

together  
we can  
challenge  
stereotypes  
for work...



tradingplaces

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The Trading Places project aims to improve access to learning and employment for women and men, and to improve recruitment where there are significant skills shortages, regionally and nationally, in 4 industries.

The geographical focus for the project is the West of England sub-region where it follows, and complements, desk-based research into the area's priority sectors.

Much is already known about the barriers that impede employment in some industry sectors, for some groups of people. This project sets out to counteract 'deficit models' of exploration – ie. the negatives – and investigate, instead, what makes people seek employment in these areas of work and to stay there despite the barriers.

The areas identified for specific targeting were:

- Men in **social care**
- Women in **construction**
- Women in **engineering**
- Men/women in **retail**

The project design involved the recruitment of 25 people, the project's experts, who are already working or training successfully in these 4 sectors. And at the heart of the proposal was the need to build trust and strong communication between them and the project team. Together they set out to explore what it is about the experts that has enabled them to seek employment or training in a non-traditional industry, to stay there, and to make a success of it.

The teams, therefore, shared a common aim: to work together to understand and record the factors and features that characterise effective occupational 'desegregation' – and to disseminate and share those findings.

These findings will be used to train and support 'gatekeepers' who affect and influence the choices that children, young people and adults make when considering learning and employment opportunities, and to change the attitudes and habits that continue to reinforce stereotyping in some industry sectors.

Part 1 of the main report tells the 25 experts' stories, by sector, and highlights the main findings, together with specific recommendations, for each of the 4 industry sectors.

Part 2 of the main report is a record of the methods and processes involved in telling, listening and recording the stories. There is comment on the use of each method from the project team and the expert team.

### **Trading Places**

Learning South West

June 2008



## Introduction

Gender segregation in employment is of concern for two reasons, quite aside from issues of equality of opportunity:

- Segregation into different areas of work remains a key factor contributing to the gender gap in earnings
- Gender segregation also contributes to the continuing skills deficits in the UK in some sectors.

The Trading Places project was designed to combat stereotypes in employment, to open the eyes of those in positions to influence young people and adults, and to encourage those ‘influencers’ to challenge stereotypes.

The 4 sectors selected by the West of England Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for specific consideration were:

- Men in **social care**
- Women in **construction**
- Women in **engineering**
- Men/women in **retail**

## Methodology

25 men and women, the experts from the 4 industry sectors, each of which experience stereotyping of one type or another, shared their experiences and told their stories. Encouraged and supported by the project workers, they reflected on early influences, their experiences during primary and secondary education and subsequent factors that have drawn them to a particular area of employment.

A variety of successful methods were used in making this journey of discovery. Those which were most successful are listed below. Those which were least successful, on this occasion, mostly involved the use of technology.

- One to one discussions between the experts and the project workers
- Group meetings of experts, by sector
- Large group induction meetings for experts
- A weekend residential break for experts and project workers
- Incentives including the free weekend and the use and gift of a PDA for experts
- Film-making, including inviting feedback from the experts at the editing stages
- Contributing to the writing and editing of individual stories
- Contributing to the formulation of recommendations.

## Main messages

The experts’ stories can be read in Part 1 of the main report. In summary, however, the main messages that emerged from the process of telling and listening to the stories are:

### **recognise and value difference...**

Recognise and value difference and embrace change. Don’t always do the same thing.

*“If you do what you’ve always done, you’ll get what you’ve always got.”*

*“Educate men and boys about equality issues from a younger age. There are still attitudes out there that make it difficult for women to achieve and they have to really want to do it to overcome the obstacles and barriers.”* **engineering sector**

### **keep an open mind...**

Keep an open mind and abandon previous stereotypes of what people can do and where they can work. People can do whatever they set their hearts on. *“People are good are doing what they are happy doing.”* There is no hierarchy of jobs, they all have their value and their strengths.

*“(the project) made me realise that I truly love what I do and want to keep doing it... if the project can help other people feel as good about their work as I do, then the project will have succeeded in every way...”* **care sector**

### **give a leg-up...**

Give a leg-up – *“grow your own”* – support and encourage people to follow their dreams. Look under your nose – there will be people (younger and older) who, with nurturing, can be the best employees in any area of work.

*“...when it comes to retail, I feel that people don’t appreciate the variety of jobs you could do within retail. Many big organisations also have their own training schemes where they will help drive you to your potential and a great career path. Also, something people miss out about retail is how rewarding it can be - just by doing your job you can make people’s day.”*

**retail sector**

**value different routes...**

Value the different routes people take to get where they want to go. None are better than the other. It's all down to individual preference and circumstance. It will suit some to take a vertical path. Others will zigzag. Others may not realise that they're on the path until they stop to look back!

*"More work should be done to convince parents, whose children may be the first generation of their family to have the opportunity to go to university, that this is not the only option for intelligent young people – intelligence, with a leaning towards creativity and practicality, can make a very successful career in the industry, as opposed to the stereotype of labouring 'on site'."*

**construction sector**

**Conclusion**

The Trading Places project has demonstrated that, in some ways, and in some industries, the stereotypes are as ingrained as they ever were. The 25 people that the project team had the privilege to work with were, without exception, exceptional, and they are clearly in the forefront of pioneering the way for others to follow. The project's experts are often at pains to say they are ordinary people but it became clear over the course of the project that they had ambition, strength and determination well beyond the limits of most of us. However, their message overall is that anyone can do what they want to do – and with the support of those around them – advisers, teachers, funders, employers, trainers and so on – **they will get there!** In the words of a female engineer:

*"Promote the message that 'anyone can do it'. It's normal – not exceptional. These are interesting jobs for ordinary people. You can have fun, a family, fashionable clothing **and** be an engineer."*

**Trading places recommends**

The following groups of recommendations come from the project team working with, and with the approval of, the project's 25 experts:

**to policy makers and funders...**

Expand the use of incentives to attract people to work in roles in which there are skills shortages and/or which are under-represented by a specific gender, eg. like 'golden hellos' for teachers in specific curriculum areas.

*"I've never been one to take orders so going self-employed has been good for me; it takes guts and self-belief and you have to be determined, but I have had support from Business Link West throughout and it has worked so far..."*

Use funding as a lever to stimulate FE/HE providers to address recruitment of men/women into areas of training where they are traditionally under-represented and/or where there are skills shortages, eg. men into child-care training.

Amend standards for inspection/quality kitemarks to reflect the demand for recruitment of women/men in industry sectors where they have been traditionally under-represented.

Introduce incentives to encourage employers to adopt flexible family-friendly working practices, eg. women working in traditionally male-dominated industry sectors.

Introduce incentives for employers to offer genuine hands-on work-experience for people of all ages, and fund those who take up the opportunities.

*"Women (and men) sometimes come back to the subjects that they did not pursue at school and by the time they realise it is something they would like to have done, it is too late, or more difficult to start a career in..."*

Develop and provide funding for expanded 'ambassador' schemes, which offer workshops, materials, etc. to promote positive images and combat stereotypes.

*"Put in place a mentoring scheme, whereby a database of female and male engineers in the area is set up. This database could be made available to schools, colleges and advice services as a mentoring one-to-one service for young people who have an interest in the subjects. This system would work better than going into schools, as mentors could be matched to pupils/students and would give support to individuals who express an interest in engineering specifically."*

**to careers influencers...**

Develop and use methods of assessment, (including one to one, groupwork, psychometric instruments), which enable children, young people and adults to reflect on their strengths, qualities and interests. Provide accurate information on roles and industry sectors which accurately match the outcomes, eg. those with strong interpersonal skills and a competitive streak may be well suited to the retail sector.

*“It’s rewarding and it isn’t all about money, although it can be a well paid career. It’s about doing your best, giving a good service and meeting the challenge.”*

Promote all routes to employment with equal value, highlighting the advantages of each. Avoid making assumptions about ‘suitable’ pathways for individuals based on academic achievement at school/college.

*“Everything else paled in comparison to the apprenticeship scheme. I didn’t really want all the debt from university. There are so many people with degrees and no jobs. I went the sensible route – worked and earned money at the same time.”*

Ensure all careers information is accurate, current, and presented in a way that is meaningful and accessible to all clients and, where appropriate, their parents/carers.

*“Although maths is important, you do not have to be a mathematician to study engineering. All you need is some A-level maths and reasonable logic.”*

In training those in positions to influence career choice, including teachers, ensure the curriculum and/or their on-going professional development includes awareness of prejudice, and work-shadowing opportunities to combat stereotyping and stigma relating to some industry sectors.

*“The image of engineering is still one where people are in overalls working in an oily or dirty environment. The image needs to be promoted more positively and accurately, emphasising the creativity, fun and variety of roles. A positive image is important for both male and female. Engineering is a **profession**.”*

*“We need to encourage employees, recruiters and young people to look at retail differently and give it a go as a serious career prospect.”*

*“The careers adviser said that girls don’t do engineering so I couldn’t possibly do that – I just ignored it.”*

Seek out opportunities to talk to young children, including those at pre-school, about work, and to combat stereotypes like ‘Bob the Builder’.

*“Engineering is all around us – going into a hospital you see the equipment that is keeping people alive – it is all about engineering. Most people don’t see that.”*

*“Educate men and boys about equality issues from a younger age. There are still attitudes out there that make it difficult for women to achieve and they have to really want to do it to overcome the obstacles and barriers.”*

**to employers and unions...**

Offer genuine work-experience opportunities to both young people and adults, beyond the statutory one or 2 weeks.

*“Taster sessions are a very effective way of introducing engineering to potential recruits. For those who have a tendency to practical subjects, a hands-on session in a real engineering environment can be inspirational and can show potential recruits whether they will enjoy or flourish in engineering.”*

Develop flexible, family-friendly employment practices to attract and keep both men and women.

*“It was the lack of flexibility in working hours for my husband’s job that triggered a move.”*

*“Employers should value their staff, listen to them, train them and support them, they can cut the wastage: turnover in retail is 47% per annum and it costs £3,000 to recruit and train each employee.”*

Review all materials that are presented as an image of the industry or company to the public, including web-sites. Avoid reflecting a stereotypical image, eg. photographs of managers, when all are one gender.

*“Make people aware of the multitude of disciplines and roles available ranging from getting dirty on site, working with precise instruments to managing people, writing reports and number crunching to name but a few.”*

Use recruitment and selection methods that are developed to suit both men and women and do not disadvantage one gender or the other.

*“Employers should be encouraged to ensure that attitudes of people at recruitment and interview are not prejudiced against women and that staff are not breaking the law.”*

#### **to schools and colleges...**

Ensure all those in contact with young people and adults are aware of the influence they have over the choices people make, both in a positive and a negative way.

*“Motivation needs to start at a young age. Any interest in areas that can lead to... should be nurtured through school and young people given encouragement. Teachers in primary and secondary schools are really important in sowing the seeds.”*

Ensure all those in contact with young people and adults are trained to combat stereotypes and stigma against some industry sectors and have access to good quality information, and are offered the opportunity to experience working in some sectors.

*“There is a stigma around sales – but I see it as providing a service, giving expert advice and making customers happy, by respecting and communicating effectively with them.”*

Train and encourage those in contact with young people and adults to develop and use reflective processes with clients, enabling them to know themselves better and make improved choices for work.

*“Young women at 15/16 may not know what they want to do but may have an interest and aptitude in more traditionally male subjects. This needs to be nurtured.”*

#### **general...**

A structured approach is required for communication between organisations that are involved in career choice, training and development, enterprise and job search. These organisations need confident people with strong networking skills, who are receptive and want to support others. Confident and competent organisations create effective networks which will, in turn, support the choices and development of young people and adults.

This part of the Trading Places report contains our experts' stories, by sector, together with the main findings and, where appropriate, sector-specific recommendations.

The stories of our experts are the outcome of nine months work – 25 experts working with 4 project workers – to identify what it was that encouraged them to choose their career path in the first place, and to find satisfaction and success in what they do. The project design highlighted that the project was not about dwelling on the barriers as there is already a considerable amount known about what stops people from pursuing and staying in certain areas of work.

The stories are the result of many hours spent talking to the experts, either in a one-to-one or in small group situations. They are the product of writing and re-writing and then further editing. All the stories have been agreed by the experts themselves and are produced with their permission.

This part of the report, then, is arranged in 4 sectors:

- **social care**
- **construction**
- **engineering**
- **retail**

Each section is prefaced by the main findings that emerged from the experts' stories and is followed by a number of recommendations that relate specifically to the sector. The recommendations have also come from the experts themselves, through meeting in sector groups over the duration of the project and having the chance to work more intensively in a residential setting towards the end of the project.

No apology is made for suggestions that may already be in place – if the experts themselves are unaware of initiatives relating to their sector then they are clearly not widely known and, that in itself, may be an issue.

For further information about the processes involved in working with the experts, see Part 2.

Name	Job	Age group	Based	Employer Training provider
<b>Bernard Wildsmith</b>	Development coordinator/ manager	40 > 50	South Gloucestershire	Care Learning
<b>Cefn Kendall</b>	Play worker foundation degree student	40 > 50	North Somerset	North Somerset Council City of Bristol College
<b>Chris Aplin</b>	Day service worker	18 > 25	Bristol	The Brandon Trust
<b>Hal Camplin</b>	Team leader	25 > 40	Bristol	Freeways Trust
<b>Michael Slee</b>	Childcare student	18 > 25	Bristol	City of Bristol College
<b>Noah Kelly</b>	Childminder Children's entertainer	25 > 40	North Somerset	Self-employed
<b>Simon Edwards</b>	Childcare worker foundation degree student	25 > 40	Bristol	Bristol City Council City of Bristol College

In total, 7 men working in adult and early years care in the West of England participated as experts for this sector. The table above summarises who they are.

### **main findings...**

- A significant proportion of the experts had a strong religious upbringing and supportive and caring parents.
- A few of the experts were in contact, while children, with a significant older person in their lives who worked in the care profession.
- A few of the experts had either members of their family or close familial friends who required care themselves.
- A significant proportion of experts worked in unrelated sectors before a significant event in their lives brought them directly into contact with the care profession.
- A significant proportion of the experts had considerable support from their partners to enter the care profession.

- The experts generally had a strong conviction to enter the care profession, and the courage to resist negative peer pressures.

- A few of the experts had achieved financial security prior to entering the care profession.
- All the experts believed that salaries in the care profession are poor and were motivated more by strong social conscience.
- The majority of the experts perceived themselves as being different. They also believed that others close to them perceived them as being different.
- A significant proportion of the experts working in Child Care had their natural affinity with children highlighted by people close to them.

