

Addressing Women's Poverty: Local Labour Market Initiatives Synthesis Report

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Preface

The GELLM Partnership and Research Programme

Between 2003 and 2006, the **Gender and Employment in Local Labour Markets (GELLM) Programme**¹ explored an extensive range of factors affecting the labour market situation of women in 11 local labour markets in England.

This unique programme of research, perhaps the most extensive study and analysis ever undertaken of the local labour market situation of women in England, was developed in a close and active partnership with 11 local authorities, and with support, guidance and additional investment from two national agencies, the **Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)** and the **Trades Union Congress (TUC)**. Working closely with its 13 external partners, the GELLM project team, comprising an experienced and diverse group of social scientists (with expertise in sociology, social policy, urban and regional studies, social statistics, and gender studies) produced 12 **Gender Profiles of Local Labour Markets** (Buckner et al 2004, 2005), each presenting a comprehensive picture of gender-disaggregated local labour market statistics². The team then went on to develop, in 2004-5, six new **Local Research Studies**, each carried out in parallel fashion in up to six of the local labour markets which had been profiled, and designed and implemented in close collaboration with local policy-makers. The evidence from these studies was reported at the local level in 31 **Locality Reports** published (in spring 2006) with the support of the local authorities concerned, and disseminated in each of the English regions in a series of successful local events³.

Carrying out this research in partnership with a wide range of local authorities over a three year period was important in a number of ways:

First, it enabled us to focus our studies on topics which were of interest not only as subjects for academic study, but also as issues of major policy relevance and current concern to our partners. We debated the topics we should explore (and the precise focus of each study) with each of our partners in meetings of the GELLM *Regional Project Groups* (established by each local authority partner to support the project at local level), in consultations with the GELLM *National Advisory Group* (which comprised all our local and national partners, and also had the benefit of three external academic advisers with relevant expertise⁴), and within the research team. This led to the decision to develop 6 multi-method *Local Research Studies*, with each local authority partner able to participate in up to three of the studies.

Second, it enabled us to design the studies so that they would draw on local intelligence and expertise about the issues involved. This was particularly important in those studies where there was thought to be existing research, or a body of knowledge about our topic, which had not previously been drawn together into a single report (and most notably in our study of ethnic minority women and their local labour markets).

Third, our partnerships made the process of securing research access (to organisations, documentation, agencies and individuals) both efficient and effective. Our various partners thus assisted in identifying suitable venues for focus groups, in contacting agencies and individuals who could provide a practitioner or policy-maker perspective at the local level, and supported us in accessing interviewees, workshop facilitators and the additional resources needed to support this type of research.

Finally, the partnership ensured that this body of research was not merely 'policy relevant', but achieved our wider aims for the GELLM programme. These were: to produce an *evidence base fit for the purposes of local authorities* and their partners; to deliver the research in a way which was '*policy engaged*' and recognised the realities and challenges of addressing the entrenched local labour market problems which

¹ The programme was based in the *Centre for Social Inclusion* at Sheffield Hallam University, and directed by Professor Sue Yeandle. It was made possible by a large core grant from the *European Social Fund*.

² The *Gender Profiles* were launched at events hosted in each locality by our local authority partners in 2004-5, and were attended by a total of approximately 800 people.

³ A list of the 31 *Locality Reports* and details of the local dissemination events can be found at www.shu.ac.uk/research/csi.

⁴ Prof. Ed Fieldhouse and Prof. Damian Grimshaw, both of the University of Manchester, and Prof. Irene Hardill of Nottingham Trent University.

underpin women's employment disadvantage; and to conclude the partnership, at the end of the three year period, by supporting our local authority partners to *mainstream gender equality* in their planning, operations and strategic policy-making in relation to local labour market issues. Our Locality Reports were presented at well-attended conferences and workshops organised by our local authority partners in spring/summer 2006. These events were used to launch the reports, to debate the new evidence and recommendations, and to consider what actions should follow. Across the country, over 800 people attended these events, and at most of these meetings clear commitments were made to give further detailed consideration to the research findings, and to explore ways of addressing the issues identified at the local level.

The GELLM Synthesis Reports

This *Synthesis Report, Addressing Women's Poverty: Local Labour Market Initiatives*, draws together the findings from the local research study of economic disadvantage for women and the approaches adopted in regeneration strategies, carried out in **Birmingham, East Staffordshire, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Somerset, Southwark** (London Borough), and **West Sussex**. It provides a comparative analysis of some of the issues employment services and regeneration agencies face in delivering neighbourhood improvements in 6 local labour markets, and draws on the wider body of GELLM research of which it forms a part. As indicated above, it is one of the 6 GELLM *Synthesis Reports* published in summer 2006, and completes the study output as funded under the original research award.

In the 6 *Synthesis Reports*, we show how both gender and locality play out in the way local labour markets operate, and identify features which affect women's labour market situation in similar ways across 11 very different local labour markets. We also show that in some cases, particular local labour market circumstances act as quite locally specific constraints and opportunities for the women living and working within them. In each case we explore the diversity of the female working age population, and take account of changes and developments which have affected the structure of the local labour market. In our analysis we have tried to tease out those factors which are within the sphere of influence of local authorities and their local partners - employers, trade unions, voluntary sector organisations and publicly funded agencies – as well as to identify those policy issues which require attention at the national level if local agencies are to achieve their objectives.

Because they offer a comparative analysis of data relating to different local labour markets, our *Synthesis Reports* present the research findings in ways which will be of particular interest to national and regional agencies with responsibilities for developing effective labour market policy, and for ensuring that the labour market operates in an inclusive manner, making full and fair use of the talents of both women and men across the whole economy. The research therefore contains messages of crucial importance to:

- those charged with seeking effective ways of **tackling local pockets of 'worklessness'**
- those responsible for achieving a high level of **productivity** and making effective use of national **investments in education, skills and training**
- employers and trade unions seeking to create **modern workplaces** which can attract and retain staff and support employees to **achieve their full potential**
- employers and service providers concerned about **labour and skills shortages**

The GELLM Research Studies

We developed the *GELLM programme* in a partnership in which all parties shared the view that local labour markets should aim to offer women (and men) equitable access to employment opportunities and a fair chance to realise their full potential as labour force participants - and that they should assist those who desire to enter the labour market to do so. Across the entire programme we have therefore:

- i) explored the **situation of women outside the labour market** who wished to enter it (Grant et al 2006a; Escott et al 2006j)

- ii) examined the particular situation of **women from minority ethnic groups** (Stiell et al 2006; Yeandle et al 2006)
- iii) looked in detail at **women's employment in the local authority sector** (Bennett et al 2006)
- iv) studied the **situation of women in low-paid jobs** and examined why so many part-time women workers are **employed 'below their potential'** (Escott et al 2006; Grant et al 2006b)
- v) explored the **recruitment, retention and workforce development** policies of employers in the highly feminised domiciliary care sector (Yeandle et al 2006)
- vi) through the **Gender Profiles** (Buckner et al 2004, 2005), provided the fullest possible **statistical evidence** for our topic of enquiry, making extensive use of the 2001 Census and other official statistics.

As we pointed out in the introduction to the **Gender Profiles**, given the importance of two critical factors - the **gendered nature of labour force participation** and the **local nature of most employment** - it is remarkable that previously so little attention has been given in analysis of labour force participation and behaviour to gender-disaggregated data at the sub-regional level. We believe the output from the GELLM Programme represents a major step forward in developing evidence-based policy in this field, makes it quite clear that such data is available, and shows that new evidence-based understanding of entrenched labour market problems and how to tackle them can be secured through a gender-sensitive approach to labour market analysis.

Box 1 Policy Relevance of the GELLM Research Programme

When we began the study, we could not know quite how close the fit between our research and new developments in public policy would be. During the research period:

- The **Women and Work Commission** reported its findings (in 2006).
- The Prime Minister commissioned two major **Equality Reviews** (reporting in 2006).
- The **Equality Act 2006**, setting up the *Commission for Equality and Human Rights* and placing a new duty on public bodies to promote gender equality (from 2007), achieved the royal assent.
- The *Equal Opportunities Commission* conducted **new GFIs**⁵ into:
 - ◆ **occupational segregation**
 - ◆ **pregnancy discrimination**
 - ◆ **flexible and part-time working**
 - ◆ **ethnic minority women at work**
- Important **new developments occurred at the national level**, affecting policy on:
 - ◆ skills and productivity - **The Leitch Review of Skills 2005**
 - ◆ access to the labour market - **A New Deal for Welfare: empowering people to work** - DWP Green Paper 2006
 - ◆ the delivery of health and social care - DoH White Paper **Our Health, our Care, our Say: a new direction for community services**
 - ◆ work and family life - **Work and Families Act 2006**

⁵ GFIs are the 'General Formal Investigations' which the *Equal Opportunities Commission* has statutory powers to conduct under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1975*.

1 Introduction

This study was designed to

- Explore the nature and extent of women's poverty and economic disadvantage in selected localities.
- Develop an evidence base about the relationship between poverty, gender and local labour markets.
- Examine relevant area-based public and private sector initiatives and their impact on women's labour market opportunity.
- Assess local service provision and identify the service needs of women living on low incomes.
- Make recommendations of relevance to local authorities and their partners, including Local Strategic Partnerships, and to regional and national policy makers.

The main **research questions** we hoped to answer through the study were:

- **Women's poverty and economic disadvantage**
 - What are the demographic and employment trends underlying changes in women's labour market participation, and how do they vary between localities?
 - Why do some labour markets continue to function poorly?
- **Labour market engagement**
 - What are the constraints affecting women's access to paid employment?
 - Why do women find it difficult to gain higher paid work?
 - Which services most effectively support women's labour market participation?
- **Regeneration initiatives**
 - Have local 'regeneration' programmes assisted the employment position of local women?
 - What are the lessons for emerging local, national and regional labour market strategies?

Six of the local authority partners in the *Gender and Employment in Local Labour Markets (GELLM)* research programme chose to take part in this study⁶. They were:

- **Birmingham City Council**
- **East Staffordshire Council**
- **Newcastle City Council**
- **London Borough of Southwark**
- **Somerset County Council**
- **West Sussex County Council**

⁶ Each of these local authorities received a separate report drawing on the detailed quantitative and qualitative data obtained through our interviews and focus groups in the locality, and summarising the local policy context and developments in spring/summer 2006. Those interested in this detailed material can find it in the six Locality Reports relating to Addressing Women's Poverty: Local Labour Market Initiatives. The reports were launched at events held in each of these six local authorities between April and June 2006 (Escott et al 2006a-f).

To explore the research questions we adopted the following **study design and research methods**:

- **Analysis of official statistical data** - primarily from the 2001 Census, but also including official statistics on pay. This work was designed to identify some of the key indicators for local labour market disadvantage, as well as to examine evidence about neighbourhood characteristics, including travel to work patterns, available at district level from the Census of Population.
- **Documentary analysis** of regeneration reports and information supplied by the local authorities, including examination of the equality and gender dimensions of local strategies and delivery plans.
- **Interviews with key stakeholders** – these included local authority staff responsible for planning and organising regeneration funding, project managers in local regeneration agencies and local community initiatives, as well as others in the locality such as officers in Job Centre Plus and Sure Start who had operational or strategic roles relevant to our study.
- **Focus groups** – evidence from discussions with women recruited through local community organisations explored questions about the local neighbourhood, their experiences of work and unemployment, opportunities and barriers to paid employment, and aspirations for themselves and their families.

Comparative analysis

By drawing together evidence from all six of the local studies, in which a common research methodology and research instruments were used⁷, this **Synthesis Report** offers a comparative analysis of the policy and practical issues in improving women's labour market participation in six very different localities. As we will show, some of the most important issues in addressing women's poverty are challenges common to all of these localities, albeit challenges which are different in scale and degree in each case. Others are rather more specific, and relate to particular conditions in the local labour market, to the nature and volume of the available labour supply, and to the demographic features of its resident population. We have also had the opportunity to review the different ways in which area-based regeneration initiatives have addressed women's economic disadvantage and poverty. The study was designed to inform future regeneration strategies including those designed and implemented at local level, to ensure that the specific needs of women living on low incomes are directly addressed.

In each case our local study of Women's Poverty was carried out after we had prepared a very detailed *Gender Profile* of the relevant local labour market (Buckner et al 2004-5). The study was also conducted alongside two other GELLM local research studies relevant to understanding gender and employment in each locality. This has enabled us to contextualise both our new research evidence about the locality, and our analysis of the statistical evidence about supply and demand, within a detailed understanding of local labour market conditions.

Report Structure

The remainder of this **Synthesis Report** is structured as follows:

- A summary of the policy context and key themes in relevant literature (section 2)
- Comparative analysis of the study findings (sections 3 – 6)
- A discussion of examples of innovation and effective practice in the regeneration field (section 7)
- Key Policy Messages (section 8)

⁷ Full details of the research methodology are given in Appendix 2.

2 Policy Context

In the UK, women are more likely than men to live in poverty. Poverty amongst women remains a persistent and worrying feature of some local labour markets, despite recent policy changes. Women's poverty is often hidden, and is exacerbated by widespread assumptions about their financial dependence on men and about their role being primarily as mothers and carers rather than as wage earners. These assumptions contribute to the low pay of many women who enter the labour market and to the low incomes of those who remain outside it. Although there is a relationship between economic inactivity and poverty, employment does not necessarily provide an escape from poverty for women. Women in the labour market face the risk of low wages, insecure work, occupational segregation and lesser access to promotion than men, in jobs that are often fitted around domestic responsibilities. The factors causing persistent poverty are difficult to disentangle, but we know that low income is linked to other forms of deprivation (Blanden and Gibbons 2006) and may affect several generations.

It is important to recognise the ethnicity dimension of women's poverty, as some ethnic minority women face a particularly high risk of poverty (Women's Budget Group, 2005). Poor health and low self esteem, often associated with the stress of managing poverty has also been highlighted in other recent research (Bradshaw et al 2003; Yeandle et al 2003). This study does not explicitly explore the position of women within households as a way of measuring poverty (Millar 2003), but recognises that domestic and caring work, largely carried out by women, has consequences for labour market participation.

Regeneration and labour market policies

Policies to support people into paid work are high on the policy agenda in the UK. Over the past 30 years, national, regional and local initiatives, under the broad heading of local economic development or 'urban regeneration', have sought to tackle disadvantage in areas of economic decline. Local authorities and others have invested considerable resources in these initiatives, and private sector urban renewal developments and investment have also been heralded as bringing prosperity to declining economies.

This study focuses on area-based labour market initiatives and developments, and explores their impact on women and on their participation in the local labour market. It was carried out in the context of other research on regeneration which has concluded that regeneration policies often fail to take into account differences between men and women, notably in relation to local services such as education, transport, care provision and economic development (Oxfam 2005). Poverty levels in UK cities remain key concerns for which more fundamental solutions may be required. For example, a 'living' rather than a minimum wage has been recommended by the Commission on Urban Life and Faith (2006).

Although there is growing evidence about the structural causes of economic decline and its local impact (Lupton 2003), existing research does not explain why so many women living in communities where there has been significant public and private investment continue to experience economic disadvantage. Webster (2006) has argued that labour market activation programmes do not necessarily benefit the most disadvantaged communities, pointing out that employment among lone parents has increased but that high unemployment areas – where more lone parents are concentrated – have seen increases no greater than those in low unemployment areas, and that the take-up of tax credits by lone parents has increased more in areas of low than of high unemployment.

The Government has a number of **policy measures** which are directly relevant to this study:

- A national target to engage more women and men in employment (DWP, 2004, 2006). *The UK National Action Plan for Employment* (2004) acknowledged the gender pay gap and structural problems of occupational segregation for women and reaffirmed the policy of encouraging labour market participation, using measures to promote work-life balance, improve access to childcare and better financial incentives.
- The Green Paper *A New Deal for Welfare* (2006) promoted an employment rate equivalent to 80% of the working-age population. It argued that *work is the best route out of poverty*, and underscored the

government's intention to reduce the numbers of people on Incapacity Benefit, and to increase the numbers of lone parents and older people in work⁸.

- The government's skills strategy aims to ensure fair access to training and jobs, and to tackle barriers between welfare and work (DFES, 2005). The White Paper *Skills: Getting on in Business, Getting on at Work* seeks to tackle the obstacles preventing fair access to high-quality training and good jobs, so that no group is held back by prejudice, discrimination or stereotyping. This includes guidance, support for carers and for women returning to work after parental leave. It also seeks to raise aspirations, creating a learning culture in each community to break the cycle of deprivation and create new workplace partnerships between employers, trade unions and employees.
- The *Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy* (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001) seeks to improve the quality of life in the most deprived areas. It aims to reduce the difference between the employment rates of disadvantaged groups and the overall rate by spring 2008 (NRU 2005), and to increase employment rates for lone parents, ethnic minorities, people aged 50 and over, those with the lowest qualifications and those living in local authority wards with the poorest labour market position (NRU 2005), and informs local labour market initiatives and regeneration approaches.
- Recognising that deprivation can be highly concentrated in neighbourhoods, requiring tailored approaches to providing services, work incentives and promoting self-employment, *Jobs and Enterprise in Deprived Areas* (SEU, 2004) explored concentrations of 'worklessness'. It called for better 'joining-up' of agencies and initiatives, better support for people with multiple disadvantages, and work incentives in deprived areas; however, the report lacked analysis of gender differences.
- In 2005, the *Prime Minister's Strategy Unit* identified low levels of economic activity and poorly performing services as key factors which drive an area into decline, noting that revitalisation of local economies and improved services are key to regeneration. It argued that weak local economies perpetuate low skill levels and a lack of incentives for the residents of deprived areas to take paid work, as well as discouraging employers from investing in these areas (Cabinet Office, 2005).
- *Fiscal measures* directed at reducing poverty - the National Minimum Wage, Tax Credits and Income Support changes have also been adopted. Increased employment has made a real contribution to reducing poverty, but greater redistribution through tax and benefits changes is required to maintain the progress made (Sutherland et al 2005). Early evaluation of the pilot *Pathways to Work* scheme concluded that some people would not have entered paid work, returned to work so quickly, or have been confident about being financially better off, without this scheme (Cordon and Nice 2006).

