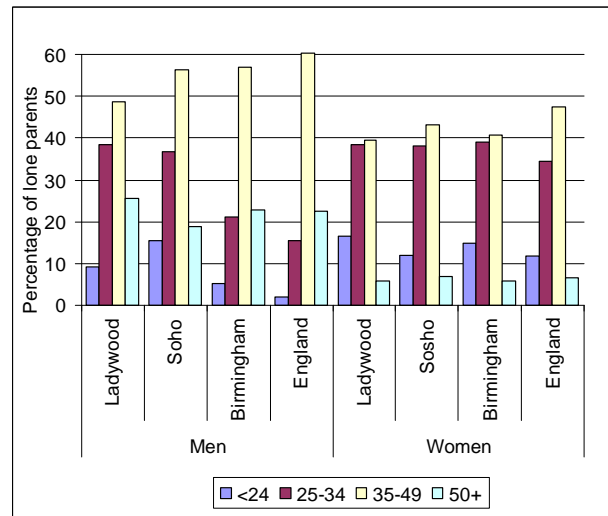
Note: ** data unreliable due to very small population sizes

Figure A4 Lone parents by economic activity



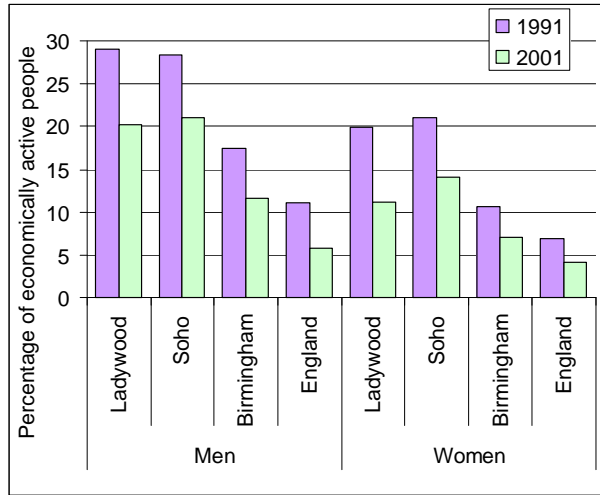
Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003

Figure A5 Lone parents by age



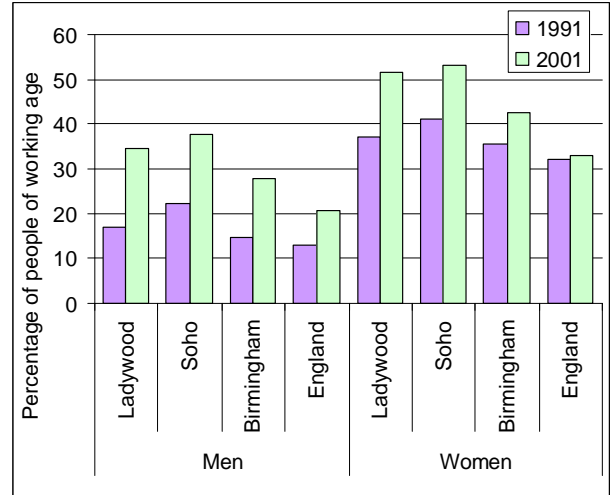
Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003

Figure A6 Unemployment rates as a proportion of economically active people, 1991 and 2001



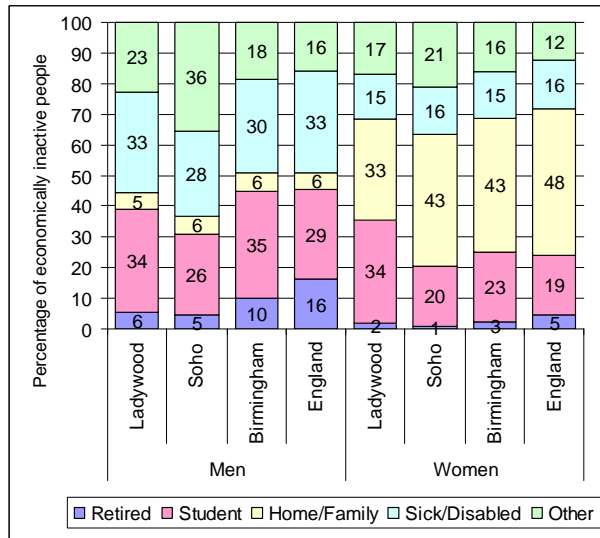
Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003. 1991 Census LBS, Crown Copyright 1993.