**care sector recommendations...**

1. Address the fundamental financial dichotomy between the costs in the care profession, imposed by the Care Standards Act 2000, and the income provided, in the public sector by Local Authority placement funding rates, and in the private sector by the limits of personal wealth. The current outcome of this tension is tight margins and low pay for all.
2. Address the salary differential between the health care and social care sectors, currently to the detriment of the latter.
3. Fund pilot 'golden hellos' to newly qualified male social care professionals working in the public sector, and evaluate the effectiveness of this course of action over a 3 year period.
4. Address the cost of re-training workers from other occupational areas who show a real commitment to moving into the care profession and vigorously promote the opportunities.
5. Provide locally-funded and locally-delivered awareness raising programmes for careers teachers and Connexions personnel in the variety, range and level of opportunities for men in the care profession, and stress the value of a variety of career pathways. In particular, stress to careers teachers and careers advisers that care is a vocation applicable to both genders, and, if young men show an interest, encourage and nurture their courage and strength of conviction.
6. Relevant Sector Skills Councils can promote the message to their members that men, having had experience of other professions, can offer a lot to the care profession, including complementary skills, common skills, and an ability to look at issues with a new pair of eyes.
7. Relevant Sector Skills Councils can promote to their members that research has shown that a roughly 50:50 mix of male and female employees is the most conducive to harmonious and productive working relationships.
8. The relevant Sector Skills Councils can work in tandem with local schools, colleges and awarding bodies to look anew at social care qualifications for 16-18 year olds. Many care tasks are unsuitable for people of that age thereby constraining the current ability to offer apprenticeships in social care. A consequence of this is that many young people go into other professions.
9. Encourage both public and private employers to increase the number of full-time posts in the profession thereby making the work more attractive to males. Currently over half of the posts in care are filled on a part-time basis.
10. Expand the existing care ambassador scheme to target Jobcentre Plus clients and provide care-work tasters for appropriate male Jobcentre Plus clients.
11. Through the Learning & Skills Council, build in funding 'levers' to discriminate positively in favour of men on social care courses.
12. Encourage makers of TV soap operas to introduce male social care professionals into their programmes.

## Bernard Wildsmith

*social care expert story 1*

Bernard is 46 years old. He grew up in Pinner, in a strongly Catholic family, and moved to Bristol when he was 14. His father was a manager for Clerical Medical, and his mother was a teacher, specialising in remedial work. Bernard is one of 4 children – he has 2 sisters and one brother.

Bernard attended a Catholic primary school, along with his brother and sisters, where his mother taught. He says he was slow at school and, because his mother taught remedial education, he did not get the same additional help as other children. He feels he has always been better at practical work. At his comprehensive school, Bernard was popular and played a full part in the life of the school. He started a school magazine, which he edited for 2 years, using the offices of his father to get it printed, and took the lead in a school play.

During his school life Bernard would have liked to have had more direction from his parents. Nevertheless when he decided to take particular options they supported him.

At this time Bernard also led a church-based modern contemporary music group, playing the guitar and leading the singing. It was through this group that he got involved with the Avon Catholic Youth Service and he continued this involvement when he left school.

On leaving school, Bernard tried to get on a popular design for printing course at college but was unsuccessful. He applied for jobs and started work as a stevedore before working for Clerical Medical in the printing section. In the early 1990s Bernard moved from printing to marketing, although still within Clerical Medical. At the same time the Avon Catholic Youth Service folded and Bernard realised that the biggest losers were the young people themselves. He has always enjoyed helping people and missed the youth work. He considered at this time taking a social work qualification.

In 1996 Bernard was made redundant from Clerical Medical. Having worked with the Union while he was an employee, he continued to work for Clerical Medical as a union representative for a further 3 or 4 months supporting fellow workers through redundancy.

Bernard realised he was gay when he was 11 or 12 but didn't 'come out' until he was 17. On being made redundant he applied successfully for a job as development worker with 'Living Room', an HIV charity supporting people needing respite care. At the same time he was diagnosed HIV positive himself. During this time Bernard also worked part-time for 'Choices for Bristol'. From 2000, when Bernard decided to tell his parents about being HIV positive, he has been very open about his condition.

Bernard has emphasised his wish, throughout life, to help other people, citing his voluntary work with the youth service, his later employment and his HIV-related website. He recognises that he had difficulty when he was young in talking openly about his difficulties and wants to give others the opportunity to express theirs.

Bernard worked temporarily for the Terence Higgins Trust before returning to 'Living Room' as Project Manager. In 2003 he started to work for Care Learning as a Development Coordinator. Now a manager, he hopes the Trading Places project will provide positive outcomes that can be used to develop the 'Care Ambassador' scheme, a recruitment project.

In his current work situation the majority of his colleagues are women but he doesn't feel intimidated and remembers in the past when, as a teenager, he felt himself to be the odd one out. Bernard says he is now happier, both at home and work. He is now comfortable with himself and is not troubled by what others think of him.

The future is uncertain for Bernard as his current job is funded on an annual basis but he wants to remain in the voluntary or community sector, although not necessarily in care. His philosophy is to make a difference and treat others as he would wish to be treated himself.



## Cefn Kendall

*social care expert story 2*

Cefn was born into an army family and spent much of his childhood in south London. He was the oldest of 3 children. His father was absent for a lot during his childhood and his parents subsequently split up.

Cefn says he didn't have many friends as a child and lived in his own fantasy world, and for a while he had psychiatric help. He won a free place at the local "posh" grammar school at 11, but failed to get on with the other children, despite trying, as he felt different. Rebelling against class discrimination, Cefn was expelled when he was 15 and then attended the local comprehensive but spent little time there, instead getting a job at Safeway and then a succession of casual jobs. His main interest was punk music.

At 19, Cefn left home and got a job as a trainee cook at the London Hostels Association. He shared a flat with another trainee cook who was very different philosophically, but who became the best friend Cefn says he ever had. He subsequently died from a drug overdose.

Cefn says he was egotistical and arrogant at this time and came into conflict with the overseas students, also employed by the LHA, and management. This ultimately caused him to rethink his attitudes and enabled the real Cefn to emerge.

In 1981, Cefn moved to Italy to live with one of the overseas students and stayed there for four years, off and on, in a volatile relationship. Problems were caused by difficulties in finding sustained employment despite being able to speak Italian.

In 1985, Cefn returned to England. Living in Brixton and Bristol, he did voluntary work, like summer camps, and mixed with people, not dissimilar to those he mixed with when a punk. These were people with ideas and ideals who had a significant influence on him. During this time Cefn worked annually at the Glastonbury Festival, where he met his wife. She was a teacher and is now a head teacher of a primary school.

As his wife was able to earn the larger income, they agreed that Cefn should become the house-husband and look after their two children. Once their first child was born he helped out at the Windmill Hill City Farm parent and toddler group. He started story-telling and ran the 4-8 year old group. When his children attended infant school Cefn became involved in the life of the school – one that was very supportive and welcoming to parents, a complete contrast to his own school experiences. At this point he considered becoming a Learning Support Assistant at the school.

When the family moved to a village, Cefn was determined to contribute at his children's new school, and to life in the village. He applied successfully for a job as arts and crafts play leader and developed the role. He is now the play leader for 3 schools in his local area.

Cefn completed the CACHE Level 3 Diploma last year and is in Year 1 of a Foundation Degree in Playwork at the City of Bristol College.

Cefn says he is now very content, and happy to work in a woman-dominated working environment. He enjoys talking to women and believes that his way of thinking is more female than male. He joined the project because he believes in the need to break down barriers between genders, and he sees taking part in the project will help him to fulfil his own goals.

Cefn says he is not resentful about anything about his past – he recognises that his effectiveness as a play worker is due, in large measure, to his wide range of life experiences.



## Chris Aplin

*social care expert story 3*

Chris was born in Bristol into a close-knit and strongly Christian family. His father has worked as a salesman, a landscaper and a lay preacher. Chris's mother returned to full-time training a few years ago in order to become a midwife – she'd previously worked as a secretary. She has also, in the past, run playgroups. Chris has an older brother who is a full-time musician and a younger sister, who works in retail and has completed a health & beauty course.

Chris's school experience was "okay" and he made friends easily, some of whom he is still in contact with. At about 10 years old Chris went on holiday with his family and another family who fostered children with disabilities such as Down Syndrome and cerebral palsy. Chris was very comfortable with these children and has remained friends with these and other disabled children fostered by the same family.

At secondary school he was supported in his dyslexia by a very good special needs teacher and never felt pressured by his parents in his choice of optional subjects. He performed poorly in his GCSEs and stayed an extra year to repeat some subjects, including maths and English, and to do a couple of new ones.

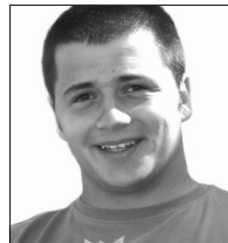
Chris held a variety of jobs after leaving school including working in a supermarket, landscaping and working in a mobile phone shop.

Chris found the work in landscaping through a friend of his father's, Ian. Ian is 10 years older than Chris and has been a great influence on him. He had already worked in care and had plans to open his own plant nursery, providing employment for adults with learning difficulties. Unfortunately, this plan did not take off but it did lead to Ian going to work for the Brandon Trust at Elmtree Nursery. He put in a good word for Chris who, soon after, also got his current job at the Brandon Trust. Ian and Chris worked together at Elmtree Nursery until summer 2007 when Ian moved to Provence with his family to teach children with dyslexia.

Chris's job at the nursery is entitled 'Day Service Worker' and involves teaching and supporting the adults with learning difficulties who work there, and providing general maintenance. There are currently only 2 staff at the nursery – Chris and his line manager, who is a woman. She approached him to become a 'Care Ambassador' for the Brandon Trust, giving talks and presentations to school and college students. He really enjoys this work and prefers it to his 'day' job. It has increased his confidence. He has also been involved in the production of a DVD about the care industry.

Chris finds girls easier to talk to than boys and prefers their company. He is soon to move into a new flat with a mixed group of young people. He does find, however, that in an older woman-dominated environment there is sometimes a tendency for them to dismiss the skills and qualities of younger people and not to value training opportunities.

Chris hopes to have his own business doing similar work to that which he is currently doing, and to increase his 'Care Ambassador' role. He liked being asked to be part of the Trading Places project by his manager. It has made him feel good and is pleased to help. One day he would like to look after his own children.



## Hal Camplin

*social care expert story 4*

Hal was brought up in South London, the oldest of three children, and was responsible for looking after his younger brother when he was a child. He says his father is a 'bookish' art publisher, a very disciplined man, good with ideas but not very outgoing. Hal's mother works in administration and is very sociable.

At school, Hal felt he was on a conveyor belt following a path leading to university and a professional career. At 17, he tore a muscle in his arm, which gave him continuous pain and discomfort. After 6 months he was referred to a consultant and it was discovered that Hal had a serious condition that affected his spine, a condition that was likely to get worse. An operation arrested the condition but it has left him with continual pain.

This had a considerable effect on Hal – changing his outlook on life and he felt, in a perverse way, that it set him free. He realised who his real friends were because they were on hand when he needed them.

Hal continued with his 'A' levels, especially art because it was therapeutic. He did well and went to Bristol University after a year at art school. University was a difficult time for him because of the constant pain from his condition and emotional problems.

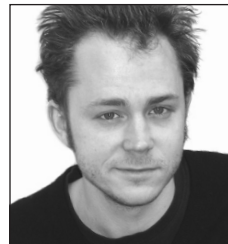
Hal found his first employment in advertising, working for a brand design agency in London, which lasted for just under a year – he couldn't cope physically and lost his motivation. He was in continual pain and felt that if he had to do a job it was to be something worthwhile. His socialist political views started to crystallise at this time.

When Hal left advertising he felt a little apart from those around him so he returned to Bristol, where he still had friends who also had no clear career paths. Initially, he found a job at WECIL, (West of England Centre for Inclusive Living), an organisation led by disabled people. Hal sympathised closely with the organisation and its aspirations. His job was to help disabled people set up their own businesses.

In 2005, Hal moved to Freeways as a support worker in a residential care home for adults with learning difficulties. He works there in shifts and loves the job. His aim is to stay at Freeways and move up the ladder into management. One of the attractions of Freeways is that he's allowed to make suggestions and carry them out.

While at Freeways, Hal has achieved an NVQ Level 3 in Health & Social Care and been promoted to the post of team leader. He has shown real enthusiasm for his work and realises that he has a natural ability to do it. He recognises that his work involves a lot of brain power and it gives him real challenges. He is now beginning to see himself as a young male working in care rather than, as in the recent past, as a disabled person.

Hal is engaged to be married and works as an entertainer in the guise of 'Barry the Badger', which he really enjoys and sees it as contributing to a good work-life balance. The Trading Places project endorses Hal's feelings about encouraging more men to consider care work as a profession and complements his work as a care ambassador.



## Michael Slee

*social care expert story 5*

Michael is one of 4 children, 2 boys, 2 girls, who all still live at home. His mother is a primary school teacher. His father was a minister in the Baptist church and now manages a Christian bookshop. Michael goes to church regularly.

Michael has always enjoyed spending time with his church and his interest in child care has been kindled by involvement there. In his early teens he helped with the younger children and as he got older he helped at Sunday School. He is currently applying to be a youth leader at the church.

At primary school Michael was very sociable and he received some additional literacy and numeracy support. This support was no longer required when he moved to secondary school. In Year 10, Michael felt that he would like to study child care but by the start of Year 11 he had changed his mind – he was interested in cars so decided that he would go to college to study car mechanics on a course with 12 other men.

He found the course quite exciting at first, especially the practical work, but it became obvious very soon that this course was not for him. He found that he didn't have the same interests as the rest of the class. After a lot of soul searching, Michael decided to leave the course. This was difficult for him because he is not a quitter. He left the course formally, with an exit interview, not wishing just to leave.

The formal exit interview was very helpful in crystallising his thoughts about the future and he decided to study child-care the following September. In the meantime he worked once a week at a nursery. During this period, he helped to look after his godparents' toddler and a baby, staying with them for two nights a week. Michael really enjoyed this work and it gave him a huge confidence boost for the first time in his life.

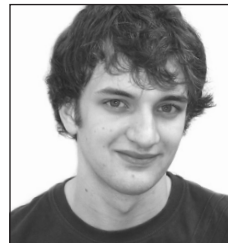
In September 2006, Michael started a 1 year foundation course. He really enjoyed the course as well as life at college and the company of others on the course, all of who were female apart from one other man. He was good at it and, although quite shy to start with, his confidence grew and he gained a distinction at the end of the course.

His tutors encouraged him to apply for the diploma course. All the students on this course are female except Michael. Staff in his work placements are pleased to see him because he provides a male role model and his confidence is growing all the time. He has received an award for the most improved and successful student in the childcare sector.

Each college class has a student representative for college council meetings. Michael has this role for his class and takes problems from his classmates to the council. Michael was elected as the Student Union President, which involves sitting on the College's governing body. He found it a steep learning curve but it has led him to be able to deal with people older than himself.

Michael's parents are very proud of him, and he cites their support, his Christian upbringing and the opportunities to work with children through his church connections as important factors in choosing child care as a profession. For the future he is considering working with 4+ year olds, possibly those with special needs.

Michael says he is involved in the project because he wants to express his views about childcare and he wants to encourage others to get involved. He sees real value in working with children and wants to change people's awareness and attitudes.



## Noah Kelly

*social care expert story 6*

Noah's parents split up when he was very young and he was brought up by his mother, in a large extended family where everyone got on well together. His upbringing was essentially female-dominated, without a strong male role-model.

During his early years Noah was left to himself, existing in his own world. Noah lived some distance from school, and he didn't see his school friends often outside school. His mother was very house-proud and his friends were not encouraged to come into the house.

At school, fellow pupils thought Noah was gay, because he showed a sensitive side to his character and was rather baby-faced. Despite this he was not bullied because he was able to make the bullies laugh – he realised that acting as a joker pre-empted any difficulties. He left school at 15 after CSE/O levels, with no idea what to do for a career. He worked in a pet shop, briefly went on a YTS programme with a stationery office supplier, and then worked as a bingo teller for a while.

At 19, Noah went to Weston College to do a performing arts course. His aunt was a dance lecturer there and encouraged him, as he wanted to be famous. He became more extrovert and flamboyant at college. On finishing college, Noah played in a residential band in hotels in Fuerteventura and, on returning to England, toured with his girlfriend who was employed as a dancer with a magician. He learned card tricks from a 'close-up' magician they met in the Isle of Wight.