To add to understanding of the context in which these policy developments play out, this study explores in detail the local labour market context facing women living on low incomes in the selected localities. To date, public policy evaluation and academic research assessing regeneration initiatives has rarely adopted a gender perspective. While targeted regeneration projects are known to have differing impacts on women and men, and some focus on lone parents and ethnic minority groups, most fail to highlight gender issues., and key differences in the experience of particular groups of women facing economic disadvantage, for example, young women, older women and women with disabilities, are often overlooked.

The study also offers a contribution to the evidence base for labour market policy at regional level. The policy direction of *Regional Development Agencies*⁹ and *Regional Assemblies* is important for economic regeneration, employment and training. Regional Economic Strategies and related sub-regional plans include 'equalities' as part of their policy framework, but the requirement to improve economic competitiveness and to promote economic development has rarely been enhanced by local analysis which informs the promotion of gender equality. Regional Development Agencies work with Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and other stakeholders to tackle poverty and social exclusion through promoting economic development in the most deprived areas. Their target to reduce deprivation by 10% in the most deprived wards is also promoted through the Sustainable Communities Plans for each region (ODPMb, 2005). These aim to tackle deprivation and disadvantage, by balancing economic success with social

⁸ This approach has been criticised for assuming that the problem lies on the supply side of the labour market (Webster, 2006), with the characteristics and motivation of the workless as the problem, rather than the demand for labour. Webster argues that deindustrialisation, decentralisation and weakness in labour demand are key problems.

⁹ The Regional Development Agencies are now responsible for regeneration programme funding.

justice, and include a focus on new jobs and economic growth, and on strategic approaches to skills, transport and infrastructure.

Labour market and regeneration policies are increasingly viewed in a holistic way, alongside health and education. Health and well-being are clearly linked to employment opportunities. Unemployment reduces well-being and those with mental health problems face particular barriers to employment (Social Exclusion Unit, 2004). Working for very low pay may have similar effects on well-being (Ritchie et al, 2005). The scale of mental illness in Britain also involves high economic costs, and, with 40% of Incapacity Benefit recipients suffering from mental illness, represents a major form of deprivation (Layard et al 2006). Layard's proposal for new, local, therapy services mirrors the recommendations for local and integrated employment, health and education services highlighted in this study. Learning and skills in deprived areas are also continuing concerns for policy makers, including those seeking to improve educational and employment outcomes. Systematic planning and delivery, alongside community engagement and local services integrated into local learning centres are increasingly recognised as important features. A recent review of learning communities (Yarnit, 2006) suggested the need for clearer links between the work of Regional Skills Partnerships, Regional Development Agencies, Learning and Skills Councils and Local Strategic Partnerships and community learning initiatives.

In this study we highlight the services and initiatives which work most effectively for women. This is important, as the Government has recognised that regeneration programmes and area-based initiatives have failed to support deprived areas effectively (Cabinet Office, 2005), noting that a plethora of local initiatives, and fragmented responsibilities, give cause for concern. We start from the position that the geography of an area is an important dimension of women's labour market participation. Gendered roles result in women using services and the built environment differently from men (Booth 2004; Greed, 2005). Travel to work patterns, the location of nurseries and schools, and the fact that fewer women have access to a car means that they experience local labour markets differently from men (Buckner et al 2004, 2005). Greed (2005) argues that if gender is to be mainstreamed into plan-making, statistics on women's work, caring arrangements, travel patterns and other land-use activities need to be prioritised.

Local authority approaches

This study examines local labour markets in the context of a wider understanding that structural economic changes continue to have uneven spatial impacts (Lupton and Power, 2005). The wards selected for this study by six of our local authority partners were identified as areas suffering from relatively high levels of unemployment and economic inactivity (see Box 1). Local authorities noted that many local residents who had traditionally worked in the manufacturing sector and in operative and elementary jobs were still affected by the results of economic restructuring. Inequalities in the labour market, which may be linked to differences in house prices and rents, translate into additional geographical inequalities (Adams, 2005). Our interviewees felt that job growth in the localities was not benefiting these disadvantaged local residents, many of whom live on very low incomes, whether or not they are in work. Poverty levels were identified as particularly high among lone parent households and recently arrived ethnic minority groups in all six areas. Many of these concerns were highlighted in the local authorities' own council strategies and policies.

Each of the study areas had received regeneration funding over the past decade, and continued to receive investment aimed at addressing high levels of deprivation. Some programmes, such as the Employment Zone in Southwark and the Worklessness Pilot in Newcastle, are led by central government. Others are local initiatives, largely developed through area-based programmes supported by local authorities and other public agencies, including Job Centre Plus. Specific initiatives were designed to assist local residents gain training, skills and support in accessing employment. A central aim of these programmes was to assist local residents to take full advantage of the new opportunities linked to the wider regeneration of the area. Some of these were taken forward in the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund Programme¹⁰. Sure Start had been supporting childcare initiatives in all six areas since 2001, and in several areas Children's Centres had been built. These offered childcare provision alongside a range of health and social care services. At the time of the study, some Job Centre and adult education services were also provided in these centres.

Box 1 Regeneration initiatives in the study areas

Birmingham: *Ladywood and Soho wards in North West Birmingham*

Here SRB 6¹¹, a £40m programme running until March 2007, prioritised employment and training related advice, and initiatives to raise qualification levels. Much of its first phase focused on physical improvements. A community safety programme (SRB 4) and the Handsworth Area Regeneration Trust (SRB 5) have also invested in the area. The Birmingham and Sandwell Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder¹², which commenced in 2003, has addressed housing abandonment and low demand. *Advantage West Midlands*¹³ is engaged in the area through the South Black Country and West Birmingham Regeneration Zone scheme, and funds regeneration projects in the area. Neighbouring localities include Aston and Sandwell, also recipients of substantial regeneration funds, which have been the focus of other research on women and disadvantage within the GELLM programme (Grant et al 2006a, 2006b).

East Staffordshire: *Anglesey, Eton Park and Shobnall wards in Burton on Trent.*

SRB 6 funding been used to raise educational attainment and reduce unemployment in the selected wards. The Heart of Burton Partnership, in the area since 2001, is part of the Government's Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Initiative¹⁴, which aims to reduce the gap between people living in the area and the rest of Burton. From 2005 the work of Sure Start is being taken forward by the Children's Centre located in the study area, offering a wide range of locally based services to families living in the locality and beyond. The area is part of the Inner Burton Housing Initiative.

Newcastle: *Byker, Monkchester and Walker wards*

SRB2¹⁵, which with support from the European Regional Development Fund invested £84m from 1995-2003, included much of the area covered by the study. Some projects, e.g. Learning@Brinkburn and the Byker Community Education project, have been taken forward in the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund Programme¹⁶. A Working Neighbourhoods pilot¹⁷ supported by the DWP operated in part of Monkchester ward. Much of the eastern part of the area is subject to the Walker Riverside Masterplan (2004), a housing-led regeneration scheme, and the wards are also within the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder for Newcastle-Gateshead. A number of private sector retail investments have also been linked to labour market initiatives supporting local residents into employment.

Southwark: *Chaucer, East Walworth and Newington wards*

SRB6 funding from 2000-2006, targeting the Elephant and Castle area, invested in a wide range of labour market initiatives. Some of these were taken forward in the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund Programme. Implementation of a £1.5 billion scheme currently underway (the Elephant and Castle regeneration strategy), focuses on commercial, retail and housing-led regeneration. This is expected to deliver mixed use developments and, through work with local agencies, to deliver high quality services, including educational improvements.

Somerset: *Hamp, Sydenham and Victoria wards in Bridgwater*

SRB6 funding in two programmes (in Hamp and Sydenham) developed community information and advice facilities. In Victoria ward a Building Communities scheme is underway, which includes a Children's Centre, doctors' surgery, access courses, community facilities and other local services, including work to improve skills and employability. Sure Start operates in these wards and its services will be mainstreamed under the Children's Trusts.

West Sussex: *Hotham, Marine and Pevensy wards in Bognor Regis.*

SRB2 established a partnership of local agencies and businesses to form Bognor Regis Ltd and the Triangle Initiative, set up to help women back into employment. SRB6 funding commenced in 2000, and involved £7m of investment for the coastal area of the county. The Coastal West Sussex Area Investment Framework (West Sussex County Council, SEEDA and partner organisations) a regeneration strategy designed to address housing, business enterprise, employment, and health and transport priorities, has identified a number of target areas, including Bognor Regis.

There have been a number of plans to physically regenerate the areas under study. In most cases, the expectation was that the strategies would deliver mixed use developments and work with local agencies to

¹¹ SRB6 is the Single Regeneration Budget Round 6 programme which provided funds for regeneration initiatives 2000-2006. It has now been subsumed Regional Development Agency single programmes.

¹² 9 Market Renewal Pathfinder projects were established by ODPM to tackle the most acute areas of low demand for social housing and abandonment of properties in parts of the North and Midlands.

¹³ AWM is the Regional Development Agency for the West Midlands.

¹⁴ Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders are a national initiative set up in 2001 to improve deprived neighbourhoods, public services and quality of life.

¹⁵ SRB2 is the Single Regeneration Budget Round 2 programme which provided funds for regeneration initiatives between 1996 and 2003.

¹⁶ Neighbourhood Renewal funding is allocated to public services and communities in the 88 poorest local authority districts.

¹⁷ This Working Neighbourhoods Pilot commenced April 2004 in 12 deprived neighbourhoods to test a new approach of offering intensive support to local residents to help them overcome barriers to employment and access to jobs.

deliver high quality services to the local area, including educational improvements. Future developments centred on housing renewal are expected to have a significant impact on two of the study areas, in East Newcastle and the Elephant and Castle area of Southwark.

Summary

- A wide range of public policy and initiatives seek to address poverty in deprived areas, including low qualifications and skills levels, and employment problems facing disadvantaged groups.
- Recent developments, such as the National Minimum Wage and Tax Credits, have been beneficial for low paid women workers, but policy makers recognise that more could be done to tackle economic inactivity and inequality in the labour market
- Local authorities and others have invested considerable resources in initiatives, under the broad heading of urban regeneration or labour market initiatives, which seek to tackle disadvantage in areas of economic decline.
- There has been a shortage of public policy evaluation and academic research assessing the success or otherwise of regeneration initiatives from a gender perspective.

3 Local Labour Market Characteristics

Women's employment

At national level, changing patterns of employment and unemployment for men and women are well documented. Women's labour market participation has increased, but at the same time the gender pay gap remains, and women suffer as a result of discontinuous patterns of employment (Robinson 2003). Minimum wage legislation and the tax credit system have supported some improvements in household income, but women remain over-concentrated in low paid employment (Grant 2006a). The growth of higher-paid jobs in the business and finance sector, and growing numbers of jobs in lower paid sectors such as retail, hotels and catering and in health and social care has resulted in a more polarised labour force (Goos and Manning 2003). The rise in female employment rates has been strongest amongst women with employed partners, increasing divisions between 'work-rich' and 'work-poor' households (Ritchie et al 2005).

Although women have higher economic inactivity rates than men, most studies of 'worklessness' have highlighted the problems of men (Alcock et al 2003; Fothergill and Beatty 1999; Faggio and Nickell 2003). In another of the GELLM studies (Grant et al 2006b), we discuss the importance of connecting women with the labour market. Policy initiatives in this field, including public investments in childcare and schemes to assist women into paid work, have focused on the poverty of low-income mothers, especially lone parents. An emphasis on paid employment as the best way out of poverty has assisted women (for example through Sure Start), but the impact has been limited (Daguerre and Taylor-Gooby 2003). Tax credits do not cover the full costs of childcare, and wider support is only available to those households on very low incomes.

The UK's flexible labour market, in which a large pool of entry-level jobs is central to the economy (Esping-Anderson 1996), is an important feature of labour demand, as the evidence we will show here confirms. Interventions designed to increase skill levels and participation rates, to enhance economic competitiveness and tackle problems of poverty, play out differently for men and women. In this study, we focus on women's situation, arguing that investing in sectors of employment growth, and understanding the complexity of women's lives, is crucial for tackling worklessness and low incomes among women.

Structural change in six local labour markets

Wider changes in the labour market, the broader context of growth and decline in local and regional economies¹⁸, the structure of job opportunities, and wage levels are all important in understanding some of the pressures experienced in the six study areas. The geography of deprived communities is linked to economic investment, service infrastructure and public policy initiatives, which need to be considered at a macro as well as local level.

Examination of the local labour market context highlights some important variations in the six localities from district, regional and national patterns of employment and pay. Between 1991 and 2003, all six districts experienced a net gain of jobs, reflecting the national 19% increase (Table 1). The rate of job growth was very varied, however, with rates well above the national trend in East Staffordshire (+27%), Somerset (+24%), and West Sussex (+36%). Lower rates of job growth were found in Birmingham (+5%), Newcastle (+12%) and in Southwark (+16%).

Over this period, the number of male and female full-time jobs rose by 9% and 13% respectively across England, a trend reflected in all but two of the six localities. However, the numbers of full-time jobs held by both men and women fell in Birmingham (-7% and -1%), and in Newcastle, although male full-time employment increased (+7%), female full-time employment was merely stable. The overall size of the working age population also decreased in these two cities. Part-time jobs grew across the country, a trend seen in all six localities. For women, the increase in part-time employment was higher than at national level in East Staffordshire, Somerset, Southwark and West Sussex, but was lower in Birmingham and Newcastle.

¹⁸ See Escott and Buckner (2005)

Table 1 Changes in Employment 1991-2002¹⁹ by full-time part-time status and sex²⁰

1991-2002	Birmingham	East Staffs	Newcastle	Somerset	Southwark	West Sussex	England
Change in number of jobs	+20,679	+11,235	+18,628	+36,947	+19,442	+93,447	
Female full-time	-1,657	+1,418	-126	+4,843	+5,991	+13,559	+632,289
Male full-time	-17,661	+1,766	+4,332	+4,220	+1,996	+44,047	+819,143
Female part-time	+20,588	+5,457	+6,891	+19,558	+6,412	+21,821	+1,231,606
Male part-time	+19,409	+2,594	+7,531	+8,326	+5,039	+14,020	+88,379
Percentage change	+4.5	+26.8	+12.2	+24.1	+15.8	+35.7	+19.2
Female full-time	-1.3	+14.4	-0.3	+13.0	+16.0	+19.0	+12.7
Male full-time	-7.6	+8.1	+6.7	+5.9	+3.0	+38.9	+9.3
Female part-time	+23.8	+61.5	+20.7	+52.5	+44.0	+34.5	+30.8
Male part-time	+115.7	+171.3	+118.2	+107.8	+105.9	+98.1	+103.1
Total jobs in 2002	484,913	53,210	171,721	190,474	142,781	355,509	22,175,234
Change in working age population	-1,000	+2,900	-1,200	+21,100	+27,900	+29,400	+1,241,000

Source: 1991 Census of Employment, ABI 2002, Crown Copyright (Buckner et al 2004, 2005)

New jobs taken up by women were concentrated in the service sector; in finance, banking and insurance²¹ in Birmingham, Southwark and West Sussex; in public administration, education and health in East Staffordshire, Newcastle, Somerset and West Sussex; and in distribution, hotels and restaurants across all areas (Table 2). Women's jobs were lost from manufacturing in all six areas, but this remained an important sector for women's employment in the Birmingham, East Staffordshire and Somerset wards.

Table 2 Change in the industrial distribution of jobs held by women, 1991-2001

Increase/decrease in share of jobs in selected sectors	Birmingham	East Staffs	Newcastle	Somerset	Southwark	West Sussex	England
Manufacturing	-5.3	-9.8	-1.7	-3.6	-2.0	-7.2	-6.9
Construction	-0.4	-0.6	0	+0.1	-0.6	-0.4	+0.2
Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants	+1.8	+3.6	+0.4	+2.2	+0.2	+2.1	+3.6
Transport and Communications	+0.2	0.1	-0.2	0	-0.9	+0.3	-0.5
Banking, Finance and Insurance	+3.6	-0.3	0	-1.9	+3.1	+2.7	+5.8
Public Administration, Education and Health	-1.5	+6.5	+1.2	+3.3	+0.0	+2.1	-1.2
Other Services	+1.8	0.1	+0.6	+0.3	+1.2	+0.8	+1.4
Total change	+20,679	+11,235	+18,628	+36,947	+19,442	+93,447	

Source: 1991 Census of Employment, ABI 2002, Crown Copyright (Buckner et al 2004, 2005)

Across all occupations, women in full-time employment in all six areas earn on average less than their male counterparts, reflecting the national picture (Table 3). Women's average full-time pay rates were lowest in East Staffordshire and in Somerset, and were relatively low in West Sussex, where the pay gap between full-time male and female workers was particularly high. Women's full-time pay was nearest to that of men in Southwark, reflecting the industries and occupations where women who live in the borough work. Although low pay is less prevalent in Southwark than in England as a whole, 5% of women working full-time earned less than £250 a week. Part-time pay for both women and men in the six areas was consistently low, and in all areas, apart from West Sussex and Southwark, was well below the national average.