Figure A7 Economic inactivity rates 1991 and 2001



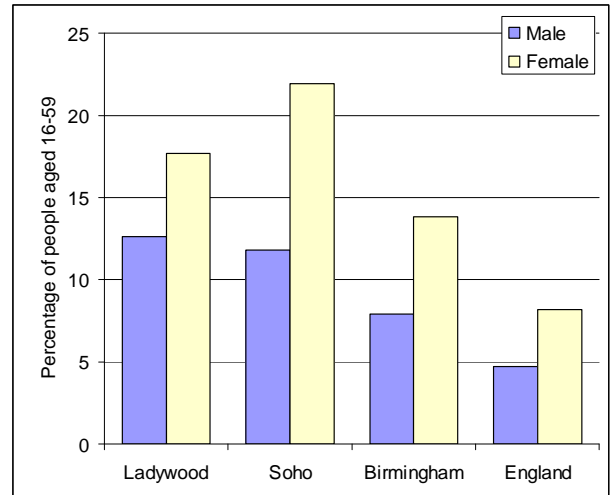
Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003. 1991 Census LBS, Crown Copyright 1993.

Figure A8 Economic inactivity, by reason



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003

Figure A9 Income Support claimants



Source: DWP August 2003 and 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003

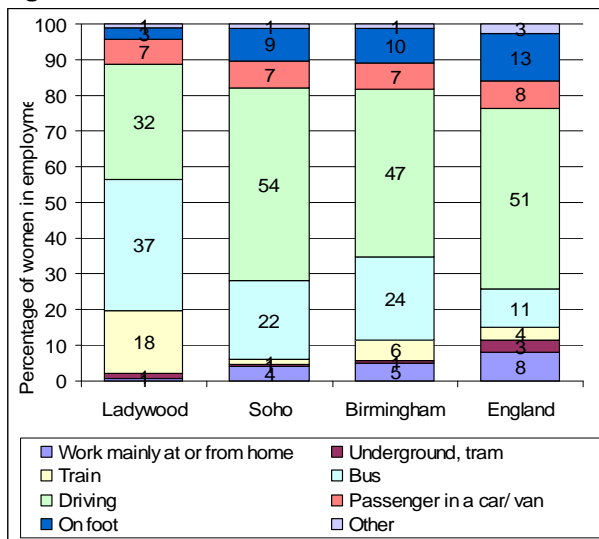
Figure A10 Former occupations and industries of unemployed and economically inactive women

	Ladywood	Soho	Birmingham	England
Occupation				
Managers, senior officials	3	3	5	7
Professionals	5	4	5	6
Associate professionals & technical occupations	8	6	7	9
Process, plant and machine operatives	8	15	8	5
Elementary occupations	27	27	24	21
Industry				
Manufacturing	12	19	13	11
Health and social work	12	17	16	16
Finance and real estate	13	10	11	15
Wholesale, retail	21	20	22	22
Hotels and restaurants	19	11	12	10

Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003

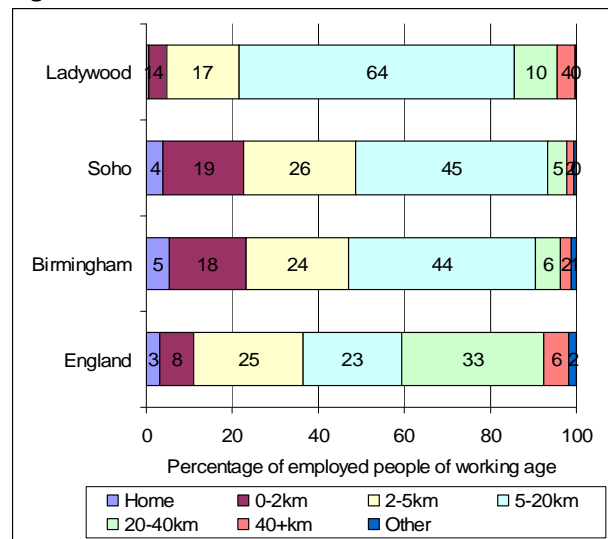
Work travel to work data - travel to work data for women who work in the area but may live elsewhere

Figure A11 Method of travel to work



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003

Figure A12 Distance travelled to work



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003

