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# **THE IRIS NETWORK IN THE U.K.**

**PA Cambridge Economic  
Consultants Limited**

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Commission of the European Communities  
Equal Opportunities Unit - DG V.B.4

This report is part of a series of 12 brochures on the national achievements of the IRIS Network - European Network of vocational training programmes for women - launched by the Commission in 1988.

Each report has been drafted under the responsibility of the members of the IRIS Working Party of the Member State concerned. It gives an overview of the national equal opportunities policy, especially in the field of vocational training for women.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

IRIS is a Europe-wide network of training projects promoting training for women. It is made up of training projects from the twelve Member States, which either provide training solely for women, or are predominantly concerned with the needs of women. This booklet gives an account of the development of IRIS in the UK since the formation of the network in 1988. It looks at the achievements of IRIS projects, and at the extent to which the network has influenced training practice. Some of the main experiences of the UK projects in developing training methods for different groups of women are outlined. The booklet is one of a series of twelve national studies on the operation of the IRIS network; a similar booklet is being produced for each of the other eleven Member States.

Four projects are examined in detail, chosen because they were strong, well-established projects which represented particular strengths of specialisms of the contribution made by UK projects to the IRIS network across Europe. They are:-

- the Birmingham Women's Workshops (BWW), chosen as an example of a project which works with ethnic minority women and which helps women cross gender boundaries by developing skills in electronics, computing and carpentry
- Newham Women's Education and Training Centre (NEWTEC), chosen for similar reasons; it trains in computing, electronics and bricklaying, and works in east London, especially with ethnic minority communities
- the Scottish Enterprise Foundation (SEF), based at the University of Stirling in Scotland, and chosen as an example of training for women in enterprise creation and management skills
- the Women and Manual Trades Collective (WAMT), based in east central London, chosen as an example of training and support services for self-employed women working in manual trades (mainly in the construction sector).

The strengths of these four projects are drawn on, and potentially transferable ideas in training practice and method are outlined. The difficulties faced by the projects are also discussed, with the aim of contributing to a shared understanding of the difficulties which must be overcome in any attempt to assist the integration of women into 'quality' jobs. In addition to the four case studies, the booklet draws on responses to a postal survey of IRIS projects in the UK, and on telephone interviews with a number of projects following up points emerging from the survey.

The case studies were carried out by project visits during the summer of 1992. Where possible, questionnaires were given to current trainees for self-completion and return to the researchers, and to past trainees by post. For WAMT, training

activities had only just started, so a trainee survey was felt to be premature. For the other three projects, the questionnaires offered insights into the trainees' background and their reactions to the courses. However, the sample sizes were limited by the number of former trainees - that is, by the scale of the projects themselves - and by the response rate, which was about one in three for past trainees although almost 100% for those the researchers met in the classroom. The time elapsed between the date the trainees left and the period in which they received the questionnaire was dependent on the course dates and the research period; with SEF it was a few weeks, with NEWTEC and BWW up to a year. The ideal would be to interview each cohort of trainees six months after leaving, and then again a year and perhaps two years later. Longitudinal studies of women's post-training development, based on IRIS projects, might be worth considering in future.

Readers may also like to know of evaluations of other IRIS projects which have previously been published; the study of South Glamorgan Women's Workshop (Essex et al 1986, summarised in Clarke, 1991) and of Edinburgh Women's Training Centre (evaluated by PACEC for the ERGO Programme, 1990; see European Commission, 1992).

Annexes III and IV provide reference material as a context to the study. Annex III describes the institutions and policies that provide the background for women's training in the UK. Some comparisons of women's employment and training in the UK with other Member States of the European Community are given in Annex IV, together with information on gender differences in employment and earnings within the UK.

Developments in women's training generally in the UK are considered in chapter 3. This chapter focuses specifically on some key examples of innovative approaches in three areas; women's enterprise training, work with ethnic minority women, and women in male-dominated 'manual' occupations. Telephone interviews with large employers involved in carrying out positive action policies for women, and with other key actors in the UK training 'scene' are used to draw a picture of the activities of a range of those involved in training specifically for women. Chapters 4 and 5 look at the specific methodological achievements and innovations of the UK IRIS projects, and at the transnational contacts that different projects have had, both through and outside IRIS.

## **2. THE IRIS NETWORK IN THE UK**

### **History of the IRIS Network**

- 2.1 The IRIS network was established by the Equal Opportunities Unit within the European Commission, to promote women's training and employment in the Member States. It was set up in the wake of the Recommendations on Vocational Training for Women adopted by the Commission in November 1987. This calls on Member States to ensure that women have equal access to all types and levels of vocational training, particularly in professions which are likely to expand in the future and those in which women have been historically under represented. The aim was both to enable women to benefit fully from the opportunities for employment growth in the Single Market and also to address the need for skilled labour in Europe's medium and long term development. The IRIS network is intended to promote this aim through the development of collaboration between training projects, equal opportunities agencies and the vocational training/employment authorities in the member states.
- 2.2 The official launch of IRIS took place in December 1988 at a conference in Brussels, attended by the 71 original member projects and national representatives of Equal Opportunities and Vocational Training authorities. The launch conference emphasised the need to 'address the question of the follow on from women's training and the need to ensure that women benefit from training by means of higher pay and better jobs.' It was also suggested at that conference that 'in expanding the network, priority should be given to seeking out employer sponsored training examples', in order to assist this aim.
- 2.3 The main activities of IRIS began, following this conference, in 1989. IRIS activities focus on the exchange of information and experience. This takes place through contact between projects at seminars and national technical meetings and on exchange visits. IRIS also produces a number of publications, with an extensive mailing list and provides an E-mail service and a database facility for members. Unlike many EC programmes, for example NOW, there is very little funding attached. There are a small number of grants available to members for publicity and partnerships and also for exchange visits, but IRIS does not fund programmes. IRIS' activities were partly determined by the Commission at the time of the programme, and by the Commission, the European Centre for Women in Training (CREW), who carry out the day to day management of the programme, and the Commission. Events and activities are aimed not only at promoting exchanges of experience between members but also at promoting women's training and influencing policy makers, employers and other influential groups.
- 2.4 Four national seminars in different countries have been held in each of the years in which IRIS has been operational. These target policy makers in particular, but also training programmes, trades unions and employers. They focus on particular aspects of women's training needs. The first UK seminar took place in 1991. The seminar, in common with the other 1991 seminars in Ireland, Denmark and Germany, had the themes of new technology and women in male-dominated

trades. National evaluation meetings, aimed at member projects only, were held in the UK in 1989 and 1990. There was no meeting in 1991, because of the UK seminar, but a meeting is planned for later in 1992.

2.5 The Equal Opportunities Unit of the European Commission has overall responsibility for IRIS. The network is financed jointly by the Task Force and the Equal Opportunities Unit. The former provides a budget of 500,000 ecu and the latter 250,000 ecu. The network is co-ordinated through the Working Party on Women's Vocational Training, which meets twice yearly, and includes one representative from the national training organisation and one from the national equality body of each Member State; in the UK, the Employment Department and the Equal Opportunities Commission. The group has an advisory role in establishing the criteria for membership of the network, and in selecting member programmes from applicants. Members also inform the Commission of national developments in the field of women's vocational training. Services and publications work are carried out on behalf of the European Commission by the Centre for Research on European Women (CREW), an independent organisation.

2.6 Originally, IRIS was to be a network of demonstration or model projects in the field of vocational training for women. The criteria for membership has gradually been altered over the period of the network's existence, so as to specify a fuller picture of the 'ideal' project, but have been applied flexibly so as to encourage projects to join who have good practice to offer on specific points.

2.7 To be eligible to apply for membership, projects should either train women only, or if they are mixed, be predominantly concerned with the specific training needs of women. They must answer the training needs of either:

- women seeking work after compulsory schooling
- women wanting to return to the labour market
- women wanting to obtain better professional qualifications
- unemployed women
- women seeking retraining or promotion possibilities in non-traditional jobs or in sectors where they are under-represented

They must guarantee an improved access to the labour market, further education and/or professional training. In addition, the projects' objectives must respond to the needs of the labour market and/or local and regional development.

In general, projects should either train women for jobs where they are under-represented, or train in one of a number of specific sectors. Projects training women in 'traditional' women's areas can be included if they satisfy the following criteria:

- use innovatory teaching materials
- offer promotion possibilities for women already in these jobs



- make possible the reintegration of women in the labour market, including unemployed women
- aim to create new jobs or economically viable small businesses

The design of the training course must satisfy at least one of the following criteria:

- offer a well-constructed and vocationally relevant curriculum which can be transferred
- use innovatory training techniques such as distance learning or computer assisted learning/training
- offer modular structured courses
- provide on-the-job training in companies
- offer guidance and counselling services
- provide for a trainee support programme during and after the course

Project coordinators have to be prepared to invest both time and energy in exchanging information with other IRIS projects. They are also expected to work in general towards the improvement of training standards in their own Member State and on a European level.

2.8 The original 71 model programmes have increased to 469 members during the three years that IRIS has been operational, and in 1991 there were 300 applicants for membership. In the UK, membership has grown from 25 projects in 1988-89, and 43 projects in 1990-91, to 68 projects from 49 different organisations in 1991-92. It is significant that this growing demand for membership has taken place despite the fact that IRIS does not offer major funding to projects: rather, it seems to be a testimony to the value which members attach to the network's activities.

2.9 The UK is, though, still relatively under-represented in IRIS membership - 12.8% of all IRIS members are UK projects, compared to the 21.4% of the total EC female labour force that is in the UK. This relative imbalance is largely an outcome of the way in which the projects are chosen. Essentially, the size of the network in any individual country is determined to some extent by the number of projects which national co-ordinating units in France, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands do try to attract projects to the network. (Only 21% of applications to join the network in 1990 were rejected). In the UK, the original IRIS membership overlapped almost completely with membership of the Women's Training Network of ESF funded women's training workshops. This network publicised IRIS to its members, but outside of the network, there was little publicity.

#### **Characteristics of UK IRIS projects**

2.10 As in the rest of Europe, the majority of IRIS projects in the UK are aimed at economically inactive women; only six projects are aimed at women who are in

employment or already running their own business. In particular, 28 of the 68 target women returners and 21 unemployed women. Twelve of the projects are aimed particularly at women from ethnic minorities.

	Unemployed or inactive women	Employed/self employed	Women in rural areas	Other/unspecific
B	93	0	7	0
DK	84	3	0	13
D	75	6	0	19
GR	89	0	11	0
E	61	11	7	21
F	71	7	2	20
IRL	58	8	8	25
I	56	13	6	26
NL	90	0	5	5
P	56	22	11	11
UK	63	12	0	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>18</b>

Source: IRIS Directory 1991

Note: 'other/unspecific' includes projects with multiple target groups.

The projects are spread fairly evenly throughout the UK;

London	11
South outside London	11
North of England	18
Wales	5
Scotland	12
Northern Ireland	3

Source: IRIS Directory

2.11 The most common training areas are information technology and other new technology related areas. Twenty nine of the projects, 46% of the total, train in areas related to new technology. Seven of these teach computer programming

and electronics engineering (computer assembly, repair and testing), the others skills relating to the use of information technology, particularly in an office context. Sixteen projects, 25% of the total, teach management and enterprise skills. Nine of these teach them in relation to management within an enterprise, and seven in relation to the creation or growth of an owner-managed small business. Nine projects carry out training for manual trades, or work with tradeswomen, particularly those in occupational areas which have traditionally been dominated by men.

Eight projects are involved in training that is not directly vocational, involving confidence building and personal development work. These vary from pre-vocational courses, some involving basic vocational training in addition, to career development courses for women already in employment.

Information technology/computer office skills	21
Electronics/computer programming	1
Management skills	10
Enterprise skills	6
Manual trades/craft skills training	7
Confidence building/personal development	5
Pre-training confidence building and basic vocational work	6
Technology and IT skills	2
Media skills	1

Source: IRIS Directory

- 2.12 IRIS projects in the UK do not in the main operate within the context of TECs and LECs, who have responsibility for the principal government training schemes, ET and YT (see chapter 3 for a description of ET and YT). Nineteen of the IRIS projects are run by organisations linked to the education sector. The majority of the projects in this group receive EC funding. Twenty-six projects are run by organisations linked to the education sector, including further and higher education colleges and universities. The distribution of training areas between the different types of provider can be seen in the box below.

**Table 2.4 - Skill areas in which IRIS projects in the UK undertake training, by type of promoter**

<u>Further education college linked</u>		<u>Higher education college/ university linked</u>	
IT/computer office skills	9	IT/computer office skills	2
Management skills	1	Enterprise skills	2
Pre-training/assertiveness	3	Personal development	2
Craft skills	2	Management skills	3
Industry specific course	1	Industry specific course	1
<u>Women's workshops/ voluntary groups</u>		<u>Council linked projects</u>	
Electronics/computer programming	5	IT/computer office skills	3
Non-traditional trades	4	Management skills	2
IT/computer office skills	4	Non-traditional trades	3
Enterprise training	1	<u>TEC/lec linked</u>	
Confidence building/ assertiveness	2	Enterprise skills	2
Media skills	1	Management skills	1
<u>Commercial training providers</u>		<u>Industry linked bodies</u>	
Pre-training/basic vocational skills	3	Management skills	1
Positive action/assertiveness	3	Enterprise skills	1
Computer office skills	2	Non-traditional trades	1
Management skills	1	Admin/secretarial	1
<u>Chamber of commerce linked</u>			
Office skills	1		
Source: IRIS Directory			

### **How the network operates within the UK**

2.13

Within the UK, one meeting has been held each year since IRIS was formed. In 1991, this took the form of the Manchester conference, with the theme of New Technology. In the other years, a technical meeting has been held. The 1990 technical meeting included representatives of sixteen IRIS projects, and other

participants from the Equal Opportunities Commission, the UK national equality body, from CREW and from the Employment Department, which has policy responsibility for most publicly funded training taking place outside of the educational sector. The meeting focused on the role of the TECs, then newly introduced, and on their intentions with regard to women's training.

- 2.14 A high proportion of the UK members of IRIS are also members of the Women's Training Network. This is an important group of women-only projects which receive money from the European Social Fund. It was founded in 1984. Members meet every six weeks or so to discuss training practice and funding issues. The complexity of European funding procedures and the continual need for new information about them means that the projects dependent on that source find it useful to have a network of this kind. From time to time they also lobby government about funding issues. Since the reform of the Structural Funds, the WTN has a role in examining applications for ESF funds from the voluntary sector, jointly with the National Council of Voluntary Organisations.

### **3. DEVELOPMENTS IN WOMEN'S TRAINING AND THE INFLUENCE OF THE IRIS NETWORK**

3.1.1 IRIS projects are only one part of the overall UK training scene. In this section, we attempt to relate the developments within IRIS to the wider training environment, including employer training and other initiatives related to the development of women's training and employment opportunities as well as to the general training infrastructure outlined in section 3.

3.1.2 As in other EC countries it has been found that women experience some specific difficulties in accessing mainstream training provision. In general, women are less likely than men to receive vocational training (Clarke, 1991). There are a number of reasons for this unequal access:

- women with young children may not be able to attend training if no childcare is available, or if the training hours do not fit in with school hours (Clarke, 1991)
- gender stereotypes may mean that women have unequal access to training for non-traditional occupations, or may lead young women to drop out of areas such as maths which are necessary to enter some training courses
- traditionally female occupations, such as clerical work, involve less employer training
- women who have been out of the labour market while bringing up children receive lower priority in access to publicly funded training schemes than people who have been unemployed and claiming benefit

We also in this section present some key examples of innovative approaches taken by employers, TECs and other actors in UK training.

3.1.3 Despite these obstacles, the local 'skills audit' studies referred to in Annex IV have shown a very strong demand by women for training. Many mothers see training as a long-term investment in their future, which they want to make whilst their children are young and their capacity for paid work limited, in order to re-enter the labour market at a higher level of skill and pay. It has been shown that training improves occupational status more for women than it does for men (Greenhalgh and Stewart, 1982). Payne's study of the TOPS training scheme (operated by the UK government for unemployed people and women returners up to 1988) found that training increased women's hourly earnings if they found a job in the field of their training, and helped women to move from sales and personal service jobs into office work, with gains in both pay and status.

3.1.4 Women-only training schemes, targeted at unemployed and inactive women, are widely established in Britain through local initiatives, mainly by the educational

and voluntary sectors. The Women Returners Handbook listed 1500 courses in 1990 (Women Returners Network 1990). These initiatives have given rise to a large number of applications for finance from the European Social Fund, many of them for fairly small scale projects (Clarke, 1991). By 1991 the UK had 35 training centres supported by the ESF which provided women-only training for occupations in which women are under-represented.

3.1.5 There have also been some attempts by employers to use special training measures to increase the proportion of women applying for management and technical positions, during the 1980s, as well as a number of action research projects to challenge gender stereotyping in the choice of training and career by school pupils (see Clarke, 1991, for a brief overview).

3.2.1 The growth of organisations such as Opportunities 2000 and Training 2000 (see box 3.1 and box 3.2) is a reflection of the increasing desire of private and public sector employers to be seen as a 'good employer' for women, and to take positive action to demonstrate their commitment to increasing the opportunities for women. This has arisen because of three main concerns;

- to attract women returners in the face of falling numbers of school leavers
- to improve continuity of employment, and avoid the loss of staff who represent a considerable resource in terms of experience and training because of the difficulty of combining employment with family responsibilities
- more generally, to exploit to the full the human resources offered by all of their staff, and to avoid wasting the potential of staff by letting them remain in a job below their capabilities. Linked with this is the desire by some employers to reduce the extent to which recruitment is limited, and the best potential employees not chosen, because of stereotyped views held by interviewers

There are a range of actions that companies who wish to improve the position of women in their organisation are taking. These range from increased possibilities for promotion, to the provision of training and development opportunities. However, the percentage of women at senior management levels. Only a small percentage have any form of training specifically aimed at increasing women's potential for success in their organisation.

### **Box 3.1 - Opportunities 2000**

In the past five years, a number of larger employers have introduced positive action policies to encourage the recruitment, retention or promotion of various groups of women within their organisation. Opportunities 2000, run by the umbrella organisation 'Business in the Community' brings together a number of companies (110 at May 1992) who are taking some action to further the promotion of women to senior management level within their company, and presses for the increase in the number of female senior managers generally. Opportunities 2000 was launched in October 1991, with the support of the government, but is a private sector initiative.

Companies joining Opportunities 2000 are not required to take any specific actions other than making a public commitment to goals decided by themselves that focus on increasing the opportunities for women in their organisation by the year 2000, and publication of progress towards these goals at agreed intervals. These need not be numerical goals; some of the goals that companies have decided on focus on qualitative aspects of recruitment or employment conditions. Lloyd's Bank, for example, set their goals as relating to their general equal opportunities policy of changing attitudes to working patterns, away from the idea that traditional working patterns, which are only suitable for those with few family or other responsibilities, are the only valid way to work. Their goals include introducing 'clear standards' for recruitment and progression. They aim to identify where there is a 'loss of value' from barriers to women, and take action to remove those barriers. As one way of attacking barriers, they are carrying out awareness training for all those involved in recruitment and promotion.



### **Box 3.2 - Training 2000**

Training 2000 is a network of both public and private sector companies and other organisations involved in women's training in Scotland. It aims to provide information on the training of women at all levels, to update trainers on new approaches to human resource development and training practice, and to establish links between practitioners. Training 2000 was established in May 1990 by the Scottish Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (SIACE). The impetus for its establishment came from a conference sponsored by Lothian Regional Council jointly with the European Commission in 1988.

Training 2000 receives the IRIS newsletter and its own magazine regularly carries information about IRIS, NOW and other European Community programmes. The Scottish network would like to be more closely involved with IRIS, but because Training 2000 is not an individual training project, nor does it directly sponsor any training projects, it cannot become a full 'project' member.

Seminars are held on such topics as the experience of women's staff development in Scotland, and cost effective ways of developing women managers. They are generally limited to around 35 people, because the network has found that people can work together better if the group is a small one. Networking meetings are popular with supporters as a way of exchanging information and advice, and sometimes lead to exchange of written material (for example course materials, research reports).

Training 2000 believes that good practice in training and career development for women employees is something which can and should cross the barriers between different sectors - between public, private and voluntary organisations. It has helped to bring together practitioners in all three sectors, seeking out private sector managers who are strongly committed to equal opportunities policies within their own companies and offering them a mutually supportive environment in which to develop and enhance what they are doing. Training 2000 has also carried out a research project for Scottish Enterprise entitled, 'Women's Access to Education, Training and Employment'.

### **3.2.2 *Confidence building and personal development training***

The majority of instances of positive action training carried out by private sector employers focuses on confidence building and personal development. Courses are generally short, lasting under a week, and aim to help women develop skills that will enable them to further their career. Many companies introduce personal development courses for women as part of a wider ranging equal opportunities policy, often in recognition of the fact that they are wasting resources, by allowing talented women to remain in low level jobs, or to leave because of the

difficulty of combining work with family responsibilities. One of the companies interviewed felt that if positive action courses were not part of a wider look at the working culture of the organisation, they could fail to address the real barriers to women's success. The comment was also made that such training often benefits only a small group of high-flying women, who are likely to be among the percentage who succeed anyway; the ones who really need confidence building/assertiveness training are often not the ones chosen to go on the training courses.

3.2.3 Companies running these courses have in many cases achieved a significant increase in the proportion of women at management level. The Bank of Scotland, for example, increased the proportion of women managers from 3% to 6% between 1989 when they first ran a career development course, and 1991. In the same period, the proportion of women assistant managers increased from 17% to 31%, although it is not clear how far this is due to awareness training. There are few benchmark figures for the proportion of women generally found in management posts, although Hirsch and Jackson (1989), quoted by Karen Clarke (op. cit) estimated that women are still only four per cent of senior management. McRae (1990) gives a figure of 3%.

#### 3.2.4 *Equal opportunities awareness training*

In addition to women only personal development training, a number of companies have some form of equal opportunities awareness training for both male and female staff. In some cases, this is particularly targeted on those involved in recruitment, with the aim of overcoming bias at the selection stage. Again, this training is generally short, often involving discussions based around videos or similar materials. Lloyds Bank carry out awareness training for both male and female staff and are introducing an 'accreditation' scheme for all staff involved in recruitment, which will involve training on equal treatment in recruitment. They also consider all requests for flexible working seriously, and only reject them if there are special reasons why the post should be carried out by a full time worker. In 1986, 3% of Lloyds managers and 8% of assistant managers were women. By 1991, this had increased to 7.5% of managers, and 19% of assistant managers, although it is not clear how far this is due to awareness training.

### **Box 3.3 - Some key examples of employer positive action training schemes**

*The Clydesdale Bank* runs a personal development course for women 'with career potential'. This has been run once a year since 1988, with twelve women per course. There is a formal course follow-up event, and in addition to this, course participants have created informal networks. The bank networks with the other clearing banks and shares training materials - they have been using a video produced by Barclays to improve equal opportunities 'awareness' amongst both male and female staff. Equal opportunities training will shortly be introduced for all those involved in recruitment. They feel that networking between the banks is particularly useful, because they have similar needs. The bank has also joined Opportunities 2000 and is looking at the question of how to define equal opportunities goals. It is about to undertake research into job sharing.

*Gloucestershire County Council* have run a Career Development course for women for three years, aimed at all women in the Council, with a particular focus on women returners. The course involves confidence building work and work on the structure of the organisation. Around 200 women had taken part by last November. They also run a leadership course for women in higher grades, and are looking at developing work-shadowing and mentoring for women in the Council, as well as the question of part-time workers' rights, the Council also has its own Women Managers' Network, through which ideas for leadership training developed.