¹⁹ Southwark's data is for 1991-2003

²⁰ All Crown Copyright material is reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO.

²¹ Banking, finance and insurance includes business services such as advertising, recruitment agencies, accountancy, engineering and architecture.

Table 3 Women's and men's average gross hourly pay in 2005: all occupations²² £s

Gross hourly pay excluding overtime	Birmingham	East Staffs	Newcastle	Somerset	Southwark	West Sussex	England
Women working full-time	9.68	7.87	9.40	8.74	12.50	9.59	9.96
Men working full-time	10.69	10.73	10.42	10.17	13.35	12.12	11.5
Women working part-time	6.44	5.90	6.38	6.17	**	7.44	6.73
Men working part-time	6.09	**	6.28	6.08	6.89	7.04	6.53

Source: ASHE 2005, Crown Copyright.

Notes: ** Missing values are due to small numbers in the survey

Summary

- Nationally, there was substantial job growth between 1991 and 2002, but patterns of employment growth were variable in the six local labour markets.
- Job growth for women and men exceeded the national rate in East Staffordshire and West Sussex (all full-time and part-time), Somerset (part-time only), and Southwark (female full-time and part-time only).
- The strongest rate of job growth was in West Sussex, where pay rates were higher than the national level for all categories, apart from women working full-time.
- The cities of Birmingham and Newcastle experienced a small net loss of female full-time jobs, and lower increases in part-time jobs than nationally.
- New jobs taken by women were particularly concentrated in public sector jobs in administration, education and health, and in private sector employment in distribution, hotels and restaurants.
- The national gender pay gap is evident in the six localities. Pay is particularly low for women working full-time in East Staffordshire and Somerset, both areas of strong job growth.
- Women and men working part-time are lower paid than full-time workers nationally, and in Birmingham, East Staffordshire, Newcastle and Somerset they earn on average less than the national average.

²² Gender disaggregated pay data is not available at ward level.

4 Women's poverty in six localities²³

District and regional level changes have impacted adversely on many households living in the neighbourhoods under study. In the past, many of these areas accommodated workers in heavy industries (coal, ship building and related engineering activities in Newcastle), and in the manufacturing sector (in East Staffordshire, Birmingham and Somerset). The West Sussex study area was developed around tourism and manufacturing, and Southwark, having lost most of its manufacturing employment, now has a diverse structure with many jobs in banking, finance and insurance and in the public sector.

Our interviewees in all six districts reported that some aspects of the physical state of the area had improved in recent years, but that unemployment and low income remained serious problems for large sections of the community.

Traditionally men would have worked full-time and women may have had a part-time job. This was the bedrock of employment, but it has gone. (Interview, Newcastle)

There is a lot of hidden unemployment and a high proportion of low paid jobs. The industrial base has reduced and the area is more dependent on female employment, which tends to be low paid. (Interview, Somerset)

Many people live in very poor housing. They have no employment, or work in very low paid jobs on the minimum wage and are very disadvantaged in the workplace. (Interview, Southwark)

In this part of the report we explore women's poverty²⁴ using a number of indicators to examine women's lives, including paid and unpaid work, care in relation to children and elderly dependents, and their experience of the local neighbourhood.

The neighbourhoods

As shown in the Locality Reports, the wards under study were among the most deprived wards in the six localities. Several had a relatively high level of residents who were new to the area²⁵. For example, in Hotham ward in West Sussex a quarter, and in Marine a fifth, of the population had moved in the year prior to the Census, mostly from within the UK. In Southwark's Chaucer ward, which has a high student population, almost a quarter of the population had moved in the year prior to the Census, again mostly from within the UK. The most stable communities in the study were in East Newcastle and Bridgewater, Somerset, also areas with high levels of council owned property.

Agencies and focus group participants drew attention to the changing demography of the localities, with new migrants, including refugees, facing high levels of deprivation.²⁶

There are a lot of refugees who face a high level of disadvantage (Interview, Southwark).

We are getting other groups who are unable to read or write in English, but have a very high level of literacy and numeracy in their own language (Interview, East Staffordshire).

This view was repeated in West Sussex, where increasing numbers of Eastern Europeans were now thought to be living in the area, and working in agriculture, retail, and the residential care sector.

There are more people coming in as migrant labour, and they are not always showing up in the statistics. Many are now hoping to improve their standard of life through further education. (Interview, West Sussex)

You've got lawyers and doctors working in the fields picking tomatoes. That is all they can do, because they can't speak the language. (Interview, West Sussex)

²³ Quotes in this and following sections are either from interviews with local organisations or from focus group participants.

²⁴ For a discussion of definitions of poverty, see DWP (2006).

²⁵ Transience, the speed at which the local population is changing, is recognised as a possible characteristic of areas of high deprivation (Kenway and Palmer 2004).

²⁶ A study of central East European migrants in low wage employment in the UK is explored in Anderson et al (2006)

Patterns of housing varied considerably. In four of the areas, the level of private renting was high. Here far fewer residents owned their home, and a higher proportion than at national level lived in rented social housing⁴. Housing-related problems were in some cases exacerbated by high house prices.

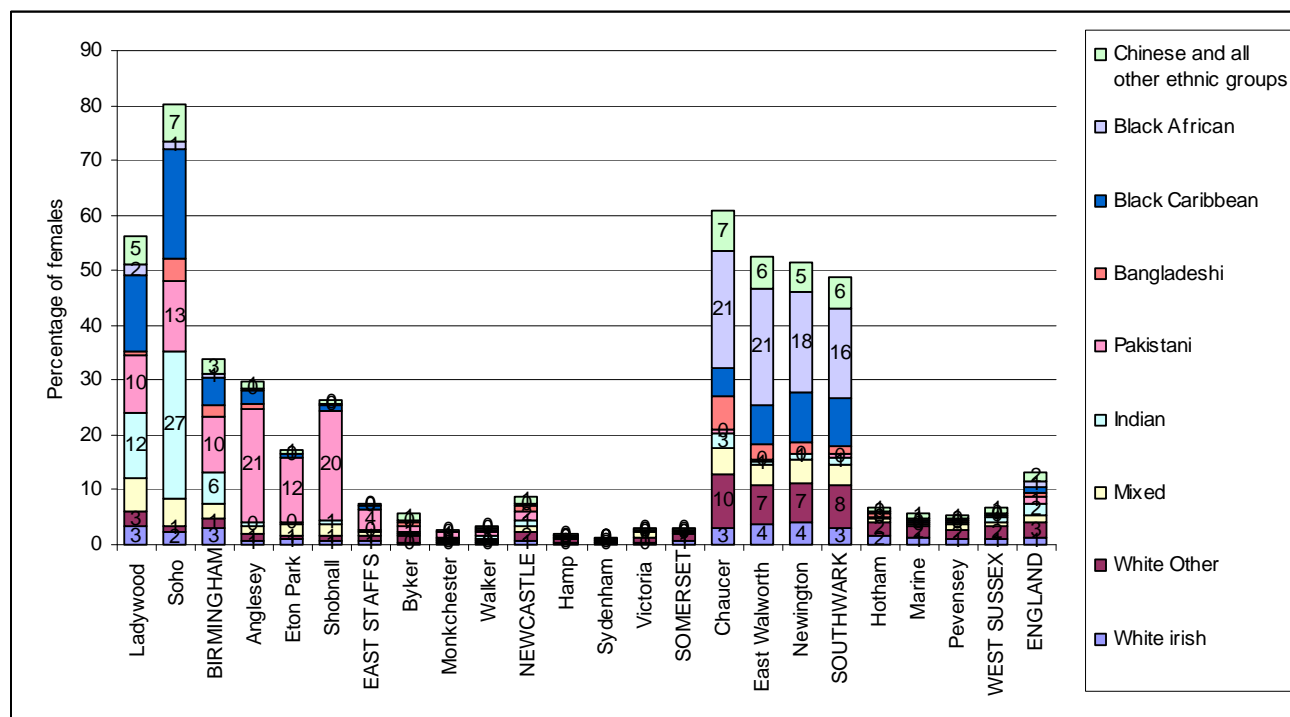
People cannot live on the wages that they get. The South is worse because even if you get minimum wage you still can't afford to live. (Focus group participant, West Sussex)

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

Ethnicity

As we showed in the *Gender Profiles* (Buckner et al 2004, 2005), the ethnic composition of the population in the areas studied is highly variable. Within these areas, there was also considerable variation. In Soho in Birmingham, 80% of women of working age were from ethnic minority groups whereas in the Somerset wards, they represented less than 2% of women (Figure 1). The largest ethnic minority groups across the six localities were women of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black African origin.

Figure 1 Ethnicity: women of working age



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Our **interviewees** informed us of high levels of economic disadvantage among ethnic minority groups living in the six localities, stressing issues such as poor health, unemployment, low levels of educational attainment, and language and skills issues. The Locality Reports of this study explain the particular concerns for groups in the localities with high ethnic minority populations.

Residents' views of the neighbourhood

Our focus groups revealed a strong sense of 'community' among participants in four of the six localities. This was emphasised by those with easy access to community venues, where they felt comfortable and welcomed. Weaker community links were reported in the Somerset and West Sussex wards, though work on increasing community facilities had assisted the women we interviewed. Participants felt the existing community infrastructure was an essential starting point for future improvements. Many people, including those with higher level qualifications and paid employment, wished to remain in these areas.

It's an integrated community, a colourful community with lots of different cultures and traditions. (Focus Group Participant, Southwark)

Women are the ones that get involved and keep the community together. They are the ones that make things happen. (Focus Group Participant, Birmingham)

Low income households

All aspects of our data highlighted women's poverty as a serious concern. This came across strongly in the interviews and focus groups:

Many women live on low incomes whether they are in work or not; if they are in paid work it tends to be low paid. People get by, but only just. (Interview, Newcastle)

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

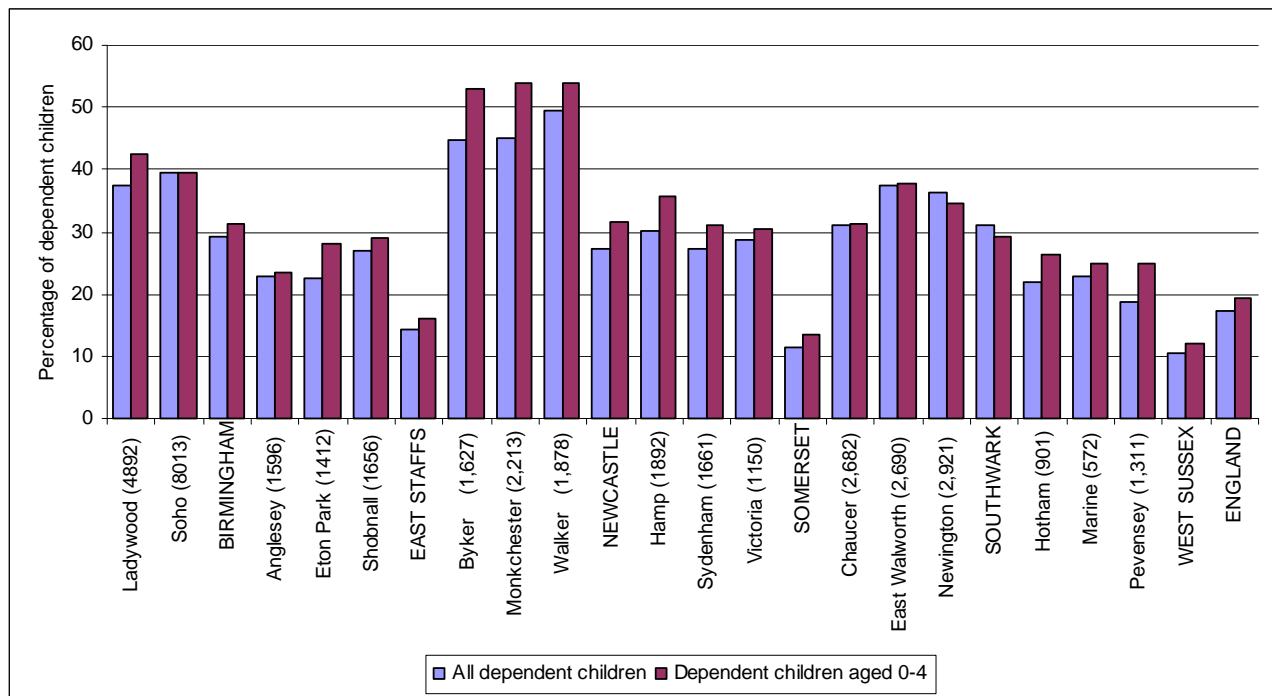
In the county council areas, where poverty was more hidden, local organisations drew our attention to the problems for many women:

I think in economic terms for women, it's the day to day pressure of feeding children. I get women saying they can't afford to buy food for themselves, let alone feed young children with fresh food. (Interview, Somerset)

There are high levels of poverty and I think women on their own are probably in the worst situation. (Interview, West Sussex)

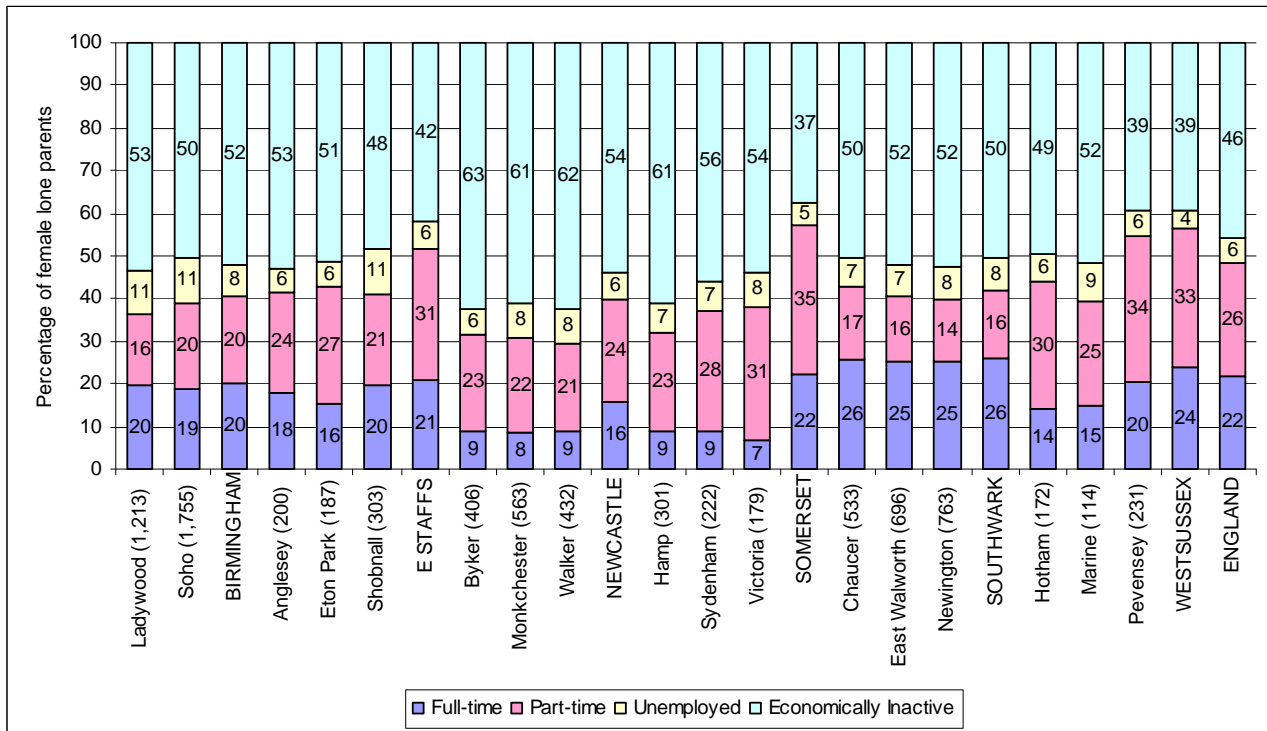
Our statistical analysis shows that in these wards high proportions of dependent children live in families with no working adult (Figure 2). Whilst the Newcastle and Birmingham wards had very high levels of such households, the level of workless households in all the wards studied far exceeded district and national averages.