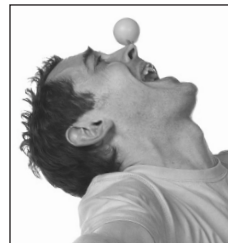
Noah married and had a number of short jobs. While working behind a bar in a hotel, he showed his card tricks to an entertainer who worked in the hotel. He was subsequently invited to an audition with the entertainment controller for Center Parcs and a TV producer for Talking Telephone Numbers.

Noah was successful with both and had his first TV appearance two weeks after the audition. At that time he managed to build the world's tallest card tower, which increased his publicity, leading to more TV work over the next 3 years, specialising in 'close-up' magic.

Noah has remarried. His second wife has worked in care and has also been a nanny. She opened his eyes to the possibility of work with children, and pointed out his natural affinity with them. After she and Noah had had 2 children together, she registered as a childminder. Ofsted regulations limit the number of children that a single childminder could care for, so Noah also became a childminder himself.

12 years on, 'Nutty Noah' continues to work at Center Parcs and has adapted his work to be very child focussed. He has a weekly slot at Butlins and other holiday centres around the country, and a residency at the Gala Casino in Bristol once a month doing card tricks. He has always been independent and believes that he always will be. He recognises the value of this and enjoys being different.

With the total support and encouragement of his wife, Noah says he gets tremendous satisfaction out of working with children. He would like to help others to feel as good as he does about working with children.



## Simon Edwards

*social care expert story 7*

Simon's father was a post office engineer and his mother worked for the NHS after staying at home to look after Simon and his older brother until they were settled in primary school. His father's shift work meant that he was always there for his children before they went to bed.

Simon attended a comprehensive secondary school and was usually in the top set. He got 10 'O' levels and was particularly good at art. He lost his way in the 6th form and achieved 'A' level art after 1 year but failed his other 2 'A' levels. However, he was successful in applying to Brunel Technical College to do Graphic Design, despite it being a difficult course to get on. After 6 months he realised he had made a mistake and, with some financial family pressures at this time, Simon decided to leave and to earn money. He worked initially as an insurance broker and then started working for BT.

The work at BT was attractive, the pay was better, the prospects were good, and there was greater job security. During the next 16 years at BT, Simon was promoted and managed more and more people. During that time he met his wife and they had a daughter. Simon says that the pattern of going to work early and getting home late meant he hardly saw his daughter during the week.

Simon's wife became terminally ill and died in December 2002. Throughout the period of her illness, Simon was given compassionate leave on full pay from BT to care for his wife. He was able to return to work on reduced hours, allowing him to pick his daughter up from school on certain days and to become involved in after-school clubs.

Simon began to feel that he needed a more rewarding job and considered other options at this time, including working in a hospice. He found he was in a better position financially and, with redundancy money from BT, he was able to consider a more worthwhile job for less money.

Simon's new partner was very supportive of his change of career. Simon is currently in the second year of an Early Years Foundation degree having started out on a Level 3 course for classroom assistants.

A work placement at a Children's Centre has led to 2 days a week paid employment. The staff at the centre is predominantly female, which is similar to BT, where the majority of his staff were also female. Simon says some children at the centre react well to a man – especially the boys, who tend to listen more to a man. He thinks that more male staff at the centre would improve the dynamics, and that fathers/male carers, who tend not to show the same level of interest as mothers/female carers in the progress of their child, would be better able to engage with the centre.

Simon believes that the care industry would benefit hugely from employing more men with other experiences and skills. He also says that although salaries in the care industry are poor, pay is not the only reward.



Name	Job	Age group	Based	Employer Training provider
<b>Catherine Rodway</b>	Quantity surveyor	25 > 40	South Gloucestershire	ISG Pearce Limited
<b>Christine Jones</b>	Painter & decorator	25 > 40	North Somerset	Decorating Solutions <i>self employed</i>
<b>Claire Smith</b>	Painter & decorator	25 > 40	North Somerset	Decorating Solutions <i>self employed</i>
<b>Jenny Oram</b>	Apprentice electrician	18 > 25	Bristol	Bristol City Council
<b>Rachel Horne</b>	Business support manager	25 > 40	Bristol	Bristol City Council

5 women working in the construction industry participated as experts for their sector. The table above summarises who they are.

### **main findings...**

- Not one of the experts started work in the construction industry as a result of careers advice.
- All the experts started out on very different paths to construction.
- All felt that the perception of the construction industry is one of heavy manual labour and the diversity of opportunity and job roles in the sector is not well enough known.
- The experts were encouraged into the industry by contact with a role model who worked in construction, often a close family member.
- Once employed or self-employed in the sector they have found support and mentoring from more experienced colleagues, managers and other trades people.
- Although the financial rewards in the sector are high this was not the main driver for the experts.
- All the women experts said they enjoyed working in a male dominated environment. They felt this gave them an advantage, in many instances, as they stand out and are remembered.
- All 5 women are hardworking, driven and keen to develop their careers in construction.
- Most of the experts are motivated by a sense of achievement – getting a thrill from seeing a project through from its inception to the finished product no matter how big or small.

### **construction sector recommendations...**

The experts from the construction sector made the following suggestions for recruiting more women to the industry:

1. Initiate a more flexible approach to construction training courses. The women commented how difficult it is to attend courses to develop their skills when they are working, particularly if they are self-employed. They would like courses to be offered in a greater variety of locations and at times and timings to suit them, eg. weekend courses.
2. Make the role of women working in construction more evident in all marketing materials, including web-sites. If all the managers are currently middle-aged men wearing ties, consider how this may look to a young woman considering her career choices.
3. Highlight the variety of roles that are part of the construction industry, aside from heavy manual labour, and show women in these roles.
4. Promote and fund apprenticeship opportunities for older women such as those who have had a career break or who are not finding job satisfaction in their original career choice.
5. Promote a variety of possible career pathways in the construction industry and promote the rewards. Ensure pathways include those for 'late entry', ie. women who are considering a career change.
6. Offer more work experience opportunities to young people of both genders, and emphasise the diversity of jobs available.
7. Create a database of construction ambassadors who work in the industry. Train and pay them to talk to groups of people – younger and older – to share what it is really like to work in construction.

## Catherine Rodway

construction expert story 1

Cat has been employed by Pearce Group Ltd as a quantity surveyor for the past five years. She is a member of a small team of quantity surveyors working across a large geographical area, predominantly centred around the South West and Wales.

Cat is very hard working and enthusiastic about her work. She thrives on the challenges and diversity that her role presents on a day-to-day basis. She is particularly keen to see the progression of each project, often from a green field site through to the completion of an of large/complex development. Cat is able to work independently but is also an active team member. She is currently mentoring a newly recruited quantity surveyor.

Cat attributes much of her success to her strength of personality. She is highly driven, has very high standards and exceptional organisational skills. On the weekend just prior to starting work with the Pearce Group she broke both of her arms in an accident and yet still turned up for work and did what she could. She said that the management team was very supportive and clearly they recognised that Cat had a very strong work ethic: *“What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger!”* Her positive go-getting personality is complemented by a wicked sense of humour *“I give as good as I get.”*

The daughter of a bricklayer/site manager, Cat’s favourite subjects in school were maths and science. She was very capable and achieved good grades but hated exams and found school generally boring. On completion of her GCSEs she took the opportunity to leave school and go to New College, Swindon. Cat had no idea what career or indeed course she wished to pursue. She asked for information on any course without exams, and was rapidly enrolled onto an OND in Childhood Studies. The course did not stretch Cat and in the second year she also joined an ‘A’ level biology course and



felt that she might like to be a midwife. Through a spell of work experience in midwifery, however, Cat became absolutely certain that this was not the career for her, and nor was working with children.

It was whilst Cat was meeting up with an old school friend, who worked in a building which also housed a plumbing company, that her career-changing job opportunity came along. A chat with the man who owned the plumbing company led to the offer of an office job. Her main task was to fill in timesheets, soon evolving into doing some estimating. Her childhood experience of the building industry equipped her well for this role and she felt very comfortable in this working environment. The office manager was a strong character and she was determined that Cat should stay in the office and suggested that she did an accountancy course. But the overall manager, Richard, recognised Cat’s abilities, and gave her greater responsibility, moving her from administration to the main office. He also supported her training, enabling Cat to attend an ONC in Building Studies Course on a day release a basis. Aged 20, she progressed to the HNC course.

Cat said that she was one of only two girls on the ONC course and was treated as *“a bit of a joke”* and not really taken seriously. Part way through this course the plumbing business folded but the college was able to find her work with a shopfitting company. On completion of the HNC, Catherine outgrew the shopfitting work and decided that she really wanted to pursue a career as a quantity surveyor.

After a short period with Network Rail, Cat started work for Pearce Group Ltd as a trainee quantity surveyor. She felt she had eighteen months to prove herself and she has. The company has sponsored her attendance on a day release basis to gain a degree from the University of the West of England in ‘Quantity Surveying & Commercial Management’. Cat’s skills and drive quickly led to her being given responsibility for a project in Wales. There, another quantity surveyor working in the area mentored her over the 18 months of the programme. She felt she was given the opportunity to sink or swim.

There have been many challenges but Cat is hungry for success and has learned from her mistakes. Cat takes it upon herself to carefully examine contracts for the projects she works on and to really understand the detail. Through hard work and drive, she has realised a huge amount of success in a relatively short period of time. She enjoys being one of only a small number of women in a male-dominated industry and feels this not only makes her more well-known but also requires that she needs to go the extra mile to prove herself.

## Claire Smith & Christine Jones

*construction experts stories 2 & 3*

Claire and Christine are business partners who own the business 'Decorating Solutions'. They are self-employed and have owned and developed what is now a very successful business over the past 5 years. Such is the success of their company that they regularly employ subcontractors to keep up with the ever increasing demand for their services. Originally their clients were from the Weston-super-Mare area where they are based, but they now operate all over the West of England. Their business started with small domestic and commercial work but this has expanded to include large multi-site companies. They have a web-site to promote their business but many new contracts are realised as a result of recommendation from existing clients.

The partners enjoy their work and the challenges that self-employment presents. They are very pro-active in promoting the company, 'Decorating Solutions', and seek out opportunities to move the organisation forward. Together they have personalities that work well and complement each other. They aim to continue to grow the business over the coming years with a view to employing more sub-contractors and taking on greater managerial roles.

### Claire

As a child Claire moved house many times. Her father is a successful businessman and much of his work at that time involved a frequent need to live in different parts of the country. He currently imports furniture and has many large retail clients. Her mother was a librarian.

Claire attended Worle School, Weston-super-Mare, and left in 1986 with good 'O' level grades. She particularly enjoyed languages, science, art and geography but didn't really even consider a career in construction, and was certainly never encouraged to seek this as a career option. She is a very creative person with a strong business sense. On leaving school, she was drawn towards a career in the arts but her parents felt that Claire should go into an administrative environment as there would be more opportunities for stable regular work. Claire enrolled on a London Chamber of Commerce course, studying Business & Secretarial Studies, and passed with distinction.

She started work for a large building society in Bristol as a customer liaison officer in 1988. She enjoyed working for the building society and understood her parents' reasons for encouraging her in this. She particularly enjoyed the customer service aspects of her role. There were other opportunities for Claire to progress in her career within the financial services industry and in 1991 she was promoted to the post of manager's assistant. Claire worked extremely hard and strived to be promoted in what was a highly competitive working environment. Only three years later she was appointed as a mortgage underwriter and then in 1995 qualified as a financial adviser. After a career break to start a family, Claire returned to the industry, retraining as a qualified mortgage broker.

Claire left the financial services industry to start the business partnership with Christine by forming 'Decorating Solutions' in 2003. In her early 20's, alongside her career, Claire had purchased and renovated a flat in Weston-super-Mare and resold it, making a healthy profit. Claire repeated this with a larger property and, now, together with her husband and with a young daughter, she continues to renovate properties and owns several which are let.

Claire's husband is very supportive of her business development. Being self-employed himself, he understands the drive and commitment needed to run your own business and the buzz of working for yourself. He encourages her to grow the business even though at times the risks involved in both breadwinners being self-employed can be high.

It was a big decision to leave a secure and well-paid job in the financial services industry to set up 'Decorating Solutions' in 2003. However Claire was supported into self-employment in a number of ways:

- Tradesmen, who carried out work at the various properties that Claire and her husband purchased, recognised her skills and actively encouraged her to explore opportunities to work in construction.
- Claire's father saw that she was very capable of making a business out of what was a hobby and encouraged her to do a plastering course.



- There was mutual support for Claire and Christine as business partners as they had been friends for many years – long before starting the business.
- Claire's husband was also willing to support Claire and encouraged her to set up 'Decorating Solutions'.
- Claire gained support from her then employer – she applied successfully for voluntary redundancy, cushioning the financial impact during the early set up period of the business. In addition, her employer provided assistance to those being made redundant by offering the services of their 'in house' marketing department to design art work for letterheads, business cards etc.
- Claire went to Business West for free business advice. She commented, however, that initially the adviser seemed to assume that, as women, they would decorate small private houses rather than seeing them as starting a business with potential for growth.

## Christine

Christine also attended Worle School and gained good grades at 'O' Level. She had both creative and academic skills. On leaving school, she married and had children. She had a series of part and full-time jobs, mostly in sales, as well as bringing up 4 children. Christine also renovated properties as a way of generating additional income for the family.

Approximately 10 years ago, Christine decided to go back to college. She was unsure what career path to follow but careers advice at the college suggested that teaching or the prison service would be good choice for her. Her father was an RE teacher and so Christine had some experience of the teaching profession. She subsequently enrolled on an Access course at Weston College and progressed to a degree course at Cheltenham and Gloucester College with a view to qualifying as an English teacher.



Part way through the second year, Christine left the course as she and Claire had decided to start 'Decorating Solutions'. Christine has however suggested she would like to return to some aspect of teaching and perhaps teaching painting and decorating would be an option at a later date.

Christine's family and friends have been very supportive. Her father-in-law is a plumber and was previously a painter and decorator. Christine said that she learned a great deal from him. Like Claire, Christine has had a huge amount of support from her husband who has encouraged her to develop the business and cushioned the financial burden in the initial setting up period of 'Decorating Solutions'. Christine suggested that it would have been extremely difficult for her to have started the business if she had not had the financial security that her husband's work provided to support the family. Similarly, Christine has a close friend who is an electrician, with whom the company has been able to exchange business.

Christine says about her peers' attitude to her chosen career: *"They think it is great and wish they could do it too."*

Both Christine and Claire are highly focused and have a strong work ethic. Together they complement each other in their personalities and have lots of drive and are constantly busy looking for more opportunities to grow the business. They have an ambition to expand the workforce by employing more sub-contractors and becoming less 'hands-on' themselves. Claire and Christine enjoy working in this male-dominated industry although most of the time they are working with 1 or 2 female decorating sub-contractors. They are both very creative and really enjoy seeing a job through from beginning to end and being proud of the finished work.

Claire and Christine feel that much of the success of the business is due to their attitude to customer care. They rarely promote their business as an all-woman team of decorators. However they feel that as women they need to prove that they can meet the customers' requirements and work harder and smarter than their male equivalent competitors. They regularly prove their worth and invariably get repeat business by recommendation.