A number of employers including *Gloucester County Council* have made use of the '*Springboard*' confidence building and personal development course. This was developed by Liz Willis and Jenny Daisley, of the Springboard Consultancy, originally as a BBC management development course, and was then modified and published as a workbook for general use by companies under this name. '*Springboard*' lasts considerably longer than the majority of confidence building type courses. It is based around an open learning workbook, and takes about three months to complete, with an average of three hours study and discussion a week, and up to three one day workshops. *BP Exploration in Glasgow* are using it as part of an equal opportunities initiative; about 50 women have been involved since January 1991. It was introduced after five women pushed for its use and piloted it themselves for the company. Other organisations that have used the course include *Kent County Council* and *Grand Metropolitan (Foods)*.

BP also made use of the 'outward' bound style course in challenging outdoor activities, run for women only groups by Canopy Training, in Derbyshire. This uses activities such as orienteering and abseiling to develop women's confidence and their leadership capacities.

**Box 3.3 continued**

*Strathclyde Fire Brigade* introduced equal opportunities awareness training for all internal personnel in 1989, with more specific training for those involved in recruitment and selection. The training was intended to help in the Brigade's aim of increasing the recruitment of underrepresented groups of Strathclyde's population; chiefly women and ethnic minorities. The number of women recruited remains low, although recruitment from ethnic minorities has increased. They feel that networking has been helpful to them, enabling them to learn from the experiences that other fire brigades, particularly have had in introducing similar initiatives.

- 3.2.5 TECs have a responsibility to have an equal opportunities policy, and to have a strategy for achieving this. Other than this, there is no requirement for them to carry out any specific training or to provide any other facilities for women, apart from the requirement to provide childcare for the 'Guarantee group' (see Annex III, para A.3.1.4). A number of TECs are involved in initiatives aimed at women, but these vary considerably from area to area, from the range of courses and other provision in Tyneside (box 3.4), to Hertfordshire's encouragement to employers in providing childcare help. Box 3.5 shows some examples of initiatives being carried out by TECs. The Equal Opportunities Commission is currently carrying out a study of how TECs have approached their 'equal opportunities' responsibilities. This study will report on the difficulties and constraints which TECs have faced in meeting their obligations, as well as highlighting examples of good practice.

### **Box 3.4 - Tyneside TEC**

*Tyneside* are one of the most active TECs with regard to women's training, and wider issues relating to women's employment. They have a board member responsible for women's issues, and have set up a *Women's Advisory Group*, with representatives from outside organisations such as Women and Training North East and from local Black Women's groups. They are also involved in childcare initiatives.

The TEC has helped to establish a *Women's Training Centre*, which runs a wide range of courses targeted towards women. They run women only 'Freshstart' courses for women who have been out of the labour market because of family responsibilities for a year or more (they ignore very short hours work or short periods of temporary work). These courses are not aimed at unemployed women receiving benefits, who are advised to join ET, because otherwise the allowance from the TEC is counted against their benefit. The courses are flexible hours from 15 upwards and women do not have to attend during school holidays.

They also run fairly frequent *Winter Horizons Days* for women to encourage them to enter training or employment, which provide free creche facilities and a travel allowance for women attending, training courses specifically aimed at Asian women, (some providing training in Punjabi and Bengali), Women into Management and Management Development Courses for women. Short 'taster' courses for those thinking of becoming self-employed, are particularly aimed at women; there are also other courses aimed at women running their own businesses.

They have linked with *Opportunity 2000* to run an award aimed at Tyneside businesses (not necessarily members of Opportunities 2000) with active equal opportunities policies - the award will go to the company making the most progress towards equal opportunities targets in the year.

### **Box 3.5 - TEC initiatives for women**

**West Wales TEC** is 'looking at women returners as a valuable resource', and has offered employers financial support towards retraining courses for these women.

**Norfolk and Waveny TEC** hope to use the findings from a recently commissioned piece of research on women's training and employment to enable more women to take advantage of training opportunities. The TEC is working with others to establish a county wide childcare network.

**Northamptonshire TEC** have sponsored a one day event organised by Kettering Business Venture Trust 'Towards Employment' to encourage women back to work. The event was a follow-up to a 'Skills Bus' that operated in the borough in 1989.

**Hampshire TEC** 'is hoping' to set up a number of projects focusing on effective training and guidance for women. This is in the context of their 1990/91 labour market analysis, which looks at women returners as one group who may be necessary to overcome future skills shortages.

**Hertfordshire TEC** have part funded a Children's Day Care Co-ordinator post, to work with companies encouraging them to provide childcare - not necessarily workplace nurseries, but holiday playschemes etc. They are also trying to encourage joint ventures between companies in childcare initiatives.

**Bolton and Bury TEC** are funding courses aimed at helping adults return to work - aimed at women and men. The courses are part-time, and take place on a Saturday morning, and include IT, communications, basic maths and self-appraisal.

**Essex TEC** have created a Returner's Unit as a joint initiative with Chelmsford College of Further Education. The unit aims to encourage and help companies to establish good working practises, retraining programmes, and initiatives to attract women.

... (case study) of the Childcare Forum, which draws together employers and childcare providers in East London to look at issues of employer linked childcare provision and improvement of quality in childcare services.

- 3.3.1 IRIS shares the concern of TECs and other employer led initiatives to enable all employed women to achieve their full potential, and to be able to combine this with any family responsibilities that they have. The network has been making

efforts to develop closer links with employers and employer led bodies; Training 2000 and a representative from Tyneside TEC both spoke at the Manchester conference in 1991.

3.3.2 At a local level, it has been noted that the majority of IRIS projects are aimed at unemployed or inactive women. However, many of the projects have developed extensive links with employers, often including work placements with an employer as part of training courses. In addition, most of the projects are in contact with many other local actors, including local government and bodies such as the social services.

3.3.3 The case study projects illustrate the different links that IRIS projects have with other local actors (see box 3.6). They demonstrate the ways in which IRIS projects try to influence the wider employment environment in their areas. Despite being relatively small in scale and localised in influence, the projects generally seek to reach outside their immediate group of trainees, and work to improve the employment opportunities for women more widely within the local area.

**Box 3.6 - IRIS case study projects' links with other local actors**

*The Birmingham Women's Workshops* include work placements as part of their course, placing students with local employers, both private and public sector, and with voluntary groups. This has led to regular links with certain employers who take successive cohorts of students. Tutors are chosen by the projects partly for their industrial experiences, which both provide students with appropriate role models, and also maintain links with industry. Work placements have in many cases resulted in students on the computing course being offered a permanent job by their work placement employer. They have links with local colleges and often refer potential students who would find other courses more appropriate. They also have links with the local council and with the social services.

Box 3.6 continued

*NEWTEC* courses include work placements for 'Design and Technology' trainees. They have cultivated links with the local TEC, and run a Women Returners' course under ET. Their management committee includes representatives from local employers, they hold 'open days' for employers and they have used links with local employers to examine skill needs. This has led to the identification of a shortage of CAD/CAM operators particularly in the local car industry, and as a result they have included a module on CAD/CAM in their Design and Technology course. They have set up a childcare forum, involving the local authority social services, the TEC and local employers with an interest in childcare. The forum studies local provision, particularly from a quality perspective. In addition, they try to 'set an example' to other local employers in the provision that they make for members of their own staff with young children. Their new NOW partnership will involve international trainee exchanges. As a result of this, local employers will be offered bilingual women computing trainees from Greece and Germany on work placements. It is expected that the TEC will help to place them with local companies.

*Women in Manual Trades (WAMT) and the Scottish Enterprise Foundation (SEF)* have rather fewer links with employers, as their main focus is self-employment. WAMT try to influence bodies such as the Health and Safety Council, and persuade them not to produce stereotyped advertising and information. They also try to persuade employers to take more account of the needs of women manual workers, for example on issues such as washroom provision and gender-specific health and safety risks. They are involved in outreach to schools, producing a wide range of literature and visiting schools to speak about working as a tradeswomen. They also support women already in self-employment, and try to improve the chances of women breaking into the more lucrative areas of construction work. The SEF runs a women-only course under ET for the local TEC. They also have links with local women entrepreneurs, through which trainees are placed within a business to carry out projects. *SEF* also runs a course for women in the field of self-employment. *SEF* also runs a course for women in the field of self-employment. *SEF* also runs a course for women in the field of self-employment. Within this field, they provide a channel for women to advance into management positions.



#### **4. THE TRANSNATIONAL COLLABORATION OF IRIS PROJECTS**

- 4.1 Of eighteen UK projects responding to the survey questionnaire which was sent out to IRIS projects throughout Europe in January 1992, twelve had taken part in IRIS exchange visits or seminars, and eleven had international contacts through other programmes or networks as well. Only one UK project had had no international contacts at all, either through IRIS or other contacts. The projects with considerable international contacts through non-IRIS sources also tended to be the projects most strongly involved in IRIS transnational activities.
- 4.2 Asked to rate IRIS events that they had taken part in, the most popular events cited by UK projects responding to the questionnaire were exchange visits. These were found to be useful by the participants and, on a number of occasions, had led to further collaboration between projects. Some projects had involved trainees either to help with hosting the visitors or to assist in the preparation for an exchange visit. In one project, the exchanges had been used to stimulate work on issues relating to the Single Market. Others commented that they thought that a 'European dimension' was important to trainees who were likely to come into increasing contact with other EC countries. A number of projects were keen to develop transnational work placements for trainees, and felt that contacts made through IRIS exchanges might be useful for this in the future.
- 4.3 Participants valued the opportunity for self-evaluation of their own project through comparison with the ways in which projects in other countries handled similar problems, and some had adopted aspects of training content. Evaluation by visitors and constructive comment and discussion was felt to be a benefit of hosting an exchange visit, in addition to the opportunity for trainees to become involved in contact with visitors.
- 4.4 The Birmingham Women's Workshop commented that, particularly on exchange visits, those without language skills are excluded from full participation, even where another participant is able to translate for them. For this reason, the BWW is including language training for both students and staff in the partnership that they are developing with an Italian project. They hope that being able to speak each other's languages will widen the number of people able to benefit from the partnership. A number of the projects responding to the questionnaire have suggested that the communication between the members of IRIS could be put to good use in the development of language skills. Members with similar interests and a wish to learn each other's language could become telephone or e-mail 'penpals'.
- 4.5 Several projects were involved in developing training materials either in conjunction with IRIS contacts or through NOW partnerships. The IRIS project at the University of Ulster involved in the joint development of an EC qualification commented on the difficulties of developing materials and qualifications that will be appropriate in all EC countries, where there are, for example, considerable differences in the level of technology. They feel, though,

that it is worthwhile developing compatible qualifications, again in the light of the potential future need for trainees to be mobile between EC labour markets.

- 4.6 In the four case studies, we explain the details of the partnerships which these projects had set up. An interesting feature is that not all of the transnational contacts which formed the basis for NOW partnerships were established through IRIS. ELISE, visitors to London and various international events and conferences have provided sources of initial contact.
- 4.7 NOW is an EC programme for funding of transnational actions in the field of women's training and enterprise promotion, which runs to the end of 1993. Projects which apply for funds must identify partners in another member state, and each of the parties must successfully bid for a share of the funds in its own country's operational programme, for the action to go ahead. (All project funds have now been allocated). Three of the four case study projects had developed new forms of activity using funding from NOW. This programme had given a whole new dimension to their work in the case of WAMT, and had helped SEF and NEWTEC develop and consolidate international contracts which they had made through IRIS and other channels. The case studies illustrate how NOW has facilitated international transfer of expertise and brought new projects into the IRIS network. However, NOW was not regarded by the case study projects as the ideal mechanism for transnational partnerships. It had been found bureaucratic and complicated. SEF had experienced severe uncertainty about whether their transnational partners would be funded. NEWTEC were unhappy about the fact that NOW had linked together, in the same funding package, what were felt to be two quite distinct objectives - innovative training development in the UK and 'technical assistance' to other countries.
- 4.8 The case study projects had various suggestions about how IRIS could develop in future. The suggestion made by NEWTEC was for strategic work with employers at European level, moving away from project-to-project links and trying to use international networking between TECs in the UK, and parallel bodies in other countries, to raise issues like models for CAD/CAM<sup>1</sup> training of women and, above all, the problem of childcare. NEWTEC felt that IRIS should produce publications specifically targeted at employers.
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- greater depth, with a real analysis of training practice, looking at what methods work best and why.

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<sup>1</sup> Computer Aided Design/Computer Aided Manufacture

## **5. THE INNOVATIONS AND METHODOLOGICAL ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE NETWORK**

**5.1** In this section, we attempt to sum up the main innovations of the IRIS projects addressed in the four case studies, and to pose some suggestions for further action and research. Since we have only been able to study four projects in depth, this overview does not pretend to be a complete account of the strengths, weaknesses, needs and transferable methods of the IRIS network in the UK. But hopefully it may serve to indicate a framework within which a wider 'balance sheet' could be drawn up at future technical meetings of the national network.

### **Understanding of women's problems in the labour market**

**5.2** Both WAMT and NEWTEC have shown how even the best labour market research and project planning can be overtaken by events, especially given the fact that courses take a year or two to set in place. What were skill shortage areas in the mid-1980s are now occupations of high unemployment in London - this applies both to skilled construction workers, and more recently to computer programmers and operators. This is not to deny the importance of labour market intelligence in planning courses, but rather to underline the need for flexibility and for a continued search for 'professions of the future' in which the combination of a skills shortage and lack of established gender stereotypes may give women a better opportunity to compete with men.

**5.3** NEWTEC has identified one such 'profession of the future' - that of CAD/CAM operator. Particularly as computer-operated pattern cutting takes hold in the garment industry, where women have traditionally had a strong hold (although often as machinists rather than cutters), CAD/CAM will present a new opportunity. NEWTEC is seeking models for a training structure for this area of work, and hopes to make links with FORCE and EUROTECNET to see if there are openings for transnational work in this area.

**5.4** BWW recognises that women who have trained for the construction trades will be particularly badly affected by the recession. It may be easier for them to work in crafts such as cabinet-making and toy-making. This requires modification of existing training curricula, since these are oriented towards the construction trade. BWW is currently working on a new qualification.

**5.5** WAMT has a particularly astute, if pessimistic analysis of the problem facing women who enter non-traditional occupations in a recession. Employers' prejudices are intensified if vacancies are few. In this situation, women are driven to look at the self-employed option; but individual, isolated self-employment is an even harder path for unemployed women than it is for unemployed men. WAMT has no illusions about its difficulty, and are trying to help women ride the recession through their NOW project to draw women together into larger teams, thus helping them compete for larger and more profitable contracts. This may well be an 'exportable model', not just for self-

employed women in the construction industry, but perhaps also for women in the garment industry, where an isolated woman is generally confined to homeworking as a machinist, but a team or cooperative may be able to move up the 'hierarchy' of enterprises, taking on more profitable functions and gaining more bargaining power.

- 5.6 WAMT's approach is specifically different from that of a cooperative development agency. It recognises that teams of women may wish to work together on a temporary rather than a permanent basis - it may be convenient for a woman to work with certain colleagues on one contract, but with different colleagues on another or at a different period of time. The 'team' concept obtains some of the advantages of 'cooperation' without the complexities of long-term commitment or legal structures.
- 5.7 Both WAMT and SEF recognise the importance of 'feminisation' of support structures for the self-employed, but in different ways. WAMT has concentrated on setting up a separate structure for women, whereas SEF, besides doing this same thing through its training courses, has also trained women business advisers for work in 'mixed' support structures. Each approach has its place. The rationale for WAMT's approach is that in the particularly male-dominated and difficult environment faced by women in manual trades, a separatist support structure is needed to help women combat the sometimes quite overt hostility which they face from male colleagues.

#### Training methods: the form of self-confidence training

- 5.8 All the projects reviewed address the need to develop women's self-confidence, but in different ways. One common theme is the provision of positive female role models - the women tutors, who can show that they themselves have achieved technical skills which many women consider inaccessible; women construction workers (in the case of WAMT), who are able to give a first-hand account of how to survive and progress as a woman in a male-dominated trade; women business advisors and entrepreneurs (in the case of SEF). Another common theme is the provision of assertiveness training and examination of the ways in which women miss opportunities because they have low self-esteem. Both NEWTEC and BWW provided distinct timetable slots for 'personal development' in which assertiveness training and confidence building was linked to careers guidance and job-finding techniques. Whereas most NEWTEC trainees regarded this as quite valuable some BWW ones said the contrary. Past trainees in BWW were more enthusiastic than the present trainees about 'personal development', suggesting that there may be a temporary problem with the course. Methods of teaching 'personal development' would be an interesting area for further research. SEF's approach is a different one - that of integrating assertiveness training within the body of the course, and using exercises which are part of the 'core' business skills training to help women develop their own self-image away from that of 'housewife' towards that of being a business owner. In this approach, confidence building is not seen as a separate element of the curriculum, either by

students or staff, but as something which comes through the core training itself, if the core training is designed with that in mind. SEF also emphasise 'affective socialisation' - the process whereby trainees reinforce each other with anecdotes about how they have challenged and overcome problems which they face as women. Similarly, BWW have found that in a women-only group, women mutually support and encourage each other to apply for jobs, so that they may be encouraged to apply for jobs they would, if isolated, consider out of their reach. A similar effect has been observed in mixed job clubs, but it is possible that the effect is stronger in all female groups.

- 5.9 NEWTEC have found a distinct way of building self-confidence in their 'Return to Work' course - the very process of setting trainees a task which challenges gender stereotypes and makes them feel that they have accomplished something which crosses the gender boundary. Building a wall or mending a car gives women a sense of achievement which challenges both their notions of 'women can't do' and their notions of 'I can't do'. From there it is an easier step to planning to start a technically difficult training course, or aiming high in a job application. In this respect, NEWTEC's approach echoes that of the 'outward-bound' style courses which have been used to develop confidence for women managers in BP Exploration and other companies. Outdoor exercises, involving finding one's way alone through a forest, abseiling or crossing a chasm, have been used for women management trainees in the same way as NEWTEC's exercises in house and car maintenance skills (Training 2000 News, September 1990, page 4, and December 1991, page 9).

#### Training methods: the question of 'women-only' or 'mixed' courses

- 5.10 In their replies to our questionnaires, three quarters of the trainees in the four projects indicated that they preferred training in an all-women environment (11/10) but a few said that they would have preferred a mixed situation. The reasons why women prefer a women-only environment deserve further research, because they are of considerable relevance to the issue of 'mainstreaming'. If all training projects became 'women-only' or 'men-only', not only would there be no choice for those women who prefer a mixed situation, but men would be forced into 'male-only' groups and that might, in turn, affect their perceptions of women in work situations and their future professional relationships with female colleagues. Thus it is difficult to contemplate 'women-only' situations as a general solution at, say, the level of national programmes for the unemployed, although it is important to continue to provide the 'women-only' option for those who feel most strongly about it, especially for Muslim women and for those seeking to enter male-dominated trades. On a larger scale, the future may lie in identifying exactly what features of the 'women-only' environment trainees find helpful, and working out how to provide these in a mixed situation - for example, by having some women-only sessions in mixed courses. So what are these features? Is it the 'personal development' modules which draw women to women-only courses? Or the absence of male trainees from the classroom? Or the role-model, advice or support provided by women tutors? Individual comments from our questionnaires could be found to support any one of these hypotheses, but they

cannot provide conclusive answers. This is both because of the small size of the samples, and because to test these hypotheses properly one would need an appropriate research design. That is, one would need to set up 'control groups' in order to compare women in 'women-only' and 'mixed' situations, in each case with or without one of the key factors (female tutor, personal development module). Furthermore, the contrast between NEWTEC and BWW suggests that sometimes the personal development modules work well, and sometimes not - so that testing of different 'personal development curricula' across several projects would need to be a first stage in research on their relationship to the 'women-only' issue. It must be noted, however, that SEF's approach to personal development could not be carried out in a mixed situation - their approach makes it an integral part of women-only teaching.

### Childcare services

- 5.11 The projects dealt with the very important need for childcare services in different ways. SEF, with small trainee numbers in relation to the overall size of the university, was able to count on the existing university nursery. BWW, because of lack of space in its building, could not provide an internal nursery so that trainees had to rely on outside childminders. Recognising the difficulty many mothers have in identifying a suitable childminder and in being able to tell whether the childminder's service is of good quality or is right for a particular child, BWW sends a worker to visit potential minders with the trainee and her child.
- 5.12 NEWTEC, with both space and funding for a high quality in-house nursery, has been able to make the development of exemplary childcare services an important part of its work. It has sought to promote good quality childcare in the local community as a whole by setting up a ~~Children's Forum~~ in which interested organisations, including employers, can discuss this issue, and also by providing childminders' training courses. One unexpected result of this research was that we were able to pass on information about the provisions within NOW for childcare measures, as well as the excellent discussion paper on 'Quality in Services for Young Children' produced by the EC Childcare Network.
- 5.13 As well as identifying the lack of free or low-cost childcare services as the most significant obstacle to employment faced by women when they leave training, NEWTEC and BWW have also identified an additional need which women have for childcare whilst they are searching for work. NEWTEC permits women to use the nursery occasionally when they come back for the 'drop-in' sessions which can be used to use computers (to brush up skills or for CV writing) and to seek tutors' advice. BWW finds that women may need childcare whilst they are carrying out an intensive search for work through job club type facilities, and would like to set up a fund to help women in this situation until they find jobs.

## Evaluation

- 5.14 Self-evaluation by means of questionnaires and written reports is a strong point of BWW and NEWTEC. With WAMT, where courses are short, small and informal and the range of services which women get from the centre vary a great deal with the individual, evaluation is more informal and takes place through meetings of users. In the case of SEF, the Women's Enterprise Unit is involved in a three year research project to find out to what extent gender is a significant factor in the process of small business management. It has also drawn out the benefits of its experience in model teaching materials (described below) and the SEF as a whole has published a series of research papers on various aspects of small firm development.
- 5.15 BWW send questionnaires to former trainees three months, six months and one year after they have finished the course. NEWTEC is starting to send questionnaires to former trainees. Of the four projects, it has perhaps the most extensive systems for evaluating courses whilst they are still going on. These have three components; questionnaires are given to trainees at the end of courses, an ongoing 'course diary' is kept by the students to record their achievements and feelings about the course throughout the period, and tutors report to management at three monthly intervals, based on the diaries and feedback from trainees in tutorials. These methods are used to guide staff discussions about curriculum development.

## Sharing experiences: international contacts

- 5.16 All four projects have a number of international contacts besides the ones they made through IRIS, and three of them have set up partnerships for international work within NOW, whilst BWW is currently working with an Italian project through an IRIS partnership grant. Some of the contacts are with 'third world' countries, the USA and Canada, as well as within Europe. Contacts were made through meeting at conferences and delivering conference papers, through personal friendships, and through exchange of publications. It must be emphasised that although IRIS membership has been important and beneficial to all the organisations studied, it has not been their only channel of international contacts within the European Community, nor their only source of initial contact with the
- 5.17 Both NEWTEC and SEF receive large numbers of visitors and enquiries, sometimes from IRIS members but often from other organisations. SEF, located in a university department which is expected to be largely 'self-funding', has turned its popularity into a marketable product; it engages in consultancy work for other training organisations, and has produced a manual on the development of small business product/service ideas which it offers for sale. This has demonstrated that there is a market for publications which can be used to transfer good ideas about training from one organisation to another. The manual is now being translated into Italian. A further set of materials, 'Quality Training for Women Starting a Business' was developed by SEF for TECs and LECs, with

sponsorship from the Department of Employment. (They can be obtained from the Department of Trade & Industry, Small Firms Division, Room W814, Moorfoot, Sheffield S14PQ). Both WAMT and NEWTEC have made videos about their work, which will be shown at the IRIS Fair in Brussels in October. NEWTEC hopes to use its video for work with employers, starting with a launch at a meeting in the House of Commons to which major employers will be invited.