Figure 2 Dependent children in households with no working adult



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Figure 3 Lone mothers by economic activity status: selected wards and districts



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Much attention has been given to the problems lone parents face in accessing the labour market, and to their higher poverty rates compared with other household types (DWP 2006). There is, however, little evidence on differences in economic activity among lone parents between different local labour markets and between lone parents of different ages. In this study, the economic activity rates among lone mothers varied considerably, reflecting in part the jobs and pay rates available in the area and access to affordable childcare and other support services (Figure 3). Rates of **full-time working** among lone parents were highest in areas where there was strongest job growth (West Sussex) and where hourly pay rates tend to be higher (Southwark). The lowest rates of full-time working among lone parents were found in the East Newcastle and Somerset wards. In the latter, affected by a strong decline in local manufacturing employment, job opportunities were limited, and average pay for women working full-time was very low (Table 3). Rates of **part-time working** among lone parents also varied considerably across the wards, although almost everywhere they were below the national rate. This reflects the limited opportunity for many women in this situation to move off benefits into part-time employment, and the lack of flexible and higher paid part-time employment opportunities²⁷.

Age is also an important factor to consider in developing support for women who are lone parents. Nationally, most lone parents are in the 25-34 and 35-49 age groups, and this was also the case in the selected wards (Figure 4). In the Eton Park and Shobnall wards in East Staffordshire, in the Southwark wards, and in the Hotham and Pevensley wards in West Sussex there were fewer lone parents under aged 25 than the English average. The tendency for local regeneration initiatives to target young lone parents misses out large groups of women whose children are no longer young and who may wish to be supported into employment.

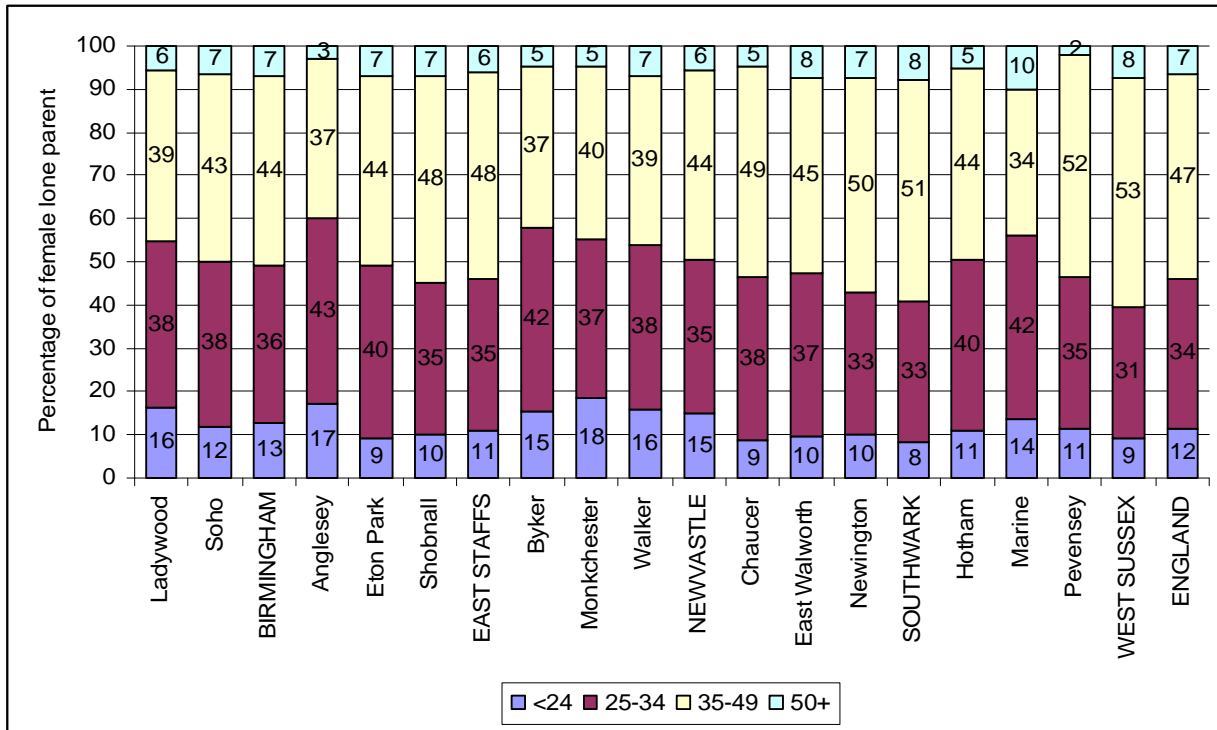
Almost a fifth of women of working age in the Birmingham and Southwark wards, and almost a third in the Newcastle wards, claim Income Support, well above the district and national average (8%)²⁸. Almost two-thirds of all claimants were women, across all the six districts. In addition to paid benefits, this reflects a

²⁷ See also Grant et al (2006a)

²⁸ Source: DWP, 2003

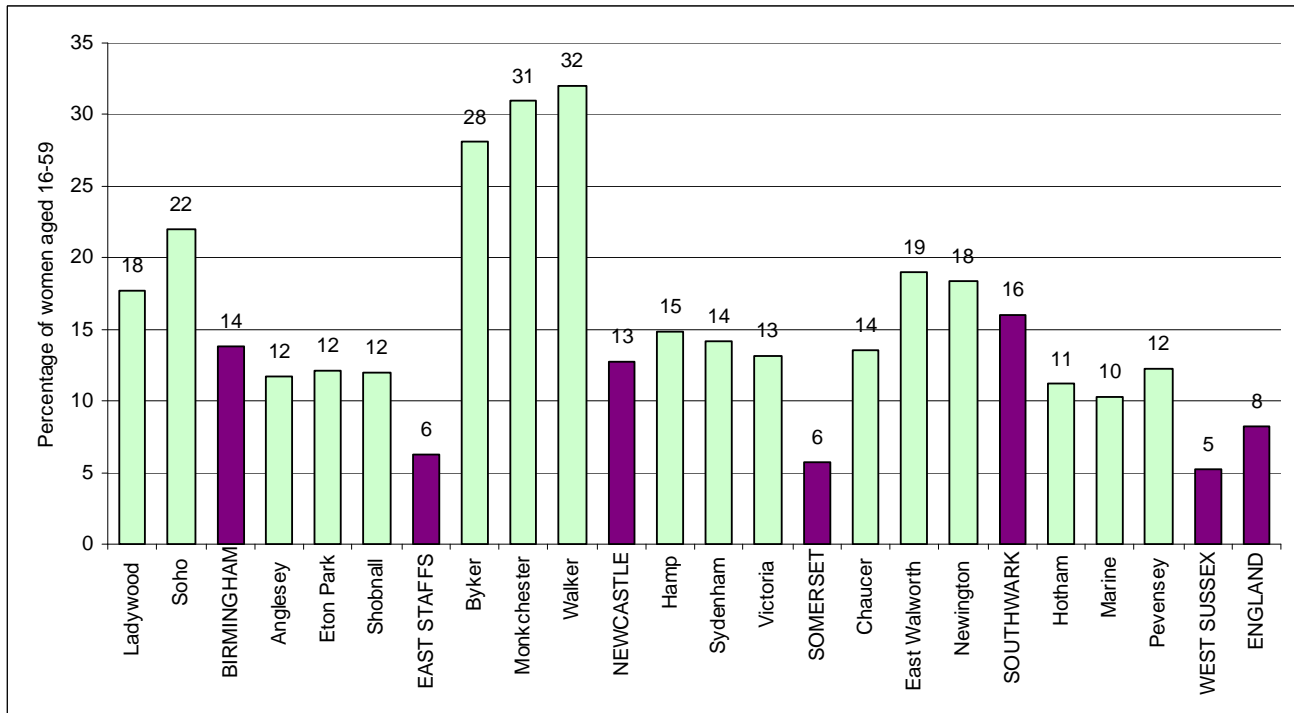
high dependence on low income, including low paid employment, among women living in these areas (Figure 5).

Figure 4 Lone mothers by age in the six localities



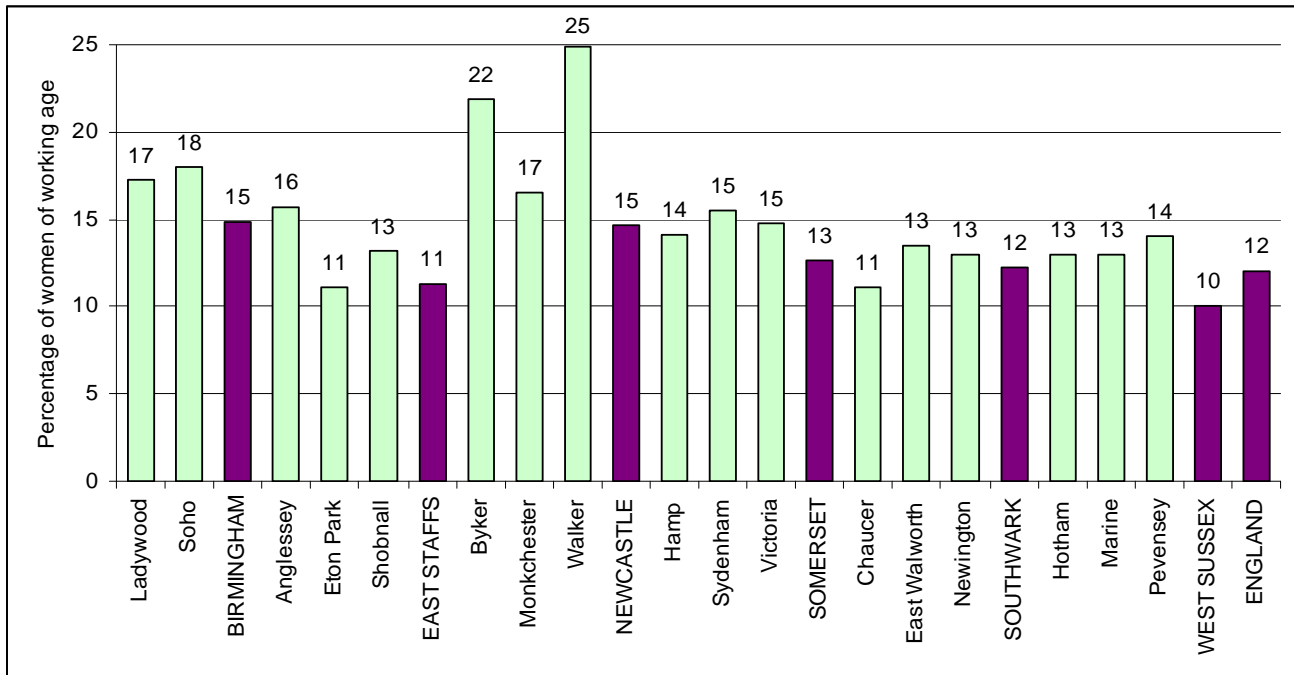
Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Figure 5 Income support claimants: women aged 16-59



Source: DWP 2003.

Figure 6 Limiting long-term illness in the female working age population



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Rates of limiting long-term illness among women of working age were higher in the majority of wards than in the districts in which they were located and in England as a whole. Lack of paid work was considered to be contributing to high levels of poor health.

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

Staying on benefits for too long leads to depression, lowers motivation and your confidence takes a knock. (Interview, East Staffordshire)

In the wards under study, women who have unpaid caring responsibilities²⁹ were less likely to be in paid work (either full-time or part-time) than in the district or nationally. This is particularly marked in East Staffordshire and Newcastle, which had low levels of full-time working among carers. Part-time employment rates were particularly low for women with unpaid caring responsibilities in Birmingham and Southwark (also the areas with the highest ethnic minority populations). This may reflect the additional problems women with caring responsibilities have in the 6 localities in gaining paid work and combining this with care.

Summary

- The most stable locations with least population movement were in East Newcastle and Bridgwater, Somerset. The localities with most population change were in Southwark and West Sussex
- High ethnic minority populations were found in Birmingham, East Staffordshire and Southwark. Many of the indicators of women's poverty were similar to those found in the largely White British localities in Newcastle, Somerset and West Sussex.
- The level of workless households with dependent children was very high in all six localities.
- Lone mothers were least likely to be in paid work in Newcastle and Somerset. In West Sussex more lone mothers worked than nationally.
- Almost two-thirds of income support claimants in the six localities are women.
- Limiting long term illness and poor health were more prevalent in the localities than nationally, apart from in Chaucer ward, Southwark, where there is a particularly large student population.

²⁹ The 2001 Census included a question asking people about help or support which was not part of their paid employment which they gave to family members, friends or neighbours with long term physical or mental ill-health or disability.

5 Women's position in the six local labour markets

We have already seen the scale of shifts in the wider economy at district and national levels in the data on full-time and part-time employment between 1991 and 2001 (Figure 3). Key features over this period were a significant fall in the share of women's employment in manufacturing, and important increases in employment in distribution, hotels and restaurants, public administration, health, and banking and finance. This section of the report highlights some of the key employment challenges in the study localities: qualifications, uneven participation in full-time and part-time employment and high unemployment and economic inactivity rates for women. It provides an insight into local labour markets which are not operating effectively in areas where there has been considerable regeneration investment.

Qualifications and skills

Qualification and skills levels are key labour market indicators, and employers tend to use qualifications as proxies for skills (Mansour 2005). Below we consider our ward-level data on qualifications. Some of our qualitative data on skills and experience is highlighted in Section 6. A high proportion of women in the selected wards had no qualifications (Table 4). While, as might be expected, this was particularly marked for the older age groups (especially in Birmingham and Newcastle), the lack of qualifications among the 35-49 age group was also high – and far higher in the selected wards than at district level. While some progress has been made in achieving higher qualification rates among younger age groups, in some of the wards this was patchy, and in 14 out of 17 wards the proportion of 25-34 year olds with no qualifications was higher than the district average. Furthermore, having qualifications did not always translate into employment for women in younger age groups. In the Newcastle wards and in Soho, Birmingham a persistent qualifications deficit over several generations of women was evident.

Table 4 Qualifications and employment: women of working age (%)

	Women with no qualifications				Women in employment by level of qualification		
	16-24	25-34	35-49	50-59	No qualifications	Lower level qualifications	Higher level qualifications
Ladywood	15	25	43	63	27	39	68
Soho	32	37	52	77	26	47	65
BIRMINGHAM	21	26	38	62	36	57	76
Anglesey	29	24	46	69	34	63	74
Eton Park	20	22	45	71	40	68	88
Shobnall	24	30	47	74	38	58	72
EAST STAFFS	19	15	29	55	52	70	83
Byker	31	27	45	71	34	52	57
Monkchester	33	33	59	86	32	53	65
Walker	34	38	62	84	43	64	78
NEWCASTLE	14	18	34	61	42	52	76
Hamp	26	16	30	55	57	69	83
Sydenham	20	22	45	71	40	68	88
Victoria	17	19	38	64	61	70	84
SOMERSET	16	12	23	46	57	70	81
Chaucer	9	13	31	54	36	39	65
East Walworth	14	17	34	66	38	50	69
Newington	17	16	31	62	40	52	73
SOUTHWARK	14	13	28	52	38	52	74
Hotham	8	16	26	58	56	61	67
Marine	11	8	24	47	47	68	78
Pevensy	15	19	28	57	53	66	76
WEST SUSSEX	14	10	19	44	59	71	80
ENGLAND	16	14	26	52	50	66	79

Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

In the Birmingham, East Staffordshire and West Sussex wards those women with no qualifications and those women with 'lower' qualifications (equivalent to 'A' level and below) were less likely to be in employment than in the districts/counties in which they were located. Women in the West Sussex and Somerset wards without qualifications were more likely to be in employment than nationally, but the opposite was true for the four other areas. For those without qualifications, employment rates in Birmingham, Newcastle and Southwark were particularly low.

In 5 of the 6 localities, those women with higher qualifications (a university degree or above) were less likely than similar women nationally to be in employment. The exception was the Bridgwater wards in Somerset, where highly qualified women were more likely to be in employment than in the county or nationally.

Employment patterns

Economic activity rates were generally lower than at district or county level. However, the picture is more complex than first appears, with some areas, such as Ladywood ward in Birmingham and Newcastle's Byker and Monkchester wards, having less full-time employment and fewer women looking after their home and family full-time (Table 5).