## Jennifer Oram

### construction expert story 4

Jennifer is employed as an apprentice electrician by Bristol City Council. She started a 4 year apprenticeship 2 years ago. Her work is very varied, working with different members of the electrical team every week. Jennifer really enjoys the variety posed by her work and the challenges of learning this trade. She has a highly driven work ethic and her vision for the future is to progress through the organisation. She is hard working, focused and an excellent team member. Jennifer feels that she has a good working relationship with everyone she works with, attributing much of her success to her strength of personality. She is very happy working in a male-dominated environment.

Jennifer's father originally trained to be a carpenter. From a very young age Jennifer recalls spending a lot of time with him and indeed helped him to build a wooden playhouse in their garden. She is also very close to her mother and has a younger brother who has a passion for cars and is currently doing a motor sport engineering course.

Jennifer went to both primary and secondary school in Portishead. She really enjoyed her school years and achieved very good grades in 10 GCSEs. Her favourite subject was woodwork. Jennifer describes all of the teachers in this department as brilliant and inspirational, particularly Miss Taylor. She joined the school when Jennifer was in Year 9 and they formed a good friendship. Jennifer was very keen to shine in this subject and did a lot of extra work in her own time outside of the classroom. The design and technology teacher was also very enthusiastic and Jennifer was happy to spend her free time in the DT workshop. She felt that the teaching staff in this department enjoyed their jobs and had a passion for success.

Jennifer pointed out that students who were struggling to achieve their GCSEs were, in Year 10, given the opportunity to go to a local college for one day a week to do a vocational course. Jennifer felt that she would really have liked to have been given this opportunity too. However, she was academically capable and, excelling in her GCSE's, the option was not open to her.

On successful completion of her GCSE's, Jennifer progressed into the school 6th form. However, she didn't feel that this was right for her and 2 weeks into the academic year changed to 'A' level courses at City of Bristol College. Jennifer gained good grades in French, Spanish and Business Studies but she felt that she had lost the passion for these subjects and she said that: *"deep down she knew that it wasn't really what she wanted to do."*

The expectation from those around her was that she would go to university. This was a difficult time, but Jennifer knew that she wasn't keen to follow a university route and wanted to take up a vocational career path. This was a big decision but she knew it was right for her. Her parents were very supportive. Jennifer's father owned a building company so he gave her a period of work experience in a cross section of the trades so that she was equipped to make a truly informed choice. After a few months of working for her father, Jennifer decided that a career as an electrician was right for her. Although she enjoyed the other trades, she felt that the electrical work was best suited to her abilities both mentally and physically.

Many people who know Jennifer were very surprised that she had chosen to follow this career path. She says: *"This is what I really wanted to do and this is what makes me happy."*

There are approximately 20 students on the electrical apprenticeship course of which only 3 are women, including Jennifer. Jennifer has a 'go for it' attitude and is the type of young woman who is happy to participate in class and is not afraid to make a mistake.

Jennifer enjoys her work as an apprentice electrician. She is very hard working and driven to succeed. She values the support of the team of electricians that she works with and describes them as *"a great set of blokes."*



## Rachel Horne

*construction expert story 5*

Rachel was born in Bristol. Her father is a retired engineer who works as a part-time handyman. Her mother is a retired catering assistant. She enjoys spending time with her family on a daily basis.

Rachel went to school in Bristol. On completing secondary education, she decided to be a hair-dresser, but was too late to start a college course, so enrolled on a Youth Training Scheme for retail. Although Rachel liked the other staff and customers at Debenhams, she did not get satisfaction from the work and transferred to administrative work.

Moving to Western Provident in Bristol the human resources manager recognised Rachel's abilities and took her on as personal assistant. She was extremely supportive of Rachel and coached and mentored her. Rachel's self-esteem and confidence grew. Rachel was soon promoted to office manager, co-ordinating the sales team of a new branch. Her next move was to Taunton to work with the marketing team but this proved to be an unsuccessful career move – Rachel says she became bored and de-motivated without the support and encouragement of the HR manager.

She contacted some recruitment agencies to find a more challenging job and took a temporary post as support clerk with Bristol City Council. At first Rachel was unsure about working in a male-dominated environment, but she made a decision to 'prove herself' and was soon given a full time contract. After 2 years, she applied for the role of support clerk for all council-owned properties.

The new manager of this section quickly recognised Rachel's skills and abilities. He wanted to re-grade Rachel but couldn't do so as she had no construction trade background, which was an essential criterion for promotion. He created the new role of 'works co-ordinator', in which Rachel remained for more than 7 years, effectively working as team leader.

In January 2007, Rachel's employers won an electrical contract. The requirement to have a trade qualification had been removed and Rachel was appointed as Business Support Officer, and up-graded to Team Leader, responsible for the co-ordination of 20 electricians working throughout the Bristol area in council-owned domestic and commercial properties. This section is also due to take on two further contracts and Rachel is ready to embrace the challenges.

Rachel says the support she has received from her manager has been excellent and his encouragement has enabled her to be successful. She feels that, as a woman in a male-dominated environment, she has had to prove herself far more than if she were a man, and that her success is attributed to recognition and support from particular managers. Rachel has always held a positive attitude to her work. She says: *"there are not many things that I wouldn't have a go at"* and *"give it a go – I'd give anything a go."*



Name	Job	Age group	Based	Employer Training provider
<b>Adrienn Tomor</b>	University lecturer & researcher	25 > 40	Bristol	University of the West of England
<b>Antonia Barnes</b>	Road safety engineer	25 > 40	West of England	WSP Group
<b>Fiona Gleed</b>	Programme leader	25 > 40	Bristol	University of the West of England
<b>Lucy Hewitt</b>	SW regional ops systems controller	25 > 40	West of England	Viridor Waste Management
<b>Mary Frost</b>	Head of fuel control & HMI dept	40 > 50	South Gloucestershire	Airbus
<b>Rachel Bence</b>	Head of supply management	40 > 50	South Gloucestershire	Airbus
<b>Sally Martin</b>	Apprentice	18 > 25	South Gloucestershire	Rolls Royce plc
<b>Stacey Wheeler</b>	Apprentice	18 > 25	South Gloucestershire	Rolls Royce plc

8 women working as engineers participated in the Trading Places project for the engineering sector. The table above summarises who they are.

### main findings...

- All the experts love what they do and see engineering as offering interesting work that can be very creative, enjoyable and rewarding.
- The experts represent some of the many and diverse areas of engineering: civil, aeronautical, structural, mechanical and electrical.
- The experts have used different routes to get where they are now:
  - » Half went through an 'A' Level and degree route.
  - » 3 of the experts took – or are taking – the apprenticeship route.
  - » One expert took a vocational route, studying for qualifications alongside working full-time.
- In all cases the women were very much in the minority, and in some cases were the only females in the group.

- Some experts were influenced by parents who were engineers or by practical activities or games that they encountered in the family home. Half of the experts had no engineering family influence and, in some cases, the decision to pursue engineering was motivated by a desire to do something quite different.
- At school, all the experts had a preference and interest in practical, technical or more traditionally male subjects (physics, chemistry).
- The choice to go into engineering influenced their choice of options at GCSE and 'A' Levels. If they had not made those choices, they would not be where they are today.
- The availability of information, advice and support at school was very varied and in some cases the experts turned to engineering through a chance encounter. Some had support from an individual who suggested engineering as a possible career, others were self-motivated to do something different and to prove they could, others ignored advice that 'women don't do that'.
- Some experts, who were faced with aptitude tests at apprenticeship interviews that involve using tools and concepts, feel that women can be at a disadvantage if they've not had practical experience or opportunities at home or at school.

- Most of the experts have, at some point, been asked to go into schools to do motivational talks with groups. They are passionate about what they do and willing to give time to inspire and motivate others. Some are signed up as ambassadors through different schemes.
- Most of the women have encountered comments and attitudes that are negative/rude or insulting. However, most also see this as something they are prepared to put up with and attitudes are improving as more females move into the profession and older workers with entrenched attitudes retire.
- Two of the experts have school age children and juggle work and childcare.
- One expert had a mentor during her training and another took advantage of a short course offered by WISE (Women in Science and Engineering) called Insight.
- Some of the experts enjoy the fact that they work in a 'man's world' and that being female brings advantages. 2 experts feel very strongly that support and opportunities should be equally available to men and women and that targeting only women could be counter-productive.
- There are a number of national organisations, initiatives and reports that are concerned with supporting and promoting women in science, engineering and technology. There are 2 initiatives that could have a positive impact on potential recruitment into engineering:
  - » the development of the Engineering Diploma.
  - » the establishment of the Dyson School for Design Engineering, planned for Bath.

### **engineering sector recommendations...**

The experts from the engineering sector made the following suggestions for recruiting more women to the industry:

1. Promote engineering more positively and highlight the following:
  - » the variety of roles and responsibilities in engineering
  - » use the different areas of work you can do as the hook, rather than using the generic word 'engineering', eg. say motor cycles, design, aircraft, motor racing etc.
  - » it is for normal people, not extraordinary people
  - » the creativity of engineering
  - » the potential for an interesting lifestyle, travel, job mobility
  - » the interpersonal skills and the qualities that women bring to engineering for employers
  - » benefits to both men and women.
2. Improve the information about choices:
  - » at a young age through schools and careers advice.
  - » to encourage young people to really think about what is important to them, what they are interested in and what they want to do.
  - » to provide opportunities and activities for young people to discover their potential and to explore their strengths.
  - » have a list of all the different jobs in engineering which can be matched to an individual's strengths and interests. A 'route map' could be used to illustrate the variety of routes into engineering and where they lead. A website 'portal' could be used to make this information widely available.
  - » keep the choices open to both men and women.
  - » information, advice and guidance for those returning to work after a career break should include advice about training routes into engineering.
  - » be aware of the pros and cons of an apprenticeship route, a vocational route and academic route.
  - » be aware of the difference between working on the factory-floor, and office or managerial work.
  - » a variety of materials with positive visuals, and role models threaded into TV soaps.
  - » a campaign using an engineering bus to reach all communities and schools.

3. Offer taster, hands-on practical sessions or work placements to encourage both men and women into engineering:

- » give a taste through hands-on workshops where young people can design and create their own project.
- » make practical challenges part of the everyday curriculum.
- » employers to provide short work placements to young people.
- » nurture an early preference in more practical or traditionally male subjects and fund individuals who have an inclination towards science engineering and technology to try a 'taster' course.
- » make it fun – offer practical hands-on activities after school (Scrapheap Challenge).

4. Encourage and support the use of mentors and ambassadors:

- » encourage use of mentors through a regional database and create a funded co-ordinator post.
- » make a meaningful link with STEMNET's Ambassador scheme, WISE and other organisations to provide support and professional development.
- » offer mentoring to people already working in engineering to advise and support their professional development, or how to become a member of one of the professional institutes.

5. Highlight the incentives and advantages of a career in engineering:

- » highlight the job security and financial stability of the apprenticeship route and the variety of interesting work opportunities for all routes.
- » highlight to employers the advantages of a mixed gender workforce and the skills and qualities that women bring.
- » create opportunities to share good practice, using case studies, and highlight employers who actively recruit and support women in engineering.

6. Avoid the wastage of expertise:

- » have systems in place to keep people in the profession after a career break (both men and women) eg. refresher training opportunities.
- » provide conversion courses for mature learners to have a taste of the profession.
- » provide training opportunities for those who may wish to move from one profession to another.

7. Encourage people to enter and stay in the profession through appropriate recruitment practices:

- » make apprenticeships available for older people and fund them appropriately.
- » consider more family friendly policies for both genders to enhance the retention of trained engineers.
- » provide study leave and possible financial support for staff who have come through a vocational route to pursue a degree or other qualification.
- » consider an attractive policy of options for maternity (or paternity) leave.
- » be aware that people taking different routes will require different support throughout their career.

8. Ensure appropriate training:

- » monitor attitudes of recruitment staff and give appropriate equal opportunities training for all staff
- » provide more engineering hands-on opportunities in teacher training for teachers in primary and secondary education.
- » include 'route maps' to working in engineering as part of the initial and on-going training for teachers and careers advisers.

## Adrienn Tomor

*engineering expert story 1*

Adrienn was born in Budapest. Her father was an engineer and an early influence on her chosen career, as she learned a lot from watching him work. She liked finding out how things work and making things from a young age. For the 'A' level equivalent course at the end of secondary school she chose technical subjects such as Maths and Physics as well as languages, alongside the compulsory subjects. She claims that she was not particularly good in Maths but it isn't a barrier for engineering.

As she was deciding about going to university she looked for a scholarship to study abroad. *"I was thinking of doing architecture, but when I looked around for scholarships, they only had one in engineering. So I applied for it, being the next best thing. I am very glad now that I did."*

She left Hungary for Dresden University at the age of 18. *"I spoke some German, but I understood very little in the lectures during the first 6 months. So I had to spend a lot more time going through the lecture notes with my dictionary."* Adrienn feels that this experience greatly benefited and enriched her life. *"While living in another country, you learn much more in one year than you would normally learn in five years staying at home. Although it was hard at first, I had a brilliant time and I would not have missed it for anything."*

Adrienn studied for 5 years, graduating with a degree as a bridge engineer. She was one of only 2 female students out of a group of 12 but she found that all the male students were very helpful throughout their time at university. *"Being one of only a few female students was more of an advantage than a disadvantage. The boys were great and always very helpful to us."*

After graduation, Adrienn was offered a studentship at Exeter University to study for a doctorate. After completing her PhD she worked as a research assistant at the University of Salford in Manchester, continuing with masonry arch bridges research.

Her move to Bristol to take up a lecturing post at the University of the West of England has given her the flexibility to structure her work between teaching and research. She is keen to use motivational teaching strategies to engage her students – *"Somewhat unusual examples, such as cheese and elephants, work very well when explaining about how structures and materials work. It also keeps students engaged and interested. Engineering does not need to be boring."*

This desire to learn is an important ingredient for research. *"Doing research requires an investigative mind and interest in how things work. Because science is developing so rapidly, every technological development opens up a range of new possibilities. There are even more new areas and topics to discover now, than ever before. Research has a great element of unpredictability and it is very exciting to see where it takes you."*

Adrienn has never worked in industry and has not encountered the prejudice that might be more prevalent in an engineering company or on the manufacturing floor. *"Academia is not prejudiced against women and is a good route to work in engineering. Working in a male dominated environment can be an enjoyable and interesting experience. I have found that men appreciate women who know what they are doing and being a woman among a majority of men can be an advantage."*

In future, Adrienn would like to build on her research work at UWE. *"There are only a handful of people working in this field in Europe and it's great to see my results benefiting bridge owners and organisations all around Europe."* She has recently succeeded in getting a 3 year research grant from the Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council.



## Antonia Barnes

engineering expert story 2

Antonia is a senior engineer managing the Road Safety Audit process with an international company called WSP, carrying out Road Safety Audits as audit team leader, member and observer. Antonia has over 9 years experience in civil engineering, with 3 years working on construction sites and over 6 years office work including highways, transportation and road safety engineering.

Antonia grew up as an only child in Swansea. Her mother was a teacher and her father was a nuclear engineer for a while, a lecturer and a supply teacher.

*“My Mum would make me read books – I don’t mean that in a bad way – but when I went over to my Dad’s house we’d carry out experiments that would probably be totally against health and safety these days – we’d get a tube of glass and heat it up over a gas cooker and then blow down the tube to make balls. We had chemicals in the house and made fireworks and crystal gardens. He made science interesting.”* Antonia’s interest in Science & Technology influenced her choice of GCSE’s and ‘A’levels.