5.18 The four organisations have different approaches to their current international partnerships. For SEF, NOW partnership is seen very much as a two-way exchange; they will learn from their Spanish partners who have developed sophisticated methods of selecting participants for business training courses, and the Spanish and Italian partners will adapt SEF's teaching materials. In the case of NEWTEC, NOW partnership is more a question of technical assistance to the centre in Athens which NEWTEC is helping to set up. But it will also be a way of drawing NEWTEC closer to local employers in London, when NEWTEC exchanges trainees with the Greek project and hopes to meet a demand from London companies for bilingual staff. The Birmingham project wants to enable trainees to participate as fully as possible in its IRIS partnership project, and sees it as an opportunity to offer them the chance to learn Italian in order to contribute fully to the projects' main objectives. For WAMT, participation in NOW is seen as a welcome opportunity to do something which it badly wanted to do, but would otherwise have no money for. The transnational character of the project is not such an integral element as it is with the other NOW partnerships illustrated here - although WAMT's ideas for building contracting teams of women are a potentially exportable model.

5.19 The projects also 'network' at local and national level. Here WAMT has become well-known in London as an organisation able to help women to gain training for women in manual trades, and as a source of contact with experienced women to act as tutors. It has also done a lot of outreach work with schools on women's career choices, and its contribution to the book on gender stereotypes, produced by CREW in 1990, has provided a channel for WAMT's work in this area to reach an international audience. NEWTEC finds that some of its ideas on course evaluation are being adopted by the local TEC. SEF's training materials have been distributed widely in Britain after their publication was sponsored by TEED.

5.20 Most of the projects are part of a network of UK women's training projects which are funded by the European Social Fund. They benefit from the regular meetings of this network to discuss training practice and funding sources.

5.21 Various suggestions emerged from our conversations with the four projects about future work for IRIS. These included:-

- \* some 'in depth' publications about training methods; these should go into sufficient detail to be sure of telling experienced practitioners something new, but must be short and easy to read



- \* literature (and other forms of publicity, like videos) specifically aimed at employers**
- \* strategic work with employers at European level, including work on the need for childcare and ways of providing it**

## **6. CASE STUDIES**

### **THE BIRMINGHAM WOMEN'S WORKSHOPS (BWW)**

#### **1. Introduction**

The Birmingham Women's Workshops offer training to women throughout Birmingham in computer skills/electronics and carpentry. The centre aims to recruit women from a cross-section of communities in the city reflecting the ethnic mix in Birmingham. Women joining the courses offered by the Workshops need no prior experience or qualifications, except a basic level of written and spoken English.

Recruitment takes place on the basis of need, with special priority being given to women who are likely to encounter discrimination in other areas, such as black women, women with children, women with a disability, women carers, and women with few or no formal qualifications. Courses take place in term time, and are part-time, few enough hours per week to allow participating women to be eligible for benefits. In addition to directly vocational training, both courses also involve a complementary studies element including discussion and group work that looks at employment issues relevant to women, such as occupational segregation and low pay.

#### **2. The history of the Birmingham Women's Workshops**

The Birmingham Women's Workshop was set up as the result of a study carried out by a group of women from Birmingham investigating the need for training and support resources for women in the city. This research was carried out in 1984, in the tail end of the recession of the early eighties. Female unemployment in Birmingham increased considerably in this period as a result of the contraction of the manufacturing sector, whereas previously, unemployment in the city had been concentrated among men. The BWW was set up in 1985, with funding from the Economic Development Department of Birmingham City Council and the European Social Fund. A number of other organisations also arose from the work, including the Birmingham Women's Information and Advice Centre, and Womenprint, with which the BWW work closely.

Originally, the BWW aimed only to run taster courses in electronics and computer skills of a few days in a women only environment, with the intention of stimulating women to seek further training from conventional sources. However, feedback from women taking part in the courses indicated that women were in many cases not able to take part in these conventional courses. For this reason, the course length was increased, to a few weeks, then to three months, and in 1989 to six months - 19 weeks once school holidays are taken into account. From September 1992 courses will last for a year, still in term time only. Courses in manual skills were added to the computer/electronics courses in 1987.

Originally the BWW aimed to work on a co-operative, sharing basis in both learning and management. This ethos has changed somewhat in both areas during the life of the Workshop. The introduction of a qualification into the courses was very heavily favoured by students, who felt that it would give them increased credibility in their search for work; it is also now a requirement for ESF funding. However, the inclusion of a qualification and the need to follow a syllabus gives a more formal structure to the courses, and has to some extent encouraged a more competitive attitude within the groups of trainees.

The BWW's staff originally worked as a collective, with a non-hierarchical management and pay structure. This collective broke down in 1986, and as a condition of continued funding, the City Council required that the collective be disbanded, and replaced by hierarchical structures for both management and pay. In fact, the staff now work on a co-operative basis, recognising that each worker is a specialist in their own area.

#### Development of networking activities

The BWW joined IRIS in 1989. The extent to which they have participated in IRIS activities has increased during their time as members. Originally, they participated in the national evaluation meetings, but did not get involved in other IRIS activities. Over the last three years they have incorporated the IRIS e-mail system into the computer skills courses, received a publicity grant to produce a video publicising the workshop and taken part in an exchange visit to Holland. They have now received a partnership grant and are developing a partnership with an Italian project.

The BWW are members of the Women's Training Network, the informal network of training projects in the UK which are funded by the European Community. They also have informal links with a wide range of organisations throughout Birmingham, feeling that it is important to work closely with other community groups.

### **3. Funding, staffing and management**

#### Funding

BWW receive funding from two main sources; the European Social Fund and the Economic Development Department of Birmingham City Council. The project's income this year was £290,000, 55% from the City Council, and 45% from the ESF. Rent is no longer included by the ESF as an allowable claim, so the BWW have had to persuade the City Council to fund the £25,000 rent without matching funding. In the past, the City Council has underwritten the contribution from the ESF, giving the BWW the full amount of funding for each quarter, with the BWW returning the ESF contribution to the council when it is received. This principle is now in doubt; since ESF funding is often received up to two years in arrears, if the City Council cease to underwrite the BWW, they will have considerable cash flow difficulties.

## Staffing

There are nine staff; three tutors (carpentry, computing and electronics), who have all worked in the area in which they teach, a employment development worker, a Women's Support Worker, two part-time finance workers, an Administrative Resource Worker, and two Co-ordinators who job-share, one having responsibility for project co-ordination, and the other for training co-ordination. The staff work on a co-operative basis, with the co-ordinators monitoring outcomes. There is a weekly workers' meeting at which activities and any problems are discussed. The co-ordinators are responsible to the BWW Management Committee.

## Management

The steering group of women originally involved in setting up the project developed the management structure after visiting women's workshops already in existence, in particular the East Leeds Women's Workshop, and the South Glamorgan Women's Workshop. The BWW is registered with charitable status as an Industrial and Provident Friendly Society. Any woman resident in Birmingham with an interest in women's training can become a member of the society on paying a joining fee of £1. The management committee is elected from members of the society at the Annual General Meeting, and meets each month to set policy and monitor progress of finance and training.

## 4. **Current activities**

### The training courses

The BWW run two training courses at present, one in computing and electronics, and one in carpentry. In 1991-92 there were 9 students on the carpentry course and 24 on the computing and electronics course.

The carpentry course focuses on craft skills oriented towards self-employment, or further training in areas such as cabinet making rather than on carpentry for the construction trade. Women work on set projects for part of the course, then work on creating and constructing their own designs. This has caused problems in the design of a craft based carpentry level 2 NVQ with a view to being accredited as a centre for the qualification in the future.

The computer and electronics course aims to give women with no experience of computing both the skills to use computers, and an understanding of the way in which they work, through the electronics element. The computer work includes programming in BASIC and use of commercial software packages. Women have the opportunity to sit several examinations: City and Guilds, electronics, RSA computing and City and Guilds communication skills and numeracy. The workshop also has CAD facilities, and hope to include use of these in future

courses. They also hope to introduce programming in a language other than BASIC.

Women leaving the computer and electronics courses take a variety of routes. Some, mainly younger single women, have gone on to further training, including HNCs and degree courses. A few have gone into technician jobs, in some cases in factories where they have previously worked on an assembly line, and have then continued their training while employed. The majority, however, have moved into relatively low paid, traditionally female, office work. The BWW feel that this, while not breaking down gender barriers in employment, is still a 'non-traditional' route for the women concerned, who without the course would have few options other than factory work or cleaning jobs.

Both courses include a 'core skills' element. This includes work on job search skills, interview techniques, CV writing, and careers guidance. There is also personal effectiveness and confidence building work, which involves work on employment and legal issues affecting women and communication skills in speaking and writing. There is also work on numeracy skills. In addition to the careers guidance within the core skills element, the BWW also have a 'library' of material that students can refer to, and a careers guidance computer package that students can use.

The idea of the delivery of the core skills element is to create a group situation in which the tutor acts as a facilitator, providing some materials, such as videos, where the course students work through discussion and sharing of experiences and knowledge. All students have to take part in the core skills element of the course; if potential students are purely interested in the vocational side of the courses, the BWW will direct them towards suitable college courses. Equally, the BWW do not provide literacy or language training; if potential students do not have a reasonable level of written and spoken English, they are referred to other organisations which can provide this help, and offered a place for the following year's course. However, some teaching of English will be offered within the BWW from 1993, to reduce the need to refer women elsewhere.

All students are required to sign a 'Student Agreement' after the completion of their induction period, which involves working through and discussing the agreement. The agreement also discusses what the BWW will require from them in return. This includes an 80% attendance requirement. The agreement also lays out course contents and practical information about health and safety procedures, the allowances available and the running of the workshop.

Students take part in a six week work placement near the end of their course. In the past, a number of students have received job offers from their work placement employer; in 1990, 7 out of 20 students from the computer course received a job offer. The impact of the recession had reduced this, and none of the employers made a job offer in 1991 - but eight of the current (1992) students on placement have received job offers. The economic situation has made it more difficult for

the Employment Outreach Worker, who has responsibility for employer contact, to find placements. Half of the work placements are in with private sector employers, a quarter with the public sector, and a quarter with voluntary organisations. The students are visited once a fortnight, and as part of the agreement with the employer providing the placement, a private space is provided for discussion, to enable students to discuss any problems with the placement without the employer being present.

### The students

The BWW recruit throughout Birmingham, and aim to recruit a cross-section of the communities in the city. The ethnic origin of the students in the 1990-91 courses was:

African-Caribbean	33%
Asian	11%
White	56%

The BWW say that they have problems in recruiting Asian women. There is a possibility that facilities for teaching English as a foreign language may be introduced in the future, in the hope that this could help both in the recruitment of Asian women, and also allow the workshop to reach other ethnic communities in Birmingham.

Students generally have few or no formal qualifications, and most have not undertaken any vocational training. Three quarters of students had worked at some time within the last five years, all in traditionally female occupations. A third had previously been employed in bar and shop work, 17% in clerical work, 13% in manual work such as cleaning or factory work, and 13% in caring work.

The drop-out rate was 17%; the main reasons that women drop out are health problems, job offers and personal difficulties, including changes in family circumstances.

The courses are advertised in the local press and posters are displayed in community centres. However, word of mouth recommendations are also important to the workshop; a third of the women heard about the workshop from friends, neighbours or childminders. The workshop also has contacts with local organisations, makes presentations to groups, and holds open days.

### Childcare issues

Around three quarters of students are over 25, and over 80% have dependent children. The courses take place in school hours and run in term times only. The BWW also organise childcare for students, provided off site, generally by childminders. This was not a conscious choice; despite the internal design of the

building being carried out by a woman architect, and involving consultation, childcare facilities were forgotten until a late stage, when no space was available. However, they feel that there may be some benefits in having childcare away from the training centre, in that it helps students concentrate fully on the course. There is a very small on-site nursery facility at the workshop for emergency use, with trained staff on call if necessary.

The BWW regard childcare as a very important issue in the success of mothers in the course, and for this reason, a lot of emphasis is placed on the suitability of provision. The Women's Support Worker visits potential minders with the student and her children some time before the course begins and aims to create a situation in which women are confident about leaving their children in the care of the minder by the time the course starts in September.

#### Other help and support

The Women's Support Worker also helps women with any problems in areas such as housing, benefits or domestic violence. If the problems cannot be resolved, she has a network of contacts with individuals in the statutory and voluntary organisations in the city, and can refer women to other sources of help.

In addition to the childcare allowance, students also receive travelling expenses. There is no training allowance. The course runs for under 21 hours a week, which means that women in receipt of benefit can attend without losing their benefit entitlement. The BWW Employment Outreach Worker provides help in job search techniques as part of the 'core skills' element of the courses. The workshop buys local papers, and provides letter writing and other facilities to help women apply for jobs. Students also have access to careers guidance package.

#### Project outcomes

A high proportion of students completing the course go on to further study; a reflection of the introductory nature of the courses. The destinations of the 1990-91 students on leaving the course were:

Working	22%
Seeking employment	20%
Left early	17%
Other	8%

The 'other' category includes students who have left the country and those who have just had babies.

### The students' perspective

Past and present students of the BWW were asked to fill in a short questionnaire about their background, their views on the training, and their reasons for joining a training course. Twenty past and fourteen present students filled in the questionnaire.

#### *Background*

The women responding to the questionnaires were mainly over 25, with the majority being between 25 and 39. The present students were all coming to the end of a year long course, and were on work placement at the time the case study was carried out. The past students had mainly been on courses between 1989 and 1991, with a small number having taken part in a course in 1988. Before joining the Workshops, five of the women had been working part-time, four had been studying elsewhere, and the remainder had been unemployed or at home. Those who had been working had been in catering work, clerical work and cleaning. Those who were not working had last worked between one and twelve years before, in similar areas of work to those who were employed before joining the course. Students had found out about the project in roughly equal numbers from local advertising and by word of mouth.

#### *Childcare*

Nineteen of the women had young children, of whom ten had a child under five years old. All of the women with a child under five years old received financial help with childcare from the BWW, and all said that they would not have been able to attend a project that did not provide help with childcare. The on-site nursery at the BWW is very small, and used to provide emergency care only; five of the women had used this facility at some time. Generally, the students were happy with the childcare provision, although one commented that the on-site provision is less than ideal, as there is no space for children to run around.

Five of the women who have left the BWW are limited in the jobs that they can take by the need to fit in with school hours, or to be able to afford childcare. Of those still on the course, five hope to find work fitting in with school hours (one of whom says 'I resent having to do this'), two intend to use a child minder, and two hope to make arrangements with neighbours or relatives.

#### *Reasons for joining the BWW*

The past and the present students mainly wanted training in order to increase their job prospects and to learn new skills, and in some cases, for a chance to escape from looking after their family and 'do something for me'. Compared to the participants in the other training courses, women attending the BWW were particularly interested in the chance to obtain qualifications; eleven undertook training with this in mind. A smaller proportion joined a training course with the hope of increasing their confidence. Past students were asked whether they had



achieved their aims in joining the course; seven felt that they had, nine that they had 'to some extent', and two that they had not.

The support and facilities offered by the BWW were important to most of the students in deciding to join a course; the availability of childcare, and of a travel allowance were important to many of the students.

'supportive environment, non-competitive'

### *Benefits of the project*

The main benefits that the present students felt that they had gained from the project were new skills, confidence, and the chance to get away from the home or unemployment.

'Improved confidence, re-established a routine suitable to work hours'

If they had not joined the BWW, five of the students would have tried to join a different training project, and the remainder would have either stayed at home or continued to look for work.

Ten of the past students have been employed since leaving the BWW, some in more than one job. They have worked in clerical occupations, caring work, and community work. Four feel that their work is related to the training that they received at the BWW, five that the training helped them 'a lot' in finding work, and three that it helped 'a little'. Four received increased earnings, with the amount of the increase varying from under 10% to over 20%. Seven of the past students have undertaken further study.

The present students are optimistic about their chances of finding work, with all but one considering that their chances of finding work in the area that they have trained for are either 'good' or 'not bad'. This optimism is backed up, at least in the case of the computer related students by the fact that eight have received job offers from their work placement employers. All but one of the present students think that the period of work experience will be helpful to them in getting a job, and none have had any problems with their work placement.

### *Views on women-only training*

The students were fairly evenly divided between those who had particularly wanted to join a women-only project and those who had not. If the women-only course had not been available, most would have joined a mixed course offering similar training. Having taken part in the project, three quarters felt that the women-only training had been beneficial, mainly because of its supportive and relaxed atmosphere, and because many of the students were facing similar issues and problems.

'not intimidated by men'

'Easier to learn a traditionally male-dominated skill, supportive friendly environment'

### *Counselling and confidence building work*

Students generally found the counselling available at the BWW helpful, although some would have liked more information about planning their training and about their progress on the course, and some, more careers information. Many found work related advice particularly useful, including advice on what to do after leaving the course, and advice on dealing with work-related problems.

The majority of students found confidence building work very or quite useful; equal numbers would have liked more and less time to be spent on it. A few students felt that it was not at all useful, and five said that although it could have been helpful, it had not been well done. In general, the past students had found the confidence building work more useful than present students. This could be a reflection of the fact that this type of work is more useful in retrospect, once in a work situation. However, it may be that as the course has changed and lengthened, the confidence building element has deteriorated.

### *Ways in which the project could be improved*

Several of the past students would have liked the project to be longer - in fact, it has increased in length for 1991-1992, and now lasts for a year. None of the present students felt that the course was too short. A number of students would have liked to spend more of the time on specifically vocational areas, with some of the other areas being optional. Three felt that the course might benefit from being more organised. One (present) student felt that although the relationship between students and tutors was very good, the relationship between management and students could be improved:

'let the students choose which subjects they would like to study'

'possibly more time in the carpentry workshop as there is a lot to learn and a lot we don't have time for'

Asked for general comments, four students said that taking part in the project had given them the 'push' that was needed, two commenting that, although their jobs were not directly related to their training, it had helped them develop the right 'frame of mind'. A number of past students are now in further education, and three said that without the project, they would not have had the confidence to achieve this. Two others would like to go on to further study, but have had trouble finding the necessary funding:

'The project gave me confidence to go out and seek further education'

'Women need this workshop. It is helpful and is good especially for mothers of young children'

'I really feel it made a difference to my confidence'

### Constraints and problems

The BWW follows up students at 3 months, 6 months and a year after they have finished the course, and all former students are invited to the AGM. Ex-students are also able to use the resources of the workshop in terms of space, information and telephone/fax facilities while they are looking for work or further training. However, they do not receive help with childcare or travelling expenses once the course has finished. Childcare in the city costs on average £45 per week, and there is a 'transition period' between leaving the course, and being able to pay for childcare through income from employment from which some women are unable to escape. For this reason, the workshop would like to be able to set up a fund to help women in this situation until they are able to find work.

The BWW also find that students give a low priority to the core skills elements of the course which are not directly vocationally oriented. Students are asked to fill in an end-of-course evaluation questionnaire. In the evaluation from the 1990-91 course, students tended to rate the vocational training much more highly in terms of success than the communication and confidence building areas. In many cases the BWW feel that it is hard for women to realise that work in an office and involving computer type skills will still involve communication and group working.

They have found that the co-operative, group aspects of the course and the work on wider issues affecting women, which are an important part of the original ethos of the workshop are unpopular, and women often want to concentrate on individual work on vocational skills. To try to overcome this, they are intending to restructure the course to try to bridge the gap between the training environment and an atmosphere appropriate to a work environment, building the work on employment issues into this, to make it more relevant to the students.

### 5. The transnational dimension

The BWW took part in an exchange visit to Amsterdam, looking at the nature of women's employment. The IRIS element of the exchange visit was valuable; the BWW were particularly interested in the extent to which Dutch training projects network, and the emphasis on support to trainees after finishing their courses. The visit also gave an opportunity for the BWW to make contact with the Dutch delegate to another project that the BWW are involved in, which is being run through the EC by the Forum of Socialist Feminists. These additional European connections enabled the BWW to make full use of the time in Holland - they commented that projects which did not already have contacts in other countries

A partnership is being developed by the BWW carpentry course with an Italian project, funded by a £7,600 IRIS partnership grant. The partnership is based around environmental issues and awareness. The BWW carpentry course

involves craftwork and environmental issues. Their Italian partners, who run a design course particularly concentrating on architecture also try to consider environmental issues in their work. It will take place in two stages; the first stage involves visits by project staff, the production of induction materials, the development of a course programme for trainee exchanges and language training. The second stage involves an exchange of students and tutors as well as exchange and development of learning materials.

The experience of the BWW in IRIS activities, particularly the exchange, is that those without language skills are excluded from full participation, even where another participant is able to translate for them. For this reason, language training for both students and staff, although only at a basic level, is stressed in the partnership, in the hope of creating more equal participation in the Italian exchange.

The BWW also has frequent international contacts through visitors to the workshop. The contacts come from a range of sources; through Birmingham University, the Women's Enterprise Development Agency, the City Council and others. Recent visitors have included women from Zimbabwe and Kenya. They welcome the opportunity for networking and publicity that visitors to the workshop give. International contacts, and IRIS in particular, also give an opportunity for small projects such as the BWW to have a voice in the international arena. They feel that the dependence of women's training in the UK on small voluntary organisations makes the existence of networks particularly important in giving credibility to these small groups, and in helping them demonstrate the range of things that they can achieve despite their size.

## 6. The lessons of the Birmingham Women's Workshops' experience

The BWW emphasise continuing support for students once they have finished a course, through the provision of facilities for job search in particular. They are considering the possibility of extending this element of their work. They note in particular the practical difficulties of a transition period of job search, where women may not be able to afford transport costs or childcare. They are also impressed by the mutual support network seen in Dutch projects, where ex-students encourage each other to apply for jobs, and build up each others confidence. They mention the difference that can be seen between men and women looking for a job;

'The woman will see a list of ten things, and think "I can't do all of those - I can't apply", the man will see the same list, and think "I can do two of those - I could do that job'

The core theme element of the BWW is courses attempts to create an opportunity for women to discuss these types of problems. They have had difficulty, though in persuading students of the value of this part of the course; raising questions about the extent to which this confidence and mutual help can be created, and to what extent it has to emerge from the group of women concerned.

A relatively high proportion of women leaving the computing and electronics courses at the BWW move into administration and clerical work rather than 'non-traditional' occupations. The aim of the BWW is to train women for non-traditional work; however, they feel that this is not entirely a failure. Given the background of many of the women who come to the workshops, administrative or clerical work, although low paid, represents a great improvement in pay and conditions on the work that they would otherwise have been able to find.

The courses offered at the BWW have constantly changed and developed in response to the comments of students and the experience of staff. At the end of their training course, students are asked to fill in a questionnaire evaluating course content and style of presentation, tutors delivery of the course, training materials and other aspects of the training environment, right down to practical matters such as whether the lighting levels are adequate. This gives the BWW a considerable amount of information about the attitudes of students to the course. Where there are problems, they make changes and develop the course, as in their attempt to try to bridge the gap between a training course environment and a work environment, making the basic skills element more relevant to students.

## **NEWHAM WOMEN'S TRAINING AND EDUCATION CENTRE**

### **1. Introduction**

Located in a part of East London where a large minority of the population are of Asian or Afro-Caribbean origin, NEWTEC provides a good example of women's training in a multi-cultural environment. A thorough-going equal opportunities policy has ensured strong representation of black and ethnic minority women amongst the trainers and administrative staff of the centre as well as the trainees.