Table 5 Economic Activity Indicators in the selected wards

Locality	In the selected wards the following were LOWER than at the district/county level	In the selected wards the following were HIGHER than at the district/county level
Birmingham Wards	<input type="checkbox"/> Full-time employment <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time employment <input type="checkbox"/> Looking after home and family FT (Ladywood)	<input type="checkbox"/> Looking after home and family FT (Soho) <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment <input type="checkbox"/> Non-employed students (Ladywood) <input type="checkbox"/> Sick / Disabled (Soho)
East Staffs Wards	<input type="checkbox"/> Full-time employment <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time employment	<input type="checkbox"/> Looking after home and family FT <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment <input type="checkbox"/> Non-employed students (Anglesey) <input type="checkbox"/> Sick / Disabled (Eton Park)
Newcastle Wards	<input type="checkbox"/> Full-time employment (Byker and Monkchester) <input type="checkbox"/> Looking after home and family FT (Byker and Monkchester) <input type="checkbox"/> Non-employed students	<input type="checkbox"/> Full-time employment (Walker) <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time employment <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment <input type="checkbox"/> Sick / Disabled
Somerset Wards	<input type="checkbox"/> Full-time employment <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time employment (Hamp & Victoria)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part-time employment (Sydenham) <input type="checkbox"/> Looking after home and family FT <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment <input type="checkbox"/> Sick / Disabled
Southwark Wards	<input type="checkbox"/> Full-time employment (E. Walworth and Chaucer) <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time employment (Chaucer) <input type="checkbox"/> Looking after home and family FT (Chaucer)	<input type="checkbox"/> Economically active students <input type="checkbox"/> Non-employed students <input type="checkbox"/> Looking after home and family FT (E. Walworth and Newington) <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment (Newington) <input type="checkbox"/> Non-employed students (Chaucer) <input type="checkbox"/> Sick / Disabled (Newington & E. Walworth)
West Sussex Wards	<input type="checkbox"/> Full-time employment (Pevensey) <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time employment <input type="checkbox"/> Looking after home and family (Hotham and Marine)	<input type="checkbox"/> Full-time employment (Hotham and Marine) <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment (Hotham and Marine) <input type="checkbox"/> Non-employed students <input type="checkbox"/> Sick / Disabled

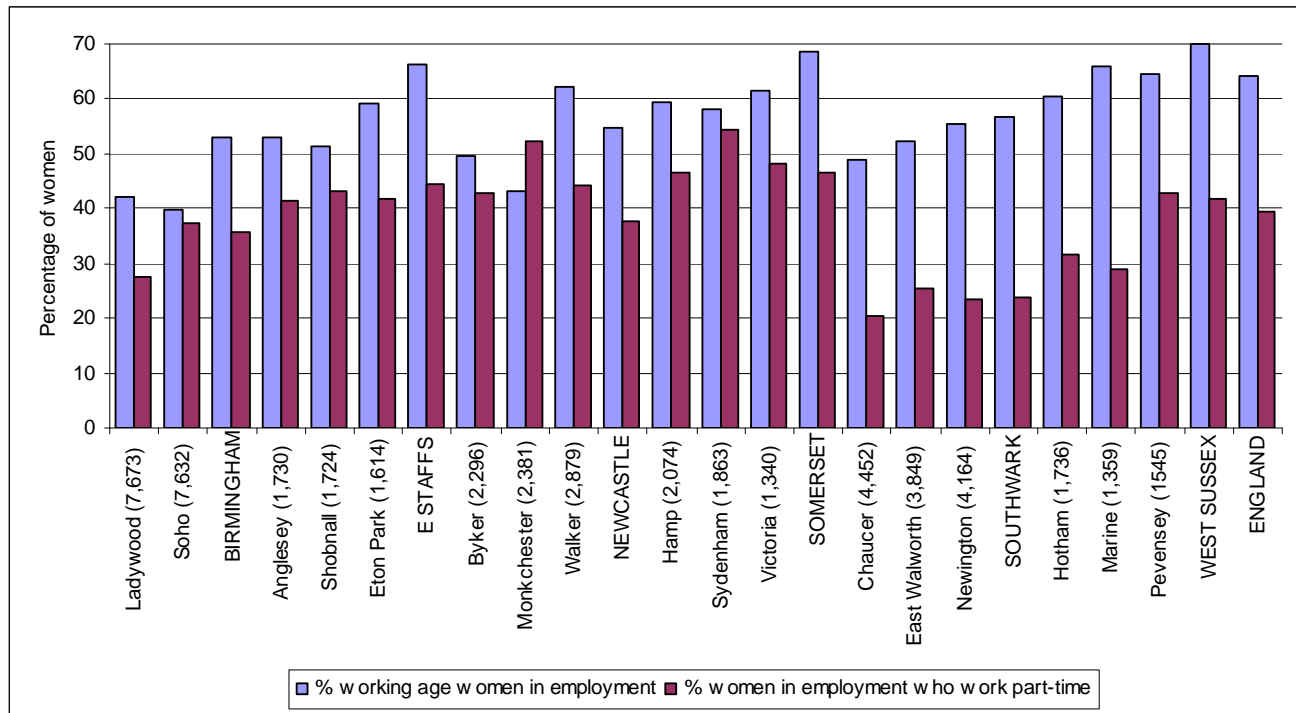
Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Full-time employment rates among women living in the selected wards in North West Birmingham, East Staffordshire, East Newcastle and Somerset were well below the national average. The lowest rates were found in Soho ward (24%) in Birmingham (where the ethnic minority population represents 80% of the population) and in the Monkchester ward in Newcastle (20%), which is a largely White British community. Both areas had experienced particularly dramatic losses of heavy industries and manufacturing employment over the past two decades. Our qualitative research also highlighted that these areas had suffered from a lack of significant public or private investment over that period. By contrast, full-time

employment rates for women living in disadvantaged wards in one Southwark ward and two West Sussex wards equalled or exceeded the national rate.

Part-time employment among women living in the selected wards was much more variable than the full-time working patterns. Part-time work for women in the three Somerset wards, in Walker ward (Newcastle) and in Pevensey ward (West Sussex) was more common than it is nationally. But for all other wards there were lower part-time work rates than nationally and, in most cases, than in the district. Figure 7 shows the proportion of women working part-time as a percentage of all women in employment. The picture here reveals a clear geographical divide between areas, with by far the lowest proportions of part-time working in Birmingham, Southwark and West Sussex.

Figure 7 Women in employment and part-time work



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

The proportion of women looking after their home and family full-time was highest in the East Staffordshire wards in central Burton on Trent and in the Bridgwater wards in Somerset. High rates were also found in Soho ward in Birmingham and in Monkchester ward in Newcastle, also areas with low rates of part-time working.

The low level of paid work among women in these areas can be attributed to a number of causes discussed in section 6, including:

- Lack of suitable full-time and part-time employment opportunities.
- Lack of relevant qualifications and recent work experience.
- Limited access to higher paid part-time work.
- Lack of care services.
- Affordability of childcare.
- Lack of flexible hours.

The differences between the areas are most likely to arise from a combination of factors, which are explored in greater detail in our companion study of part-time employment (Grant et al 2006a).

As at national, regional and district level, there is a gendered pattern in men's and women's jobs (Tables 6 and 7). Women living in the selected wards were more likely to work in low skilled occupations than at district, county or national level. In the majority of the wards selected for the study (apart from the

Southwark wards, Ladywood in Birmingham and Marine in West Sussex) women were less likely to be in skilled professional or managerial occupations. A similar proportion of women worked in administrative and secretarial positions in the six localities as nationally. Employment in sales and customer service jobs was higher than the national average in East Staffordshire, Newcastle, Somerset and West Sussex wards but lower in Birmingham and Southwark, reflecting the district level.

Table 6 Occupations for women of working age in employment

	Managers & senior officials	Professional	Associate professional & technical	Admin./secretarial	Skilled Trades	Personal Service	Sales & Customer Service	Process, Plant & Machine Operatives	Elementary occupations
Ladywood	9	13	16	19	2	12	9	5	16
Soho	6	7	12	19	3	16	10	9	19
BIRMINGHAM	9	11	14	24	2	13	11	4	13
Anglesey	8	4	9	17	3	15	17	7	21
Eton Park	9	5	12	17	1	15	14	6	20
Shobnall	8	6	8	17	3	14	14	7	23
EAST STAFFS	11	8	13	21	3	13	12	4	16
Byker	7	6	9	21	2	14	15	3	24
Monkchester	4	3	7	18	3	16	18	2	29
Walker	7	3	6	17	2	18	18	2	28
NEWCASTLE	9	13	14	20	2	12	14	2	15
Hamp	8	3	10	19	2	17	16	6	19
Sydenham	6	3	6	16	1	15	20	9	24
Victoria	8	4	10	21	3	16	15	5	19
SOMERSET	11	9	13	20	4	15	13	3	13
Chaucer	11	12	23	20	3	12	7	1	12
East Walworth	13	9	16	22	3	14	8	2	13
Newington	11	12	18	23	2	12	9	1	12
SOUTHWARK	13	14	20	21	2	11	8	1	9
Hotham	8	5	12	15	2	20	15	3	19
Marine	14	9	16	20	2	14	12	2	11
Pevensy	10	7	11	20	3	20	14	3	13
WEST SUSSEX	12	9	14	15	2	15	12	2	10
ENGLAND	11	10	14	23	2	13	12	3	12

Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Women from ethnic minority groups in Birmingham, Southwark and East Staffordshire tended to be more concentrated in elementary and process, plant and operative occupations than White British women.

Local women are also quite strongly concentrated in certain employment sectors. The Birmingham, East Staffordshire and Somerset wards all had a relatively high proportion of women in manufacturing, reflecting higher manufacturing employment in the locality. Almost a third of women in the East Staffordshire, Newcastle, Somerset and West Sussex wards were employed in the wholesale, retail and hotels sector, well above the national rate (24%). Employment in education in East Staffordshire, Newcastle, Somerset wards was lower than the national rate (12%). Employment in health and social work was important for women in the wards under study, and in all cases equal to, or higher than, the national rate (19%). The concentrations by gender and ethnicity are even more stark. As nationally, Black Caribbean women were far more likely than any other group to be employed in health and social work. Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian women are more likely to work in the wholesale and retail sectors.³⁰

³⁰ For a detailed examination of ethnic minority employment for women in selected localities see Yeandle et al (2006).

Table 7 Industrial distribution for women of working age in employment

	Agriculture; fishing etc	Energy and water	Manufacture	Construction	Wholesale, Retail, Restaurants, Hotels	Transport; Storage and Communication	Finance, real estate etc	Public Administration & Defence; Social Security	Education	Health and Social Work	Other
Ladywood	0	0	9	1	22	4	20	5	12	21	6
Soho	0	1	14	1	20	3	15	6	13	24	4
BIRMINGHAM	0	1	9	1	21	4	18	5	15	21	5
Anglesey	0	0	15	2	31	6	10	3	9	18	6
Eton Park	1	0	15	1	31	5	10	2	9	21	5
Shobnall	0	0	14	1	29	2	12	5	9	20	7
EAST STAFFS	1	0	13	2	25	4	12	4	13	20	6
Byker	0	0	7	1	28	4	17	9	8	20	6
Monkchester	0	0	5	1	30	4	15	6	7	23	8
Walker	0	1	4	1	29	3	14	8	8	24	9
NEWCASTLE	0	1	5	1	23	4	15	8	13	24	6
Hamp	1	0	10	1	32	3	12	7	9	20	6
Sydenham	1	1	14	1	32	5	13	4	8	16	5
Victoria	1	1	11	1	29	3	13	6	8	20	8
SOMERSET	2	0	10	2	26	3	12	6	13	21	6
Chaucer	0	0	5	1	18	4	26	6	9	22	10
East Walworth	0	0	5	0	24	5	22	7	10	19	8
Newington	1	0	3	0	20	6	23	8	12	18	9
SOUTHWARK	0	0	5	1	17	4	26	7	11	19	9
Hotham	1	0	8	1	35	7	9	5	8	19	7
Marine	1	0	7	2	27	6	14	4	10	23	7
Pevensey	1	0	7	0	26	4	13	5	9	28	7
WEST SUSSEX	1	1	7	2	22	8	19	5	11	19	6
ENGLAND	1	1	9	1	24	4	18	6	12	19	6

Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Views of the labour market

In our qualitative research women felt that the majority of employment opportunities open to them were in female dominated services. Public sector employment remained an important employer across all areas, with many women working in health, education and social care. The growth of private service employment (for example, cleaning, catering, call centre and retail employment) and low skilled jobs (for example, packaging and warehousing jobs) had limited benefits for local women.

There is an absolute mass of cleaning jobs and a lot of administrative opportunities, but many are poor quality jobs. (Interview, East Staffordshire)

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

There are some very poor jobs, such as packaging and lots of cleaning jobs with anti-social hours. People work in double shifts at both ends of the day, sometimes 60 hours a week, to make ends meet. (Interview, Somerset)

Wages and conditions were considered poor, often offering only the minimum wage. Qualification requirements were often high for the type of employment on offer.

The quality of what is on offer to local people is very poor, and we have been trying to attract higher quality employment. (Interview, Newcastle)

Some contractors treat their staff very badly and people on low wages often don't know their rights. (Interview, Southwark)

All groups felt that there were few permanent jobs, and limited opportunities for high quality, part-time jobs. In their view, local companies did not encourage family friendly policies, such as job sharing and term-time only working (see section 6).

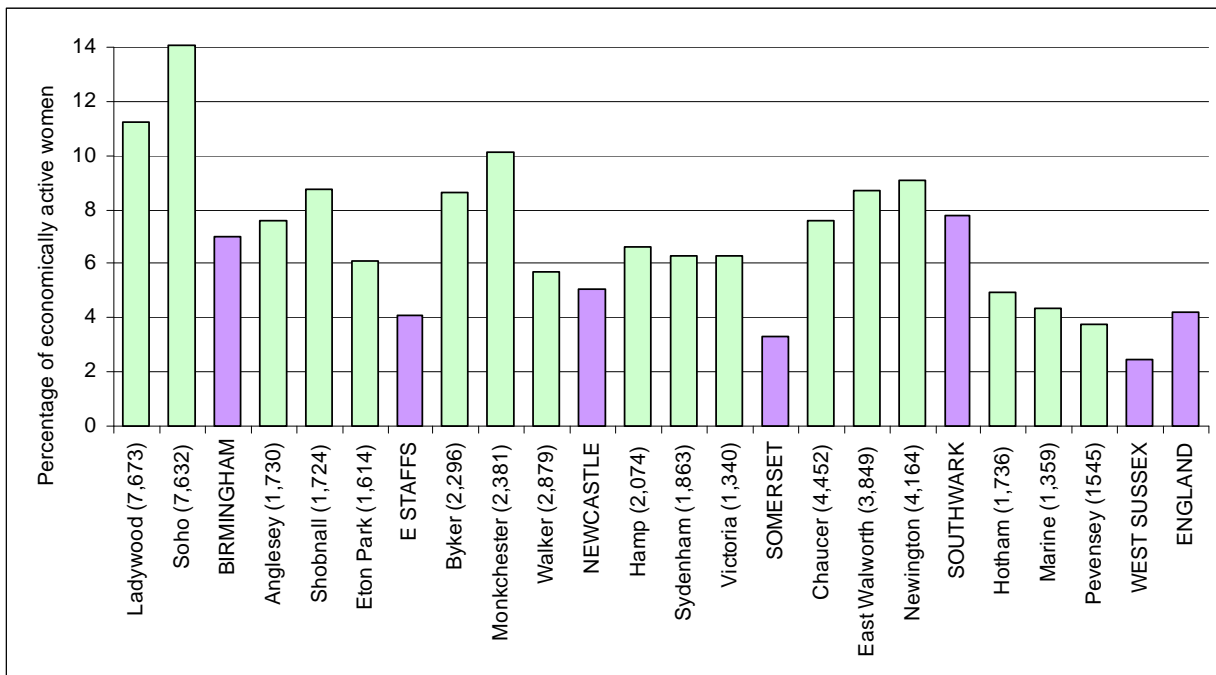
There's nothing permanent anywhere. If you're working for a lot of these firms the conditions are terrible, and the wages are terrible, and who can afford to put in for a pension? (Focus Group Participant, Newcastle)

You have very little what I call real jobs in the area. (Focus Group Participant, Newcastle)

Women outside employment

Local unemployment rates were considerably higher for women in the selected wards than in the districts in which they were located and nationally (Figure 8).

Figure 8 Women who were unemployed as a proportion of those who are economically active



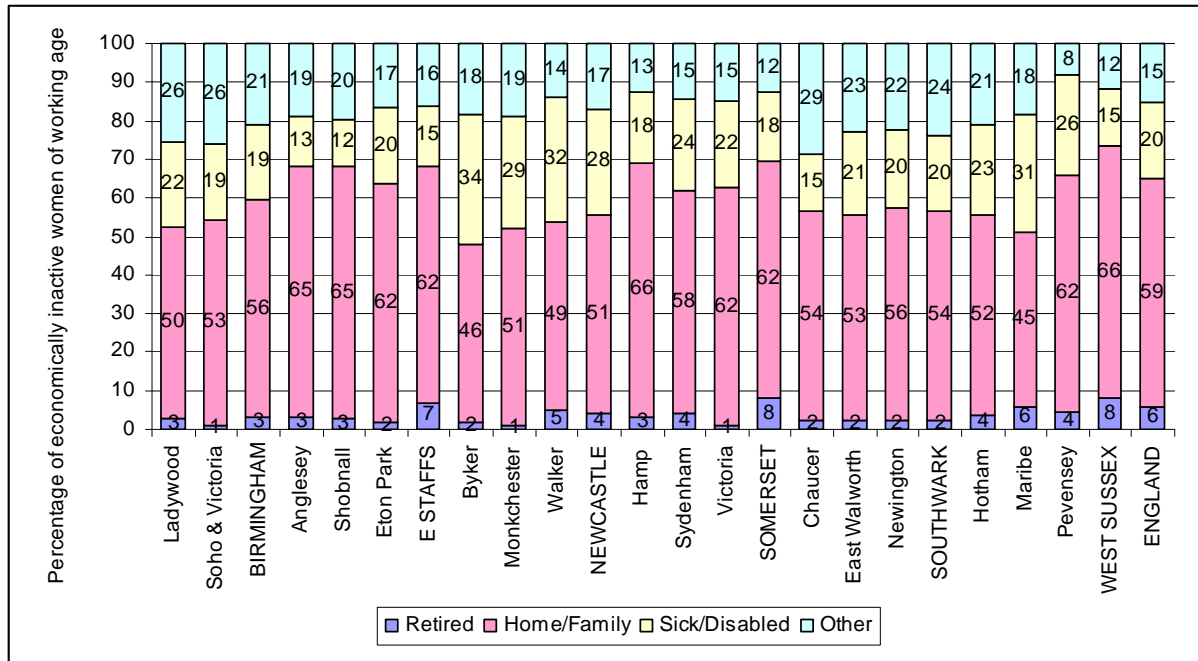
Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Between 1991 and 2001, economic inactivity among women decreased across the country, although it remains higher for women than for men. Against this trend, economic inactivity for women across the majority of wards in this study increased³¹, in some cases quite sharply (Appendix 3).

