

# Promoting Gender Equality in Local Labour Markets

## 13<sup>th</sup> July 2006: Conference report

The 'Promoting Gender Equality in Local Labour Markets' conference, organised as part of the *Gender and Employment in Local Labour Markets (GELLM) Research Programme*, attracted over 300 delegates from across the UK. During an inspiring and successful day, participants had an opportunity to hear the perspectives of national policy makers and equality stakeholders and to discuss the issues they raised in workshops.

### Keynote speakers

The day, hosted by the TUC at Congress House in London, started with a plenary session, chaired by Rita Donaghy CBE, Chair of ACAS. Rita welcomed delegates to the event which she said was very timely, coinciding with new legislative commitments to equality. The first address was given by Frances O'Grady, Deputy General Secretary of the TUC, followed by Baroness Kay Andrews OBE, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government. Both women spoke of the commitment to promoting gender equality at national level, and its relevance to creating sustainable local economies and productive workplaces. Professor Sue Yeandle, Director of the *Gender and Employment in Local Labour Markets* Research Programme, then outlined the key findings of the research and its most important policy messages.



Frances O'Grady



Sue Yeandle



Baroness Andrews

As she explained, the **GELLM research programme** explored: what women in work are doing and how they are getting on; which women are finding it hard to progress; & how ethnicity, age and family figure in the equation. To achieve this, Sheffield Hallam University had worked in partnership with 12 local authorities, covering all 9 English regions. Gender profiles of each local labour market had been produced, drawing extensively on new analysis of Census data.

### Key GELLM Research Findings

**The labour market remains highly gendered:** in the occupations and sectors in which women and men work, in how much paid work they undertake, and in the rewards they receive.

**There are big differences in local labour markets** in terms of: the shape of local industry; employment trends in different sectors; and the experiences of different groups of women, particularly between women of different ethnicity and those with and without caring responsibilities.

**Local level analysis is crucial, as large scale national and regional analysis 'smooths out' local differences, hiding key issues.**

### Working Below Potential

- **2.8 million women** nationwide **work below their potential**, in jobs which do not use their proven skills, qualifications and experience
- This affects **54% of women in part time jobs**
- It is caused by **the way jobs and employment are structured**
- **It wastes valuable talent**, at an unacceptable cost to employers, the economy, women and their families
- **It can be changed** if organisations create better quality part-time jobs in all sectors and at all levels

### Many women outside employment want to work

- **1.4 million women** in England are outside employment but **want to work**.
- This is a **major problem in poorer communities:** in some wards women's unemployment rates were 4 times the national average - for some ethnic groups 8 times higher.
- **Women care deeply about this:**  
*It doesn't look good for my daughter - me sat at home. I've been sat at home for 5 years. I'd willingly do anything. (Female research participant)*

### Stark inequalities persist for ethnic minority women

- **Local analysis shows that ethnic minority women experience higher rates of unemployment and are clustered in low paid labour market sectors.**

For example, in **Leicester**, the **manufacturing sector** employs 34% of all Indian women and 12% of all White women. Yet 86% of Indian women, compared with 62% of White women, are in the **lowest paid jobs**, while only 4% of Indian women, but 18% of White women, are in **higher level positions**.

## Regeneration policies fail to help the poorest women

- **In localities where regeneration programmes had been operating:**  
2 in 3 Income Support claimants were women; sickness among working age women was double the national level; well over a third of children were living in households without work; and more than half women aged 35-49 had no qualifications at all.
- **Yet schemes did not target women.**
- **Local agencies say local job opportunities are very poor in these localities:**  
*There are some very poor jobs, such as packaging and lots of cleaning jobs with anti-social hours. People work in double shifts at both ends of the day, sometimes 60 hours a week, to make ends meet. (Local agency research participant)*

## Job quality/workforce development can be achieved

### The domiciliary care sector

- **Is under pressure from ageing populations and rising demand for better, more tailored services.**
- **Pay remains low and working conditions can still be very poor, but the best employers are:**  
Widening their recruitment pool; training and developing their staff; offering career progression routes; recognising the skills which care workers use; prioritising team working and supportive supervision; and working with their staff to improve services to clients.
- **Partnership working is re-shaping delivery.**

### Key GELLM Policy Messages

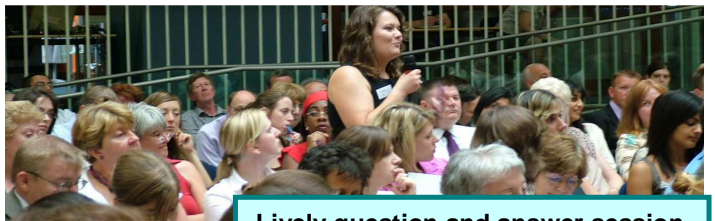
If women and men are to have equal access to the labour market we must:

- **Create better quality part-time jobs throughout the economy.**
- **Develop more comprehensive local support services for women who want to work.**
- **Address unemployment among ethnic minority women with local policies, tailored to local needs.**
- **Use the new Gender Duty to move work-life balance 'up a gear', especially in public sector employment.**
- **Integrate 'skills and employment' and 'regeneration and equalities' strategies at local and national level - and ensure they take gender seriously.**
- **Redouble efforts to create career opportunities in social care, drawing new recruits into the work.**



Panel members

Discussion resumed during the panel session in the afternoon. Panel members (above, left to right) were: Diana Holland, National Organiser for women, race and equalities at the TGWU; Baroness Margaret Prosser, Chair of the Women and Work Commission; David Darton, Director of Strategy, Research and Information at the Equal Opportunities Commission; Rita Donaghy (Chair); Professor Sue Yeandle; and Sukhvinder Kaur Stubbs, Chief Executive of the Barrow Cadbury Trust.



Lively question and answer session

## Workshop Presenters

During the day participants engaged actively in the discussions in 10 different workshops facilitated by:

- Prof. Mike Coombes**, Executive Director, Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies, University of Newcastle
- Paul Redfern**, Regeneration and Leisure, East Staffordshire Borough Council
- Cameron Russell**, Senior Research and Information Officer, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
- Kate Bellamy**, Senior Policy Officer Economic Inequalities, Fawcett Society
- Lucy Adams**, HR Director, SERCO Group Plc
- Dr Linda Grant**, Centre for Social Inclusion, Sheffield Hallam University
- Lowri Griffiths**, Gender Equality Duty Manager, EOC
- Lucy Anderson**, Senior Policy Officer, TUC
- Heather Wakefield**, Head of Local Government, UNISON
- Celia Sweeney**, Equality and Diversity Manager, Wakefield Metropolitan District Council
- Anna Coss**, Head of Commissioning and Performance Development, West Sussex County Council
- Sue Wait**, Recruitment Manager, Birmingham City Council
- Pauline Wiper**, Network Development Officer for Newcastle, Tyne and Wear Care Alliance
- Dr Maria Hudson**, Senior Research Fellow, PSI
- Prof Angela Dale**, Centre for Census and Survey Research, Manchester University
- Prof Damian Grimshaw**, European Work and Employment Research Centre, Manchester University
- Wendy Olsen**, Institute For Development Policy and Management, Manchester University
- Pam Walton**, Independent consultant
- Jean Gardiner**, Work and Employment Relations, University of Leeds
- Jo Barter**, Chief Executive, Communities Into Training And Employment (CITE), Camden
- Elaine Smith**, London Development Agency
- Darlene Corry**, The Women's Resource Centre

# Report back: The Conference Workshops

## Profiling local Labour Markets

Benefits of local labour market profiles, such as those produced within GELLM, include: better understanding about the structure of an area; informing policy-making and resource allocation; a valuable way of promoting the area's strengths and the activities of local agencies.

What data is usually missing?

Gender breakdowns at local level are limited, and often are only available from the 2001 Census. The gender-disaggregated data available for employment, unemployment and qualifications at sub-ward level is limited. Much can be missed when data is aggregated – e.g. patterns of lone parent and overall worklessness are very different.

*New sources of data:* ONS is developing more detailed travel-to-work data; the Home Office will give information on (registered) immigrant workers by postcode.

*Challenges:* to ensure research is used effectively by policy makers. Policy makers often want a picture 'in black & white' - research evidence is rarely so simple.

## Mainstreaming Equality: rising to the challenge of the Equality Act 2006

Women's lives are different from men's – public policy and service delivery needs to reflect that. Meeting known or unthought-of of needs means changing the content of services and their delivery. The public sector pay gap is a measure of 'lost potential'. New requirements on public bodies include:

- Drawing up and publishing a scheme with goals and action, in consultation with employees and stakeholders.
- Monitoring progress and publishing a progress report; reviewing every three years.
- Developing and publishing equal pay policy, including plans to tackle promotion, development and occupational segregation.
- Conducting and publishing gender impact assessments (GIAs) on new legislation and policy; publishing the GIA criteria.

## Achieving Women's Potential in the Workplace

There are few senior part-time jobs on the open labour market, and few opportunities for promotion for part-time workers. If this was reversed there would be more opportunities for women to work to their potential. This in turn would boost economic growth.

The main obstacles are the traditional design of jobs, and managerial attitudes: 2 types of part-time jobs help explain why PT work is confined to low level posts. '*Task-based*' part-time jobs - tasks can be completed in limited time & '*Demand-based*' part-time jobs - jobs which only need to be carried out during part of a day or week. Most managers still need to be convinced of the value of part-time work across all levels/occupations.