NEWTEC maintains a close relationship with the London East TEC, and it also has strong links with several employers. It manages to combine this approach with being very 'trainee-centred', helping trainees to identify routes to the most satisfying type of employment which they can realistically aim for, and to reach a point where they can apply for further courses outside the centre on the same technical level, and with the same self-confidence, as male applicants.

NEWTEC is also of interest because of its on-site nursery, and its involvement in development of childcare services in the locality, including training of childminders.

### **2. The history of NEWTEC**

Newham Women's Training and Education Centre (NEWTEC) started in 1983, and has been fully operational as a training centre since April 1984. It was started by a small group of women trainers who recognised that the official government training centres of the period (the Skills Centres then run by the Manpower Services Commission) had mainly male staff and attracted mainly male students, leading to a social and educational environment which was hard for women to enter. The group set up a 'pre-training' course exclusively for women, to help to prepare them for training in manual trades. The announcement in 1985 that Skills Centres were to be gradually wound up strengthened NEWTEC's case for more training facilities for women. It applied to the Greater London Council for funds to set up a course for women to learn construction trades. At this stage the project was very small; it had three staff and operated from two rooms at the back of a church. In 1986 the Greater London Council was abolished, and NEWTEC had to look for new sources of funds.

Gradually during the 1980s, NEWTEC has developed a wide range of courses in computing, electronics, design and technology, and bricklaying, as well as introductory or 'taster' courses in manual trades, childcare services, and pre-vocational courses, e.g. Business Cc

In 1988 NEWTEC developed a plan for an innovatory project to train women in computing, electronics and related skills. The course was to last one year for each trainee group, 24 women at one time. It included building and testing of

electronic circuits, programming and use of software packages, and led to City and Guilds certificate no. 726. They obtained a grant from the European Social Fund as an 'innovative' training scheme, which covered half the cost for three years, and the local authority, Newham Borough Council, provided the rest. In January 1992, the New Technology course was redesigned, to respond to changing technological developments and a recognition of the growing importance of CAD/CAM in the local car industry and other sectors. Under the new title of 'Design and Technology', it now includes practical training in computer aided design and robotics, an examination of design methods, a practical 'design and build' project and a six-week work placement.

With additional funds from Urban Programme, NEWTEC was able to finance the purpose-built training centre from which it now operates, and which also houses a nursery for trainees' and staff's children. This has become the springboard for a number of actions to improve the quality of childcare services in the local community, such as setting up a local Childcare Forum which draws together the local authority's Social Services Department, childminders, the local Training and Enterprise Council and private companies who provide childcare for their employees or are interested in doing so.

As one of a 'generation' of women's training projects funded by the ESF in the late 1980s, which were at the forefront of developments in women-only training, NEWTEC has been continuously active in the Women's Training Network, the network of women's training projects in the UK which are funded by the ESF. NEWTEC joined IRIS in 1990.

### **3. Funding, staffing and management**

NEWTEC's budget for 1991 was over £400,000, of which £137,410 came from the ESF, £152,936 from the London Borough of Newham, and small amounts from contract work carried out for the London East TEC and from donations from London Electricity and British Telecom. Part of the Newham element is, in turn, provided by the Department of the Environment under the Inner Area Programme. Newham Community College pays the part-time tutors' salaries for some evening classes and one of the day-time courses; these funds are in addition to the main grant from the local authority.

NEWTEC is one of the partners in the London Borough of Newham's bid for the special Department of the Environment grants programme, City Challenge. This grant will enable the project to extend its building and develop additional training activities, including more work with young women and with refugees.

NEWTEC has 26 staff, of whom 9 are tutors, 5 are in management and administration, 9 run the nursery and there is also a cook and two housekeepers. The balance of staff in different functions illustrates how complex is the organisation of a project which serves at least 150 daytime trainees per year, several evening and short courses, and also 30 children at any one time.

### How the centre is run

NEWTEC is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. It does, however, plan to set up a 'for profit' subsidiary company which will provide training services on contract to the TEC and to local companies. This is seen as a way of securing future funding at a time of continuing uncertainty about the future of local authority finance. NEWTEC also has strong links with local employers, who provide support both through funding, placements for students and advice on course content.

Receiving such a large proportion of the organisation's funds from the European Community does not make the 'cash flow' easy. Sometimes the European grant arrives as much as eighteen months late. Fortunately, so far NEWTEC have been able to make an arrangement to borrow from the local authority to tide them over until the ESF money comes.

The project is run by a 12-person management committee, all women. Amongst them are representatives of the local authority, Newham Community College, local employers, a consultant on women's training and other women drawn from the local community. Apart from the four members coopted to represent the local authority or employers, the committee is elected by an association of over 120 individual women and three community groups. Any woman who is interested in the Centre, including existing trainees and ex-trainees, can join the association subject to the acceptance of their membership by the existing committee.

### Equal opportunities policy

The project tries to ensure that black women, lesbians, working class women and women with disabilities are properly represented on the management committee. This is only one aspect of NEWTEC's equal opportunities policy, which is an important theme permeating its work at all levels. NEWTEC recognises that the local community which the Centre serves is an ethnically diverse one, including in particular many people of Afro-Caribbean, Bangladeshi, and Somali origin. Many of the black and ethnic minority trainees who use the Centre were born in Britain; sometimes their parents or grandparents were too. Others came to London as small children and have been educated there. Others have come to the country as adults, often with limited proficiency with the English language in order to progress in their careers. NEWTEC tries to make sure that black and ethnic minority women are represented in the project at all levels - in management, amongst the teaching and administrative staff, the nursery helpers, and of course amongst the trainees. It has a formal statement of its Equal Opportunities Policy, which is reproduced in the box below. This policy refers to the steps taken to avoid discrimination or difficulty of access arising from ethnic or national origins and several other factors - age, religion, disability, sexuality, class, marital status, trade union membership or political beliefs. In addition to the actions shown in the box, NEWTEC refers to the Equal Opportunities Policy in its formal written agreement with each trainee. It undertakes to comply with the policy and requires trainees to refrain from



behaviour or language which is racist, which offends against another person's culture or beliefs, or which is offensive to people with disabilities or to lesbians.

### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY**

Newham Women's Training and Education Centre is an Equal Opportunities Employer and is committed to take positive action to redress discrimination. The Centre seeks to provide genuine equality of opportunity for women who may have been discriminated against on the grounds of sex, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, marital status, class, disability, sexuality, age, trade union activity, political or religious beliefs. The Centre will strive to ensure that no job or course application, existing employee, trainee or management committee member suffers direct or indirect discrimination in relation to their terms and conditions of employment, recruitment and selection, training and career opportunities.

In order to do this, the Centre will ensure that:-

1. Its courses and activities are designed to positively encourage and benefit women from all disadvantaged groups.
2. All recruitment and selection will take place according to Equal Opportunities procedures.
3. All publicity and information will include positive images of women from all disadvantaged groups and will reflect that Newham is a multi-racial community.
4. Black women, lesbians, working class women and women with disabilities are properly represented on the Management Committee.
5. Effective records are kept and the policy is monitored every six months. This will include monitoring of recruitment and selection procedures and the composition of staff, trainees and Management Committee members at NEWTEC.

#### **4. Current activities**

##### The range of courses

The two oldest courses, the Return to Work and New Technology (now renamed 'Design and Technology'), are now only a part of what NEWTEC does. Besides these, there are two other courses which have been registered as IRIS projects;

the Bricklaying course and the 'Women into Business' course. The last of these is known to the Centre and its trainees as 'Business Computing'.

In addition to the four IRIS courses, the Centre has run in the recent past a special daytime course called 'Computing with Language Support' for women whose first language is not English. This was intended to meet the needs of some ethnic minority women whose English is not strong enough to make good progress on the 'Business Computing' course. It included teaching in English as a second language, whereas the English tuition on the 'Business Computing' course itself is not specifically oriented towards those with a different mother tongue. Although tutors for Business Computing feel that more ESL support is needed, NEWTEC has not been able to run the special course again because of financial constraints.

In addition to the daytime courses, NEWTEC runs evening classes when funds are available in word processing, management topics for women, and computerised book-keeping. These classes are dependent on part-time tutors' salaries being paid by the local college. They are currently planning to offer a series of evening classes on a cost recovery basis.

As part of its policy to promote good quality childcare services, NEWTEC runs a four day introductory course for childminders, in conjunction with L.B. Newham's Social Services Department. Three such courses were held in 1991-2. Covering finance, careers guidance and the needs of children, the course is intended to help women decide whether childminding is the right choice of work for them, and how to go about setting up as a registered childminder.

#### *The Design and Technology Course*

The course in Design and Technology (formerly called New Technology) lasts for 42 weeks, running from January to December. Trainees get the same holidays as their children do at the local schools. It covers both electronics and computing skills, including circuit building, digital electronics, microprocessor applications, computer applications, programming in PASCAL, robotics, computer hardware and communications. It also includes the theory and practice of design, so that trainees can understand how computers are used for design. Thus it covers innovation training, patent law, how to do market research, product development, marketing and presentation. Each trainee carries out a design project, which can be either hardware (electronics) related or software (programming) related. CAD software and a plotter are available, as well as desk top publishing software. They are encouraged to carry out research into products needed by the community, for example disabled groups. The bias is on the electronics side of the course rather than on use of software packages, although trainees may work for computer programming exams by themselves through open learning if they wish. Accreditation is through City and Guilds 726 modules, BTEC First award and BTEC National modules.

Technical training is supplemented by classes in English, maths, and personal development including careers guidance.

There is a practical work placement with an employer for six weeks at the end of the course. Suitable employers are sought through the Centre's open days and by contact with London East TEC. There is a formal exchange of letters between NEWTEC and the employer to set up the placement, and employers are asked to commit themselves to providing training with appropriate supervision. Employers are also asked to complete an evaluation form at the end of the placement period. Several placement employers have offered trainees jobs. One trainee is now employed as a graphic designer, by her former placement provider, earning £10 per hour. Previous to this course she had no computing experience.

### *Business Computing*

This course lasts three months, without a work placement. It covers applications packages such as word processing, spreadsheet, and database work, as well as maths and English, assertion training and personal development. Qualifications achieved include RSA, CLAIT, Number-power and Wordpower. The English class is used, inter alia, to complete the course progress diaries. A recent tutor's evaluation report found that the diary system worked well for some trainees, but that others needed a more structured format for the diary in order to draw out their thoughts. Careers guidance is dealt with within the personal development period, but the same report finds that it really needs more time and a specific 'slot' for looking at trainees' future aspirations and how to achieve them. Trainees' plans at the end of the course were very varied. A few were related to business courses or computing; two women wanted to do further business studies, one has a place for an accounting course and one for a computing course. Six others wanted to do further study, but not in related areas - 'access' courses leading to a degree, sociology, teaching, health visiting, counselling. One trainee had obtained a job and four out of fifteen were unsure what they would do next.

### *Return to Work*

This is the oldest of the courses run by NEWTEC. Originally, as mentioned in the introduction, its foundation was a response to the male-dominated nature of training for construction trades. It was acted as a 'basic' course of technical pre-training for women who wanted to enter manual trades. Owing to the recession in construction work, the demand for this kind of 'pre-training' has diminished, but the course has developed quite a different function. It has been found that a three-month introduction to manual trades, including some challenging projects like building a brick wall single-handed, is a very valuable way of improving women's self-confidence and also a useful context in which to help them improve English and maths. A bonus is that they may be able to save a lot of money by doing their own house repairs afterwards. The course covers carpentry, plastering, electronics, plumbing, bricklaying, motor mechanics and computing - as well as English, maths and careers as support subjects. Women must take all the subjects. They can try for exam passes in English and maths (AEB and RSA

Numeracy), and NEWTEC also gives its own certificate at the end of the course. The course runs for thirteen weeks, and there are three courses per year each with 15-20 training places. As with the Design and Technology course, at least 70% enter further training afterwards.

A different kind of pre-training course is also run on contract to the London East TEC, under Employment Training arrangements. This involves maths, English, careers and computing.

### *Bricklaying*

The bricklaying course lasts one year, leading to City and Guilds certificates. It takes 16 trainees. There are no entry requirements. Trainees attend Newham Community College for technical classes, on four days per week. The technical training is done 'off-site' because there are no facilities for it in NEWTEC's building, but it is done with female tutors in an all-female group. For the fifth day of the week, trainees attend NEWTEC for 'support' classes - English, maths, personal development and careers guidance.

This study does not cover the bricklaying course because it was not in session when the research was carried out in late June.

### The approach to teaching

The approach to teaching is above all 'women-friendly'. Tutors are always female, and try to present technical subjects in a way which women will find manageable and non-alienating. For example, it has been found that the way in which women are taught maths often puts them off because it is too abstract, so in the maths selection test for the Design and Technology course, the examples deal with food.

Tutors find that women are often frightened by the unfamiliarity and complexity of working with computers, particularly hardware aspects. From its earliest days, NEWTEC's approach has been one of helping women challenge their own doubts about whether they can learn technical skills. The 'Return to Work' course uses the challenge of construction work and motor mechanics to develop women's self-confidence generally, and the Design and Technology course seems to have a similar effect. The replies which trainees gave on their questionnaires indicated that gain in self-confidence was one of the main benefits of both courses. The key to achieving this gain seems to be the process of tackling a 'male' task in an all-female environment, with a female tutor as a positive role-model.

Personal development is included as a 'support' subject on all the courses. It is concerned with career choices and ways of finding jobs, as well as with 'assertiveness' training.

NEWTEC is gradually formalising the concept of an individual training plan for each trainee, although there is no distinct time-slot reserved for making the plan,

as with ET. There is strong emphasis on regular personal tutorials, and on monitoring trainees' progress in a way which reinforces them. Each trainee keeps a 'progress diary' in which they write down each week what they have learned. The tutor suggests the format of the diary and discusses its content in tutorials.

There is also a formal agreement between NEWTEC and the trainee. As well as the 'equal opportunities' code of conduct, it covers punctuality, rules about absence from classes and about use of the nursery. Regular attendance is a condition of continuing with a course, because 'slack' trainees could deny someone on the waiting list a place.

Accreditation is considered to be important. When NEWTEC first started, the Centre issued its own course completion certificates. But trainees wanted something which was recognised of a widely known national system of qualifications. Now the course completion certificate is still given, but trainees also obtain a wide range of certificates from external examining bodies - BTEC, City and Guilds, RSA, etc.

All trainees have a slot in their timetable for 'personal development' - assertiveness training, guidance on future careers and training, and job-finding techniques. They can also have individual careers advice sessions if they want them. There is a library with several shelves of information about careers and opportunities for further training.

Follow-up of trainees on the Design and Technology and Business Computing courses is achieved through open workshops which they can attend to brush up their skills, resolve a problem or simply to keep in touch. This is also an opportunity for tutors to advise them about seeking work or further training. Childcare is provided for these sessions.

### Trainee selection

NEWTEC maintains a strong 'equal opportunities' approach to trainee recruitment and selection. The project is open to all women without any requirement of formal qualifications. Trainees' characteristics are monitored through application forms to make sure that black and ethnic minority women, those from disadvantaged social groups and those with disabilities are well represented. Priority is given in selection to these groups and to lone parents. About 60-70% of trainees are lone parents, and about 60% from ethnic minorities. The building has been designed so as to give good access for women with disabilities, and special equipment is used when needed in classes, for example for those with hearing difficulties.

Women get in touch with NEWTEC as a result of the Centre's advertising in the local community and at open days where they can talk to staff and do 'taster' sessions in the kind of work involved in various courses. Two open days last

year attracted altogether over 200 visitors. The Centre is popular in the area and there is a waiting list for most courses.

Selection is mainly by interview, although for the 'Design and Technology' course, where a higher general educational level is required than for the other courses, an English and maths test is given to applicants.

#### Evaluation methods

NEWTEC lays considerable emphasis on self-evaluation of its work. Tutors hold regular course meetings to obtain feedback on the curriculum and teaching methods from their 'customers'. Trainees keep diaries of their progress, which are used in regular individual sessions with a tutor to review how they are getting on. Personal tutorials take place every six weeks. At the end of each course, a questionnaire for each trainee is used as an evaluation tool, and tutors use this and the diaries to write regular reports every 13 weeks on how the course is going.

In the case of the 'New Technology' course, a follow-up questionnaire is currently being sent to trainees a year after they have left the course, to see what has happened to them.

#### The trainees' perspective

Seventeen participants on NEWTEC courses (six on 'Return to Work' and eleven on 'Design and Technology') were asked to fill in a questionnaire, about their background, their reasons for joining NEWTEC, and their views of the project. Eight women who have participated in NEWTEC courses in the past (four on 'Return to Work' and four on 'New Technology' also filled in questionnaires, asking them similar questions, and also about their experiences since leaving the project.

Out of all 25 women, only four had been working before joining the project. Most had been looking after their children and had not worked for two to four years at the time they joined.

Sixteen of the 25 women had children under 14, with the youngest aged between one and eight years old. None of these 16 would have been able to attend a project which did not provide help with childcare. Thus, its availability was one of the main reasons why they had chosen NEWTEC. Obviously, at some stage, several participants had compared NEWTEC with the alternative option of Employment Training. But three or four of those on the 'Return to Work' course commented that job centres 'were not much help' to mothers looking for work, and had not given them help in identifying suitable training courses either. One had chosen NEWTEC in preference to ET, and according to tutors this not infrequently happens. The guarantee of free childcare was obviously a major attraction of NEWTEC.

Additionally, fourteen out of 25 respondents said they preferred a women-only course. Tutors reported that this is particularly important for Muslim women, who are sometimes told by their families that they should not attend mixed training courses like the ones available at Newham Community College. Having attended a women-only course, 18 out of 25 had found that this feature was helpful to them, saying, for example:-

'women tend to be less competitive'

'everyone is on the same level'

'not put off by men who think they know it all'

'women understand other women's problems'

They felt that the group had been more supportive than would have been the case with a mixed group:-

'meeting other mothers helped a great deal'

'I needed to boost my self-confidence - men would only undermine it'

The main benefits of the projects were perceived as gaining skills and qualifications, and the chance to develop confidence. Only two of the seventeen current trainees think that they could have got any of these benefits without attending the project, in both cases by attending other courses. Twelve of the seventeen think that it will be easier for them to get work after attending the course. If they had not joined NEWTEC, only three participants would have tried to join another course. Nine would have continued either to stay at home, or to be unemployed/looking for work, one would have continued in an unsatisfactory job, and the remainder didn't know what they would have done.

Many of the participants commented on the easy availability of support and help from the project staff in dealing with any problems. Of advice that they were given, eight found advice on what to do after leaving the course particularly helpful, six, advice on how their work on the course was going, and five, help and advice on benefits or financial issues.

Work on building up self-confidence was popular. None of the participants found it unhelpful, and six of the present and five of the past trainees felt that it had helped them a lot. Three participants said that it had not been particularly important to them, but that they thought it had helped some other participants. The eleven others all found it 'quite useful'. Five of the present trainees would like more time to be spent on this sort of work.

#### *Ways in which the project could be improved*

Many of the participants felt that there were no aspects of the courses that needed changing. One of the main suggestions from those who felt there were some ways in which the courses could be improved does not involve the content of the courses; five of the participants felt that NEWTEC should have more money, to enable it to offer places to more women, and run a wider variety of courses.

There were some other suggestions; three participants would have liked different paces for the maths and English elements, perhaps having two levels of maths, to allow some participants to take it to a higher level and starting English with a 'gentle introduction'. Two (both 'Return to Work') felt that the course might benefit from longer hours and stricter timekeeping. Two of the past participants would have liked some form of post-course help with childcare, two a more concentrated course with fewer subjects, and one more follow-up.

Asked for general comments on NEWTEC, several participants mentioned the motivation they had got from the courses that they had taken part in, and in particular, the opportunity that it had given many participants to go on to further education.

'It's my new lease of life'

'knowledge and support for any woman from any background of any age'

'Encourages you to seek higher education'

'I only wish it were bigger'

Past participants were also asked about their experiences after leaving NEWTEC;

'I am commencing a degree...in October 1992. One year ago I would never have dreamed this possible'

'If I hadn't been on the project, I wouldn't have a job'

#### What trainees achieve at the end of their courses

As stated earlier, 'accreditation' is an important part of the teaching approach. All courses provide a certificate or diploma, and often a logical progression of the national certification systems - BTEC, City and Guilds, or RSA. At least 70-80% of trainees do pass their exams, and thus take away with them a certificate which can be recognised by employers or other training providers as corresponding to a certain curriculum and standard.

In the Design and Technology course, the exam pass rate is even higher -in the second group of trainees, who graduated in 1990, 92% passed their City and Guilds exams, and many also received passes in the RSA maths exam and the AEB English.

In the 1989 group of 'new technology' trainees, who graduated in February 1990, 41% went on to further education and training by the following autumn, and 41% went into work. Perhaps because of the downturn in the labour market, more trainees amongst the 1991 leavers went into further education; from that group it was 70-80%.

To look at the full impact of the training courses on trainees' lives, one would have to follow through what they did over several years. Because of the expense of childcare, many participants cannot start work until their youngest child is at



least five, and sometimes not until the children are old enough to come and go from school by themselves. One trainee interviewed said:-

**'This is my main worry. I feel that I will never be able to afford to work, as childcare is too expensive'.**

This fear is substantiated by the experiences of the former trainees who completed postal questionnaires for us, several of whom are 'very limited' in the work they can do because of the need for childcare. Thus, many trainees are investing in their future but will not be able to realise the value of this investment until their children are older.

Although relatively few of the 'design and technology' trainees are attracted to seek work in 'hardware' related specialisms - only two out of the sixteen who left last year have been looking for work in this field - those who do may obtain relatively high salaries. On a salary scale of £12,000 to £15,000, achieved by one of last year's leavers, women can jump out of the 'poverty trap' imposed by the need to pay for childcare.

Looking at the sample of questionnaires again, four of the past participants (two from each course, 'Return to Work' and 'Design and Technology') have been in employment since leaving the project, two in clerical jobs, one in telesales, and one as a school midday assistant. Three (ex - 'New Technology' course) have been on an Access course for higher education, one of whom is starting a degree course in October 1992 and one (ex - 'Return to Work' course) has been on a further computing course. Of the four who have been in employment, only one felt that her job was related to the training received at NEWTEC - she had done 'Return to Work' which helped her a lot with English and maths, and had become a telesales assistant. *None felt that their earnings had increased as a result of attending the project.* This, together with the 'trainee outcome' information for the 'Design and Technology' course, suggests that the main benefit of both these courses (this one and the 'Return to Work') should be measured in terms of gaining access to further training. One of the past participants, now entering a university course, wrote that 'a year ago I would never have dreamed this would be possible'.

The drop-out rate from NEWTEC's courses is low. In the current 'Design and Technology' group, sixteen trainees started the course and half-way through it, three have left, two for health reasons and one because she decided that she was studying in the wrong area. In the first group (leaving 1990) only one person dropped out - to have a baby.

#### How trainees are financed

NEWTEC appreciates that trainees work best if they are not distracted by financial worries. However, it has been hard to obtain as much money for trainee allowances as they would like. At present, only the trainees on the Design and Technology course have an allowance which is co-financed by the European

Social Fund. Its level is £15 per week, an amount which corresponds to the upper limit of non-benefit income which lone parents and the very long-term unemployed can receive before deductions are made from their income support.

The only other trainees who receive an allowance, within the Centre, are those who are on Employment Training. In this case they get £10 over and above their income support or unemployment benefit entitlement.

All trainees in the Centre do however get financial help with their travel costs, and if they have a child under five years old they can either have a free place in the project nursery, or a cash allowance to cover the cost of paying a registered childminder.

Tuition at the Centre is free.