Unemployment and economic inactivity rates were particularly high among women from ethnic minority groups living in the study areas. In the Locality Reports we show, for example, that in Birmingham unemployment rates among Pakistani women (31% in Ladywood and 27% in Soho) were higher than for Pakistani men, and double the national rate for women in this group. High rates of unemployment were also found among Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi women in Birmingham and among Pakistani women in East Staffordshire and Black African women in Southwark wards. Whilst unemployment rates for White British women were higher than the national rate in the selected wards, women from ethnic minority groups who were actively seeking work and described themselves as unemployed was far higher across all minority groups in the selected wards.

³¹ The East Staffordshire and Southwark data are not available at ward level due to changes in ward boundaries between the 1991 and 2001 Censuses

Figure 9 Economic inactivity by reason for women of working age (excluding students)



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

The explanations for these high economic inactivity rates are different in the six localities. There are very high student populations in the Ladywood ward in Birmingham and in the Chaucer ward in Southwark, but when students are removed from the data (Figure 9), it is clear that sickness and disability were particularly important underlying causes of economic inactivity in the Newcastle and the wards in Somerset and West Sussex. Looking after home and family was a particularly important feature in East Staffordshire which has a significant Pakistani community and in the largely White British wards in Somerset. There were fewer retired women in the selected wards in East Staffordshire, Somerset and West Sussex than at district or county level. Around a quarter of economically inactive women in the Birmingham and Southwark wards gave other reasons for economic inactivity. The qualitative research indicates high levels of a desire to work amongst this group. This is explored further in another of the GELLM studies (Grant et al, 2006b).

Compared with the district and national picture, a high proportion of unemployed or economically inactive women in the wards had last worked in elementary jobs or as process, plant and machine operatives (Appendix 3). Women who had become unemployed who were economically inactive tended to have previously worked in manufacturing industry or in the health and social work sectors.

Transport and travel to work

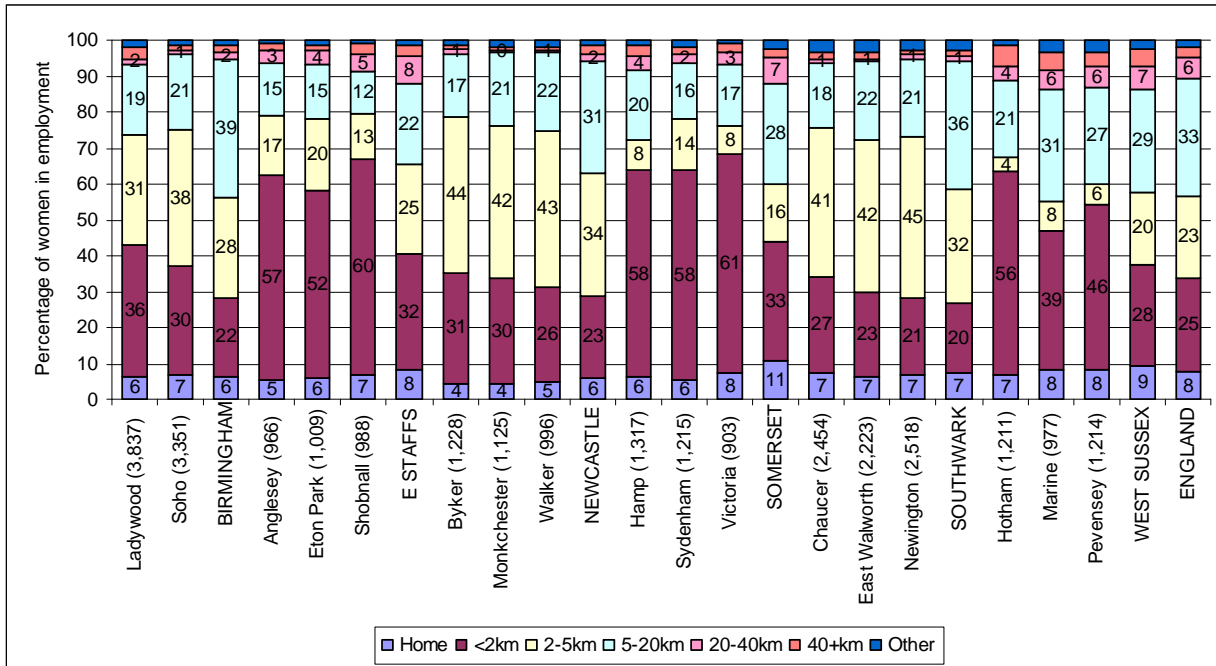
Across the six localities, residents lived and worked in close proximity, and this was particularly true for women. In the East Staffordshire, Somerset and West Sussex wards, over half of women worked within 2km of their homes, almost double the national figure (Figure 10). These were also areas where focus group participants highlighted the limitations of the public transport service. Associated with this, a high proportion of women in these neighbourhoods walked to work (Appendix 3). Fewer women than men travelled to work by car or van. Bus, train and metro use was also higher among women than the national rate, reflecting in part very low car ownership amongst women living in these areas.

Proximity to work is an important factor in considering employment for participants in the focus groups. As well as travelling time, which was a particular consideration for women with care responsibilities, transport choices for women in the locality depend on wages, time, car ownership and public transport. Inadequate public transport and distance from schools hindered efforts to seek employment out of the immediate locality.

Physical barriers can create mental barriers in looking for employment. (Interview, East Staffordshire)

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

Figure 10 Distance travelled to work by women of working age



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Transport links in the city areas of Birmingham and Southwark were regarded as good, in that the buses were regular and relatively cheap, but in Newcastle's Walker ward and in Burton on Trent's town centre wards, public transport was felt to be quite difficult. The expense and time needed to travel by public transport outside the neighbourhood were also particularly important barriers for women living in Bognor Regis, West Sussex and Bridgwater, Somerset. Few considered travelling to other centres for work.

A lot of women don't have their own transport. There is low car ownership. (Interview, West Sussex)

After 6 o'clock there are no buses. So if you don't finish work until 5 o'clock, you've got to rush, rush, rush to get wherever you're going to. Sundays and Bank Holidays, God forbid you need a bus, two or three hours' wait. (Interview, Somerset)

Summary – in the wards studied, women were

- Less likely to be in full-time employment; the exceptions were Walker in Newcastle and in Hotham and Marine in West Sussex
- Less likely to be in part-time employment in the Birmingham, East Staffordshire, Southwark and West Sussex wards.
- When lone parents, less likely to be in paid employment in areas where job growth was less strong
- More likely to work in unskilled and semi-skilled and less likely to be in professional or managerial jobs.
- If they had caring responsibilities, less likely to work either full-time or part-time.
- More likely to be unemployed.
- More likely to be economically inactive.
- Much more likely to work closer to home.
- A high proportion of women of working age living in the neighbourhoods had no educational qualifications.
- Fewer women with and without qualifications in the areas were in paid employment.

6 Labour market engagement in deprived areas

The research revealed a fairly consistent picture of the constraints affecting women's access to employment in the six localities. The qualitative interviews and focus groups included discussion of a number of problems, including aspects of the tax and benefits system, which can only be resolved at national level. Fears about loss of benefits and lack of information about tax credits have also been highlighted by the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit (2005). Other problems related to aspects of the economic, social and physical infrastructure of the study localities which can be influenced by regional and local agencies (as well as by central government). The issues raised in our qualitative research can be divided into, first, those relevant to **demand for labour** and the role of employers and, secondly, **labour supply** as experienced by women living in the six localities. The key messages were repeated by women in the focus groups, almost half of whom were, at the time of the study, employed in low paid work. Their views of local services and regeneration initiatives, and those of agencies working in the localities, are also reported in the following section of the report.

Demand for higher quality and flexible jobs

Skills shortages were reported in all the six localities, but women in the focus groups did not feel that there were many suitable job opportunities in their area. Public and private investment had attracted employers, but many women and local agencies were frustrated by the emphasis on **low quality** and **entry level** employment. Even where the local labour market was very buoyant, **pay levels** were generally regarded as low in the growth sectors. Jobs, often filled through agencies, were frequently part-time and temporary.

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

I think they need to attract more higher paid and higher skilled jobs to the area, because there are lots of jobs at £5 an hour or at the national minimum wage - but try living on that. (Interview, East Staffordshire)

You can't dismiss the large numbers of jobs in sectors like care and tourism. What we don't have is people working in higher quality jobs in those sectors. (Interview, West Sussex)

Some local employers had introduced schemes to raise skills levels and to attract more women into employment by changing shift patterns, but few examples emerged from the interviews and focus groups.

The irony of **public sector and statutory agencies** unable to fill vacancies in an area of high unemployment was highlighted by several stakeholders. Women regarded education, health and care as important potential employers, but they felt that the employment and recruitment practices of public service agencies and providers often did not reflect the local community or utilise their experience or skills.

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

Some participants felt that **job advertisements** for many vacancies were complex, involving unnecessarily technical language, and often stating that the job required higher qualifications and training than was in practice necessary. For some women, job searches resulted in frustration:

The headings and the jobs they come up with are not the same. (Focus Group Participant, Southwark)

The jobs are not really suitable for us. It's mainly cooks and cleaners. (Focus Group Participant, Southwark)

The requirement to have **formal qualifications** posed a challenge for some. This could affect the types of jobs local residents considered applying for. Even where they did have qualifications, it did not necessarily lead to employment:

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

I've done so many courses, I've got loads of certificates at home, but the opportunity of getting a job isn't available. There aren't any jobs around. (Focus Group Participant, Southwark)

Qualified residents in the poorer wards often find it difficult. This could be caused by high levels of instability and the focus on entry level jobs. (Interview, Southwark)

Women in our focus groups complained that employers were generally not flexible in relation to hours of work, training, childcare and school holidays.

I think one of the biggest problems for women is the business sector. They have not recognised that when women are employed they have to be flexible. I don't think they realise what it really means. (Interview, Southwark)

One of the main barriers for women with children is the lack of management accepting flexible working, (Interview, West Sussex)

Few of the women involved in the study had any experience of work-life balance policies or career development opportunities.

They should encourage us more. They say you can work from home, but when you get there the opportunity is not there. (Focus Group Participant, Southwark)

You can provide all the services, the information, and help with childcare, but if they walk into the company and they are given a low position and are unable to move up, then they are not really helped. (Interview, Southwark)

Labour supply issues

Alongside this weak demand for employees wanting to work flexibly or part-time in the six localities, supply issues from the perspective of the women in the focus groups also caused problems, the primary concerns being financial.³² A **benefits trap** was highlighted as a major concern by local women and organisations. To move from benefits to paid employment was a difficult challenge, involving support in looking at options. Recent initiatives had helped some women but fundamental problems remained for many.

My husband earns just over the minimum wage, there's four of us on his wages, basically. I wouldn't be able to live if it wasn't for the credits. (Focus Group Participant, West Sussex)

The government initiatives and incentives are coming into this area using tax credits and help through childcare. Women are saying, 'I'm not going to stay on benefit for the rest of my life - I will use this period on income support to get training without loss of benefit'. (Interview, East Staffordshire)

It has to be worth it, but it's amazing that people do put in an enormous amount of effort and experience stress for £20 a week. People do have the work ethic and they do want to work and they know that they will be better off, not just financially. (Interview, Southwark)

Many of the focus group participants who were not in paid work felt they would notice little change in household income if they were in paid employment.

I hate benefits, it's a stigma. I'd like to move off, but what can you do? (Focus Group Participant, Somerset)

No-one wants to stay on benefits. I am looking to get out of it, but there is a benefits trap, especially in this area, where rents are so high. (Focus Group Participant, Southwark)

As long as the benefits trap exists and there isn't a clear way out for people, it is very hard, because the wages are so low in the area. (Focus Group Participant, West Sussex)

As a result of the low pay economy many women described, they felt reliant on benefits and were particularly cautious about losing benefits through taking up employment. Focus group participants argued that the benefits system needs to take into consideration the short-term, transitory nature of employment, as the length of time needed to apply for benefits can leave women short of income. Respondents suggested that some of the regulations regarding Working Tax Credits should be relaxed. The 16 hour

³² 9 out of 10 of the focus group participants lived with their family, and included some lone parents.

threshold³³, combined with childcare responsibilities, gave little incentive to seek employment. Women felt the system was over-complicated and that information and advice need to be clearer.

I think one of the major problems is fear of coming off benefits. What they don't realise is that with Tax Credits and Child Tax Credits, they can be better off by going back to work. (Interview, East Staffordshire)

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

Women participating in the focus groups felt constrained by their lack of **recent work experience** and **qualifications**. Some felt that a narrow view of skills meant that many women without qualifications or relatively recent experience would never find employment. Previous work experience may not be useful, as it can be dated and is not entirely relevant.

You've got to be skilled, you've got to have lots of qualifications. You can't get experience until you get qualifications. It's a vicious circle. (Focus Group Participant, Newcastle)

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

There are a lot of opportunities on paper to get a teaching qualification, but in practice I hit brick wall after brick wall. (Focus Group Participant, West Sussex)

Some ethnic minority women were constrained by lack of spoken English. Longer term training provision which linked ESOL³⁴, qualifications and work experience, rather than one-off services, was recommended.

Focus group participants felt that **childcare** was a major concern in gaining paid employment. Interviewees stated that whilst there had been improvements for pre-school children, a number of problems remained. The **cost of childcare** was prohibitively expensive for those in low paid and part-time occupations.

Women are very keen to work, but they need to be able to earn a decent wage without being crippled by childcare – it has to be affordable to help most women out of poverty. (Interview, Southwark)

Affordable childcare is limited. What is affordable? These women think £2.50 an hour is not affordable if you're on a wage of £4.50 an hour. You can claim it back through tax credits, but it is very difficult if you are a single parent and you've got several mouths to feed. (Interview, Somerset)

More **flexible childcare** was needed, which took into account part-time hours, shift work requirements and school days. Childcare provision was patchy for **school age children**. School holiday periods posed a major problem for women in paid employment in all six localities.

The lack of breakfast clubs and after-school facilities limits not just children's education, but prevents further work on raising self esteem and expectation for parents. (Interview, West Sussex)

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

Sure Start and the work of Family Centres were important as there were now more opportunities for women with children, who wished to be involved in education and training activities offered by the centres.

Sure Start is very good – running many good activities in the area. (Focus Group Participant, Southwark)

If you had kids and you're not up with the times, there's nothing to really help you get back into work or anything like that. I got my job because I do volunteering for Sure Start. (Focus Group Participant, Newcastle)

³³ Entitlement to Working Tax Credit is only available for those working at least 16 hours a week.

³⁴ English for Speakers of Other Languages courses and training

Local services and support

In the interviews and focus groups in the six localities we discussed the types of services available to economically disadvantaged women. Locally based provision which assisted residents on a broad range of service needs, was a common theme in the discussions. It was felt that services which were located in residential areas and close to schools and other services were much more likely to be successful for women who had not been in paid work for a long period. Staff from local agencies considered that initial work with benefits recipients, engaging women who are not economically active in skills and training initiatives required detailed, sometimes one-to-one, support.

Standard services just don't help them, because if someone has complex needs and is severely depressed, they don't want to talk to several agencies about the detail. (Interview, Newcastle)

They may have to work through multiple layers of services, and they need personal advice on a range of problems (Interview, Somerset)

This approach required intensive resources and staff based in community venues with local understanding and detailed knowledge of the types of support available from a range of agencies. Some focus group participants felt that there should be a **careers advice** service for women who already had work experience or had taken a break from paid employment.

The women identified lack of support for ethnic minority groups in their community, some of whom were well qualified and had considerable work experience which was often under utilised. Some ethnic minority women had low levels of spoken English speaking which was an important barrier to training and employment. Further ESOL classes, linked to employment advice and targeted at families living in the study areas, were suggested.

Community based education and training

Many training schemes had been promoted, but interviewees often questioned their success in assisting women into work. Whilst local education provision was a valued service, interviewees felt that there should be better integration of training initiatives.

Better education, better skilled and better qualified young people at all levels to assist in building stronger communities. (Interview, West Sussex)

There are bits and pieces all over the place. Once women get confidence from community level provision there needs to be some assistance in making the transition from informal to formal training. (Interview, Newcastle)

The physical (and psychological) distance of Further Education Colleges in some of the localities led many to argue for mainstream provision to be located in the wards under study. College provision was distinguished from community education and local learning centres which provided a different type of service to local residents. Women in several areas suggested courses designed to assist in interview techniques and writing applications.

Confidence building. Because when you apply for the job and get the application, it's really nerve-wracking. Sometimes it's just the way things are worded, the phrases that people use. (Focus Group Participant, Newcastle)

Outreach services through the CAB and other providers were also highlighted as important methods for supporting women in the community. Funding of non-accredited courses and adequate resources for tutors who develop close links with the local community was highlighted in the context of longer term support for local women. A community education project in Newcastle, for example, is now offering NVQ 3 training for early year crèche workers and classroom assistants.