Antonia decided to stay on at school to do ‘A’ levels but was very unhappy as her friends had left after GCSE’s, so she left too and tried to do the ‘A’ levels at college. It was all very different – subjects were covered in a different order leading to gaps – and she only scraped through. She went on to complete a foundation year of a degree course at Swansea University and then chose civil engineering as her specialism, as she liked to be outside. Some of the course was fine but *“there was a lack of involvement with industry and I couldn’t see how this was all fitting in.”*

She took the opportunity to change direction when her mother suggested joining a YTS scheme with the local council where she worked. Antonia was placed on a site and had a *“fabulous year...”*

*“We tunnelled under the River Tawe with a remote controlled pipe jacking machine and I learnt how to use all the instruments and carried out the settlement monitoring along the inland tunnelling routes – that’s what I felt engineering was all about.”*

Antonia found employment with the WSP Group as a technician and was promoted to senior technician and then senior engineer. She realised that having a degree under her belt would enhance her job prospects with the company so signed up for an Engineering degree with the Open University, which took her 5 years to complete. She paid half the fees (the company paid the other half), gave up Saturdays to attend tutorials, used annual leave to sit exams, revise and finish projects. Her company gave her paid leave, over and above her annual leave entitlement, for the 2 periods of residential study.

Antonia’s job takes her all over the UK and to Ireland. She enjoys going out on site, about one day a week, as she gets a ‘different feel’ on visits. She also likes the fact that the work is very much an amalgam of engineering and people – the safety of people using a particular road.

Antonia is married and hopes one day to have children. In the future she would like to move into a role that carries more responsibility, gives her a new challenge and possibly take a management role.



## Fiona Glead

*engineering expert story 2*

Fiona grew up in Hampshire and her family background was a big influence on her future choice of career – *“My father is a Fellow of the British Computer Society and he was one of the test cases to show that computer scientists were actually engineers. He’s very high powered and technical and did a degree in maths and physics at Cambridge.”* Her mother also worked for the British Computing Society for a long time.

The influence of the technical background showed in their play activities. *“My Dad would do things with me like Meccano and woodwork. I think he found it hard that it was me that was interested and not my brother. My brother wasn’t interested in things like Meccano. He wasn’t very dextrous and found it all very fiddly.”*

Fiona thinks that her aptitude was more technical and practical. *“When I think back to films and TV, it was the robots that I related to. We went to see Star Wars and it was C3P0 and R2D2 rather than the people that I was interested in.”*

At 11, Fiona went to Sherborne School for Girls in Dorset. *“At age 14, my Dad was a guest at Farnborough Air Show and got chatting with a senior RAF Officer and arranged for the RAF liaison officer came to see me at school. At that stage I was interested in aircraft and things so they said that the best route into the RAF is as an engineer as you would have the technical expertise that would be respected regardless of whether you are male or female, tall or short. I then looked at engineering and was initially interested in aeronautical or electrical engineering.”*

Everybody at the school was quite supportive. Fiona left at 17 and had a year to fill before she was able to start higher education, so she worked at ARUP, a multi-disciplinary engineering consultancy. The company sponsored her through her 4 years at Oxford University. Women made up 10% of the people on her course. She continued to work for ARUP, gaining experience in the university holidays.

Fiona graduated in 1992 with a MEng (Hons) in Engineering Science and joined the Bristol office of her sponsors, ARUP, working on local projects, including Cribbs Causeway Regional Sales Centre and the Synthetic Chemistry Building at University of Bristol. She stayed for 9 years, including 2 periods of maternity leave. She took her professional exams to become a Chartered Structural Engineer.

*“I received the letter saying that I had passed whilst in hospital after the birth of my second child. It was quite an emotional day!”*

ARUP was very flexible with her as a working mother, but she felt that her manager was being rather too sympathetic to her family commitments and not giving her more responsible jobs that would involve travel to meetings and sites outside Bristol.

It was finally the lack of flexibility in her husband’s job that triggered a move. The balance was not right with her husband working full-time and studying part-time, whilst Fiona was a full-time mother. They decided to switch roles, with Fiona working full-time as a lecturer and her husband staying at home and starting part-time work to fit in with the children. This met the needs of both parents; Fiona’s need for intellectual stimulation and her husband’s need for more time with his children. He completed his degree and started full-time work again just in time for Fiona’s third spell of maternity leave.

Whilst at the University of the West of England (UWE), Fiona has been promoted to programme leader and sees herself as a champion of the students on the civil engineering degree course. Many of the students are women who have come back into education as mature students. They face issues of childcare, juggling family life and full-time work and study. Fiona is an active member of The Institute of Structural Engineers and attends committee meetings locally and at HQ in London.



## Lucy Hewitt

engineering expert story 4

Lucy says that her family has no engineering background to have influenced her choice of career. Her father was a chef and her sister, who is 5 years older, was a dental assistant at that point. Her mother had done bookkeeping and cleaning. Lucy says: *“Nobody had done anything like this in my family. My grandad had an interest in steam trains, making models after he retired, but he never said anything about my doing an engineering apprenticeship. I don’t think my Mum even asked him. When he found out afterwards he said: ‘Oh, I’ve got a grandson after all!’”*

*“I used to do things with my Dad out in the garden messing around, we’d just be making things – usually silly things. Practically I was involved in that. I used to love going in the garage with him. My sister could never understand it.”*

Her school days were spent in a co-educational school where she naturally seemed to gravitate to spending time with the boys. She didn’t really have any girl friends: *“I always used to hang around with the boys”*. She couldn’t quite understand the way the girls behaved: *“They were either pregnant or worried about their make-up or their shoes. I just didn’t get it because I was having such a good time mucking around with the boys, having piggy back rides.”*

As her career has progressed, Lucy has come to appreciate that not all women are as she viewed them in her teenage years. *“Now I work with women and they are more like me.”* But all her girlfriends have some connection to engineering. One who is an accountant also has an interest in motorbikes.

At school Lucy was interested in subjects such as Physics, Maths, IT & Design and had no desire to follow more ‘female’ subjects. At 15, a teacher thrust some leaflets about apprenticeships into her hand and her mother researched the possibilities. She applied to a couple of schemes and, at 16, took up an offer from the Atomic Energy Authority, training with them for 4 years. Her qualifications included a BTEC and a NVQ in Engineering and in Instrumentation.

Lucy was one of 2 females in her first year of apprenticeship and one of 3 in the year at the nuclear research site. She opted to specialise in mechanical engineering after one year, whereas the other young women opted for instrumentation and electronics, perhaps attracted by the cleaner image. She later trained for 3 years in instrumentation herself when she realised that this could help her in the job market.

With 2 separate training periods and apprenticeships in engineering, which did not result in a job, Lucy was interested to be part of a national debate about apprenticeships. *“It was part of my apprenticeship training; Steve Milligan, the MP, was there talking about apprenticeships in the industries and what happens after the apprentice training. They were speaking to me because I had already done an apprenticeship and they wanted to know why I was doing another one – but I didn’t get any job offers after the first one. If the workforce isn’t ready to accept you, what’s the point in doing it?”*

Lucy has worked/trained in specialised engineering workshops for the nuclear industry for research development and covered all engineering such as the installation of underground pipes and plumbing on the site. Her experience has been moulded in the petrochemical industry and South West Water.

She moved to Devon recently and found that her applications to be a hands-on mechanical engineer were hampered by male attitudes before and during interview. She has had to ‘take off her overalls’ for her current role, which draws on her experience of training in engineering, but hopes to do what she absolutely loves to do again in the future. Her job takes her all over the South West and she works in Bristol and North Somerset.

Lucy is soon to be married. She is in the process of renovating a house in Devon and her partner appreciates her practical knowledge and skills.



## Mary Frost

*engineering expert story 5*

Mary and her brother grew up in Southampton. Her father was a building worker and also trained as a plumber; her mother a housewife. They didn't want her to go to college because of the expense. Their attitude was *"well, no-one else in the family ever has so why do you want to be different?"*

As a teenager, Mary accompanied her father to building sites to earn a bit of pocket money at weekends and evenings. Her father discouraged her initially, and only agreed as long as she acted the same as every other apprentice, by doing labouring tasks and carrying the tools. *"I used to walk along behind him carrying his bag that I could barely lift off the ground – I was 14."* She was always comfortable in the company of boys and men. Her brother and the 2 boys next door created a very male dominated environment in which to grow up. Mary says that it is only recently that she has female friends.

Mary attended a mixed comprehensive school and then went to a 6th form college. She chose to do 'A' levels in Electronics, Physics, Computing, Maths and General Studies. She never considered that girls should not do technical subjects leading to a technical career. *"The careers adviser said that girls don't do engineering so I couldn't possibly do that – I just ignored that."*

Her second choice – her parents wanted her to leave school and get a job – was to be an electrician so she included electronics in her choices. None of the teachers said that girls shouldn't do those subjects and it didn't even cross her mind that she couldn't. Mary thinks her possible naivety might have led her to miss the signals that she was supposed to hear. She was also very keen to have a 'proper job' after education.

She was one of a group of 4 girls at her comprehensive school who were top of their subjects, which tapped into Mary's naturally competitive nature. 3 of the 4 girls went to Oxford or Cambridge. Mary went to Oxford University to read Physics, but hated it so much that she transferred to Southampton University for the 2nd and 3rd years.

Her Oxford College principal, when Mary told her she was leaving, gave her *"a lecture on how I should be so grateful they condescended to give me a place as I had come from a comprehensive school."* Fortunately, Southampton University agreed that she could enter straight into the second year of a physics degree with electronics. Mary graduated from Southampton University with a BSc (Hons) in Physics with Electronics.

Since graduating, Mary has worked for a number of companies including Smiths Aerospace, Nortel, and Goodrich, mostly in fuel systems. She has worked for Airbus since 2004, initially as engineering team lead on A380 Fuel System Safety, became engineering group leader and is now Head of Fuel Control and HMI department. She says that Airbus is the least sexist place she has ever worked.

*"There are 2 or 3 other women in senior technical posts, who have been there quite a long time, so people are used to women and they treat me the same as the other heads of department."*

She completed an MBA in Technology Management in 2003 through the Open University and a post-graduate diploma in computing in 2006.

Mary believes that as a woman doing engineering you can have great advantages. *"Being the odd one out has huge advantages because everyone remembers you – you're always the one to get noticed and be asked to do things – I have done so many presentations at international conferences because they want a woman to do it. So as long as you make a good job of it people notice you, remember you and that gives you better chances later on."*



## Rachel Bence

engineering expert story 6

Rachel grew up in Bristol in a family that believed strongly in education. There was no scientific leaning at all in the family and Rachel thinks that she took a science route partly, *“because I was quite pig-headed. I thought I was going to study something that no-one else knew anything about.”*

Rachel went to Red Maids School for Girls in Bristol where she did ‘A’ levels in Maths, Physics and Chemistry. In the year before starting higher education she did Art ‘A’ level at Filton College. *“Rather than going travelling around the world I thought I would do another ‘A’ Level – it was wonderful – it was so good – I was also working but it did redress the balance a bit.”*

By her own admission, Rachel had a passion for how things worked and the theory behind it. *“I just loved finding out about things, putting models together, thinking about how things worked and the theory behind it. I used to study on my own – I was an absolute anorak. I used to ask terribly awkward questions. I was one of those kids who really wanted to know and find out about everything.”* Rachel feels that the presence of other, similarly-minded female students at school was a great advantage.

Rachel went into higher education wanting to do research. She did her degree in Theoretical Physics for 3 years at Royal Holloway College, London, graduating with a 1st class honours degree and offered a scholarship to do a PhD, an offer she accepted. She completed a PhD in High Energy Particle Physics and had got married.

Her husband was working at University of the West of England so she looked for employment in the city but it was 1991/1992 and there was a massive recession. She says: *“I had a couple of interviews with agencies and they wouldn’t take me because of my weird qualifications.”* So Rachel turned her hand to dressmaking. *“Every once in a while you have to do something that is the opposite, so I worked for a dressmaker – wedding dresses and evening wear. It was phenomenally good experience for meeting drop-dead time-scales. It is not unlike engineering, putting something together and fitting it. I did corsetry and a bit of pattern cutting and got paid very little. It was just a fun thing to do”.*

Working for an agency as a tutor, she was offered a job with an IT company. *“So that’s how I really got into the commercial sector with databases and so on and then I went on to work at Rolls Royce. I got into engineering through this tutoring role.”*

Rachel worked for Rolls Royce for 3 years before an opportunity to work for Airbus as an engineer came up. She says she was offered the perfect job. She feels that it has not really been a planned career. *“It is sort of unplanned but I feel vaguely in control – and have taken a few risks.”*

She has now worked for 10 years at Airbus and has recently taken another risk by applying for and getting a job in a different department in a fairly unrelated area. She is responsible for design packages for suppliers’ involvement and for Level 3 support. *“I have to make sure the contractors are in place and their metrics are set up to show how they are performing as a supplier – a focal point between Airbus and a supplier. I did supplier management before so I’ve had some experience.”*

Rachel says that both at Airbus and Rolls Royce the attitude to women engineers is very positive. Rachel enjoys working with men and women and likes a balance. *“I did get fed up with being the only woman and when my friend left I was the only one and felt isolated. I like working with men. They are very straightforward. The women I work with are very practical and hard working and have a distinct lack of ego.”*



## Sally Martin

engineering expert story 7

Sally grew up in Trowbridge. She describes everyone in the family as 'pencil pushers', working in offices. Her mother is an office manager and father works at the MOD. Her grandfather was an engineer – but a long time ago and she never talked to him about engineering.

Growing up, she describes herself as a tom-boy and liking to do practical things. Sally shares her mother's stubbornness. *"It was people saying that I couldn't do that kind of thing that made me work hard at it to prove them wrong."*

She did 11 GCSEs including some practical ones. She chose to do a GNVQ Level 1 in Engineering at school *"to show everyone that I could, because it was all blokes, obviously. I was one of two girls in the class. I didn't want to do subjects that were typically thought of as girly ones. I thought engineering sounded quite good as it was all about systems, technology and electronics"*.

On leaving school Sally applied to Wiltshire College to do a National Diploma in Mechanical Engineering, but her Maths GCSE result was not high enough, so she started with a Foundation course. When she progressed to the National Diploma, she achieved 17 distinctions in the 18 units. She doesn't know exactly why she chose it, and says it was 'a lucky stab in the dark'. *"I always liked taking things apart and putting them back together again – like stereos etc. I was a bit disappointed as it was not as hands-on as I hoped and it was quite theoretical. But I thought if I did well at that then I could do what I wanted after."*

After college, Sally was undecided whether to go for an apprenticeship or to university. Keeping her options open, she applied for both. She looked around some universities but was not overly impressed. She was also offered a few interviews for apprenticeships and received 2 offers, one with Rolls Royce. *"Everything else paled in comparison to that. I didn't really want all the debt from university. There are so many people with degrees and no jobs. I went the sensible route – worked and earned money at the same time"*.