Since 60-70% of trainees are lone parents, virtually all of them and some others as well are dependent on welfare benefits. Those who have no dependent children must be 'available for work' in order to comply with the rules for claiming benefit. NEWTEC is conscious of this and designs the daytime courses so that formal classes only occupy up to 21 hours per week, permitting trainees to study and claim benefit under the '21 hour rule'. Advice on benefit claims is given by project staff on request.

#### Childcare services

The idea that childcare services should be free and available to all trainees, as well as being of good quality, is central to NEWTEC's approach. If children cannot be accommodated in the nursery, a cash allowance to cover the cost of a registered childminder is paid instead. At present the nursery caters mainly for the 3-5 age group - the quota for younger children is very limited - but with the new building, it should be possible to provide places for 12 babies.

Nursery work has developed into a learning programme for the children; it is felt important that the nursery should be a real nursery school, rather than merely a creche, and its change in status has recently been recognised by the local authority. The multi-cultural character of the community is reflected in the way the nursery is run, with a number of ethnic minority staff, and celebration of the Bangladeshi festival, Diwali, as well as Christmas.

For mothers of children of school age, NEWTEC pays a cash allowance where necessary to hire someone to fetch the child home from school.

NEWTEC has set an example for other employers in the area by making the nursery available to staff - but they pay half the cost, whilst to trainees the service is free.

The Centre's childminding courses and its work through the Childcare Forum, mentioned in the 'history' section earlier, are ways through which NEWTEC seeks to promote good quality childcare in the community as a whole.

## **5. The transnational dimension**

### **Participation in IRIS activities**

NEWTEC has been a member of IRIS since 1990. NEWTEC was originally attracted to participate in the network in 1989, when a staff member attended a meeting organised by ELISE in France, to look at local economic development initiatives. This led to an invitation to speak at a further ELISE conference in Barcelona, where Mary Conneely, NEWTEC's current director, met a Danish member of IRIS. Mary was later asked to speak at the Manchester conference of IRIS in 1991. NEWTEC has hosted visits by Greek and German projects to the UK, as well as having numerous informal contacts with IRIS projects looking for information and ideas. She has visited projects in Germany and Denmark. These visits did lead to some new ideas for course development and improving the training environment; Mary was impressed with the way in which the Danish projects she visited used creativity, music and art in enriching both women's development and the atmosphere of the training centre. But she felt that on the whole women's training projects in the UK seemed to be ahead of their sisters on the continent. She was surprised to see hardly any ethnic minority women training in Frankfurt, and felt that there was a certain amount of 'creaming' in German projects.

At national level, NEWTEC is a member of the Women's Training Network, the grouping of UK projects funded by the ESF which now takes part in the selection process for new ESF projects in the voluntary sector, together with the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and the Industrial Common Ownership Movement (ICOM). WTN membership overlaps closely with IRIS.

NEWTEC benefitted from an IRIS publicity grant to make a video about their work. London Electricity also contributed to its cost. It will be given a first showing at a meeting for employers at the House of Commons in October.

Mary Conneely would like to see IRIS do more strategic work with employers at European level. She would also like to see closer links between IRIS and other European programmes, and NEWTEC itself is looking for an opportunity to get involved with FORCE. She hopes that models could be found within European networks for development of women's CAD/CAM training, a field which will be important for NEWTEC's future.

### **NEWTEC's NOW partnership**

Through IRIS, NEWTEC was approached by a Greek organisation, the ADA Women's Technology Centre in Athens, to help them develop new curricula and partnerships with employers. Through a Greek colleague who was working in

Bremen, ADA brought in the Bremen partner, BBI, and Softwarehaus in Frankfurt. (BBI was not previously a member of IRIS but now wants to join). Under the auspices of NOW, the three organisations will engage in exchanges of trainers and trainees and in joint curriculum development. Greek trainees could be snapped up by London companies looking for bilingual staff, and London East TEC have already expressed an interest in helping to place them for work experience placements.

## 6. The lessons of NEWTEC's experience

NEWTEC's approach to training can be considered an important example of how to address the problem of 'creaming' so often observed in training for the unemployed. It has demonstrated that an open access policy, without formal entry requirements in terms of educational qualifications, can lead to a majority of trainees gaining access to further education, even though most of those trainees are from disadvantaged groups like ethnic minorities and single parents. From trainees' and tutors' comments it appears that an all-female environment is a key factor in this success, although a research design involving control groups would be needed to test this rigorously.

This process is not, however, cheap. NEWTEC's budget works out at something approaching £4000 per trainee, including childcare. Alternatively, its costs are around £165 per trainee-week. This would be considered on the high side for Employment Training, which has however been generally considered very tightly funded. On the other hand, it is not expensive by comparison with other high-quality training projects in Britain which we studied for the ERGO programme such as, for example, Edinburgh Women's Training Centre (also an IRIS project and also training in computer skills and electronics), at over £7,000 per trainee per year if the cost of trainee allowances are excluded, and the Waltham Forest Vocational Training Initiative, at £4,165 per trainee-year for office skills, including childcare but not trainee allowances.

NEWTEC's 'positive outcomes' should not, however, be taken as any but the most crude indicators of the project's achievements. Although relatively few of NEWTEC's trainees get jobs straight away at the present time, this has to be interpreted against the background of the current London labour market, which has seen a significant increase in unemployment during the last year, including a 'shake out' in white collar occupations like computer programming which had been thought of as 'skill shortage' areas only two or three years ago. In these circumstances, to spend time in further training is an option chosen by many jobseekers. The most significant achievement of NEWTEC is that it puts disadvantaged women on a more level 'playing field' with men or with middle-class women in seeking access to further training, thus it provides them with an escape route from the poverty trap created by the combination of high-cost childcare and low wages for unskilled work. As stated earlier, many women are investing in their future by training even though they will find it very difficult to work until their children are older because of the lack of affordable childcare services once they have started work. This lack of childcare services emerges as

perhaps the largest obstacle to ex-trainees' employment, and NEWTEC are therefore doing everything they can to address it by trying to get employers interested in this problem.

## **THE SCOTTISH ENTERPRISE FOUNDATION**

### **1. Introduction**

The Scottish Enterprise Foundation has achieved a significant reputation throughout Europe for its work in helping women to enter self-employment and small business management. It was a founder member of the IRIS network and has since promoted four IRIS projects:-

Enterprise Training for Women, launched in 1987; a course for unemployed women or 'returners' wishing to start up in business

Women Business Advisors, launched in 1987; a course for unemployed women with higher educational qualifications to enter the field of giving professional advice to small enterprises

Action Learning for Women, launched in 1988; a training programme in advanced managerial skills, run on a distance learning basis for women already working in an enterprise

Business Training for Women; launched in 1991, this course leads to a university certificate in the management of small and medium sized enterprises.

### **2. The history of the Scottish Enterprise Foundation**

The Scottish Enterprise Foundation was set up in the early 1980s within the Business Management Department of Stirling University. It carries out a wide range of training, research and consultancy activities related to enterprise promotion and business skills, concentrating on the needs of small enterprises in Scotland. The Women's Enterprise Unit was set up within the SEF in 1986, to encourage and enable more women in Scotland to take up business ownership and be effective in this role. It has come to occupy a leading position in the development of good practice in women's enterprise training in the UK.

The SEF has concentrated on pioneering innovative approaches in enterprise training, research and consultancy for women business owners and their proprietors. In particular, it has examined the specific problems that women face in business ownership, and the strategies which they use to overcome these problems successfully.

Women are severely under-represented in the business world in Scotland, whether as owners or managers, or as business advisors. SEF seeks to address this under-representation and the specific problems faced by women in business, by means of its courses, publicity and information work, research and dissemination of teaching materials. It emphasises training of women in all-female groups and careful integration of 'personal development' with business skills learning.

### **3. Funding and staffing of SEF activities**

The SEF has very little 'core funding' from the university. 95% of its income is obtained from grants and contract work which it has sought outside of 'core funding'. It has sponsorship from seven large private sector companies, and from two district councils in Scotland, as well as elements of funding from several European programmes. It does training work on contract to several LECs (local enterprise companies - the equivalent in Scotland of the Training and Enterprise Councils in England and Wales, these organisations are the vehicles for delivery of state-funded training programmes). Its research work is also funded on a contract basis. Most contracts have to be won by competitive tender; for this reason, information about the costs of SEF's activities is commercially sensitive and this is why it has not been included here. Out of the Foundation's income of just over £1.2 million in 1991, £60,535 was provided by the private sector sponsors.

The Foundation has around 30 staff, of whom 3 are in the Women's Enterprise Unit.

### **4. An overview of the SEF's current activities**

#### **Teaching**

The specific projects which have been put forward by the Foundation to be members of the IRIS network must be seen in the context of its teaching work as a whole. Start-up training for unemployed people wishing to launch a business is an important aspect of the SEF's local work in Stirling and Falkirk. Last year, with funding from the local LEC (Forth Valley Enterprise) 90 participants took part in mixed courses run within the framework of the Employment Training programme. A second type of work is the management extension programmes, placing unemployed graduates or managers with small firms for training. Nearly 100 people took part in these programmes last year, beginning with a period of intensive training in 'Total Quality Management' according to British Standard 5750. The SEF has found that these training and placement programmes not only help the trainee, but can be a vehicle for helping the 'host' business improve the quality of its management overall. Research papers evaluating these programmes have been presented at a number of European conferences.

Courses which the SEF runs within the University include a Diploma in Small Firms Exporting, which trains language graduates for careers in export marketing; and an M.Sc. in Entrepreneurial Studies. These courses are in addition to the specific certificate course for women, described below.

The SEF has developed 'action learning' for small business managers, both women and men. Small groups of owner-managers meet once a month with a member of the Foundation's staff, to analyse their problems and identify business opportunities. In some cases, this approach has been 'customised' for managers from a particular business. Its 'customisation' for women represents one of the

IRIS projects described below. The preparation of a training manual based on this work is currently under consideration.

### Awareness and information work

The WEU seeks to increase awareness of business women's needs on the part of business advisors, and to support women entering this type of work. It has created a support network for women business advisors, following up the training course for women seeking to enter this field which was the earliest of its IRIS projects.

The Women's Enterprise Roadshow was a twelve-week mobile campaign and advice centre taken around Scotland in the autumn of 1989. It was run from a double-decker bus adapted for this purpose. Over 1000 women visited the campaign bus to seek advice, information and support for starting a business. A video and report of this initiative can be obtained from SEF. Following the success of the Roadshow, the Department of Employment in England commissioned SEF to run a similar initiative further south. In its English tour, the 'Roadshow' took on the title 'The Business Advice and Information Shop'. Beginning in Carlisle in May 1991, the roadshow went on tour for five months, visiting 16 different areas. Its work included two separate campaigns; 'Women into Business', encouraging women to start up in business, and a 'Business Fitness Check-up', giving advice to those already in business.

The SEF has a library, the Small Business Resource Centre, containing over 5000 publications and teaching materials on small business development, which is available to course participants, business proprietors, trainers and business advisers. It has a computerised catalogue and telephone enquiries can be answered by the Centre's Manager, Cathy Butts.

### Teaching materials and dissemination of good practice

Based on the experience of the Women's Enterprise Unit, Christina Hartshorn and Pat Richardson have developed materials for use throughout Britain. The Department of Employment sponsored this work, to help board members and training staff in TECs and LECs develop effective ways of attracting women into business start-up training and of helping trainers and trainees to create more substantial businesses. *These materials have received a good response from trainers, and can be obtained from the Department of Trade and Industry under the title 'Quality Training for Women Starting a Business'.* Other teaching materials including the 'Business Ideas Generation Manual', and open learning materials designed for unemployed people considering self-employment, can be purchased from the Foundation. They have achieved a large circulation throughout the UK and organisations in several parts of Europe are investigating the possibility of translating and adapting them.

Another way in which the Women's Enterprise Unit is helping to pass on its expertise is by offering 'observer' placements to staff from other programmes.



Two business advisers from the London Borough of Brent have recently attended the business start-up courses and shadowed the trainers, in order to help Brent develop its own programme.

The Women's Enterprise Unit provides support to trainers from other organisations through a number of workshops and conferences. Its staff have been sponsored by the Department of Employment, Business in the Community and several TECs to hold workshops throughout the UK for business trainers. The WEU also organised a symposium in Glasgow last year, entitled 'Women and Business Ownership; an agenda for the 1990s'. It has contributed to several international conferences on business training, including ones organised by IRIS and by other European programmes.

#### SEF's research activities

The SEF has carried out over 20 research studies on various aspects of small firm growth and development, and a large series of research reports can be purchased through the Foundation's library mentioned above. Of particular interest in the context of IRIS is the three year project to investigate to what extent gender is an important factor in the process of small business management. Fieldwork is now being carried out for this project, by means of a questionnaire to 750 owner managers (half of them female). The work will investigate the contribution of spouses and domestic partners to the business; the effects of home life on the business and of the business on domestic life. The research team are Dr. Peter Rosa, Sara Carter and Daphne Hamilton, and the work is being funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

### 5. The four IRIS projects

#### Enterprise Training for Women

This was the first women's training course run by the Foundation in 1987. It has been run twice a year ever since, changing somewhat in form over time. The course group mixes students under 25 with those over 25, with the idea that the two age groups can learn from each other. As in all the Foundation's work, emphasis is placed on integrating personal development and confidence building within the fabric of the course (rather than putting these elements into a separate learning module). Thus, for example, one of the exercises given to the women is to research the market for a business idea invented by one of the tutors (so that women can practise researching this without adverse consequences for their own 'real' idea if the contacts go wrong). They must make contact with other real-world businesses to find out who would buy their product and on what terms, and who would provide them with materials or services. This is a valuable exercise in building the women's self-confidence; students have reported great pleasure and surprise in finding that business people treated them like real business-women, instead of treating them as housewives.

Originally, this course was co-funded by the European Social Fund, and it took in women from all over Scotland. In line with its rules, there had to be alternating periods of full-time course work and full-time practical experience. During the latter periods, the women returned to their homes, whilst during course work periods they lived on or near campus. But SEF found that this was not the best arrangement. They felt it would be more effective for women to spend part of the week on campus, and to be able to do their practical work (market research and work on their own business plan, for example) close to the university so that they could be in constant contact with tutors, instead of returning to their home towns for these periods. After two years, SEF obtained funding from the Training Agency for a course which was to be limited to women from Central Scotland, and which could be run on the basis that they wanted. Later on, the funding basis changed to the national Employment Training programme, and the course is now run under rules determined by the LECs within this framework.

The eligibility criteria for participants is now in line with national rules for Employment Training - participants must have been out of work for at least six months. The course consists of ten weeks classroom training in classes of 12-15 students, after which students work by themselves on launching their businesses. Under the LEC arrangements students receive an allowance of £10 per week in addition to any benefits they are entitled to. Women not in receipt of benefit get the basic £10 per week. Travelling expenses are paid for all students. The allowance can be claimed for up to a year, as long as students continue to attend for the weekly counselling sessions while working on launching their businesses.

Course sessions take place only in term-time, to make it easier for women to attend if they have children of school age. All the students have access to nursery places, but only those who are single parents receive financial help with the cost. The University has just expanded its on-site nursery for staff and students.

The training materials for these courses have been made available to trainers throughout the UK through the TEED initiative mentioned earlier. An important aspect of SEF's approach is the emphasis on group counselling, which continues once a week after the end of the ten week basic course.

As well as running women-only courses the SEF also runs a parallel course for mixed groups. Thus, women can choose whether to be in a women-only group or a mixed group.

### Women Business Advisers

When this course was developed by the SEF, there were only three women business advisers working in the whole of Scotland. SEF felt that it was important to correct this imbalance, in order to give new women entrepreneurs appropriate female role models and to break down stereotypes about women's relationship to the world of business. Research had shown that women tended to be

disadvantaged when trying to launch a business if they did not have sympathetic advisers.

There was enormous demand for the course. Although only six women could be trained on each of the courses - one in 1987, one in 1988 - no less than 120 women applied for each course. It was a condition of eligibility for the course that the trainees had to have had experience of running their own business.

Each business advisers' training course lasted three months. Trainee advisers spent 60% of their time with women who had recently started in business, learning the same skills and observing the women's approaches and problems. The other 40% of their time they were placed for practical experience with Enterprise Trusts, learning counselling and interviewing skills.

Of the twelve students who took the course, eight obtained jobs in business advice work, one started her own business, one obtained a management post in a company, one undertook a full-time higher degree and one did not seek work because she was having a child.

### Action learning for Women

This is a programme for existing women business owners who want to expand their activity or review its progress. It is a 'customised' version of the action learning approach devised by the SEF for use with women and men. It is intended to bridge the gap between 'start-up' training and the Foundation's 'business development' programmes, the latter being for entrepreneurs who have been in business for at least two years and have at least five employees. The Action Learning course is targeted at women who have been in business at least twelve months, and combines strategic business planning with personal development. The course lasts for between three and four months, with the women meeting once a month. Many of the trainees come back to the Foundation for the Action Learning sessions after they have finished start-up training. Others are introduced to the Foundation by Enterprise Trusts.

Initially, the Foundation ran this course for mixed groups but found that they attracted very few women. When it tried running women-only groups, they attracted a good response from women, and the trainees were much more comfortable discussing problems about reconciling their home and family life with their business when they were in an all-female group.

### Business Training for Women

This course lasts one year, on a full-time basis, leading to a university certificate in the management of small and medium sized undertakings. Its aim is to improve women's chances of obtaining management positions and thus help them to pave the way for others. The course includes a 16 week practical work placement in a small enterprise, during which students have to carry out a specific management

project and produce a report on it for the business owner. Course work combines personal development with business topics.

SEF employs two full time staff to look for and handle student placements for this course.

### The trainees' perspective

Participants on the Enterprise Training for Women course were asked to fill in a short questionnaire about their background, their reasons for joining the course, and their views on the training and the WEU generally.

#### *Background*

The participants on the course were generally older than those on the courses run by the other case study projects. Ten out of the sixteen women filling in questionnaires were over 40, and only one was under 25 years old. The women had been involved with the WEU for periods of between one and eighteen months. They came from a variety of backgrounds; working, unemployed, caring for their families, studying elsewhere and from previous self-employment. Those who had been working had been employed in jobs ranging from teaching to finance/clerical work. Their business intentions were equally diverse, and range from knitwear/clothing manufacture, through manufacture of navigation equipment to desk top publishing. Six of the participants had children under 14, although only one had a child under school age.

#### *Reasons for joining the course*

Most of the participants had joined the Enterprise Training for Women course with the aim of gaining practical business skills and experience:-

'Stated as a definite aim producing a business plan - I needed this to get a loan'

'Knowledge of how to go about being self-employed'

'A direction for ideas'

The main way that they had first found out about the existence of the WEU was from newspaper advertising, or in the case of three participants, through word-of-mouth recommendation. In general, they had chosen the WEU because of its specialisation in skills for self-employment, and because of the all-women course. Seven had particularly wanted to join an all-women course; this proportion is likely to have been influenced by the fact that an equivalent mixed course was available at the SEF. The facilities, including counselling and support available at the WEU, and the convenient hours were also an attraction for eleven of the participants.

'...backup, not only from the project but from the other participants'

**'personal counselling and support'**

The childcare facilities were very much less important than to participants at the BWW and NEWTEC, as a result of the lower proportion of women with children below school age. Only one participant used the creche facilities available, and one received financial help with childcare.

***Benefits of the course***

The main benefits of the course were seen as being a growth in confidence and an opportunity to learn practical business skills. Three participants commented on the benefit that they gained from contact with other women with similar difficulties and aims:-

**'Meeting other women with similar problems and realising that help is available'**

**'Confidence in myself and in my product - a better understanding of how to run a business'**

**'Time (and space) to discuss and clarify my own skills, ideas, goals etc.'**

Only two felt that they could have gained any of the benefits of the course in other ways; they mentioned some the specific skills such as accounting that they could have studied at other courses. Had they not gone on the course, the participants were split fairly evenly between those who would have 'gone it alone' into self-employment, and those who would have stayed at home/unemployed or continued in an unsatisfactory job. Two thirds of the participants preferred women-only-training; they felt that there was increased 'co-operation and teamwork' and there was a greater understanding between members of the group than would have been the case in a mixed environment:-

**'women...are more supportive of each other'**

**'No-one was trying to dominate any sessions'**

Despite this, twelve out of the sixteen would have been prepared to join a mixed-sex project providing similar training if a women-only one had not been available

Work on developing self-confidence was considered to be useful; thirteen of the sixteen agreed with the statement that it 'helped me a lot', none considered it not to be worthwhile, and six would have liked more time to be spent on it. Asked what other types of advice they had found especially helpful, four participants mentioned advice on dealing with problems relating to work, and three advice on financial issues.

There were only a few suggestions for improvements; three of the participants would have liked more follow-up sessions, two, more specific advice in some areas, one a slower pace, and one a longer course. One participant also

suggested that it might be helpful if there were more input from local employers. Generally, the participants were very enthusiastic about the course, saying that they have found it 'enjoyable' and 'motivating'. Five commented on the high standards of the lecturers and the quality of the course organisation.

### SEF's overall approach to women's training

SEF has developed what might be called a 'holistic' approach to training of women to become business owners and managers. Christina Hartshorn, the director of the Women's Enterprise Unit, emphasises that personal development - building self-confidence, changing women's image of themselves - needs to be integrated with the process of working up a business plan and making the contacts needed to launch a business. This approach is in contrast to the alternative of putting 'confidence building' and assertiveness training into separate modules. 'The question must be asked, assertiveness for what?' she says. Assertiveness comes when women push themselves to take practical steps necessary to make business contacts, to find out where and how to buy and sell things, to talk to bank managers and solicitors. Confidence and assertiveness are developed by 'affective socialisation' - that is, by means of women discussing their experiences within the group, encouraging and reinforcing each other. Through group counselling sessions, SEF tries to make the most of this effect, encouraging the women to see themselves as business owners rather than as housewives. It also uses these sessions to draw out issues about the way the women's partners relate to what they are trying to do, helping them to recognise and resolve tensions arising from their changing role within the family.

SEF also finds that the different aspects of teaching people how to run a business are best treated in a developmental, integrated way rather than being divided into separate modules. Finance is one of the most difficult aspects to learn, and it is best done over an extended period. Constructing the business plan needs to be treated as a learning experience in itself, as a 'means' rather than an 'end'; once people have grasped the techniques of working out a plan, they can alter their original figures as they go along. SEF has set down their experience in a handbook on women's enterprise training which can be obtained from the DTI (see 'References' at the end of this report).

## **6. The transnational dimension**

### The role of SEF within IRIS

For SEF, the IRIS network is only one source of international contacts amongst many. Since its initiation, the Foundation has attempted to exchange experiences with other countries, both within and outside the European Community through conferences, visits and consultancy work. Contacts have been made with India, Jordan, Austria, Sweden and the USA as well as with other European Community projects through IRIS and through other EC networks. SEF staff went on an IRIS exchange visit to Berlin, and they have formed strong links with CREAME

(Barcelona) and IFOLD (Sardinia), with both of whom they are now beginning a new project within NOW. Of the Berlin visit, SEF staff felt that it was valuable as a way of looking at different models of training, and for sharing of problems. They found that the questions they wanted to pose to their hosts were at a much greater level of detail than those of some other members of the party, who were thinking about women's enterprise training for the first time. This was frustrating at times. They also felt that more dissemination of the findings of the visit could have been done for the benefit of the network as a whole.