Young women are coming back to do these courses. They don't see themselves as having the skills at first, but it is a clear route into work. (Interview, Newcastle)

It was noted that whilst younger women with children were involved in learning opportunities through Sure Start and the Family Centres, it was harder to engage women in their 40s and 50s who did not have a particular focus for involvement.

Regeneration project managers highlighted the gap in educational attainment between the localities and the rest of the districts/counties. Proposals to locate college centres in East Newcastle and Bognor Regis were widely supported. The key challenge will be to engage local residents, particularly young people, into further and higher education. A bursary scheme aimed at supporting those who had left school with few or no qualifications was suggested, recognising that the financial barriers need to be addressed in this context.

Employment advice

Our focus group discussions revealed that many women (and others in their households) are confused about employment options and the benefits system, worsened by poor quality and inaccurate advice from some mainstream service providers. The limitations of traditional approaches and projects, which dealt only with younger women or only part of the pre-recruitment advice were highlighted. Fragmented services which involved Job Centres, advice centres, training agencies and colleges could be confusing for local service users. Focus group participants were generally aware of the advisory services through Job Centres and Connexions, but they did not always find these services relevant or appropriate to their needs. Advisors and support workers suggested that the complex needs of women in the six localities required sustained, integrated support services which operated more effectively in the area.

Women need more help and understanding than the Job Centre can give. Trust and respect take a long time to build up. (Focus Group Participant, Southwark)

Job Centres should open women's ideas to more options. I had three children in three years and felt useless. I love my kids, but I wanted to do more. (Focus Group Participant, Southwark)

You give people milestones, two or three things to do in a fortnight, pool ideas and decide on next steps. (Interview, Newcastle)

Concerns were expressed by local organisations that positive initiatives to support those wishing to enter the labour market were limited by insufficient financial and staff investment. The Job Centre outreach services to women, through Family Centres, were a recent development highly appropriate to local needs.

The Job Centre, they come here and if you're a single parent they discuss what options you've got going back to work and things like that. (Focus Group Participant, West Sussex)

One-stop shops would help – services in a centre with workshops and a crèche where people can say what they need. (Focus Group Participant, Southwark)

Instead of people - who don't necessarily have the means to traipse from one agency to the next coming to these locations - the agencies traipse to them, which is a much more effective model. (Interview, East Staffordshire)

Local views of regeneration and labour market initiatives

In most of the districts, focus group participants had played an important role in improving the local community. Voluntary work was common amongst those focus group participants who had a strong history of community involvement. Volunteering had in some cases led to paid employment.

It attracted me because it was working in the area where I grew up, and you feel passionate about your area, don't you? And you want to make things better not for yourself, but for your kids who grow up here. (Focus Group Participant, Newcastle)

Many respondents were concerned that problems of poverty and economic exclusion continued, despite substantial investment. Stakeholders reported limited targeting of women through the regeneration funds in the area, and felt that this could, in part, explain some of the persistent problems.

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

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

Future initiatives are likely to focus on a number of major investments, for example East Newcastle's housing redevelopment and in Southwark the Elephant and Castle regeneration programme. It is predicted that if successful, there will be skills shortages in many areas in construction related jobs. Longer term skills training for local residents is being planned through college-based centres in Newcastle's East End and in Bognor Regis (West Sussex), which aim to prepare local residents for employment. However, there was little consideration of opening up specific opportunities for young women to enter non-traditional and higher quality employment.

The proposed redevelopments in East Newcastle and in Southwark's Elephant and Castle bring with them potential employment opportunities in the locality, but interviewees were not convinced that the link to labour market benefits had been identified and planned for.

Physical improvements alone won't work. There has to be a social and economic dynamic. You can build as many new houses as you like, but if you don't work with the community, the opportunity will be lost. (Interview, Newcastle)

It could knock the spirit out of the place. Who will be living here? City people? The community could shrivel away. (Focus Group Participant, Southwark)

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

Future priorities for local organisations included addressing the economic agenda alongside tackling health problems and building a skills base, and many felt that this was a long term project. A strategic approach bringing together different public service providers was felt to be an important part of future initiatives. Education, health and care³⁵ were identified as sectors across all districts which will require staff over the coming years. Key local needs were identified in relation to Southwark's regeneration proposals:

I see a lot of poverty in the area and we need more investment in people rather than brick work – from babies upwards. People need to become better educated. (Focus Group Participant, Southwark)

We don't want flashy newsletters, we want solid information on jobs and training, better communication, and information points directing people on how to access employment. (Focus Group Participant, Southwark)

Aspirations and expectations

Women's attitudes to employment varied according to age and experience, but all focus group participants were either already in paid employment or hoping to enter paid work. Many women with children had high expectations for their families, but were themselves constrained by limited opportunities. For women living on a low income in a household where several members may be unemployed, aspirations could be low.

I don't think the area is expected to be aspirational. You get everyone talking about basic skills - skills needed for low paid, low quality jobs. It's all about getting them a job, and not about the type of job. (Interview, Birmingham)

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

I've never seen a mother who just wants to stay at home for the rest of her life. (Focus Group Participant, Southwark)

It's not that they lack aspiration as such, it's that they are scared about it. (Interview, Newcastle)

³⁵ The importance of recruiting new staff in social care is emphasised in another of *the Gender and Employment in Local Labour Market* reports (Yeandle et al 2006)

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

Young women were also influenced by limited opportunities.

Younger women don't see themselves as having any skills. They don't really know what aspiration is. They live day to day with nothing much to look forward to or think about. (Interview, Newcastle)

Young women see low paid jobs and little difference between pay and benefits. (Interview, Southwark)

The biggest problem is that many people in the area struggle with self esteem and low aspirations. Young people and children just think it's not really worth making the effort. (Interview, West Sussex)

Adult Education 'return to learn' approaches, where experience counts and individuals reflect on their life, were beneficial in assisting women.

You look at planning your journey through life, which builds confidence and helps women set goals. (Interview, Somerset)

Where there was **wider experience of paid work** among women in the focus groups, aspirations were higher.

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

They want to contribute, to be recognised, to play a part in society, to achieve like everyone else, to be part of teams and structures. (Interview, Southwark)

We need to encourage higher aspirations among women. Why do we always talk about teaching assistants when many of them could become teachers. (Interview, Southwark)

'Sustainable communities', which involved higher rates of women's participation in the local labour market were key concerns for organisations working in the six localities. Experience of previous initiatives led to the conclusion that local understanding was essential for future strategies supporting women into employment which was meaningful and valued by the wider community.

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

We need a localised strategy that focuses on local need. (Interview, Birmingham)

Summary

It is important to consider men's and women's experience of labour markets separately. Local women and local organisations identified important constraints affecting women's access to employment:

- Lack of suitable and well paid employment opportunities.
- Inflexible working practices among many employers.
- The tax and benefit system.
- Lack of relevant qualifications and recent work experience
- Breaks in employment.
- Lack of Spoken English for some ethnic minority women.
- The high cost of childcare. The availability of childcare, especially for school-aged children

- Practical services, staffed by experts with local knowledge and located in the community, bringing together employment services, financial advice, careers advice, family support and training were recommended.
- Women already in paid employment aspire to work in better quality jobs.
- Women outside the labour market would like to work but need more appropriate financial support, training and advice to support them into employment where they feel valued.

7 Innovative and effective practice

This part of the report highlights some of the broader approaches to regenerating deprived areas, arguing that a gender dimension needs to be included in future strategy and delivery in local areas. It also explores best practice in the six localities, and draws out some key success factors.³⁶ We highlight those initiatives which were helping women improve their employment position most directly, and some innovations which build on previous tried and tested approaches to training and support for women in local communities.

Area-based regeneration

The study shows that area-based initiatives which aim to improve skills levels and employment opportunities need to be re-orientated to the particular needs of in the six localities, if they are to be effective. Existing schemes had limited attraction for or impact on local women, particularly since many training projects are not linked to job opportunities. There are few incentives, through regeneration and labour market activity initiatives, for local employers to recruit local residents and to support them with their employment opportunities longer term, as part of regeneration schemes. The six localities each had a number of projects, funded through SRB and NRF programmes, which assisted in some aspects of labour market engagement, and women had clearly been beneficiaries of many education and learning projects.

We examined the equalities dimension of regeneration strategies through our stakeholder interviews and documentary analysis³⁷. This found that equalities and gender were often mentioned in relation to capacity building, with targets such as improving community safety and childcare, reducing teenage pregnancy and domestic violence. However, there were few policy developments, delivery plans or economic and employment targets which specifically addressed women's economic disadvantage in the labour market, beyond these limited concerns.

While policy aims and objectives were clearly geared to addressing neighbourhood problems, they were generally weak on the economic strategies required to tackle the unemployment, low pay and financial hardship faced by particular groups of women. The diversity of groups identified in this study includes women living in low incomes with their families, lone parents of all ages, young women with few qualifications, women who are in part-time and/or casual employment, and ethnic minority women who may be doubly disadvantaged.

Baseline data used in regeneration projects is starting to specifically identify some aspects of women's employment situation, and more advanced projects are assessing gender issues relating to wider labour market opportunities. The research did not find consistent use of specific targets to reduce economic inactivity among women. Evaluation approaches adopted for the regeneration initiatives currently investing in these areas take little account of the complex challenges facing women living in the locality. Specific initiatives which assist women by linking employment with education, raising qualifications, childcare and community support are highlighted below.

Linking workplace learning to community provision

Our stakeholder interviewees emphasised the importance of community provision, arguing that work with women at this level requires peers and mentors to work closely with diverse groups. This message was reinforced by local organisations, who felt that employment targets would not be met unless organisations provided long term mentoring support. This required funding and service delivery which was differently organised from many mainstream services. Local facilities were required for the management of regeneration schemes where women are supported into work by matching skills with vacancies over a long period.

³⁶ Further examples are included in the Locality Reports.

³⁷ The documents are listed in the Locality Reports.

East Newcastle

The Learning@Brinkburn project based at the old Byker Library had been set up using UK online services supported by TUC Learn Direct, as a drop-in centre for the community, as well as a resource for council staff living in the area. This model, supported by UNISON, is unusual in that it draws together funds which enable it to combine and promote work-based and community-based learning. Support is in the form of advice and guidance to council manual workers and access to free IT courses. Part-time women workers from sectors such as homecare have accessed these services, and support has been given to those staff progressing to NVQ qualifications. Staff explained that women have to fit their training round shifts, and are constrained by childcare commitments and a high dependence on public transport and walking. A feasibility study to build a crèche is under way to encourage more family learning and more women to participate in the centre.

North West Birmingham

The EDAS (Education, Development and Advisory Service) Foundation is based in Handsworth, Birmingham. Formed by local people, it describes itself as a grass roots organisation, supporting access, guidance and opportunity for local people to promote greater social mobility and living standards. It operates two Advice Bureaux, providing drop-in and outreach welfare rights, housing and financial advice and works closely with local schools on family learning projects. The EDAS centre whose client base is mainly ethnic minority women, also works closely with the community to attract women who may have limited qualifications. Some women participate in educational classes at EDAS several days a week. EDAS specifically helps local women obtain skills and the confidence to seek employment and training, whilst providing advice on home-life which is sensitive to their cultural backgrounds. EDAS has interpreters on site which can help bridge the language gap with progression to training in, for example, IT skills.

Arts projects in the selected wards in Newcastle and Southwark have successfully engaged women in the locality, particularly those who are very distant from the labour market. They uncover skills and abilities which have often been submerged through the formal education system. The work of adult and community education providers, including the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), has developed and worked with women on initiatives designed to build confidence and self-esteem, thereby opening up opportunities for further education and employment. The hallmark of much of this work is that it is located where women feel comfortable and that it is resourced to provide flexible and informal learning opportunities along with considerable tutorial support over a sustained period. The recent WEA Learning Champions³⁸ project has highlighted the importance of using local people to encourage broader learning amongst their peers.

Public sector employment opportunities

Higher quality employment supported by training and better pay was regarded by focus group participants and local organisations as essential to improving the economic status of residents living in the six localities. Employment in public sector agencies which better reflects the local community was promoted.

Local authorities and health and education providers could develop more employment outreach work to attract under-represented groups into jobs within their own organisation, and enhance their support for those in low paid posts to progress into higher paid work. Advice and guidance, and help in identifying the qualifications skills needed, is part of the support necessary for these groups. A broader role in promoting better work-life balance for employees working in public organisations, including support with care needs, and more flexible shift patterns, has been promoted at the community level by trade union and adult learning projects.

³⁸ WEA Learning Champions project is part of a national initiative supported by the Learning and Skills Council.

Work-life balance in care jobs

Several local authorities have promoted schemes aimed at achieving a better work-life balance for employees in care services where 24 hour care is required for service users (see also Yeandle et al 2006). Shift patterns allow parents to work either early or late shifts so that they can be involved in taking and /or collecting their children from school. Staff working weekends have several days off during the week. In some areas this has been negotiated with trade unions to tie in with re-grading and new qualification requirements. Managers agreed that further promotion among potential applicants of the benefits of such employment was necessary if the workforce in these services was to be enhanced. Workforce development activity across a number of services was being implemented supported by union learning representatives, with staff supported to gain additional skills and reach NVQ levels 2 and 3. Promoting such jobs at the community level, and providing progression routes to higher level jobs, was considered a crucial part of a longer term strategy to attract more staff into the service.

Employer-led changes

Focus group participants were keen to see more flexible, but supported, routes into work. Employer-led changes, including workplace crèches and child friendly hours, were also popular with local women. They favoured the extension of work experience schemes, and job opportunities where training and support was provided within the organisation. It was stressed in many areas that if local residents are to be skilled and ready for future employment opportunities, a strategic approach, building on the lessons of previous labour market initiatives, was required. Financial support for those who wish to raise their educational attainment and have longer-term employment aspirations will be a key factor in this approach.

Possible areas for employment initiatives included schemes with a more practical and vocational approach for younger women, attaching value to apprenticeships and to manual employment. Jobs were more felt to be more sustainable in the long term if training and support was provided by the employer.

Innovative approaches introduced by local employment projects and Job Centre Plus included preparing local residents for employment. There has been limited success in engaging employees with children and women who wished to gain higher level jobs, however. The focus groups and interviews with organisations identified the need to open up more options for women.

Linking labour supply and demand

The *Southwark Works!* approach is starting to link labour supply and demand in a number of workplaces, which go beyond the traditional routes for unemployed women. Advisers and their clients are supported by an employer liaison officer who talks to employers about their vacancies and then matches them to local people who are searching for jobs. Financial help for candidates such as a clothing allowance, travel costs and finding and paying for childcare is also provided. This recruitment service is designed to ensure that employers fill their jobs with candidates who have been matched to their specific needs. Once the person is in the job, an employer liaison officer and adviser offer ongoing support during the settling in period to both the employer and the employee. In some instances, a mentor may be available as well. The employer liaison officer and advisers also run quarterly networking events for employers to offer them expert advice on employment issues. Better understanding of employment needs and the skills required in particular sectors was starting to yield results for some of those who have been very distant from the labour market. Successful work with the Tate Modern (which now employs a third of its staff from Lambeth and Southwark) and local theatres on recruitment and job descriptions has been achieved. Further work with employers is planned, particularly in view of the new regeneration activity in the area.

Neighbourhood services

Family learning projects have also attracted mothers living in the six neighbourhoods, supporting them in overcoming their fears and anxieties about employment opportunities. Several stakeholders argued that this provision should be mainstreamed as a core service to ensure that these approaches are adequately funded.

Family Centres

Sure Start has developed a range of provision directed at families, which extend beyond childcare. Women on the Sydenham Estate in Bridgwater, Somerset felt that the Family Centre model allowed services to be more responsive to local needs. Participants are involved in educational activities while their children are cared for on the premises. The co-location of services policy provided more targeted work with those who have traditionally been socially excluded.

Coming through the door is the hardest thing. My confidence has improved 110%. (Focus Group Participant, Somerset)

Once I've established a relationship with them, I can help them with filling in forms, their benefits and then at a later date start advising them in progressing towards work. You need an element of trust which may span over two or three years. (Interview, Somerset)

They may have to work through multiple layers of services, and they need personal advice on a range of problems. (Interview, Somerset)

The work is very intense, but it's working with some very hard to reach people who wouldn't normally come for help. I am working on overcoming all the barriers which prevent them from moving forward. (Interview, Somerset)

Specialised and targeted provision in the community, linked to employment opportunities, was regarded as an essential pre-requisite for engaging women. Practical courses were needed, along with numeracy, literacy and confidence building, assisting women to highlight the value of their own experience and set longer term goals. Some had used voluntary work at the Family Centre as a stepping stone and confidence building opportunity.

Neighbourhood Centre

The Queens Street Centre in Burton-on-Trent has been redefined as a neighbourhood resource centre and, as part of recent investment, is planning more comprehensive adult community learning services which will involve the PCT and other mainstream providers in delivering courses and activities in the Centre. SureStart also operates an outreach service from the refurbished Centre. Focus group participants felt the venue was becoming a 'nerve centre' which has led to strong voluntary involvement and increased confidence among women. Initial attempts to establish plans for local community enterprises and project work had started with proposals for after-school care and home maintenance services. This has been developed in collaboration with parents at a local school, and was highlighted as particularly important for women who wanted services to be provided by women staff.