When she started the apprenticeship at Rolls Royce, her employer asked her to take the Higher National Certificate in Mechanical Engineering, which she did at Filton College. She achieved 6 distinctions and is now doing a foundation degree as a one year top up. Sally is the only person in her group who works on the shop floor. She feels that she is a bit 'different'. *"Very often comments are made about my line of work, as some of the others in my group deem it not as important as their jobs, but this for me just increases my determination."*

Sally has kept in touch with only one friend from school – she can't understand their lack of drive or ambition. *"If you asked them what they wanted to do, they would say that they would work in Tesco for a little while and then go to college. That irritates me. The other girls seemed to think only of childcare or hairdressing. Half of them look at the subjects and think, 'Oh, I'll do that', but without being interested in them. I want a house, nice things and stability and to be able to do what I want. That's why I didn't follow my friends into the 6th form."*



## Stacey Wheeler

engineering expert story 8

Stacey's family live in Bristol and she says that there were no family influences on her decision to go into engineering. Her mother works in administration in Asda and her father is a shoe shop manager.

*"It was a random guess to go into engineering. I always used to be asked by my Dad to help do things like put up a piece of wallpaper and help to do this or that. No-one told me I couldn't."*

When it was time to choose her GCSE options at comprehensive school her decisions were influenced by what she didn't want to do. *"I chose geography as I didn't want to do history, art rather than drama or graphics as I enjoy doodling and drawing. I did GNVQ Science, instead of double or single because you only had two exams whereas the double and single had more exams."*

Engineering became an option in the middle of Year 10, when she was 15. *"One day I just knew I wanted to do engineering. I didn't know what type or kind but just engineering. The Connexions man at school was about as useful as a chocolate fireguard. A booklet came round through the post about apprenticeships and some employers held meetings."*

At 16, Stacey applied for a number of apprenticeship schemes. Rolls Royce gave her some tests, an assessment and interviews. She was delighted to be offered an apprenticeship in Aircraft Engineering at Rolls Royce. *"The training officer at the time rang my mum at 8.45am to say I had got it. Mum contacted the school and I sat rocking on the floor, thinking 'I have a future'. I was happy that my life was sorted. I didn't care what others thought."*

The apprenticeship runs for 3-4 years and Stacey has already successfully completed 2 years. She has completed a National Certificate and is currently studying for a Foundation Degree in Mechanical Engineering at Filton College, a qualification that will take 3 years.

Stacey is enjoying her course at college and thinks it is helpful to have a mix of people. *"I am quite lucky, there are some apprentices, some mature students and some from outside the company."* She will put her hand up and will ask questions until she gets an answer. *"My confidence has grown a bit since I've been here."* She likes doing things where she has only herself to rely on. If she does talks, she likes to do them on her own.

Stacey has been asked to go into schools to do motivational talks to groups about apprenticeships at Rolls Royce. She feels it is worthwhile, although she gets her fair share of 'disinterested' pupils and prefers to give talks to those who have a specific interest. The lack of debt and the financial support you receive as an apprentice is something that Stacey stresses. *"I emphasise the good things, like the fact that you get paid through college, or, if you do university you don't have the debts. The wage is very good and I use that to try and entice them."*

For the foreseeable future, Stacey wants to finish her apprenticeship and would like to stay with Rolls Royce, although she is not sure in what area yet. In about ten years she hopes to get married and have children and then move up to management level. *"That's what I would like but it depends on what hand I'm dealt."*

Stacey feels that women bring advantages to the male environment. She says the women look after the younger and less experienced apprentices and sort out girl problems.



Name	Job	Age group	Based	Employer Training provider
<b>Amy Saunders</b>	Sales management	25 > 40	Bristol	BT Local Business
<b>Carole Heelis</b>	Road safety engineer	50 >	West of England	Focus DIY
<b>James Dillon</b>	Owner manager	40 > 50	North Somerset	Self employed
<b>Rhona Barratt</b>	Merchandising team manager	40 > 50	West of England	Tern Rand Limited
<b>Sam Cary</b>	Team leader	18 > 25	Bath	Homebase

5 people working in the retail sector participated in the Trading Places project. The table above summarises who they are.

### **main findings...**

- All of the experts fell into working in the retail sector. Several started on a part-time basis and at various ages, others to fill in whilst they were deciding what to do or to fit in with childcare needs.
- Several had parents who had some background in sales, but on the whole this wasn't seen as an appropriate career choice by parents. All came from backgrounds where hard work and continued employment were valued.
- The majority of the experts enjoyed school but didn't see it as particularly significant in terms of career choice.
- None of the experts had thought of retail as a career, nor had it been suggested to them by school, college, careers or parents as a possibility.
- All of them are hard working and competitive, they like to be the best: *"If I'm going to play football, then I am going to be the captain."*
- They all enjoy a challenge, taking risks and seeing tangible results. It keeps them motivated and striving to achieve at work. *"It takes guts, self-belief and determination."*
- They all describe themselves as 'people people'. They value teamwork and are all conscious of the need to nurture and support people who work with/for them. They're all keen to provide good customer service: *"...retail is rewarding – it can be just by doing your job, you can make people's day."*
- They are all proud of being part of the sector. They recognise that there is a stigma around the sector and feel that this needs to be challenged.

- All of them were spotted and nurtured by someone in the business, someone who had come up from the shop floor like them and who they could relate to. This significant other person has been key to keeping them in the sector.

- None of them have had outside training for the sector. Several have experienced in-house training and speak highly of it.
- The majority of them have fast-tracked through to management and have felt that the sector has encouraged this development.

### **recommendations for the retail sector...**

1. The retail sector offers a good career path. The opportunities and diversity of the sector can be better promoted.
2. Staff 'wastage' in the sector can be avoided by learning to spot potential quality staff, and to train and value them.
3. Pay is an issue in this sector. Although there are opportunities to earn good salaries, the entry levels of pay are poor.
4. The part-time nature of many of the jobs that are offered deters people from considering retail as a career.
5. Career 'influencers' can develop better understanding of the opportunities that are available in the sector. They can ensure that their own attitudes to retailing do not get in the way of recommending the sector as a career of choice.
6. Funders can develop a better understanding of the training that is working for the sector, and to work with partners to provide a variety of entry routes, including self-employment, as well as effective support on the job.

## Amy Saunders

*retail expert story 1*

Amy is the oldest of 3 children; she has 2 brothers, one who went to university and now works for the BBC and another who is extremely practical and has done a series of jobs. Amy's parents both went to university and she describes both as 'people people'. Her father has worked in sales, trained as an architect and worked in design for Westlands. She thinks he probably thought that being a salesman was beneath him and that she had picked up that attitude. Her father is fairly laid back and her mother is the driver in the family, and has worked in education since Amy was little. Amy is extremely fond and proud of her parents and attributes her confidence in selling to the stability of her family.

At school Amy enjoyed creative subjects and got good GCSE results in French, History and Art. At school she had wanted to be a designer, but didn't think she was good enough, despite having a good brain.

She left school at 15 and went to college to do her 'A' levels, but dropped out. Her mother decided that she was being distracted and sent her to do Community Service Volunteering in London at the age of 16, where she volunteered at a residential home for young people with Down Syndrome for 6 months. On returning to the West country, Amy enrolled for a BTec in Arts. Again there was too much distraction and, at about 19, she went to do Camp America and worked as a counsellor with underprivileged children. She loved the work and took on a lot of responsibility.

On her return she studied French, History and Communications at her local college. She completed a year and was then offered a job in a gallery in Cornwall. When this didn't work out she found a job at Cosifeet through the Job Centre – she needed a job locally and there wasn't much choice, so she went for it. She liked the customers and felt she was helping people and did well, but she was made redundant. She moved on to REM, an educational software company, and was good at selling there and saw results. She was good at spotting an opportunity, identifying a need and going after it. Her skills were recognised and she was promoted.

Amy then went travelling and on her return spent a short while at an e-booking company in Cambridge before being headhunted by Actis, another educational software company, where she again combined her creative skills with academic knowledge. She believed in what they were doing, but unfortunately the product failed and Amy re-located to the West country. She worked for another software re-seller for a year and then in various cafes and bars.

She joined BT Local Business and spent 2 years building up her skills and knowledge in the communications industry. She did well and was the best performing sales achiever and office manager. Amy now works for ADP and heads up a team of 20 people who are the best performing MATP team in the country.

Amy has learned her skills on the job and has not attended courses in retail, sales or management. She says there is a stigma around sales – it is seen as mercenary and people are suspicious of it, seeing you as wanting to make money out of them. She thinks it's more about providing a service, expert advice and making the customers happy. Her attitude to retail has changed over the years, and is now proud to be part of the industry.

She enjoys teamwork, getting pleasure out of encouraging and managing her team and gets satisfaction from seeing tangible results. She feels you need to have faith in people and what you are selling. Amy says that to be good in retail you need to be flexible, have good communication skills, be able to problem solve and deal with difficulties well.



## Carol Heelis

retail expert story 2

Carol comes from a long established Yorkshire family and has a sister eleven years older. Her father was a driver in the army and later became a miner. He retired at fifty after a serious accident at the mine left him disabled. Her mother was employed outside the home, but worked hard to ensure that the family never went without.

Carol was a tomboy when she was younger; the only girl in the street, taking off with the boys on her bike for the whole day. At school she was a bit of a rebel, but good at sports and won medals. She liked the practical things and was good at physics, but wasn't particularly interested in much else. Finally her headmaster said if she could find a job then she could leave at 16 – she did and started work in the Co-op the next day. She learned her work ethic from her father – she was brought up to believe that you never get into debt. She knew she didn't want to work in a factory so a shop seemed a good option and easy work to get.

She was the youngest person at the store and became friendly with everybody including the manager – it was like a family. She moved to become a manager at a dry cleaning store when she was 20. She enjoyed managing people and learned a lot: how to treat employees, how to organise a business and how to deal with awkward customers. She moved to work in wholesale because she knew the business was closing and she didn't want to be unemployed. After a while the wholesale business also closed.

When Carol joined Great Mills it was a family business and there was no training, no induction. She remembers, on her first day, being given a brush to sweep up the new store and then working at fitting out the store ready for opening. She joined the team developing training while she was assistant manager in Sheffield. At first she really didn't like standing up in front of people and talking, but now sees this as a really important and enjoyable part of her job. Carol wouldn't want to do only training as she says you don't necessarily see the results of your work.

She has enjoyed the challenges of the Investors in People process and doing her NVQ Level 4. She likes things to be practical and have tangible results, setting objectives and achieving them. She wins a great deal of praise from the human resources department for her people skills. She's remembered when she visits stores and still enjoys being on the shop floor, wearing her uniform with pride.

Carol was the first female store manager in the 1980s. There are now nine female store managers out of 180. Only 7 women are at her level and none above, so she wonders if this relates to the nature of her business – she says men, both colleagues and customers, do see it as odd a woman working in the DIY business. Carol identified the difficulties for women with children being store managers, as managers are asked to move around at short notice and can end up working away from home. She was fortunate that she was able to stay in one place when she had her daughter.

Carol enjoys building teams and is proud of her current team of 22. She spends time on the shop floor talking to staff about their concerns. *"If I don't know it's broke, I can't fix it."* She is good at spotting people with potential and enjoys developing their skills and encouraging them. *"It is important to find out what makes people tick."*



## James Dillon

retail expert story 3

James was born outside Glasgow in what he described as 'an industrial doughnut town' – steel works at the centre with houses built around it. When James was born the steel works had closed, bringing problems of unemployment and alcoholism. His father was unemployed because of an industrial accident. James was identified as a bright boy at school with potential but 'frustrated many a teacher'. James joined the Territorial Army for 3 years in Scotland and 2 years in Bridgwater and wanted to join the Marines.

He left Scotland when he was 21 – he wanted to do something better and felt he couldn't make a go of it in Scotland. He worked in a pub in Weston, having been told that was a good place to bring up children, better than Bristol. Working as a builder's labourer, he moved temporarily to Market Harborough and then returning briefly to Scotland. When he returned to Weston he was sick of manual work and turning up in the cold at 7am.

Having the 'gift of the gab', James went into sales, working in the insurance industry. He enjoyed the job, wearing a shirt and tie and never regretted leaving the building site. Being self-employed gave him freedom of choice. He was able to build up a nest egg, which meant he could provide well for his wife and 4 sons.

In 1991-2 his parents and a sister died and James took a big risk, giving up his job to become a volunteer counsellor. He trained at Weston College and then worked in a local hospital with acute mental health patients, and on a detox ward. James then became an assistant manager at a rehabilitation unit in Crediton, which he found emotionally draining. For 4 years he worked in care management back in Weston, managing a team of 16 staff and studying for his degree.

He moved to the Bourneville Estate, a disadvantaged area, buying a property over the shops on the parade and becoming a member of the community.

Next to his house there was an empty shop and this "*didn't make sense – it nagged at me, there seemed to be something amiss.*" He had no idea about how to go about setting up a business or even renting the shop. James agreed a sabbatical with his boss at the care home and, as he had just finished his degree, he could take a risk, although he intends to return to care work.

Originally, James thought of opening a café. He started by phoning the Town Hall, who put him in touch with Business Link West and suggested contacting the ward councillor. At his surgery in the Community Centre on the Estate, he discovered that there was a café there, but in discussion with Cllr. Parker the idea of 'Quids In' came about.

Business Link West have helped with a business plan and supported approaches to the banks. They insisted that James did an NVQ Level 3 in business, offering an incentive of £1,500 set up. The Business Link mentor has been the most useful part of the support. He is on the end of the phone and has visited to offer reassurance.

James got the shop on a 3 year lease using a business loan from the bank. He did a lot of research on the local competitors prior to the opening, and realises how cut-throat retail can be. He employs a full-time female manager, who was born on the estate, and part-time women staff. He says he allows his manager to get on with it, though he keeps an eye on things and does the accounts. He feels that his years in care management have allowed him to take this approach. James would like an extension on the shop lease and be able to sell the house and shop as a going concern. James received the 'Greatest Distance Travelled Award' for setting up the shop.



## Rhona Barratt

retail expert story 4

Rhona was born in Mexico, the youngest child of a citrus grower. Her mother looked after the house and was a very organised person – she had maids who she managed. Her father didn't want Rhona to go into sales and he set her up in her own hair-dressing salon when she left school, although she didn't work there all the time. He ensured her interest by building in an incentive – a percentage of the takings. He also treated the other staff in the same way. Rhona says that staff need incentives to become motivated and she always tries to find out what they want.

Rhona enjoyed school (in California) and did beauty care and secretarial studies as her father thought it was important to have skills. When she graduated from school she 'bummed about' a bit as well as working in the salon, and then married into the forces.

Army wives were not allowed to work and she turned into an unpaid social worker as she was good at organising and wanted to be busy. She went to Hong Kong, Germany and finally to England. When she came to England she got a job in retail. *"It was easy to get a job in retail and I made lots of friends"* she says. She progressed to work for Elizabeth Arden in large department stores like Harvey Nichols, Dickens & Jones, and Boots, organising the concession.

Rhona then left to bring up her twin boys. She returned to work, helping out in schools, but wanted more challenge and went back into retail work. She was promoted within a month.

She enjoys the flexibility of her job and likes being her own boss. Rhona is not tolerant of stupidity and likes people to be well behaved in public. She sets high standards for herself and others. She talked about her dog having to be well behaved and that she hadn't wanted to take her children to Mexico (home) in case they didn't behave. She has employed one of her sons and subsequently sacked him for not wearing the right clothes on the job. She says her staff think she is a bit of a 'bossy boots' and she can get 'ropy' if the job isn't done properly!

She is extremely hot on customer service and feels strongly about the way you treat customers and the people you work with. She thinks of her team as a family and takes care to ensure that she knows them and tries to support them. In return she expects good service from them. She feels it is important to spend time on the shop-floor and to have hands-on experience. She felt that managers who came in via the graduate route lacked this and took longer to become effective. She is often asked to help train them.