The joint work with CREAMÉ, funded by means of an IRIS partnership grant, has been very productive for both organisations. Contact was first made between SEF and CREAMÉ when staff members of each organisation met by chance during a study visit in the USA, and again at a CEDEFOP meeting. Realising that each organisation had something to offer the other in terms of training methods and experience, they applied for an IRIS partnership grant. In the first phase of work funded by this grant, each party made a study visit to the other to define in detail what aspects of training practice could be transferable. CREAMÉ was interested in the personal development aspect of training, something which SEF had developed to a high degree but which the Spanish organisation had not. SEF in turn was interested in the selection tests which CREAMÉ use to determine the likelihood of a woman being successful as a business owner. In the second phase, the two projects will work together on the design of teaching materials and tests which can be transferred from one country to another.

#### The role of SEF within NOW

Building on the work done with this partnership grant, SEF is now joining with CREAMÉ, IFOLD and another Italian organisation, CNA from Bologna, to develop internationally transferable teaching materials and try them out in experimental projects. IFOLD's practice is not so far developed as that of CREAMÉ or SEF, and CNA actually approached SEF for advice. So these two organisations will benefit from the methods already developed by SEF and CREAMÉ both in their separate work and in the IRIS partnership. In the NOW project, the partnership will train trainers, mount an experimental programme in Italy and evaluate it. The possibility of translating the 'Quality Training for Women' materials will be explored as part of the NOW programme. SEF are also separately involved in the translation of other materials for the Italian government.

A further stage of the NOW project will be to study ways in which women's businesses in each of the participating countries can export to each other.

Preparation of the NOW application was not without frustrations. Highly complex forms had to be completed at only a few days' notice. Delays have been caused by the fact that the Italian partners do not yet know whether they will be able to secure national co-financing.

SEF believes that internationalisation of its work - offering the benefits of its experience to other trainers and at the same time learning from them - is a valuable and important part of what it does. But the Foundation is cautious about doing this at too early a stage in the development of particular methods. It believes that practitioners' experience needs to be consolidated at national level before an attempt is made to transfer it to another country. Written papers on 'good practice' can be helpful; 'it's best to read before you visit'. They would like IRIS to develop more practice-related literature. 'Manuals would be helpful, but before you get to that you need something more basic; just 10-15 pages with a few points on each page, to lay down key issues to think about'. International learning is essential; 'on no account can anyone afford to re-invent the wheel'.

#### SEF and other European programmes

Pat Richardson, one of the senior staff of the WEU has recently become UK coordinator of the ILE network. SEF also has links with other European programmes such as TEMPUS, FORCE, COMETT, ERASMUS and ESPRIT. In 1991 it was awarded a contract under the TEMPUS programme for the provision of training for enterprise development specialists in Yugoslavia. Another project, funded by COMETT and Clydesdale Bank, is developing a computer-based version of the distance learning materials developed by SEF for training of business advisors. Within FORCE, SEF is collaborating with partners in Italy, Greece and Portugal for the development of training programmes in SME management.



# **WOMEN IN MANUAL TRADES**

## **1. Introduction**

**Women in Manual Trades is a resource centre and support network for women working in manual occupations which have generally been considered 'men's jobs' such as women in the building trades (plumbers, painters, electricians, carpenters etc) and also mechanics, gardeners and craftworkers. It offers short training courses to self-employed tradeswomen on various aspects of running their businesses, and tries to help these women get contracts through keeping a register of women in each trade and answering inquiries from potential clients. WAMT's other services are addressed to women employees in manual trades as well as to the self-employed; helping women find out about training courses and gain access to them; advice on health and safety issues; advice on how to deal with sexual harassment; and advice on other problems of working in a male-dominated environment. WAMT also operates as a lobbying group, presenting the case for a 'women-friendly' environment and approach to training providers. It gives talks to schools to help break down 'gender stereotyping' in career choice, and thus to help young women to recognise their right to enter male-dominated occupations and to identify training routes into them.**

**The group has an office on the eastern fringe of central London, sharing a building with several other women's projects. Unique in the London area, and probably in Britain as a whole, it draws women from throughout the city.**

## **2. History of the project**

**Women in Manual Trades started in 1975, originally as a lobbying group to press for women to be allowed to train for 'non-traditional' jobs in Skill Centres. It had its origin in the women's liberation movement of the 70s and early 80s. First the network operated from members' homes, later from a small office in North London. In the early 1980s it obtained funding from the Greater London Council, and was therefore able to expand its services, producing two travelling exhibitions and a regular newsletter. The GLC financed the production of a video showing how women can work in manual trades, aimed at breaking down gender stereotypes and encouraging young women to consider this possibility. The video has been shown frequently over the years in schools and training centres, and was updated in 1991. Another important achievement of the project during the mid-1980s was the production of their booklet, 'Trades Training for Women', a guide for women who are trying to find out about training for manual trades.**

**From its early days WAMT has kept a register of tradeswomen wanting work, and has been able to link them with householders who contact the office looking for contractors to do house repairs, or (more rarely) employers seeking to hire staff. It is planned to develop this kind of activity a stage further in the current year, by helping to develop the network of self-employed tradeswomen and looking for ways to build teams of women who can take on larger contracts by**

working together. To help the women do this, training sessions are being held on tendering procedures, contract management, estimating and other business topics.

This new aspect of the project's work will be financed by a grant from the NOW programme, enabling WAMT to increase the number of full time workers from three to four.

WAMT has been a member of the IRIS network since 1990. Its staff are enthusiastic about IRIS conferences, which have enabled them to make valuable contacts with projects in other countries - particularly Ireland and the Netherlands - and also within the UK, particularly in Northern Ireland. They consider these contacts to be an important way of working through shared problems and considering solutions to the problems which women face in trying to establish themselves in 'male' jobs. IRIS events - as well as staff visits to the USA and a number of other interesting international contacts - have been reported in WAMT's quarterly newsletter.

WAMT is a member of the Women's Training Network, the informal network of training projects in the UK which are funded by the European Community, and it also maintains close links with WICAG (Women in Construction Advisory Group), and with a number of centres and colleges which carry out trades training for women in the London area.

### **3. The project's funding, management and staffing**

After the GLC was abolished in 1985, WAMT continued to receive funding from the London Boroughs Grant Scheme. This year, it has obtained a grant of £11,000 from the European Social Fund under the NOW programme.

The project's total income is £70,000 this year. Out of this about £5,500 goes on rent, up to £2,000 on computer equipment and library materials, £4,000 on the production of publications and the rest on salaries and on other administrative expenses, including the organisation of the annual conference.

There are currently three full time workers, and another who can only be paid for one day a week. Staffing is strictly limited by the funds available for salaries, and funds are particularly tight at present because the project's grant was cut by 10% since last year. A fourth worker is shortly to be appointed. Before this happens, members of the project's network of self-employed women are being consulted about the nature of the new worker's job description. This is an important way of encouraging the network to think about the resources and services they really want and how these could be made to work.

WAMT's management committee includes all the project workers (who run the office as a collective) together with women who are invited to join it in order to represent the concerns of particular groups of members - such as self-employed women, those working for local authorities' DLOs, and those working as trainers

in manual trades. The project is run in a fairly informal way, and it has never been felt necessary to seek registration as a cooperative or a charity.

#### 4. **Current activities**

##### *Work with schools on gender stereotypes*

WAMT now has over ten years of experience in doing outreach work with schools, encouraging girls to consider manual trades as a career and trying to persuade their male classmates to accept the possibility of women doing this kind of work. It gives talks to classes and uses its video (entitled 'Hammer on the Door') to show students what it's like for women to train and work in manual trades and the problems they face. WAMT has also produced a pack of teaching materials which is available for sale to teachers, containing display material, a booklet and student exercises to generate discussion about gender stereotypes.

Having heard of this work, the Centre for Research on European Women (CREW) invited WAMT to help write similar material for use in other countries.

##### *Work with vocational training centres*

A number of training projects and colleges in London regularly call upon WAMT to give talks to their women trainees about setting up in business and about other aspects of getting started as tradeswomen. Where adult women join courses to learn carpentry, painting and decorating, motor mechanics' work and other manual trades, they obviously have more difficulty than men in getting employers to accept them at the end of their training. Many tradeswomen try to become self-employed as a way round the 'gender barrier'. But setting up in business is not easy, and WAMT tries to give them a realistic awareness of the difficulties involved and the range of complexities they need to know about - cash flow planning, how to deal with tax and national insurance, how to approach clients for work and tender for jobs, how to organise the work and make sure of getting paid for it. These talks are given by experienced tradeswoman within the WAMT network, so that the trainees can get a first hand account of what it's like to be a tradeswoman in business and the problems which they are likely to face if they try it themselves.

Careers advice is given by WAMT staff to trainees in vocational training centres. They are considered to be experts in the opportunities for women to enter manual trades, the possible training routes, ways of getting work and the problems which a woman will face in a manual trades environment. Several centres call upon WAMT to give talks to groups of women trainees who are considering manual trades as a career path.

To support this work, and also for distribution to individuals who enquire about training possibilities, WAMT has produced a booklet, 'Training for Women in Manual Trades' which lists courses available in the London area and provides an

introduction advising women how to go about choosing a training course and applying for training and apprenticeship schemes.

Because WAMT has become well known in London as a network containing experienced tradeswomen who can train others, training centres often get in touch with the project when they want to recruit tutors.

### *Work with self-employed women*

WAMT keeps a computerised register of self-employed tradeswomen looking for contracts, which is distributed to over 1000 groups and individuals each year. About 100 tradeswomen were listed on it in March 1992, but over 200 have been on the register at some time during the last twelve months. They include carpenters, painters and decorators, plumbers, electricians, gardeners, and a few other trades. Much of the work obtained through the register is repair and refurbishment work for private householders. But there are also a number of women's projects - for example women's refuges - who want to employ female building workers for work on their premises. Work is also offered by members of the London Equal Opportunities Federation - an association of public sector employers (some local authorities, housing associations, etc.) who are committed to giving women's businesses a fair chance to tender for building contracts. Lastly, there are building cooperatives (some all-women, some mixed) who use the register when they want to expand their teams for a particular contract.

About a year ago WAMT staff began to think about the possibility of helping tradeswomen to form consortia to work together. Consortium working opens up many more possibilities than working alone or with one or two friends. It enables women to compete for larger contracts and for jobs which require other people's skills as well as their own. Contracts for non-domestic work are often better paid than house repairs, but it is impractical to bid for them except as a team. But getting into the field of larger contracts requires more than just team working. Tradeswomen who do that first have to come to grips with the complexities of public tendering procedures. get onto the lists of firms invited to tender: Then they need to know how to interpret tender documents, put their bid together and estimate realistically how much work will be involved, how long it will take and how much it will cost to carry out. They have to meet clients' requirements about insurance, financial guarantees and tax arrangements. Then if they win a tender they have to manage the work, which may involve fitting different trades together over several weeks. Finally they have to make sure they can pay for wages and materials whilst waiting for the client to pay them.

The new work funded by NOW seeks to address these problems. WAMT is setting up a series of short training courses on each of these business aspects of large contract management, and on how to set up a company or cooperative. They will be backed by a series of reference manuals which women can buy even if they don't attend the courses, and by building up a reference library. The courses are informal, in groups of about 15 women, and led by a tutor with relevant business experience. They started in May of this year.

Another task which will be undertaken by the new worker is liaison with employers, both through the London Equal Opportunities Federation and directly, to find the most effective way of getting tradeswomen onto their approved lists of contractors to be invited to tender.

Not all of the WAMT self-employed network are building contractors; some are craftworkers, for example cabinet-makers or stained glass designers. WAMT wants to help them market their products and to strengthen the links between them and the building contractors' side on artistic and design issues. An exhibition of craftswomen's work is planned towards the end of 1992.

For the self-employed network to become well known and attract more business, a lot of promotion and publicity will be necessary; there are plans to represent the network at local festivals, exhibitions and shows as well as to carry out targeted advertising.

At the same time, the addition of a fourth worker will help the project extend its work on health and safety and on environmental issues. It is seeking to develop tradeswomen's awareness of health and safety regulations and practice, and it provides advice to individual women on safety issues. Some of these are women-specific, so the trade literature has not addressed them - like whether it is safe for women to work with certain paints or solvents whilst they are pregnant.

In response to growing public concern about the environment and about toxic hazards, WAMT has just produced an information pack about environmentally-friendly building materials which helps women contractors to identify the safest alternatives for themselves and their clients, and to choose energy-saving and pro-conservation products.

In order to gain a better understanding of self-employed tradeswomen's needs and how their careers develop, WAMT plans to do follow-up surveys of women who have used its services, and also of ex-trainees of women's trades training courses. A questionnaire has already been sent to tradeswomen who have recently been on the work register. The next stage will be to contact those who used to be on it, to find out why they have dropped out. Because tradeswomen are so few (only around 2% of the construction industry's manual labour force) surveys of the WAMT membership and of women who can be 'tracked' after they leave trades training courses are the only effective ways of identifying the supply of tradeswomen, finding out what kinds of support they need and what is their 'survival rate' in manual trades in the first three years of training. Some training centres have already expressed an interest in accepting WAMT's help with follow-up studies of their trainees.

#### *Keeping members in touch and representing their interests*

WAMT held a major one-day conference in 1987, bringing together individual tradeswomen, training providers, trades unions, and council direct labour organisations (the main employers of tradeswomen). Participants divided into

workshops for discussion of issues such as sexual harassment at work, racism and sexism as they affect tradeswomen; women in self-employment and women working in direct labour organisations. Another conference is planned for the coming October, which WAMT will hold jointly with Women's Education in Building. This will address career progression and will also be a way for the project to obtain feedback on its self-employment project, helping to sharpen its definition of women's needs in this area. Conference organisation is a heavy commitment for the project's staff which cannot be undertaken every year - in 1987 it required an extra temporary worker for three months. However, in between conferences a number of smaller workshop meetings have been held to discuss practical problems affecting tradeswomen.

WAMT publishes a quarterly newsletter for its members (and for anyone else who wants to subscribe). It contains a wealth of information for tradeswomen and trainers; a sample issue contained articles about new WAMT activities, ESF grant application procedures, a TUC conference on women and 1992, trades training in Denmark, the Black Contractors' Association of ethnic minority building companies, health and safety issues, a new network for cabinet makers, and an analysis of the problems ET graduates have in getting jobs after their training. The articles attempt to generate debate about issues which concern tradeswomen - like access to training, access to jobs and contracts, and the everyday difficulties of working in male-dominated workplaces. They reflect WAMT's role as a lobbying group, trying to gain equality of opportunity for women through its contacts with training providers, employers, trade unions and professional bodies.

WAMT also gives advice to women on an individual basis. It operates a telephone 'hotline' for tradeswomen who want help because they have suffered racial or sexual harassment. Sometimes women want advice on redundancy; tradeswomen suffer from the fact that where employers apply a 'last in, first out' principle in deciding who has to go, women are more likely to be affected than men. Most of the tradeswomen who are employed rather than self-employed work for local authorities' direct labour organisations, which have had to make a lot of staff redundant in the last two years because of new rules about competitive tendering for local authority public works contracts.

#### *The users of WAMT's services*

WAMT has 682 tradeswomen on its current records. Of these 221 have recently been on the self-employment register. A further 171 used to be on that register, but have now dropped out. Altogether, around 70% of the members are self-employed, or seeking to become self-employed. The remaining 30% are about evenly divided between those who work for public sector employers, those who work for cooperatives, and those who are registered unemployed. Most manual trades are represented, the largest group being painters and decorators. More experienced tradeswomen, plumbers and electricians in particular, want to move away from domestic work into more varied and interesting work with companies.

The main information that WAMT have about the characteristics of their members comes from a survey that was carried out at a conference in 1987. Most of the members then were in their late 20s or early 30s; three quarters were between 25 and 32 years old. The ethnic origin of the members, self defined, was;

Afro-Caribbean	5%
European but not from UK	5%
Irish	11%
Jewish	2%
Mixed	5%
White	68%
Do not identify this way/ feel question is not relevant	4%

### *Child care issues*

Although WAMT are not aware of the exact number of members who have children, there are a 'substantial number'. Childcare is a major concern at their conferences, and a particular problem for self employed women. While childcare is often available at training centres, once women have finished training, they can no longer use these facilities.

No childcare is available at the training sessions that WAMT are holding, but the sessions take place in the evening, the time which self employed members identified as the most convenient, given their work and family responsibilities. Since a number of tradeswomen are not able to attend the sessions, but are interested in the topics being discussed, the sessions are backed by a series of reference manuals which women can buy even if they don't attend the courses.

### *Problems faced by tradeswomen*

The fundamental problem faced by women wishing to enter a trade is the lack of work opportunities once they are qualified. While there are a number of schemes available in London that enable women to gain training and qualifications, there are very few jobs available for women leaving these schemes.

As a result of this, women with little experience have no options other than self employment. Newly qualified men are more likely to spend some time working for an employer in either the private or public sector, becoming more experienced in areas such as estimating, site organisation and general aspects of running a business before moving into self employment. Women cannot get this experience so easily, and may be forced into self employment too early in their careers.

The depressed state of the building industry has exacerbated the situation - while employers may be more inclined to consider women when there is a general shortage of skilled workers, in a climate of cutbacks, women are in a particularly bad position. WAMT have also found that some members are experiencing discrimination in the terms offered when layoffs take place.

The general lack of work creates a very competitive climate for self employed tradeswomen and those working in small firms or co-operatives. Larger firms will often tender for work that would normally be too small for them to consider worthwhile. In addition to this, the volume of building work carried out by councils, which in the past have been relatively sympathetic to tradeswomen has fallen severely.

WAMT say that tradeswomen face particular problems in gaining larger contracts and in setting up their own firms. They don't have access to the capital that is needed to buy the materials for a large contract, and to pay wages upfront. Ironically, public sector bodies, which are often the least hostile to tradeswomen, and thus a potential source of work are often also slow payers - so women who take this work risk being forced out of business if they spend large amounts on materials and wages, and then find that payment is delayed because of administrative problems.

Women also need to have access to an office worker to manage the paperwork and administration, and to be available to answer the phone and respond to callers, if they are going to break into fields involving large tenders, which must be submitted on short timescales. For this reason, WAMT are considering the possibility of providing the office backup needed to a number of groups of women.

Men are able to break into this area of work by spending time with an employer, building up their capital, while at the same time gaining contacts and experience in skills such as tendering. This experience is also likely to help them obtain loans from banks. In addition to this, they do not face the hostility, which may take the form of the withholding of important information, that groups of women often experience when putting in a tender.

WAMT feel that if loans for the necessary capital were available, women would be able to succeed in tenders for larger contracts. A revolving loan scheme could enable a number of groups of women to break into this work, being used to buy materials necessary to carry out work, and repaid by women once they had completed the contract and been paid.

#### *Project outcomes*

There is not much quantitative information available on the benefits of WAMT to tradeswomen in terms of work obtained, or numbers of young women interested in a trade by the project. However, the project provides a unique service to tradeswomen throughout London, and one that other organisations



would be unable to duplicate. Many of the benefits are in areas that are hard to quantify, such as support for women facing harassment, and the stimulation of activity to address discrimination. For this reason it is hard to separate out the cost of individual benefits.

### *Problems and constraints*

WAMT does not attempt to influence employer recruitment practice, leaving this to its 'sister organisation' WICAG (Women in Construction Advisory Group). WICAG have had little success in making contact with employers, or in influencing their attitude to tradeswomen. When WAMT have tried to influence employer practice, for example by producing an anti-harassment poster, they also have had little or no response. The difficulty of breaking through the unresponsiveness of private sector employers means that one of the main potential sources of work for tradespeople continues to largely exclude women. Although the 'consortium' approach, bringing groups of women in different trades together to bid for larger jobs, can give experienced tradeswomen access to new opportunities, this strategy is less appropriate for newly qualified women.

WAMT's coverage of tradeswomen is limited in that they do not reach a large proportion of the tradeswomen who are employed in private firms. A proportion of newsletter subscribers, possibly as many as 30%, are employed tradeswomen, but the tradeswomen with whom the project is in contact through the work register and training sessions are generally self employed or still in training.

## **5. The transnational dimension**

Although IRIS has been an important source of information for WAMT about sources of European Community funding (together with NCVQ and the Women's Training Network), their transnational partner in NOW was found not through IRIS, but by means of a contact 'out of the blue' from two German women visiting London in 1991. After they went home, their project and WAMT continued to exchange ideas and publications, and from this emerged the possibility of a partnership in NOW.

The German partner project 'Baufachfrau' in Berlin is part of a network that works with women manual trades in Germany. The idea of 'Baufachfrauen' is to help women get work, and in particular to promote 'women, working with women, for women'. The network holds meetings and works to inform women about employment opportunities. The Berlin project is working to encourage women in the construction trades; this is problematic as West German law forbids women to carry more than thirty pounds, and excludes them from construction, defined as basic building such as brickwork, carpentry and joinery, roofing and tiling. Although many East German women work in these trades, it is not clear how unified Germany will deal with the conflicting laws. The project is working to design and build a workshop and centre, hiring trainer/supervisors and training women on the job. It runs two courses for twenty women, ten architects and ten joiners. The women gain experience by first rebuilding their workshop premises.

Through its newsletter, WAMT has presented accounts of tradeswomen's experiences and problems in a number of different countries, including Germany, Denmark, the USA, Nicaragua and India. It also attended a conference about women's issues in the single European market held by the TUC, which was reported in the newsletter.

In 1990, WAMT was invited by CREW to a workshop in Brussels to help produce a booklet for use in primary schools, to help break down stereotypes about men's and women's work. This was a piece of work which made international use of some of the ideas which WAMT had put together in its own teaching materials pack.

## **6. Future perspectives**

The concept of bringing together a 'consortium' of women in different trades to undertake larger jobs will if successful increase tradeswomen's access to tender competitions. This approach avoids the difficulties of attempting to influence employer attitudes, but addresses the lack of job opportunities for tradeswomen. Working in a group of women can also help women escape the problems of harassment and unfavourable treatment in male dominated workplaces and sites.

However, there is a risk that many trained tradeswomen will not be able to stay in manual trades because of the lack of work, a problem exacerbated by the recession. The 'consortium' approach is one which is not really suitable for inexperienced women, who need to spend time working for an employer, learning the necessary skills for successful self employment.

Skilled women are in many cases forced to move into other occupations, which in most cases offer lower rates of pay. Even if women do not leave their trade entirely, they may have to diversify into other areas of work for part of the time, or to move into an area of their trade in which there is less resistance to women - for example, joiners may move into cabinet making.

## **7. The lessons of WAMT's experience**

WAMT has documented and publicised the numerous obstacles facing women in male-dominated trades. These are found in many areas, including

- The possibility of harassment

The project offers support to women facing harassment; they also advise women who are the victims of discrimination on possible action

- Supervisors and employers not having thought about women's needs at work

These can range from time off to look after sick children to the lack of provision of sanitary protection in washrooms

- competition from male 'cowboys' reducing the work available to women

WAMT's experience is that tradeswomen generally will not undertake substandard work. There have been some complaints from women associated with WAMT that a 'cowboy' willing to put in an unrealistically low bid may win tenders by cutting corners on the work necessary

- women being forced into self-employment when they are not really ready, often soon after finishing training

The self-employment project helps women in this situation - the evening sessions cover areas such as estimating and business skills which male tradespeople are likely to learn while working for an employer

- the difficulty that women face in obtaining capital

WAMT cannot at present help women get loans - they feel there is a need for some kind of subsidy/loan scheme for women in this situation

The 'glass ceiling' syndrome is common for tradeswomen. It is difficult for women to find work with an employer, and in particular, to rise to supervisory positions. For this reason they often become self employed, but then find it hard to break into better paid kinds of work. This means that women are marginalised to the lowest paid forms of self-employment.