As the *Women and Work Commission* also recommends, employers need support in experimenting with opening up promotion and pathways, and with recruiting part time workers into all posts.

Participants asked: is the term 'part-time' still useful? Does it stigmatise workers?

## Enhancing the Career Experiences of Women in Public Sector Employment

Women's employment in local government is often long-tenure and involves a career - not 'just a job'. Flexibility and opportunities for development are more important to many women than very high earnings. More information and more horizontal career paths are needed. Gender stereotypes still prevail and these present obstacles to equal opportunities – even in committed organisations. Line managers play a key role in facilitating or obstructing individual/organisational progress. Part-time employees are less likely to be given career development opportunities – and often have to complete training in their own time.

### Southwark Drummers opened the event



## Supporting Disadvantaged Women's Entry to their Local Labour Markets

What can policy-makers and practitioners do?

- Insist on gender-disaggregated data.
- Improve sources of information about rights for vulnerable women workers.
- Recognise that women's disadvantage is multi-layered, and take a long-term, holistic approach to service provision.
- Support volunteering, activism and enterprise, but do so in ways which work for women.
- Tailor benefits to work transition
- Improve the quality and pay of 'women's' work - through greater enforcement of the minimum wage, information about employment rights, and promoting flexible working initiatives to change the design of jobs to fit real women's lives.



## Delivering and new agenda for social care: workforce strategies

Recruitment difficulties face both public and private sector providers. Direct Payments will change the structure of the workforce into a segmented workforce – this raises concerns about pensions and staff training. Recruitment solutions:

- Put more resources into outreach work and identify new sources of labour from all ethnic groups and both sexes.
- Streamline recruitment processes (especially vetting procedures) to reduce delays.
- Improve job rewards.
- Some applicants are responding to new opportunities to train and gain accreditation, but more may need to be done to change the image of the job.
- Unpaid carers are often the same age as the social care workforce – are there opportunities to recruit them?

### Overcoming barriers and discrimination in the labour market: the experiences of ethnic minority women

Employers often hold negative and outdated stereotypes of Muslim women – assumptions about not wanting to work with men; about leaving work after marriage; and forced marriages. Muslim women wish to disassociate traditional views from their practice of religion. Employers often complain about a lack of ethnic minority women applicants, but many do nothing to tackle the negative image which puts them off. Many ethnic minority women get 'ethnic minority-focused' jobs. Taster courses for ethnic minority women to try jobs, with awareness-raising training for existing staff, can be successful.

### Flexible working, work-life balance (WLB) & long hours: re-designing senior jobs

WLB needs to be broadened - from a 'women's issue' to 'everyone's issue'. It can also be linked to the transition of older workers from employment, facilitating succession planning and encouraging wider acceptability among men. WLB is part of the care and life-long learning agendas.

In practice, managers must adjust the workloads of those who reduce their hours, tackle the 'hidden hours' of work done at home, and re-design the weekly schedule of meetings so that part-time employees are able to fully contribute. There are models of management operating in 24/7 companies which challenge the assumption that managers always have to be present.

### Productivity, competitiveness at the local level: securing women's contribution

Gender difference in productivity per hour is much less than regional differences in productivity.

The traditional explanation for the gender pay gap is that women don't invest in education or have continuous work experience. But research shows different patterns of reward for education, and a particularly high pay penalty for women working part-time.

To improve the pay and status of work done by women, we need to take the 'living wage' as the new wage floor, provide integrated wage systems, promote the professionalisation of feminised occupations, combat the penalties of part-time work and make women's skills visible.

### Skills, Education and Training: integrating local services to support women

Women's organisations often work with women whose needs are not being met by government agencies, or by other charities.

Women's organisations can support women to gain control of their lives in a range of ways, for example, leaving violent relationships, healing from the impact of child sexual assault, accessing legal advice, gaining skills and finding employment.



The conference included an exhibition of local authorities' work on promoting gender equality, with examples of women's art produced in the research process.

### Closing address



"This important research provides a valuable contribution to our understanding of inequality in the workplace, underscoring the need to tackle gender inequality at national and local level, if women are to get a fair deal at work and employers are to make the most of the vast untapped reservoir of women's talent".  
Jenny Watson Chair, Equal Opportunities Commission

## More information about the GELLM Research Programme

Professor Sue Yeandle was the Director of the *Gender and Employment in Local Labour Markets (GELLM)* Research Programme (2003-2006), based at the *Centre for Social Inclusion (CSI)*, Sheffield Hallam University. GELLM was funded by the *European Social Fund* and by contributions from 12 local authorities, the EOC and the TUC.

Publications from the programme can be found at <http://www.shu.ac.uk/research/csi/publications.html>

We are grateful to all our sponsors for their support and contributions and especially to the TUC for its generosity in hosting the GELLM Final Conference.

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