Rhona's work as a retail marketing manager covers 4 stores – Sainsburys, Morrisons, Asda and Tesco – across a large geographical area. She is a team leader managing, training, supporting and supervising 45 staff, who work on a geographical basis, displaying non-food products in stores. She takes the brief from the client and then follows it through to placement in the store.

Rhona enjoys her job and managing her staff. She says: *"I treat them how I would like to be treated. I put myself in their shoes – so I get to know about their lifestyle – children etc. I need to find out about what makes your staff tick – so many managers don't do this, they don't listen to their staff. We have a saying that when people are made up to managers they turn into monsters. We think there must be a special farm they train them at! This seems peculiar to Britain."*



## Sam Cary

retail expert story 5

Sam was born in the West of England, outside Bath. He has an older brother and two older step-brothers. His mother works in Bristol City College in the care department, his father worked as a car mechanic but now sets up websites and is self-employed.

At school he enjoyed sports but didn't really worry about academic work until half way through his GCSEs – he then knuckled down and achieved 6 grades above 'C'. At school he had wanted to have his own business. Sam and some mates talked about a building business, he was interested in bricklaying and had mates who wanted to do plumbing. He was offered a place in the 6th form but felt it wasn't for him so got a job as a labourer. He couldn't get an apprenticeship, so started a course in construction site management at college.

He began working at Homebase in his holidays and when he was offered an acting team leader job, he decided not to go back for the second year at college, with the idea of completing the course later. He learned fast and was soon exceeding sales targets. The store manager was a good role model, as he had successfully worked his way up through the store. He spotted Sam and encouraged him to become full-time.

Sam is now a team leader and has a team of 25 people working under him. He enjoys the challenge of this and likes working with people. He says: *"You need to find out what makes them tick, get to know them and let them know you care about them."* He uses the monthly team meeting to praise the team and ask them for recommendations about things. He likes to engender a bit of competition into the work of the team and works to give them a sense of pride in the work that they do. He is a hands-on manager who gets stuck in and earns respect for it. Sam says the difference between a manager and a leader is that the manager will get the job done, but a leader will get his staff to want to do the job.

Sam is now 'mentoring' a young person in his team who he has spotted. He is encouraging him to see the bigger picture and gives him specific tasks to do. *"He reminds me of myself."*

Sam has undertaken team leader training through the company's 'Enhance' training scheme. He is now doing the service manager course on a fast track mode, and he hopes to get the service manager job he is presently acting in. He is aiming to be the youngest store manager – the record is 24. If he takes something on he likes to be the best at it – at school he played football and had to be captain. He would be willing to move stores, to take on the challenge of turning round a failing store. He feels that the regional manager knows that he has potential and has encouraged him – he likes this.

He enjoys working at Homebase – he says it has a friendly atmosphere and this is mainly down to a 'free to choose' attitude that involves employees (colleagues) in having a say about how the store runs; customers first, team work and valuing staff. He likes the professional approach and the fact that the company looks after you. If he were to change company, it would have to be a decent company that was happy to do the same.



## Introduction

*“The Trading Places project will use a cauldron of methods to achieve effective team working, good communication, reflective practice and support.”*

Learning South West application to the Learning & Skills Council for funding, February 2007

This section of the report comments on the methodology used in delivering the project.

Much has been learned from the project – both in terms of the findings from the experts’ stories in Part 1 and on the DVD, and also from the processes involved. They have enabled a journey of discovery at many levels – for the experts, the project team, the contract holder – Learning South West, and the Learning and Skills Council.

Fundamental to the project was a focus on relationship-building and communication with the group of people who generously contributed their stories to the project. Trading Places was therefore designed to be innovative and to make use of some approaches that had not hitherto been significantly explored by the contract holder.

The acceptance of the project design by the West of England Learning and Skills Council was considered to be a departure from the norm for an ESF Objective 3 research project, and the LSC is applauded for endorsing a novel and imaginative approach.

The elements of the project methodology were as follows:

- Recruitment of ‘experts’
- Induction
- Assessment
- Background research
- ‘Tutorial’ groups
- Individual interviews
- Observation
- E-mail and chat group
- Questionnaire
- Digital recording
- Weekend break
- Action Learning Set
- Evaluation
- Incentives
- Recording
- Training

For each of the elements there is a description, below, of what was intended, together with a record of the feedback from the experts and the project team members. The feedback seeks to capture some of the learning arising from both the successes and the less successful aspects of the project.

## Recruitment

It was intended that twenty men and women who were in employment and/or training in the West of England LSC sub-region would be tracked throughout the project and comprise the ‘beneficiary team’. They became the project’s experts – and ‘expert’ is the word used to describe their role throughout the project. The experts, then, represented the four employment sectors, designated by the West of England Learning & Skills Council.

- **social care**
- **construction**
- **engineering**
- **retail**

A fifth group was also to be represented from any of the above sectors – people who are following a ‘self-employment’ option.

It was intended that potential members of the ‘beneficiary team’ were identified through links with partner organisations and network contacts in the West of England. It is estimated that in excess of five hundred telephone calls, emails and meetings were made in order to recruit the experts. In the event, the project exceeded its target to recruit 20 experts and worked with 25 people, 4 of whom were self-employed.

Some sectors proved tougher to recruit from than others. Women working in engineering and men working in care proved to be less difficult than women working in construction and men and women working in the retail sector.

The table below shows recruitment by sector:

Sector	Number	Self-employed
<b>care</b>	7	1
<b>construction</b>	5	2
<b>engineering</b>	8	
<b>retail</b>	5	1
<b>total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>4</b>

Attempts were made to ensure representation across the 4 local authority areas in the West of England sub-region, a range of ages, a balance of private, statutory and voluntary employment, and a balance between employment and training. 2 people from a minority ethnic background were recruited – from Eastern Europe and from Central America. A number of people were excluded from the project because they either did not live/work in the West of England sub-region or did not want to play a full role in the project but were happy to make a contribution.

### **comment from the experts...**

Below are some of the reasons given by experts from each sector when asked about their reasons for joining the project:

- One woman said she decided to join because it will give her an opportunity to put something different on her CV. She thinks it will help her to progress further in her industry.

*"...to be honest, I couldn't lose... it'll benefit me later in life"* **engineering sector**

- Another said she joined because she was interested in finding out more about what the project was trying to do.

*"...we've been there ourselves... people don't even think about going into construction... also, these days young people are pushed towards University, as if you either do unskilled manual work or go to University... this might help people realise there are other options."* **construction sector**

- Two of the men who were recruited from the care sector said the following:

*"(the project worker) thought I would make a good role model... it seems like a wonderful opportunity to help other people."* **social care sector**

*"I've always liked things which challenge me... it sounds like a lot of fun."* **social care sector**

- A retail expert gave this reason for being recruited:

*"I'd like to help break through the stigma... to contribute to a change of perception (about sales jobs)."* **retail sector**

- One woman felt that the level of recruitment of women into engineering is not only not increasing, it is decreasing. She was hoping that the project would contribute to reversing this perceived decline.

*"...it is rather the reverse if anything... fewer women are being recruited now than were recruited previously."* **engineering sector**

### **comments from the project team...**

- The recruitment element of the project was very time-consuming and may have benefited from more joint working amongst the project team. In one instance it was felt that recruitment could have been carried out by administrative support, but the alternative view was also expressed that the recruitment process was important to relationship building with the experts.

- A word of mouth approach worked well with good support from some FE Colleges and from the University of the West of England – particularly for engineering. Support from the West of England Learning & Skills Council and the West at Work link was disappointing – hampered by staff leaving, leave from work and general work overload.

- One project worker found it a disadvantage knowing little about the sector from which s/he was recruiting while others thought this may be an advantage and brought objectivity. In all 4 sectors the project workers have learned a great deal about an area of work about which they knew little at the start of the project.

- The process became easier when a key person from within a sector was identified who could point to other networks and opportunities. A suggestion was made that recruiters could be appointed from within the sectors for future projects of a similar nature.

- It became clear, through the project, that some sectors have more effective 'umbrella' and networking organisations than others, eg. regional Sector Skills Councils. The success of these organisations is dependent on the skills of the individuals within them. It was apparent that in some instances key people did not have the confident interpersonal skills that good networking requires.

## Induction

The intention in the original design for the project was to hold an induction day for all those involved in the project to get to know one another, to clarify the purpose of the project and the commitment, to form as a team and to assess the starting point for the experts.

The pragmatic response to the plan was to organise two evening events in Bristol. The first event, very early in the project, involved potential recruits to the project together with network contacts. The second evening, a couple of months later, was restricted to the experts, with the film crew.

The original plan would have been the ideal option. The reality was that all our experts were either in employment or training and taking time out for a whole day would not have suited all – even at a weekend for those working in the care and retail sectors, and those with families. In addition, the sector groups were at different stages of development and by the time the majority of experts were recruited one or two groups were well established and induction on a smaller scale had already been delivered.

### **comment from the experts...**

*“It was great... it was very interesting to meet all the other project members. Everybody is different, that is how it should be. It was nice... it was refreshing...”* care sector

*“That was excellent... meeting the whole team running the project I found very useful and meeting other people to get an idea of who they are and why they’re in the project was also great. The downside – time was too short.”* care sector

*“It was interesting to hear all the different reasons why women have gone into construction... it was good to see it wasn’t just us... it was fun...”*

construction sector

*“It was nice to put a name to a face and gave us a better understanding of the size and scope of the project.”* construction sector

- Several people interviewed expressed reservations about the purpose of the induction evening.

*“I’m not sure what the purpose of it was... The film crew was there, that worked well – but integrating with the other groups didn’t work very well. They mixed us up, but time was too short, so we only had 2-3 minutes before we had to move on. They should have given us a task to complete together to help us gel as a team.”*

engineering sector

### **comments from the project team...**

- The demands on the time of our expert team required sensitivity. For those in self-employment there were issues around losing pay. For others there were issues with working shift patterns or working very long hours. Distance was also a factor in giving time – some experts live at the extremes of the region. It was important to take a flexible attitude and to negotiate a differentiated response to the experts’ contribution.

- The success of the project was in taking a flexible and professional approach. The team demonstrated strong inter-personal and communication skills with an emphasis on active listening and recording. Creating the stories with the experts required high levels of trust and sensitivity.

- The project was reflective of the shift of emphasis to the individual – and listening to what people want to say. The general approach was more ‘Mohammed to the mountain’ than the other way around.

- Responding to the needs of people in a flexible way may impact on contract monitoring procedures. The Learning & Skills Council’s monitoring systems are more likely to be challenged and, in turn, require an equally flexible professional approach in achieving the project outputs.

## Assessment

It was intended that instruments would be used to assess and analyse the psychological profile of the experts at the start of the project, and to indicate changes that may occur through the project.

A number of activities were used with the experts and the team members including drawing a tree and graphology. The experts were urged to treat the results with caution but they gained a lot of enjoyment and fun out of doing them.

### ***comment from the experts...***

- The assessment activities mostly took place after the midpoint interviews had been completed, so could not be discussed in the midpoint evaluation. However, in the final evaluation questionnaire, one person said that identifying *“the common themes and traits of the individuals within the retail team, despite as being a diverse mix of people”* had been useful for their own personal development.

### ***comments from the project team...***

- Although unable to measure change from the instruments that were used, the methods encouraged reflection and triggered discussion amongst the experts.
- Overall the support given to enable the experts to reflect on their life stories was considered beneficial and contributed to experts feeling valued.
- Activities that encourage reflection are valuable to all age groups and enable people to identify their qualities and strengths.

## Background research

The project design stated the intention to ‘identify and collate specific information relating to the sub-region as a back-drop to the project, the final report and action planning’.

Subsequent discussions with the West of England Learning and Skills Council revealed the existence of a significant amount of recent research into the 4 targeted sectors in the West of England sub-region, together with detailed action plans for two sectors.

In addition, the project workers identified and used a number of other sources, including web-based sources. In some instances this led to useful contacts with other helpful organisations, eg. WISE (Women Into Science & Engineering) and information, eg. Opportunity 2000’s ‘Tapping the Talent’.

An important link was made with an Ofsted equality and diversity research project. A meeting with an HMI provided valuable insights into attitudes to women working in the construction industry.

### ***comments from the project team...***

- The existing research provided excellent background material for the project workers and helped inform reflective processes.
- The Trading Places project gives a depth or ‘life’ to desk-based research. An integrated link between the two would be most powerful.
- Information from background research was shared with some experts and contributed to their own learning about their sector.
- Aspects of the background research contributed to the ‘pause for thought’ interludes in the DVD.

### ‘Tutorial’ groups

The design for the Trading Places project assumed regular structured meetings with the experts. The plan was to group experts by location or sector, to which a specific project worker would be allocated. It was anticipated the groups would meet 3-4 times, bi-monthly, during the project to exchange and reflect on experiences.

A decision was made early on in the project to group the experts by sector in order to enable them, and the allocated project worker, to focus in-depth on the four individual sectors.

As with the induction process, it became an imperative to take a flexible approach to this plan. 3 out of the 4 sectors attempted to meet on at least 2 occasions with variable results. All project workers experienced disappointment with meeting their groups at times and venues previously agreed with the experts. They compensated by arranging more individual and telephone interviews – and by using more e-mail communication.

### comment from the experts...

- Some experts were disappointed by the lack of group tutorials. This seemed to have been a particular issue for men in care. It was felt that people should have made the effort to attend, having agreed on dates and times.
- The engineers seemed to particularly enjoy the group tutorials:

*“It was a good way to express your views and to start to feel comfortable with the others.”*

**engineering sector**

*“At the sector group meetings I met people with similar interests and drives. This is encouraging, as it can become draining working in a male dominated environment, where it appears easier for them to progress. It was interesting finding out what got them into engineering and the route which they took”* **engineering sector**

- There was no consensus about the value of combining construction and engineering group tutorials.

*“In some ways we are quite like-minded, in other ways we’re quite different.”* **construction sector**

*“It’s a very related area... engineers often start off in construction”* **engineering sector**

### comments from the project team...

- Recruitment difficulties in two sectors in particular, impeded setting up the number of intended group meetings.
- It proved very difficult to make arrangements to suit groups of experts who are all employed and/or committed to training and live many miles apart.
- The venue and refreshments are important in arranging meetings with people who are giving their time freely. The engineering group arranged and provided its own venues at the University of the West of England, where refreshments were provided by the experts.
- The groups that met were a success and, in some instances, it was felt they could have been beneficial had more people attended. Those experts who attended were disappointed when their colleagues failed to turn up.
- The groups provided an opportunity for personal development for experts – and the project team.

## Individual interviews

It was the intention that individual interviews would alternate with the tutorial groups and would seek to dig beneath the surface of individual experience. They would also serve to support individuals and, where appropriate, signpost to other services, eg. Information, Advice & Guidance and Skills for Life.

In the face of difficulties in establishing regular 'tutorial' group meetings, it proved problematic to set up neatly organised interviews, alternating with group meetings. However, all experts were interviewed at least twice, either on their own or, where appropriate, as a pair. Most interviews lasted 2-4 hours.

### **comment from the experts...**

- By far the most successful aspect of the project for those interviewed up to the midpoint of the project were the one-to-one sessions where the experts told their stories.
- All workers were praised for their sensitivity, their high level of counselling skills and for enabling insights to be gained by experts in these sessions.
- These sessions seemed to have had an especially profound impact on the men, in terms of improved self-awareness, improved sense of confidence in their career choice, their ability to plan future career moves and even on their work performance.