If tradeswomen are not to remain marginalised, they need to have the opportunity to

- gain experience through working for an employer
- have access to capital when self-employed

The major lesson from the project is that training alone is not enough; once women are trained, they need equal access to employment and capital if they are to be able to compete with male tradespeople.

Because this equal access does not exist, there is a need for some form of subsidy or loan to help women in self employment overcome the lack of flexibility of banks and build up sufficient capital to enable them to take on larger contracts. While there are some grants available which could help women in the initial stages of self employment, these are only intended for this first stage. They are not large enough to enable a group of women to pay for materials up front on

building works, and are not intended to fulfil this function. For example, the grants from the EC programme Women's LEIs are available for new women's enterprise initiatives creating at least two full time jobs for women. The grants vary between 3000-7500 ECU, depending on the number of jobs created. The number of grants is limited - in 1992 the budget was 1.5m ECU, or 500 grants of 3000 ECU, for all EC countries.

Enterprise Grant (also known as Business Start-Up, formerly the Enterprise Allowance Scheme) pays an allowance to people who wish to start up their own businesses. Again, it is aimed at people in the initial stages of self employment - recipients must have been unemployed for at least six weeks. The grant scheme is operated by TECs and paid on a sliding scale from £20-£90 per week, for a minimum of 26 and a maximum of 66 weeks - a minimum amount of £500 and a maximum of £5940. TECs can make an assessment of the viability of proposed businesses and restrict entry to the scheme if they wish.

### Exportable strengths

WAMT activities try to help women overcome the obstacles involved in being a tradeswoman, particularly the shortage of employment opportunities. The self-employed project funded by NOW, assisting the formation of groups of tradeswomen able to win large contracts could be an experiment of considerable value to projects all over Europe which are trying to help women break the 'gender barriers'. Both this project and the work register move away from the 'training without jobs' syndrome to address the problem of women who have skills, but are unable to find work that makes full use of them. These activities also enable tradeswomen to escape, at least to some extent, the male dominated working environments common in the construction industry.

## **7. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **7.1 Introduction**

IRIS is a network of women's training projects throughout the European Community, established by the European Commission for the exchange of information and experience. This booklet gives an account of the development of IRIS in the UK since the formation of the network in 1988. It looks at the achievements of IRIS projects, and at the extent to which the network has influenced training practice. Four projects are examined in detail, the Birmingham Women's Workshops, Newham Women's Training and Education Centre in London, the Scottish Enterprise Foundation, and Women and Manual Trades.

### **7.2 The IRIS network, in Europe and the UK**

7.2.1 Since 1989, IRIS has organised exchange visits, publications, seminars and technical meetings. It also provides publicity grants for dissemination of good practice models, and partnership grants to facilitate transnational development of training methods. Seminars are held in four countries each year; one took place in Manchester in 1991, on the theme of new technology and women in male-dominated trades. Most activities are organised by CREW, a Brussels-based organisation which runs IRIS on behalf of the European Commission.

7.2.2 Projects may apply for IRIS membership if they meet certain criteria with regard to training quality. They need not be 'women only', provided they address the specific training needs of women. The UK is relatively under-represented in IRIS, although membership has grown from 25 projects in 1988-89 to 68 projects in 1991-92. The UK has 12.6% of all IRIS members, compared to the 21.4% of the total EC female labour force.

7.2.3 As in the rest of Europe, the majority of IRIS projects in the UK are aimed at economically inactive women. Other strong areas are projects aimed particularly at women from ethnic minorities, and projects which train in new technology, management and enterprise skills, and manual trades. A small number of projects are involved in training that is not directly vocational, involving confidence building and personal development work.

7.2.4 IRIS projects in the UK operate mainly outside the context of TECs and LECs, who have responsibility for the principal government training schemes. Most are run by women's workshops, groups or co-operatives or by the education sector. A high proportion are also members of the Women's Training Network, a group of women-only projects founded in 1984.

### **7.3 Women's training - the institutional context and recent developments**

7.3.1 Annex 3 of the report covers the general training 'set-up' in the UK, mainly for the benefit of foreign readers. Provision of publicly funded training is organised

by a network of 82 Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) in England and Wales, and 22 Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) in Scotland. These have considerable autonomy in how they provide training within the framework of the national training schemes, ET and YT. They are managed by a Board consisting of local business people (two-thirds of the Board) and representatives of local authorities, voluntary organisations, trades unions and similar groups.

- 7.3.2 TECs are contractually obliged to have an equal opportunities strategy, but each TEC defines this for itself. Some examples of TEC initiatives on women's training and employment are described in Chapter 3, which considers recent training developments in the UK.
- 7.3.3 Some TECs have run courses specifically aimed at women returners. Others have given employers financial support for such training, encouraged local childcare provision, or worked with employers looking at good working practices and initiatives to attract women. Tyneside TEC are particularly active, and have set up a Women's Advisory Group to advise the Board.
- 7.3.4 As well as TECS, voluntary organisations and further education colleges are also engaged in training women returners. They have generally been funded by local authorities, although arrangements for colleges have recently changed. Some also receive part funding from the European Social Fund, including many IRIS projects. Industrial Training Organisations (ITOs) are funded by membership subscriptions from companies, and set the standards for industry-specific training.
- 7.3.5 As in other EC countries, it has been found that women experience difficulties in accessing mainstream training provision, for several reasons. Women who have been out of the labour market often have lower priority than the registered unemployed and training hours may not be compatible with available childcare. In addition, traditionally female occupations involve less employer training, and gender stereotypes often limit women's access to training for non-traditional occupations.
- 7.3.6 Some innovative approaches to women's training are being carried out by employers. Organisations such as Opportunities 2000, to which 110 companies belong, reflect the increasing desire of private and public organisations to attract women returners in the face of falling numbers of school leavers and to avoid wasting the potential of existing staff.
- 7.3.7 Employers' training initiatives include confidence building and personal development courses for women employees and equal opportunities awareness training. The latter covers both male and female staff, often focusing on those involved in recruitment, with the aim of overcoming bias at the selection stage.
- 7.3.8 The IRIS network has been making efforts to develop closer links with employers and employer led bodies. Many IRIS projects have developed collaborative arrangements with employers, often including work placements with an employer as part of training courses.

## **7.4 Women's employment and childcare in the UK; European comparisons**

**7.4.1** Only in the UK and Ireland do women form a higher proportion of the registered unemployed than they do of the labour force. The Labour Force Survey for 1991 shows an unemployment rate of 7.2% for women and 9.1% for men. As the number of young people entering the workforce is falling, women returning to work are increasingly being viewed as an important source of labour, leading some employers to make special provisions for them.

**7.4.2** In 1991, 44% of female employees in the UK worked part time, more than in other Member States. Fifteen percent of UK families including dependent children are headed by lone mothers, and these families are one of the groups most susceptible to poverty. The economic activity rate of UK lone mothers with a child under five is considerably lower than that of mothers with a partner.

**7.4.3** The gender gap in UK pay is relatively wide compared to other Member States; in 1991, the average gross hourly earnings of full time adult women employees in the UK were 78% of the average for male employees. To some extent this is a reflection of the fact that women tend to be employed in lower status occupations, particularly in the service sector.

**7.4.4** UK levels of publicly funded childcare provision are among the lowest in the EC. Publicly funded care is mainly targeted on children and families with social or health needs. Private childminders and day nurseries provide a limited number of places for those parents who can afford to pay upwards of £50 per week for childcare. Workplace nurseries are relatively rare in the UK, despite tax concessions.

**7.4.5** Many IRIS projects make childcare provision. Some of the projects regard the provision of exemplary childcare services an important part of their work, and seek to promote good quality childcare in the local community as a whole. Projects have also found that women need childcare after completing training, while they are searching for work.

## **7.5 Transnational collaboration of IRIS projects**

Of the IRIS events, the most popular are exchange visits, many of which have led to further collaboration between projects. IRIS members value the opportunity for self-evaluation of their own project through comparison with the ways in which other countries have handled similar problems. Several projects are involved in developing training materials in conjunction with other IRIS members or through NOW partnerships. Many member projects also have international contacts through programmes or networks other than IRIS.

## **7.6 The innovations and achievements of the IRIS network in the UK**

**7.6.1** IRIS projects have attempted to respond to change in the labour market. Project planning can be easily overtaken by events, as skill shortage areas become

occupations of high unemployment. This underlines the need for flexibility, and a continuing focus on 'professions of the future'. Employers' prejudices are intensified if vacancies are few. The outlook is particularly gloomy for women trying to enter non-traditional occupations in a recession. Many women are driven to look at the self-employed option; an even harder path for unemployed women than it is for unemployed men.

- 7.6.2 The IRIS projects have addressed the needs of self-employed women in various ways. Women in Manual Trades is showing women how to handle larger contracts by working in teams, recognising that a team or cooperative may be able to move up the 'hierarchy' of enterprises, taking on more profitable functions and gaining more bargaining power. 'Feminisation' of the support structure for the self-employed has been a goal of the Scottish Enterprise Foundation, both by setting up of separate structures for women, and by increasing the number of women advisers in 'mixed' support activities.
- 7.6.3 All of the projects studied recognise and respond to the need to build women's confidence. One way of doing this is by providing positive female role models. Others include assertiveness training within courses as a separate component, others as an integrated part of the course. 'Affective socialisation' - the process by which trainees reinforce each other's experience - is recognised as an important dimension of the confidence building process. Activities such as house and car maintenance skills have been used to help women cross gender boundaries and increase their self-esteem.
- 7.6.4 Three quarters of trainees indicated that they preferred training in an all-women environment (77%). This shows how important it is to provide this option, although it is difficult to contemplate 'women-only' situations as a general solution, It would be useful to examine in depth exactly which features of the 'women-only' environment trainees find helpful; to do this would require further research with an appropriate scale and research design.
- 7.6.5 The experience of the case study projects suggests that there is a market for market for publications which can be used to transfer good ideas about training from one organisation to another. Various other suggestions emerged from conversations with the four case study projects about future possible activities for IRIS, including:
- \* strategic work with employers at European level, trying to use international networking between TECs in the UK, and parallel bodies in other countries
  - \* publications should be fewer but in greater depth, and some should be specifically targeted at employers



## **The Case Study projects**

### **7.7 The Birmingham Women's Workshops (BWW)**

#### *History*

BWW was set up in 1985, with funding from Birmingham City Council and the European Social Fund. They joined IRIS in 1989, and offer training in computer skills/electronics and carpentry.

#### *Innovations and distinctive features*

- \* Recognising that most women carpenters become self-employed, and that job prospects are poor for anyone at present in the construction industry, BWW have started to develop a new carpentry qualification oriented towards cabinet-making, rather than on construction work which is the emphasis of standard courses.
- \* A 'Student Agreement' sets out the rights and obligations of students
- \* Use of a computer package for careers guidance
- \* During work placements, students are visited fortnightly, and a private space is provided to enable them to discuss any problems without the employer being present.
- \* A project worker helps students find suitable childminders by visiting potential minders with them and their children. This is a response to the fact that childcare cannot be provided on site, for lack of space, so that students rely on childminders who receive children in their homes.

#### *The role of BWW in IRIS*

BWW has:-

- \* incorporated the IRIS e-mail system into the computer skills courses
- \* made a video about their work, helped by an IRIS publicity grant
- \* made plans for student exchanges with an Italian project, helped by an IRIS partnership grant

### **7.8 The Scottish Enterprise Foundation (SEF)**

#### *History*

The SEF was set up in the early 1980s within Stirling University. It has achieved a significant reputation throughout Europe for its work in helping women to enter self-employment and small business management. It was a founder member of

the IRIS network and has since promoted four IRIS projects; one course for unemployed women or 'returners' wishing to start up in business, one for unemployed women to become business advisors, and two for women in management of SMEs

*Innovations and distinctive features*

- \* The SEF has pioneered innovative approaches in enterprise training, backed by research into the needs of small businesses and their proprietors.
- \* Careful integration of 'personal development' with business skills learning
- \* Research has shown that women learn entrepreneurial skills better from women tutors/advisors, and in all-female groups
- \* 'Action learning' has been developed for small business managers, and customised' for women. This involves small groups of owner-managers meeting once a month with a member of the Foundation's staff, to analyse their problems and identify business opportunities
- \* Training in advanced managerial skills on a distance learning basis
- \* The SEF has run a 'Women's Enterprise Roadshow'; a twelve-week mobile campaign and advice centre on a double-decker bus adapted for this purpose
- \* SEF has developed teaching materials for use in women's enterprise training throughout Britain

*The role of SEF within IRIS and NOW*

SEF has a library containing over 5000 publications and teaching materials on small business development. They offer 'observer' placements to staff from other programmes and provides support to trainers from other organisations through a number of workshops and conferences.

The SEF has exchanged experiences within and outside the European Community through conferences, visits and consultancy work. They are now joining with projects in Spain and Italy through the NOW programme to develop internationally transferable teaching materials and try them out in experimental projects.

## 7.9 Women in Manual Trades (WAMT)

### *History*

The WAMT collective was set up in 1975 and joined IRIS in 1990. They are a resource centre and support network for women working in the building trades, mechanics, gardeners and craftworkers. They offer short training courses on various aspects of running businesses, and try to help women get contracts, keeping a computerised register of women in each trade looking for work. They also give advice on health and safety issues, how to deal with sexual harassment, and on other problems of working in a male-dominated environment. Many health and safety issues are women specific (for example, the hazards of working with paints and solvents during pregnancy) and have not been addressed by the trade literature. WAMT give talks to schools to help break down 'gender stereotyping' in career choice, and have produced a video and teaching materials for use in schools.

### *Innovations and distinctive features*

- \* Under a new initiative funded by NOW, WAMT are looking for ways to build teams of women who can take on larger contracts by working together. They help tradeswomen form consortia, and are setting up a series of short training courses, backed up by a series of reference manuals, on the business aspects of large contract management, and on how to set up a company or cooperative. The initiative also involves liaising with employers and looking at ways of getting tradeswomen onto their approved lists of contractors to be invited to tender.
- \* WAMT staff are considered to be experts in the opportunities for women to enter manual trades, the possible training routes, ways of getting work and the problems which a woman will face in a manual trades environment. Training centres often get in touch with the project when they want to recruit tutors.
- \* Training projects and colleges in London regularly call upon them to give talks to their women trainees about setting up in business and about other aspects of getting started as tradeswomen

### *The role of WAMT in IRIS and NOW*

- \* WAMT contributed to a booklet, produced by CREW for use, throughout Europe to break down gender stereotyping in schoolchildren's career choices
- \* Through their NOW project, WAMT is pioneering the 'consortium' model for helping self-employed women obtain larger and more profitable contracts in the building trades

*History*

NEWTEC started training women for manual trades in 1984. In 1986, it developed an innovative course in computer-related skills, which was co-funded by the ESF and the local authority. This course has recently been re-designed to take account of the growing importance of CAD/CAM in the local economy. 'Taster' course in manual trades, and bricklayers' training, continue.

*Innovations and distinctive features*

- \* NEWTEC's design and technology course attempts to train women to do more than just use computer software packages; they are introduced to robotics and to the use of computers in design
- \* The 'taster' course in manual trades has become an exercise in confidence-building, using tasks such as building walls and repairing cars to help women break through gender barriers embedded in their ideas about themselves
- \* NEWTEC emphasises 'equal opportunities' in all aspects of its work; it addresses a multi-cultural community and black and ethnic minority groups are well represented amongst the tutors as well as the students
- \* NEWTEC makes exemplary childcare an important part of its work. An on-site nursery not only provides a service but is used to train childminders. The project has founded a Childcare Forum to improve the quality of childcare services in the local community, drawing together the local authority, the TEC, and private employers.

*The role of NEWTEC in IRIS and NOW*

- \* NEWTEC has made a video about its work, with the help of an IRIS publicity grant, and hopes to use it to attract interest from employers
- \* A NOW project involves NEWTEC and the ADA women's technology centre in Athens (also an IRIS member) to help the Greek organisation develop new curricula and partnership arrangements with employers. Other partners are BBI in Bremen and Softwarehaus in Frankfurt.

## **ANNEX 1**

### **GLOSSARY AND LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

Non-British readers may find this section useful to explain the abbreviations which are used in the text:

<b>BP</b>	<b>British Petroleum</b>
<b>BS 5750</b>	<b>British quality standard</b>
<b>CAD</b>	<b>Computer Aided Design</b>
<b>CAM</b>	<b>Computer Aided Manufacture</b>
<b>CEDEFOP</b>	<b>European programme for research in training methods</b>
<b>CITB</b>	<b>Construction Industry Training Board</b>
<b>CREW</b>	<b>Centre for Research on European Women</b>
<b>DLOs</b>	<b>(Direct Labour Organisations); the public works departments of local authorities. In 1989 new legislation obliged these organisations to compete with private building contractors in a competitive tendering process. Since then, they have been known as Direct Service Organisations.</b>
<b>EC</b>	<b>European Commission</b>
<b>ELISE</b>	<b>An EC programme providing information about local economic and training initiatives</b>
<b>ESF</b>	<b>European Social Fund</b>
<b>ESL</b>	<b>English as a second language</b>
<b>EURO-TECNET</b>	<b>European programme for research in training methods</b>
<b>FE</b>	<b>Further Education College (College for adult education and vocational training)</b>
<b>FORCE</b>	<b>European programme concerned with employer-linked training of employees.</b>
<b>HNC</b>	<b>Higher National Certificate</b>
<b>ITO</b>	<b>Industrial Training Organisation</b>

<b>ITB</b>	<b>Industrial Training Board</b>	
<b>LEI</b>	<b>Local economic initiative</b>	
<b>LEC</b>	<b>Local Enterprise Company (Scottish Equivalent of TEC)</b>	
<b>NALGO</b>	<b>National and Local Government Officers' Association, a major trade union.</b>	
<b>NOW</b>	<b>New Opportunities for Women - EC programme supporting training and other programmes for women (see paragraph 4.7)</b>	
<b>NVQ</b>	<b>National Vocational Qualification</b>	
<b>TEC</b>	<b>Training and Enterprise Council: responsible for the delivery of E.T. and Y.T (see Annex 3)</b>	
<b>WEU</b>	<b>Women's Enterprise Unit</b>	
<b>WTN</b>	<b>Women's Training Network</b>	
<b>City and Guilds</b>	<b>City and Guilds Institute</b>	<b>National bodies which award vocational training certificates</b>
<b>RSA</b>	<b>Royal Society of Arts</b>	
<b>AEB</b>	<b>Associated Examining Board</b>	
<b>ET</b>	<b>Employment Training</b>	<b>National programmes for the unemployed (see Annex 3)</b>
<b>YT</b>	<b>Youth Training</b>	
<b>Skill Centres</b>	<b>Government training centres for the unemployed (now no longer in existence). They trained both women and men.</b>	
<b>Enterprise Trusts</b>	<b>Non-profit making organisations, local in nature, to promote small businesses and help them by means of advice, workshop provision, etc. They are funded by a combination of private and public sector sources.</b>	

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## **ANNEX III**

### **THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT**

#### **A3.1 Women's training in the UK; institutions and policies**

##### **A3.1.1 *TECs and LECs***

Provision of publicly funded training in the UK is organised by a network of 82 Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) in England and Wales, and 22 Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) in Scotland. TECs and LECs are employer led, private sector bodies which have a contract with the Employment Department to organise training through making contracts with training providers. TECs were introduced by the UK government from April 1990 onwards, with all of the 82 TECs operational by the end of 1991. All of the LECs came into operation in April 1991. Previous to this, the administration of most publicly funded training was carried out by local offices of the Department of Employment. TECs and LECs took over the responsibilities of these offices, with largely the same staff and buildings. They have, however, considerably more autonomy in the way in which they provide training within the framework of the two main training schemes, Employment Training (ET) and Youth Training (YT). They are managed by a Board consisting of local business people, and are intended to provide training that focuses on the needs of the local labour market.

**A3.1.2** The restructuring of training provision linked with the development of TECs has major implications for the provision of 'women's training' as a distinct category in the UK. In the past, training provision for adults has focused on a number of centrally determined programmes with training within a programme for all those participating being broadly similar, and programmes being targeted on a fairly clearly defined group (e.g. Wider Opportunities for Women). There are now only the two national training programmes, ET for adults and YT for young people. TECs and LECs have a high level of discretion over the strategy they choose to deliver ET and YT in their area. The principle of participation in either scheme is that all those joining the programme will be treated as individuals (rather than as 'women' or 'a minority group') and that an individual action plan will be drawn up reflecting their individual training needs. In parallel with this, TECs will design provision to reflect skills needs in their area, and other factors that they perceive as locally important.

**A.3.1.3** Employment Training is the major UK training programme for unemployed adults. Trainees are paid on a 'benefit plus' basis, with the addition normally being £10 per week. Some of them have 'employee status' in which case the allowance is increased by the employer. Trainees not in receipt of benefit receive an allowance of £10 per week. Employment Training is open to all those who have been unemployed for over six months, but those eligible are divided into three groups in order of priority for placement; the Guarantee group, the Aim group, and others. The Guarantee group consists of those aged between 18-25 who have been registered unemployed for between six and twelve months, and

the Aim group of those aged between 18-50 who have been registered unemployed for over 2 years. People who have not been registered as unemployed during their period of absence from the labour market do not fall into either of the two priority groups. As in other parts of Europe, the unregistered jobseekers are mainly women returners.

- A.3.1.4** TECs are required to meet necessary childcare costs for those within the Guarantee group who would otherwise be unable to take up a place. There is no minimum or maximum rate set. They also have the option of making payments for childcare to those in the other two groups, but are not obliged to do so. Previous rules limited childcare allowances to lone parents, and some projects continue to operate under this policy.
- A.3.1.5** Training provision for young people has not changed to such a great extent as that for adults. There were no national training schemes equivalent to Wider Opportunities for Women aimed at young women, or at other specific groups of young people. YT replaced the Youth Training Scheme (YTS), which was broadly similar in approach. YT caters for young people; all young people under 18 who are over the minimum school leaving age (16), not employed and not in full time education are in theory guaranteed a training place. Childcare payments to women on YT are made in similar circumstances to those on ET.
- A.3.1.6** TECs and LECs do not carry out training themselves, but contract it out to a wide range of training providers. Training is carried out by a variety of different actors, including commercial training providers, voluntary organisations - in some cases catering for particular groups such as NACRO (the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders), further education colleges, and larger private companies providing training within their organisation.
- A.3.1.7** There are no specific provisions for women laid down at national level in either ET or YT, although there are some single sex projects funded through the schemes at a local level. There is a contractual requirement for TECs to have equal opportunities policies, and to have a strategy for achieving these specified in their business plan, but the form that the strategy takes is defined by the TEC concerned. Individual initiatives focused on training women are carried out by some TECs and LECs. One of the IRIS projects run by the Scottish Enterprise Foundation, for example, is funded through Employment Training (see case study for details). The existence and form of any project of this type is defined at a local level. While there are mechanisms designed to spread information and 'good practice' amongst TECs, the large number of small local initiatives makes it hard to identify the level of provision in any particular area, such as positive action initiatives, being carried out by TECs.

#### *Other training provision*

- A.3.1.8** Although the majority of publicly funded training is organised through the TECs and LECs, there are a number of organisations, including voluntary organisations and further education colleges carrying out training outside the ET/YT structure,

some running very innovative training schemes. These generally receive funding from local authorities, or in some cases, particularly in inner cities or deprived areas, from localised government initiatives. Many of these also run ET or YT courses for their local TEC. Some training organisations receive part funding from the European Social Fund. Many of the UK IRIS projects, including the Edinburgh Women's Training Workshop, NEWTEC, and the Women and Manual Trades project are funded in this way, receiving part of their funding from local authorities, and part from the ESF. The network of Women's Workshops is part funded by the ESF, with the matching funds coming from local sources. Fifteen of the UK IRIS members are FE college linked projects part funded by the ESF.