*"I learned more about myself... it opened my eyes to how I grew up, to my family's influence... it showed how I've been kind of nurtured into this job by my family..."* **care sector**

*"...it was cathartic and enlightening... her individual assessment of me was spot-on... she has obviously done this before... she had excellent counselling skills and an attentive ear... the process validated and reinforced what I already know."* **retail sector**

*"It's all about how you got through the challenges."* **engineering sector**

*"The way she asked questions, it made you really think."* **construction sector**

### **comments from the project team...**

- The interviews encouraged the experts to reflect on their experience and informed the in-depth 'stories' that are told in Part 1 of the report.
- It was underestimated how long it would take to build trust with the experts and to form good relationships. There was anxiety on the part of the project workers around doing justice to the contributions of the experts.
- Arranging one to one meetings with some self-employed people proved difficult as they wanted to meet only during their lunch breaks.
- Transcription may have been useful in recording the exact quotes from experts. An alternative view was that this could have been restrictive.
- The interviews were useful in preparing those experts who appeared in the film. They had already considered the answers to questions that they were asked on camera.

## Observation

It was intended that where possible the researchers would observe experts in the workplace.

The use of the word 'observation' was unfortunate as, for those employed in the learning and skills sector, the process of 'observing' has a rigorous quality connotation. The intention in the original design for the project was that experts would be met in the workplace and where possible conversations would also take place with managers, colleagues, clients etc. Observations therefore occurred in an informal way – some experts were interviewed in their work or training places and filming, in most instances, took place in workplaces or colleges.

### **comments from the project team...**

- In some cases a different picture of an expert was gained by seeing him/her at ease in his or her workplace.
- It was difficult to gain access to some workplaces where there is sensitivity around confidentiality, eg. in the aerospace industry.
- It was useful to observe how one or two experts coped with strong sexist attitudes in the workplace. Strong self-esteem held the key in enabling sexist attitudes to be ignored and dismissed.

## E-mail + chat groups

The project provided for all experts to have the appropriate equipment to communicate electronically and, where necessary, the training to enable them to use it effectively, and informally, with each other and the project team.

Each expert was given a PDA (see 'incentives' below) together with a limited number of minutes per month to enable him/her to use the equipment for the duration of the project. A combined contract was taken out for 4000 minutes and 250Mb data transfer a month shared between experts and project workers.

The managers of the project have learned much about securing a flexible PDA contract for a large group of people. It is considered that this learning will be very useful in future projects. The managers also learned that technical expertise would also have been better placed in-house, at the project base, as an accessible central port of call.

The opportunity to have a website and a BLOG from the start of the project was missed – largely due to lack of awareness of what was possible by the project team. However, e-mail was used extensively throughout the project in communicating with the experts and the project team. Often it was a more successful method using established email links rather than those set up through the PDAs.

### **comment from the experts...**

- The experts praised their project workers for superb communication, using e-mail and telephone.

*"Communication has been absolutely wonderful... I've been sent numerous e-mails."* **care sector**

*"(named project worker) is in touch with us quite often which is good... she e-mails us to make sure that we are okay with dates... she's very flexible."* **engineering sector**

*"I would like to thank her: she's been a wonderful project worker."* **retail sector**

- The experts were divided about the usefulness or otherwise of the PDAs. They were very much welcomed by some experts.

*"A useful piece of equipment, which makes contacting group members easier."*

**construction sector**

*"I've found the PDA very useful... it's like having a dedicated line... I found it relatively straightforward to use... it's an age thing."*

**engineering sector**

- They were considered less useful by some of the care and retail workers.

*"The PDA is an absolute nightmare to get to grips with."* **care sector**

*"I think the PDAs were a waste of money for the project. Mine has never been used but thanks anyway!"* **construction sector**

- It was generally agreed that more training on how to use them at the outset of the project, perhaps with set tasks to carry out with them, would have been beneficial.

*"(the PDA) I couldn't use mine initially and it took a long time for the IT man to contact me."*

**retail sector**

- It was also recognized that much less electronic networking took place between experts on the project than most of them had anticipated.

### **comments from the project team...**

- A project that has at its root building trust and good relationships between people will focus more on direct contact and less on more remote methods of communication. However, email proved very effective for making and keeping in contact and sharing information.

- Use of the PDAs could have worked better with additional training and regular support from the technical assistant.

- Some experts already used PDAs while others have converted their employers to their use.

- The PDAs were useful for taking photographs.

- A website and a BLOG would be useful from the start of any similar project.

## Questionnaire

It was intended that experts would be asked to complete a questionnaire once a fortnight to serve as a diary of their experience.

Relationships between the experts and project workers quickly became very close and the questionnaires were not introduced.

### comments from the project team...

- Against the other demands of the project, many of the experts would have seen this as a superfluous demand.

## Digital recording

The intention behind the project design was to encourage experts to keep a digital record of their experience using either digital cameras or camcorders. A professional film and video organisation was also to be used to film additional footage and edit the experts' material to make a short DVD to accompany the report and support the training events.

Somerset Film, a film-making charity, was contracted to make the film using an all-woman film crew, in the spirit of the project. The crew filmed, on location, a number of experts from each sector together with others who either worked with or were related to them. The aspiration that the experts themselves would produce material was largely unfulfilled. Material that was produced fell short of high quality production standards.

500 copies of the DVD have been produced.

### comment from the experts...

- Filming was perhaps the most contentious part of this project. Those people who were filmed were predominantly very happy with the process.

*"The film crew were excellent in every way. They fitted in around our work commitments, were helpful, very professional and made us feel as at ease as possible in the circumstances. The only real issue we had was that it did slow us down work-wise, but this is fairly inevitable..."*

**retail sector**

- One person has already been able to use the DVD.

*"The DVD filming footage has been used by my work place as part of a project for parents of children who come to play with us."*

**care sector**

- One person felt that it would have been beneficial to have had: *"more input on the filming side from the sector involved to prevent wasted filming... an example would be all the problems with the retail filming."*

**engineering sector**

- However, one care worker who was not filmed, made the point very strongly that the DVD was unrepresentative of the whole social care sector and that a major opportunity had been missed.

*"Childcare makes up 12.3% of the social care workforce and while childcare work may have significant challenges in recruiting men all of care does and the opportunity to showcase both sides and a wide range of career pathways has been lost in the DVD which at the end of the day is very much a key part of the project and the most significant one that many potential male carers will see. I feel that again politics has ruled, rather than what was at the heart of the project and the whole purpose of it!"*

**care sector**

A different care worker echoed this view in the final evaluation:

*"I wasn't involved in the filming, but felt that more benefit would have been derived from a more holistic picture of the experts' work in the care sector. The film focused entirely on Early Years and even then only portrayed play work and college setting."*

**care sector**

### comments from the project team...

- In some instances, difficulties in filming were caused by distances involved and in others by confidentiality issues in the workplace.
- Offering film-making training to experts would have enabled a closer relationship between the experts and the film-makers. It would have also contributed to the skills and experience of the experts.
- In one instance it was felt that the questions posed by the film crew were not appropriate to the sector.
- One or 2 project workers felt that they should have had more say in who was to be filmed although these decisions were made by the project co-ordinator in discussion with the film's producer. In engineering the decision about who was filmed was made by the expert group who encouraged less confident members.

## Weekend break

It was intended that experts and project workers would be offered a residential experience towards the end of the project – to support the final report writing, recommendations and action planning.

This weekend took place in a hotel in the Cotswolds towards the end of the project. It was attended by 16 out of 25 experts, and the whole project team. Others had wanted to attend but had not been able because of other social and work commitments. The programme included a mix of leisure activities and facilitated sessions relating to the objectives of the project.

The organisation for the weekend was highly efficient contributing significantly to its success. Experts were supported to attend – lifts were offered and travel costs paid.

The contribution of the experts over the weekend demonstrated how much they had developed ownership of the project. They came together readily in sector teams and as a larger team, engaging in all project-related activities to establish and confirm messages from the project and recommendations.

### comment from the experts...

- 15 out of the 20 questionnaires received at the end of the project cited the opportunities to get together as a whole group, including the weekend, as the most interesting and enjoyable part of the project.

*“(the weekend) provided the opportunity for discussion and identification of shared ideas. The weekend event brought everything together and made sense of our individual input.”* care sector

*“Really nice to meet everyone else, to see and hear their perspectives.”* construction sector

*“I found it really beneficial to meet all the other participants to get a real feel for the project in the context of an eclectic perspective.”* retail sector

*“It was good to be able to share thoughts and ideas with others and see both the similarity and differences between the sectors.”* engineering sector

*“It made the project as a whole make more sense by helping me see the wider context and learn about other people’s views and experience by talking with them”* care sector

- At the final evaluation, several people commented on how much they would have enjoyed more group meetings at the beginning of the project.

*“Maybe if the weekend had been at the beginning of the project, we would have had the opportunity to build and develop relationships that would have helped the communication and group meetings that could have then followed successfully.”*

care sector

*“I found the project would have been more constructive had the teambuilding exercise at Dormy House taken place earlier.”* retail sector

*“A big meeting at the beginning would have been good to get to know all about everyone and to cement a core of ideas in everyone’s mind”*

care sector

### comments from the project team...

- An earlier residential weekend would have been useful to encourage bonding between experts and with the project team. The administrator, for example, has commented that she now gets a much better response from people.
- Residential activities are crucial to team building and instilling feelings of ownership.
- The presentations by each sector team to the other sectors of their industry created a raised awareness of what the project as a whole is seeking to achieve.
- The combined contributions of the experts to the conclusion of the project revealed passion and commitment to their work – and to their involvement with the Trading Places project.

## Action learning set

The project involved the formation of an action learning set for the duration of the project to enable the project workers to develop their own reflective practices and to address any issues that may arise.

A facilitator was appointed to support the action learning set process and regular sets were convened throughout the project with the project team. The traditional model of a learning set was modified to suit the needs of the project but the ethos of reflective practice was maintained and managed by the facilitator throughout the project. Continuous reflection contributed to the personal and professional development of the project team.

### **comments from the project team...**

- The action learning set provided space for the team to address issues relating to the project and working with the experts outside the normal business meetings of the team.
- It provided 'triggers' which stimulated giving more thought to issues and approaches by the project team – sometimes outside the action learning set itself.
- Initiating a flexible response to the original learning set model was indicative of the project as a whole and contributed to the overall management style of the project.

## Evaluation

It was intended in the project design that the evaluation of the Trading Places project would be essentially formative and qualitative, with 3 main objectives:

- » to evaluate aspects of the project as it develops.
- » to comment/make suggestions on those aspects of the project which could be amended as it develops.
- » to act as 'reflective consciousness' and 'critical friend'.

Evaluation, using mainly telephone interviews, was planned in 3 main phases:

- Phase 1 (at the start of the project) – evaluation of promotion, recruitment and team building activities.
- Phase 2 (at a mid point in the project) – evaluation of relationship development between the experts and the project team and the approaches used.

- Phase 3 (toward the end) – summative evaluation including collation of findings and dissemination.

It was intended that a greater proportion of time allowed for evaluation would be used at the earlier stages of the project to enable any issues to be resolved and to highlight what was working well.

### **comment from the experts...**

The sample of experts who were interviewed by telephone were happy to contribute their ideas on how to improve the project whilst it was running. The evaluator believes that offering confidential interviews and anonymity enabled people to be honest about some initial issues, such as a lack of clarity about project goals. The second round of phone interviews revealed that people were happy that the issues raised during the initial interviews had been addressed. This provided enhanced confidence in the project team and encouraged ongoing participation in the evaluation.

*"That's all been cleared up now... all in all, it's a very positive project."*

### **comments from the project team...**

- Timing was an issue throughout the project, ie. getting everyone to the same stage at the same time. At the start, with staggered responses to the recruitment process, it was not possible to involve equal expert representation from all four sectors. At the mid-point team members felt they were given insufficient notice and not all were available to participate in the process.
- In response to feedback from the experts, through the evaluation process, it was possible to address concerns and to build flexibility into the project.
- The evaluator was external to the team, in order to maintain objectivity. With hindsight some team members felt that the role could have been more embedded within the project.
- Some team members would have liked more openness and did not like the confidentiality aspects of the process.

## Incentives

The project allowed for incentives for the experts. The aim of the incentives was:

- » to maintain the commitment of the experts.
- » to encourage the experts' on-going support of the overall aim.
- » to value the time and effort the experts put in.

The following incentives were provided:

- » a PDA device, with built-in camera and video facility.
- » attendance at a weekend break, combining business and pleasure.
- » an opportunity to participate in the film of the project, and a copy of the DVD for all experts.

26 PDAs were distributed and, in all, 25 experts contributed throughout the project. Only one person withdrew, and at the time of writing the PDA has not been returned.

16 people were able to attend the weekend break.

In all, 10 experts participated in the film-making. All experts have received a copy of the DVD. Film footage is also being used to create another DVD to promote to parents the ethos of an out of school club. Other organisations are indicating that they would be interested in using excerpts from the film.

### **comment from the experts...**

*"The offer of a Blackberry helps!"*

*"(the PDA) was a very generous thought/incentive, however, an expense that you probably didn't need to incur. Maybe an incentive given at the end of the project based on attendance at meetings (would be better)..."*

### **comments from the project team...**

- The incentives were more important for some than others. Some experts would have become involved regardless of the incentives.
- Some experts already owned a PDA – and some thought they were a 'waste' of money. A more flexible incentive offer could have been agreed.
- The weekend break was seen as a luxury bonus – especially by the younger members of the expert team.

## Recording

It was intended that all stages and activities would be recorded by the project team. The following records of the project were made:

- » 25 experts' stories have been recorded in detail by the project workers, and edited versions form one section of Part 1 of this report.
- » Milestone reports were produced by each project worker and submitted in a collated format to the Learning & Skills Council.
- » Minutes of all team meetings were kept by the project administrator.
- » Formative evaluation reports have been submitted at 3 stages in the project.

### **comment from the experts...**

- Most experts were very keen to tell their story and were reassured that this was going to be recorded for future use.

*"I want to get my view across... my view is quite different to others... I'd like mine to be heard. I want people to stop pushing girls into things. I'm trying to get across the message that they don't need to be 'babying' girls to get them to go into 'men's' jobs..."*

### **comments from the project team...**

- Provision of a template for each of the milestone reports has been useful.
- The minutes of meetings have provided a straightforward record of team discussions and decisions.

## Training

The project design built in a plan to deliver a differentiated training programme for key 'gatekeepers' ie. the staff of organisations like Connexions and Jobcentre Plus and other link organisations who have a role to play in advising and supporting people's employment aspirations.

Events have been planned on a sub-regional and regional level to promote the outcomes of the project and to distribute the DVD and CPD materials as widely as possible.

It is intended that experts will attend these events and to 'have their voice/say'. The indication is that they are keen to do this.

### ***comments from the project team...***

- The value of the Trading Places project is in the impact it can now have in changing the attitudes and practice of careers 'influencers'.

## How you can help...

It's fair to say that we all influence and apply these stereotypes, probably without a thought, it's that engrained. But it's clear to see that changing these attitudes and 'habits' could have a dramatic effect on men's and women's working lives and, as a direct result, improve the performance and profitability of businesses and organisations in the UK.

Please take a moment to look at this report – it's full of useful insights. There's a DVD too, if you'd like to receive it, plus there are some activity cards to help you (and your team!) prioritise any change...

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