**A.3.1.9** Industrial Training Organisations (ITOs) act as a focus for training within specific industries. They are industry led, and funded by voluntary subscriptions from member companies, the sale of training services and other commercial activities. ITOs have three major roles; monitoring future skill requirements within their industries, developing and promoting occupational standards, and encouraging employers to train. As part of their role, many act as lead bodies, setting the standards for National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) within their industries and developing industry specific training courses. Some carry out other activities - for example, the Engineering Training Authority (ENTRA) runs courses to encourage girls to consider engineering as a career, and provides other training courses for companies on a commercial basis. ITOs were introduced in 1989 to replace statutory Industrial Training Boards (ITBs). ITBs made a statutory levy of less than 1% of the payroll of all companies within their industry. Companies were exempted from the main part of this levy if they trained their workforce to an adequate standard, and in practice, the majority of companies received this exemption. Three statutory training boards remain, covering Construction, Engineering Construction and Agriculture. One, the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) runs a Youth Training course 'Equal Opportunities in the Construction Industry' which is a member of IRIS.

**A.3.1.10** UK equal opportunities legislation specifies that single sex training may only be offered in occupational areas where that sex is under-represented or where it appears that members of one sex are in special need of training by reason of the period for which they have been discharging domestic or family responsibilities. Companies are only allowed to advertise for recruits saying that they particularly welcome applications from one sex, or to run in-company single sex training where that sex is underrepresented in the specific occupation concerned in their organisation. In the past, all single sex training schemes run in accordance with the legal provisions had to be registered with the Secretary of State for Employment. This had the additional affect of providing an up-to-date source of information about the number and type of women-only training schemes. This provision has now been abolished, and as a result of this, it is hard to obtain a clear picture of the extent of women-only training outside of the IRIS network in the UK at present.

### A.3.2 Childcare services and maternity provision

A.3.2.1 Improving access to childcare services for women who are training or working is an important dimension of the European Community's current Programme on Equality of Opportunity. It is, therefore, one of the objectives of IRIS projects. Their work in this field must be seen against the background of relatively poor provision, particularly for women on low pay.

A.3.2.2 The majority of government funded childcare/education places for under-fives in the UK consist of places in nursery/primary schools for 3 and 4 year olds (62,700 places in 1989), of which 50% are part time. There are also a small number of places in local authority day nurseries (34,225 in 1988), which are mainly targeted on children and families with social or health needs, rather than being generally available for working women. Other public sources of provision, providing a small number of places include publicly funded childminders and creches attached to training centres or colleges. This does not include places in publicly funded playgroups, which on average are attended by a child for only 5 hours a week.

A.3.2.3 Private childminders and day nurseries provide a limited number of places for those parents who can afford to pay for childcare. 'Working for childcare', a lobby group, carried out a survey in 1991 which suggested that privately funded childcare costs from around £50 a week for a place with a childminder, and £4000-£5000 a year for a place in a creche. Tax concessions to encourage employers to provide workplace nurseries for staff have recently been restored, but this form of provision is relatively rare in the UK, being mainly confined to large public sector employers.

Daycare services for under fives : 1988		
	No of places	Places as % of population aged 0-4
Local authority day nurseries	34,225	0.9
Private and voluntary day nurseries	40,378	1.1
Registered childminders	117,654	3.0
TOTAL	263,357	7.0

Source: Cohen (1990)

A.3.2.4 UK public provision of childcare services is among the lowest in the EC. Places are available for an estimated 2% of children under three, and 35-40% of children between three and five years old (European Commission 1988). The Netherlands and Ireland also provide publicly funded childcare places for only 2% of under three year olds, but both provide places for more than half of children between three and school age. For children in this age group, only Portugal

provides fewer publicly funded places. The need for reliable and affordable out of school provision has been recognised by the UK government. A new childcare grant is to be introduced through TECs which will allow them to facilitate the start up of out of school provision in partnership with employers, local authorities and the voluntary sector.

<b>EC publicly funded childcare services as a percentage of all children in age group</b>			
	<b>Children under 3</b>	<b>3 to school age</b>	<b>School age</b>
<b>Belgium</b>	20%	95%+	6 years
<b>Denmark</b>	48%	85%	7 years
<b>France</b>	20%	95%+	6 years
<b>Germany<sup>1</sup></b>	3%	65-70%	6-7 years
<b>Greece</b>	4%	65-70%	5.5 years
<b>Ireland</b>	2%	55%	6 years
<b>Italy</b>	5%	85%+	6 years
<b>Luxembourg</b>	2%	55-60%	5 years
<b>Netherlands</b>	2%	50-55%	5 years
<b>Portugal</b>	6%	35%	6 years
<b>Spain</b>	n.a.	65-70%	6 years
<b>UK</b>	2%	35-40%	5 years

Source: Childcare in Europe 1985-1990 (European Commission 1990)

<sup>1</sup> Figures for West Germany only

**A.3.2.5 Maternity leave provisions in the UK combine a relatively long leave period compared to other EC countries, but the conditions of eligibility are stricter than in many Member States. All employed pregnant women are entitled to paid time off for antenatal care, but other the right to reinstatement and to higher rate maternity pay is dependent on a minimum of 2 years service with the same employee for women working more than 16 hours a week, and 5 years service for women working between 8 and 16 hours a week. Those women qualifying are entitled to up to 11 weeks leave before the birth, and up to 29 weeks after the birth. They are paid at 90% of earnings for 12 weeks, and receive a low flat rate payment for the remaining period. There are no statutory entitlements to paternity or family leave, or to career breaks. UK employment protection legislation leaves maternity leave provisions above the**

statutory minimum to be agreed between the employer and employee under the terms of the contract of employment.

- A.3.2.6 However, it is becoming increasingly common for large employers to offer women, and in some cases men, maternity/family leave in excess of the statutory provisions. A survey of treatment of working parents found that a quarter of the organisations questioned offered more than the minimum statutory provision for leave and pay (Industrial Relations Review and Report, May 1991). There was less interest in allowing women or men longer 'career breaks' before returning to work, and under 5% of the companies offered this option.

## **ANNEX IV WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK**

### **A4.1 Unemployment**

**A4.1.1** The UK is the only country in the EC, apart from Ireland in which the unemployment rate of women is lower than that of men. One reason why women's unemployment appears low in Britain is that UK unemployment statistics are based on a count of those claiming benefits because they are out of work. For this reason, many women who are seeking work are not included in the unemployment figures, as they are ineligible for benefit. This is particularly the case for married women, since in general, where a married couple are both out of work, it is the husband who receives social security payments, and if a woman has exhausted her right to unemployment insurance, she will not receive benefit if she is living with a working partner. The Labour Force survey provides a more useful measure of the level of unemployment. It counts as unemployed all those without a job who were available to start work within the next two weeks and had either looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview, or were waiting to start a job that they had already obtained.

**A4.1.2** In the spring of 1991, the unemployment rate on the basis of the claimant count was 9.3% of the male workforce, 4.1% of the female workforce. The Labour Force Survey for 1991 shows an unemployment rate for women of 7.2% for 1991. In contrast, the male unemployment rate in the Labour Force Survey is 9.1%; lower than the claimant count figure.

### **A4.2 The increase in female employment and its implications for employers**

The proportion of women in the UK who are in employment has increased substantially in the last twenty years, at the same time as the proportion of men in employment has fallen. This trend is expected to continue. As the number of young people entering the workforce is falling, women returning to work are increasingly being viewed as an important source of labour by employers. This has led some employers to make special provisions to help women workers; flexitime (for both men and women) and job sharing are becoming increasingly common, especially in the public sector; and within it, particularly in the central government service. However, these arrangements are still used only by a tiny proportion of the total number of employees across all sectors; only 9% work flexitime and 0.6% jobshare (Wareing, 1992). None the less, many employers are actively considering more flexible working time arrangements, according to recent surveys (Marsh, 1991). An annual leave allowance of ten days to care for sick dependents, in the event of family bereavements or for other family emergencies has been negotiated by NALGO, the largest public sector union, and one or two other unions have similar agreements. Employers are beginning to make special provisions for retraining of women returners, as are colleges and training organisations. Women have made up a growing proportion of the labour force; nearly 90% of the growth since 1971 has been among women, and they are projected to make up 44% of the labour force in 2001.

**Table A4.1 - Civilian Labour Force Activity Rates percentages**

	Women (16-59 years)	Men (16-65 years)
1971	56.7	90.7
1990	71.6	87.2
1992*	71.1	86.9
2001*	74.0	86.4

Source: Employment Gazette (April 1992)

\* Projections

### A4.3 Self-employment

The proportion of self-employed people who are women has increased over the last decade, but remains low, having risen from 21% in 1981 to 24% in 1991. In this period, though, the number of self-employed people generally increased substantially, and the absolute number of women who are self-employed rose by nearly 80%. There is only a very small difference between the proportion of self-employed women and men who employ others - 29% of women, and 31% of men had employees in 1991.

### A4.4 Part-time work

A4.4.1 Women form the great majority of part time workers; in 1991, 44% of female employees worked part time, compared to only 9% of male employees.

**Table A4.2 - Part time employment in Great Britain as a proportion of total employment by sex (percentage)**

	1983	1988	1991
All employees	21.7	23.9	26.1
Women	42.1	42.6	44.3
Men	6.4	7.9	9.4

Source: Employment Gazette (April 1992)

The Labour Force Survey asks those who work part-time their reasons for doing so. The reasons given by women for working part-time were:



	<b>Married women</b>	<b>Unmarried women</b>
Didn't want a full-time job	75%	37%
Student/still at school	-	33%
Couldn't find a full-time job	5.4%	12%
Ill/disabled	1%	2%
Other	18%	16.7%

Source: Employment Gazette (April 1992)

A 1991 study found that 96% of women working part-time found their hours 'very' or 'quite' convenient (Marsh, 1991). However, both this study and the LFS do not separate out those women who would like to work full-time, but are unable to do so because of an inability to find affordable childcare or because of other family responsibilities from those who genuinely do not want a full-time job.

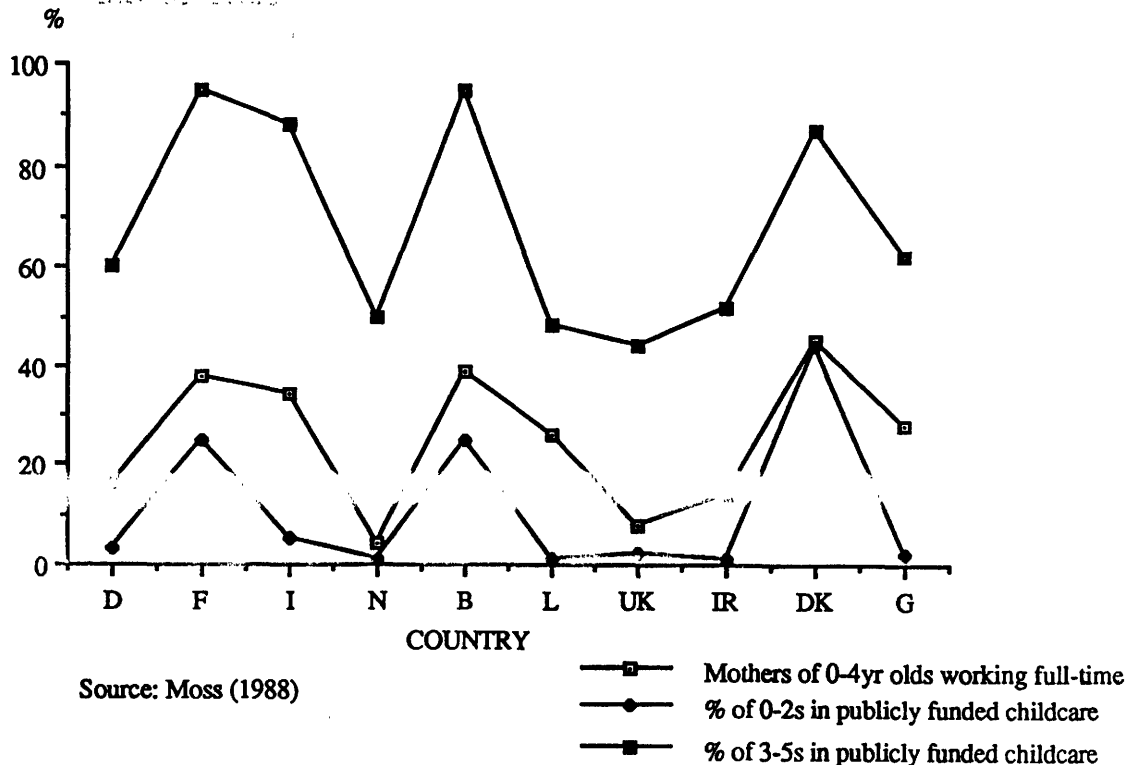
A4.4.2 Part time workers have fewer employment rights than full time workers; for example, women who work for less than 16 hours a week must work for the same employer for five years to be eligible for maternity leave, whereas those working over 16 hours need only two years service for eligibility. Part time workers also earn less on average than full time workers; average hourly earnings for part-time adult women in 1991 were 75% of the average hourly earnings of women who worked full-time, and only 57% of the average hourly earnings of full-time men. Marsh (1991) reports that women who work part-time find their hours of work more convenient than men or full-time women, are less likely to be over-tired and find it easier to take holidays with their families. But, according to this author as well as others, these benefits are often at the expense of pay and conditions. McRae (1990) finds that women who return to work on a part-time basis after having children often suffer occupational downgrading.

A4.4.3 Previous research on employer practices in the UK has shown that part-time workers are considerably less likely to receive training from their employer than full time workers (Clarke, 1991). Since so many female workers are part-time, this constitutes a significant source of disadvantage for women at work. Lack of employer-provided training limits women's career progression and affects their earnings levels. But it is also true that young women in the 16-19 age group are less likely to receive training than men in the same age group, as shown by Clarke's presentation of data from the Labour Force Survey. This suggests that gender difference in training access is not only a result of part-time working.

## A4.5 Economic activity of women with children

A4.5.1 Nearly 60% of women with a child aged under 5 are economically inactive, compared to only 22% of women with no dependent children. Activity rates for women with young children are influenced by the availability and cost of childcare. Studies of womens' working hours in the UK do not examine whether women would continue to seek part-time work in preference to full-time if publicly funded childcare were freely available. However, comparisons with the levels of part-time working in other EC countries suggest that, if this were the case, a higher proportion of mothers of young children would seek full-time employment. For example, publicly funded childcare is available to nearly half of children under three, and 85% of children between three and seven (school age) in Denmark. Three quarters of Danish women with children under 5 are economically active, and of those, over 45% work full time. Figure A4.1 shows the levels of publicly funded child-care and of mothers with young children working full time in the Member States.

Figure A.4.1  
Childcare and women's employment in the  
Member States



However, it may be that even if affordable childcare were more easily available in Britain, a substantial number of women would continue to choose to work part-time. A survey of potential women returners in Hertfordshire (Rainnie and Kraithman 1989) found that of women with children aged between 2 and 4 years, two thirds wished to return to work, but that over half would want to work part time, even if workplace childcare were provided. Three other local surveys suggest that when women with older children are included, the childcare issue is a significant obstacle to full time working. A survey of women in Harlow (Essex), covering women with children of all ages up to 16, found that mothers would prefer to return to work earlier after having children, and to work longer hours, if good quality childcare was available at an affordable price (Geddes and Duffy, 1990). This study identified the fact that many women are limited to part-time working as a major obstacle to their careers, restricting them to low skilled, low paid work with no career progression. Again, in surveys carried out in parts of London, the high cost of childcare was identified as a reason why women with school age children could only work part-time (Gray, Bulos et al, 1990; Ealing Borough Council, 1989). According to Marsh (1991), 23% of women part-time workers would like to work longer hours (compared to 19% of men and only 10% of full-time women).

A4.5.2 The percentage of lone mothers with a child under five who are economically active is even lower than that of mothers bringing up children with a partner. Under 20% of lone mothers of young children work, and only six percent work full time. In seven out of the twelve EC countries, this pattern is reversed, and lone mothers are more likely to be economically active than those with partners. Only Irish and Dutch lone mothers have lower participation rates than those in the UK. Fifteen percent of UK families including dependent children are headed by lone mothers, and these families are one of the groups most susceptible to poverty.

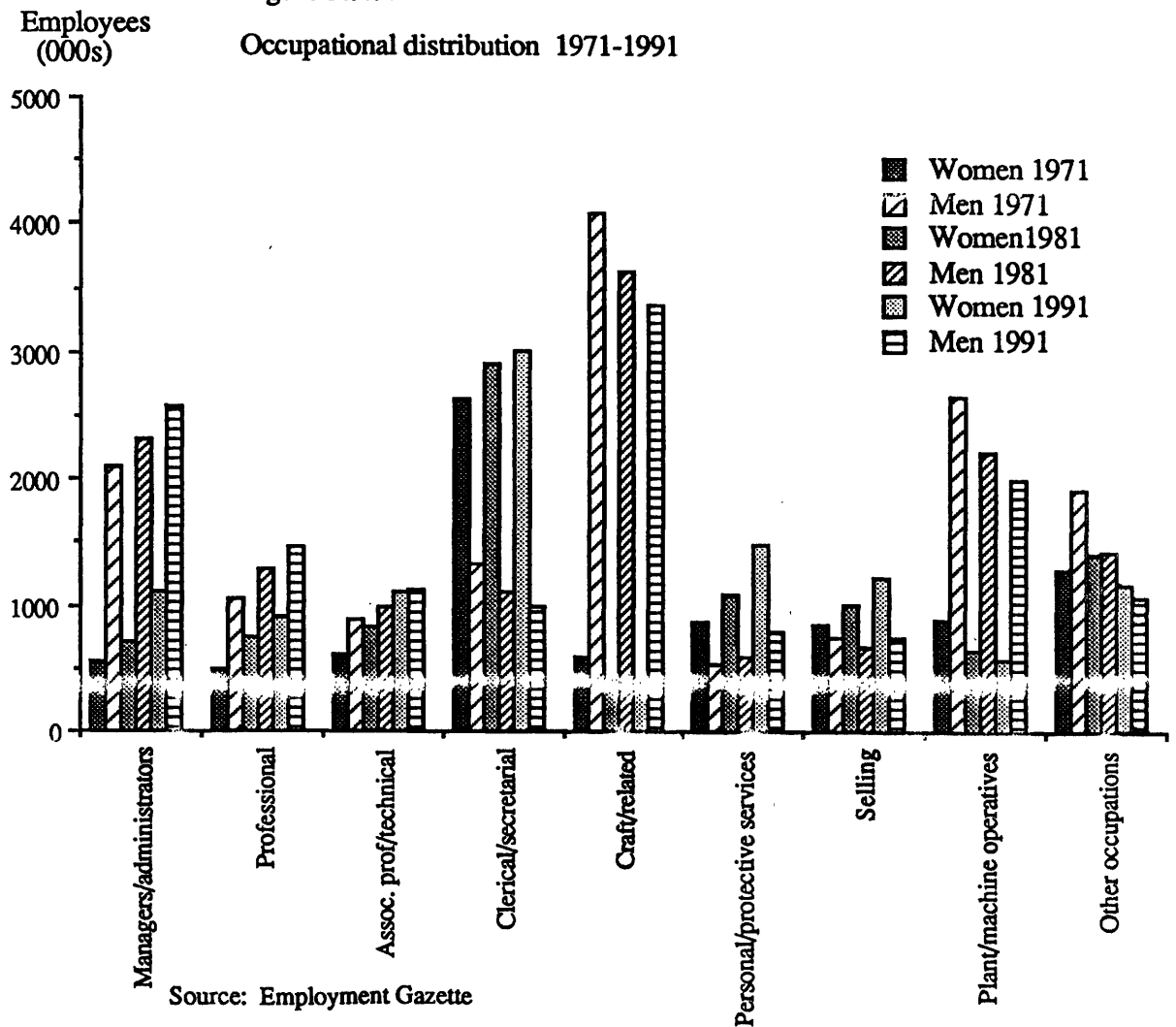
Lone mothers with children aged < 2		All mothers with children aged < 2		Lone mothers with children aged 3-6		All mothers with children aged 3-6	
Self-employed	1	Self-employed	4	Self-employed	3	Self-employed	5
Employed	12	Employed	29	Employed	31	Employed	47
Unemployed	10	Unemployed	11	Unemployed	12	Unemployed	8
Inactive	77	Inactive	57	Inactive	53	Inactive	40

Source: Female Activity and Fertility (PACEC) 1991

## A4.6 Occupational differences

Over 80% of women in employment in the UK work in the service sector. In contrast, nearly a third of male employees work in the manufacturing sector, and over 10% work in the construction sector. Where women do work in sectors such as construction, to a large extent they are still employed in non-manual jobs; although 2% of female employees work in the construction sector, only 0.2% work in manual occupations in the sector, the great majority being employed in clerical and secretarial occupations. The differences in the occupational distribution of women and men in the UK workforce, and the way in which that distribution has changed in the last twenty years can be seen in figure A4.2. There has not been a major change in the degree of occupational segregation in this time; while the balance between women and men in some groups of occupations, such as 'associate professional/technical' occupations has become more even, the proportion of women in clerical occupations has risen.

Figure A.4.2



## A4.7 Gender differences in earnings

A4.7.1 In 1991, the average gross hourly earnings of full time adult women employees in the UK were 78% of the average for male employees. The earnings gap has narrowed slightly since 1984, when women's earnings were 73% of those of male employees. However, looking at all adult workers including part time employees the gap is wider, with average female hourly earnings only 71% of those for male employees. In addition, the main source of data on earnings, the New Earnings Survey, excludes a substantial number of low paid part-time workers, and may thus understate the true earnings differential. Comparisons with differentials in other Member States are problematic, as available data dates from 1988, and deals only with manufacturing industry, whereas the majority of women in the UK work in other sectors. However, from data that is available, the UK earnings gap appears to be relatively wide compared to other Member States, as can be seen in table A4.4; looking at the earnings differentials between women and men in manufacturing industry, for those countries where figures are available, only Luxembourg has a wider differential.

	Manual workers	Non-manual workers
Belgium	74.2	63.8
Denmark	84.2	n.a.
France	79.5	65.0
W. Germany	73.1	66.5
Greece	78.2	67.3
Ireland	67.9	n.a.
Italy	n.a.	n.a.
Luxembourg	58.0	55.3
Netherlands	75.4	63.7
Portugal	68.0 (1989)	71.5
UK	67.9	54.6
Spain	n.a.	n.a.

Source: data extracted by the UK Equal Opportunities Commission from Earnings, Industry and Services (Eurostat, 1990)

A4.7.2 To some extent the differences in earnings are associated with occupational differences; as noted above, women tend to be employed in lower status occupations, and are concentrated in the service sector. However, looking at four very specific occupational categories, which are not heavily 'gender stereotyped', it can be seen that occupational segregation does not fully account for the earnings gap.

	Men	Women	Women's earnings as a % of men's
Teaching professionals in secondary education	£12.74	£11.53	91
Sales assistants	£4.46	£3.68	83
Waiters/waitresses	£4.02	£3.35	83
Assemblers/line workers	£5.69	£4.03	71

Source: New Earnings Survey 1991

A4.7.3 Although, as has been noted above, the NES does exclude many part time and low paid workers, this does not affect the comparison between different groups made in the table. The proportions of women in the NES sample for these occupations are shown in table A4.6

	Women (%)	Men (%)
Teaching professionals in secondary education	50	50
Sales assistants	66	34
Waiters/waitresses	57	43
Assemblers/line workers	42	58