New sectors of employment for women

The opportunity for women to start businesses, identified in several localities, was an important but undervalued aspect which was needed to be supported by business development funding, childcare and assistance with skills in marketing and customer services. Self-employment was promoted in several localities as an attractive option for women, who may also wish to work from home, but was largely overlooked in area based schemes. In some areas plans for local community businesses and projects had been promoted through the Credit Union and Business Starter units. Project proposals aimed to meet local service needs by training and employing local people to provide those services. Some interviewees suggested that more strategic approaches were needed, such as broadening the work of the Credit Union and support for small business development.

West Sussex

A self-employment initiative aimed at long term unemployed people in Worthing attracted a high proportion of professional and semi-professional women who wished to return to employment or change careers. This led to the realisation that publicity and awareness-raising was a critical part of the approach. *Women in Business* strategies are being promoted through the Regional Economic Strategy, and interviewees were concerned to ensure that the most deprived wards would benefit from future initiatives.

8 Key policy messages

This section provides key policy messages and practical suggestions for local, regional and national agencies responsible for public service delivery and regeneration investment. Detailed recommendations are included in the six local reports³⁹. Many of the themes raised through the research are common to women in all areas. These include the lack of opportunities in the labour market, low quality employment and the financial risks associated with low paid work. Services providing support into employment were fragmented at the local level. Broader economic policies are starting to consider gender differences, but the distinctions between women and men at the local level remain largely unexplored in policy making. This study concludes that national solutions, supported by regional and local initiatives, are required to address women's poverty, and argues that there is a strong evidence base in the GELLM research underpinning this view.

Strategic approaches to address women's economic disadvantage

The relative economic position of women living in the six localities is generally poor. Low income was not confined to those who were unemployed or economically inactive in these localities, but was also associated with low paid employment and with the types of industries and occupations in which local women are employed. Between 1991 and 2001, women's economic inactivity rates increased, against the national trend, in most of these localities. Compared with women in the districts and in the counties, and in England as a whole, women in the selected wards felt economically isolated. Those without qualifications were the least likely to be in work, but even those with qualifications had lower employment rates.

Investment in economic and social regeneration programmes had limited success in addressing labour market disadvantage. Longer term, strategic approaches are required, which appreciate the distinctions between men and women, but also between women of different ages and ethnicities. Strategies encouraging more women to gain paid employment need to understand the nature and scale of women's non-participation and their 'distance' from labour market opportunities. These problems are also a key challenge for the economy. In coming decades, local employers will need to be able to access the experience and skills of women living in these areas, and to retain staff and fill job opportunities. Women in these neighbourhoods need more concentrated and specific support to improve their education and skills levels, and investment in services which enable them to access jobs and improve their employment potential.

Local labour market differences

There were some variations in access to improved labour market opportunities according to location, education level, age, and household composition. This analysis of six localities provides an opportunity to identify three sets of local labour market circumstances, each requiring somewhat different policy interventions.

First, **close proximity to major job growth** offers no guarantee that women's poverty will decline. This is relevant in areas such as the wards studied in Burton-on-Trent, East Staffordshire and Southwark in inner London. If the only accessible employment opportunities for women living in deprived areas are concentrated in low paying sectors and occupations, then the findings of this study show that concentrations of deprivation are likely to persist, even in areas where the local economy is strong and there is a diverse range of industrial sectors and occupations, with job opportunities at all levels.

Second, the study shows that there are particular labour market problems for women in more **rural and coastal localities** in the south of England. Some of this may be due to population increases outstripping local employment growth (Beatty and Fothergill, 2003). This study shows that there are structural economic weaknesses where many of the major employers are in sectors, including tourism, agriculture, and care, offering low paid and seasonal work. Many of the jobs in these sectors do not provide a sufficiently viable option for women living in the most deprived wards. In Somerset and West Sussex the loss of manufacturing jobs and the changing nature of public sector employment had adversely affected women

³⁹ Escott, K., Price, C and Buckner, L. (2006a-f)

living in the study areas. Housing costs are also high. Here women felt that economic isolation was made worse by a weak social infrastructure and poor support systems.

Thirdly, major cities which have experienced population and employment loss include large communities which have not recovered from **major, long-term job loss in local traditional industries**, including heavy industry and manufacturing (East Newcastle and in North West Birmingham). New jobs have been created in both cities, but many residents in these areas remain largely excluded from them. A local qualifications deficit is a major problem. The more significant challenge for these areas is to increase public and private investment with a clear strategy to improve local services and stimulate local employment rates.

The study shows that in all six localities demand for employment needs to be strengthened by promoting existing jobs in the area and by economic investment which targets employment for those excluded from qualifying for jobs in the open labour market. Services, including education, care and neighbourhood services are areas of potential employment for local women. More innovative approaches which explore new sectors of employment, such as IT and creative industries, and other anticipated growth sectors, need to be included in longer term employment initiatives.

Raising the quality of employment

This study shows that women's poverty is clearly linked to occupational segregation and the gender pay gap. Changes in employment policy are required to promote higher quality employment, which offers a 'living wage' for entry level jobs, flexible practices which are negotiated with employees, and job opportunities which are designed to ensure that there are progression routes and opportunities for career development over the longer term. This suggests that inward investment approaches should be geared to higher quality employment. More holistic approaches are required which clearly link employment with social investment and improved access to education and skills. Occupational areas which are currently experiencing skills shortages and sectors likely to expand in the future need to be explored at the local level, taking into account the finding that learning while working was favoured by [many](#) women in this study.

Taking advantage of employment potential

Our study has also shown that there was variable ability to engage with the labour market, and that women's own perspectives on paid work, together with their personal circumstances, were highly influential factors. Many employment initiatives are promoted to tackle the local labour market constraints women face, but few have the resources to support women in the transition to employment on a large scale.

This study shows a strong desire to work among many women, and that in some localities employment services and initiatives are there to support them. But better support does not necessarily translate into higher employment rates for women. Women in the focus groups felt that their local labour market offered very restricted employment opportunities and that, combined with the tax and benefit system, this created disincentives to enter employment, especially where it was low paid. This finding is reinforced by other recent research on low-paid informal work (Katungi et al, 2006).

Further work on state benefits and greater understanding of the key financial barriers to work were central concerns among local organisations. Simplification and greater flexibility in the tax and benefits system were considered crucial and women argued for an easier transition from unemployment to paid work. Job Centre Plus is developing services which are more tailored to local need, but this approach needs to be more universal. A particular issue for lone parents and families on low incomes is the increase in childcare and other costs such as transport and school meals when moving into work.

Policy interventions, restricted to advice, guidance and confidence building are unlikely to be sufficient to make significant inroads into 'workless' communities (Ritchie et al, 2005). This study found that these services were important to women, but that in some localities limited information, poor careers advice, variable support services, and a lack of sufficient affordable childcare added to the problem. Many women living in the six localities aspired to gain employment and to be trained for new employment opportunities. This needs to be taken into account in planning for local employment.

Regeneration and local labour market initiatives

The assumption that the benefits of investment in physical and economic infrastructure will eventually assist in addressing poverty is challenged by this study. It has been suggested elsewhere that the skills and employment agenda must be better integrated (Mansour 2005). This study shows that regeneration and equalities policies must also be included. Regeneration investment has assisted in developing the community infrastructure and the physical aspects in the study areas, but the economic and employment improvements are much less obvious. New jobs will not necessarily go to local people, unless there are more coherent and locally relevant economic strategies which link up labour demand with labour supply.

The specific question of whether women have benefited from regeneration investment is extremely difficult to answer. This is because baseline data, and the monitoring and evaluation systems used in evaluating the impact of regeneration schemes, were not gender sensitive. The practical delivery of regeneration and labour market initiatives, including those administered through local authorities, Job Centre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council, should ensure that differences between men and women's position are reflected in local projects. Gender needs to be a condition of regeneration funding, monitoring and outcomes. Regular monitoring of neighbourhood trends must include gender-sensitive data, if we are to understand whether economic investment is starting to address women's poverty.

There are local examples of very effective support, such as pre-employment preparation, mentoring schemes and funding for childcare, but these are relatively small scale. The Family Centre model, located in residential areas where services are combined, appears to be particularly effective for women with children. Further assistance needs to be provided to those women who do not have children or whose children have grown up.

Employers

Public sector organisations, all of which have a responsibility to promote equal opportunities, are the largest employers in many localities. This study and the Locality Reports explore some examples where public bodies have reviewed and redesigned recruitment policies to target areas of high unemployment more explicitly. To take this further, gender mainstreaming approaches which use local data, new approaches to in-work skills and training, and job re-design which results in genuine flexible working and part-time opportunities are required. This model is also one which has been trialled by private sector retailers in areas of high deprivation and needs to become more commonplace in delivering local regeneration schemes.

The study concludes that greater flexibility in working practices amongst local employers would benefit women living in the area. Work to convince employers that job sharing and other flexible modes of employment are mutually beneficial will be facilitated for public bodies, through the provisions of the *Equality Act 2006*. The wider benefits for private sector employers could also be promoted through local business organisations and Local Strategic Partnerships.

The diversity of local need

Policies to support deprived communities have not achieved improvements in employment rates for disadvantaged ethnic minority women. The largest ethnic minority groups in the six localities included Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black African women who suffer from particularly higher rates of unemployment and economic inactivity. These women seek support in a number of ways which are further explored in our companion studies (Stiell et al 2006; Yeandle et al 2006).

The low incomes of lone parents, traced to low rates of economic activity, low maintenance rates, and low earnings from paid work (McKay 2002) are a particular concern of Government, which has sought to enable lone parents to work by supporting them through childcare and employment guidance. Rates of *full-time working* among lone parents were highest in areas where there was strongest job growth (West Sussex) and where hourly pay rates tend to be higher (Southwark). Rates of *part-time working* among lone parents also varied considerably across the wards, but in virtually all cases were below the national rate. This reflects the limited opportunity for many women in this situation to move off benefits into part-time employment, and the lack of flexible and higher paid part-time employment opportunities. Support therefore

needs to be more targeted and employment initiatives should reflect a greater understanding of lone parents at different stages of their life.

This study also found that there were unmet needs among women living on low incomes who are living with a partner who may be in paid work or unemployed. These women felt that there was very little support for them in exploring job opportunities.

Planning for 'sustainable communities'

This study concludes that locality and place are very important for women in considering potential training and employment. Networks and social contacts were extremely beneficial to women living in the six localities and much of the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) investment in social infrastructure had involved and supported disadvantaged women. Our focus groups and interviews explained that community projects have proven success in working with women from a range of backgrounds, ethnicities and ages. Local learning and employment initiatives, combined with practical and coordinated advice, childcare, informal and formal education approaches, require not just physical co-location but pooling of resources, appropriately skilled staff, and longer term support for women. For example, for those women outside the labour market, support needs to identify practical ways of overcoming personal, household and employment constraints. This may include advice on tax credit entitlement, tailored careers advice, assistance with application forms, interview skills, post-employment mentoring, advice on potential careers and further training.

The importance of local jobs within walking distance from home, childcare services and schools emerged as a key consideration in women's labour market participation. This finding should help inform the developing the Government's "Sustainable Communities" programme. Women's lives are more spatially constrained than men's, and many women actively seek to work close to home. Women without access to affordable and efficient public transport or to their own cars felt excluded from opportunities available in the wider labour market. Analysis of gender-disaggregated statistics, including employment data, at neighbourhood level would help inform Community Strategies and Local Development Frameworks. Planning legislation, including Section 106 agreements⁴⁰, should be applied more actively to facilitate local labour agreements. Where regeneration schemes are proposed, more active steps should be taken to maintain employment sites and support indigenous businesses to prevent the further loss of manufacturing and service employment in the locality. The longer-term benefits of job creation from regeneration schemes should be more clearly assessed for the potential and distinctive benefits for women and men, so that more appropriate support can be put in place.

Education and training

Investment in school and adult education has had positive outcomes in the six localities. Younger women tend to be better qualified than previous generations. Whilst the focus on level 2 qualifications is important for many, they are not always the qualifications most relevant to gaining employment (Adams, 2005), and women require more choices. A range of education and training services providing a series of stepping stones and options which assist women in routes to employment may be more appropriate. This study showed a desire from organisations and the women we interviewed to have more community resources and easier access to colleges and university centres, ideally located in their areas. Further financial support to women in the form of bursaries was also suggested.

Listening to women

It is important to explore the problems of individuals in the broader context of their experience of the labour market. In poor households, where women are highly dependent on their own low income or the low income of a partner, levels of self-esteem and long term aspiration can be low. The interviews and focus group discussions challenge the view that many women living in deprived areas do not wish to work. The research also shows that participation in the labour market is not just an economic decision. It is related to

⁴⁰ Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows a local planning authority to enter into a legally-binding agreement or planning obligation, with a land developer over a related issue. The obligation is sometimes termed as a 'Section 106 agreement'.

income, but also to limited options, care responsibilities and household pressures. Government agencies, at the national and local level, must listen to the experiences of women more clearly. The focus group discussions for this study, exploring attitudes and ideas about tackling individual and collective problems in engaging women in employment, were highly valued by the participants. Models where discussion is combined with practical advice on a range of opportunities, which could be followed through on a regular basis, is an effective model worth pursuing.

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Appendix 1 Gender and Employment in Local Labour Markets

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

The GELLM research programme's output comprised:

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

The GELLM Team

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

The GELLM Partnership

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

Appendix 2 Research methods⁴¹

The methods used in conducting this study were:

Analysis of official statistical data to assess the nature and extent of women's poverty and economic disadvantage in the selected geographical areas using Census 2001 and other relevant sources.

Documentary analysis

 including

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

Interviews with local organisations Semi-structured interviews with 81 representatives from local initiatives in the six districts including local government, regeneration programmes, statutory agencies, employment and training projects, Family Centres, and UNISON. The interview schedule included questions organised under the themes of:

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

Staff and other representatives in the following organisations were interviewed in the six localities:

- **Birmingham:** Birmingham City Council, SRB 6 North West Corridors of Regeneration Team, SRB 6 Board Members, UK Asian Women's Centre, EDAS Foundation, Soho Elders Association, UNISON
- **East Staffordshire:** East Staffordshire Borough Council, SRB 6 Programme Manager, Queen Street Community Centre Sure Start/Children's Centre, Heart of Burton Partnership, Job Centre Plus, UNISON
- **Newcastle:** Newcastle City Council, Byker Community Education Project, Byker Sands Family Centre, Them Wifies, Learning@Brinkburn, Workfinder, SureStart, Health Works East, East End Partnership, Job Centre Plus, UNISON
- **Somerset:** Somerset County Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Bridgewater Youth Service, Sydenham Information Centre, Hamp SRB, Sure Start, Sydenham Family Centre, Forwards to Work, UNISON
- **Southwark:** Southwark Council, Elephant & Castle SRB6 Programme, Elephant Jobs, PECAN, Groundwork, INTO, Job Centre Plus, Southwark Works, Kickstart, London South Bank University, UNISON
- **West Sussex:** Arun District Council, Chichester College, Bognor Regis Citizens Advice Bureau, Sussex Enterprise, Job Centre Plus, Blueprint Business Centre, Laburnum Grove School, Bognor Action Support and Education (BASE), UNISON

Focus groups The views of local women were explored through 14 focus groups attended by 133 women living in the wards selected for the study. The groups ranged in age from 18-65 and included a diverse mix of ethnicities (53% white, 9% Pakistani, 7% Bangladeshi, and 4% Black). 44% of the women were in paid work when they participated, in the group, 20% of the women were seeking paid work, 15% were studying and 31% were involved as volunteers in numerous places including residents' groups, community organisations and various types of childcare such as toddlers' groups. Some lived alone (8%), but most (91%) lived with their family. Some participants and their families (41%) depended on benefits⁴². Over two-thirds (69%) of the women in the groups had some formal qualifications and 17% had higher qualifications. This included women who had qualifications from overseas which they had been unable to use in the UK. 14% had no formal qualifications.

The discussions held in local community venues included questions on the following themes:

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

⁴¹ The authors would like to thank Christopher Price, Gerard Poole and Lucy Shipton for additional research support.

⁴² This includes those who were in paid work but also dependent on the benefits they receive

Appendix 3 Additional data for the localities

Figure A1 Trends in unemployment and economic inactivity 1991-2001: women of working age

	Unemployment rate among economically active women		Economic inactivity rate among women of working age	
	1991	2001	1991	2001
Ladywood	20	11	37	52
Soho	21	14	41	53
BIRMINGHAM	11	7	36	43
Shobnall				
Eton Park				
Anglesey				
EAST STAFFS	6	4	32	28
Byker	14	9	37	42
Monkchester	18	10	46	49
Walker	19	6	43	31
NEWCASTLE	10	5	35	37
Hamp	9	6	37	30
Sydenham	8	6	32	35
Victoria	7	7	35	34
SOMERSET	6	3	32	26
Chaucer				
East Walworth				
Newington				
SOUTHWARK	15	8	33	34
Hotham	7	5	21	29
Marine	7	4	25	27
Pevensy	5	4	36	28
Arun	5	3	30	26
WEST SUSSEX	5	2	29	25
ENGLAND	7	4	32	29

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

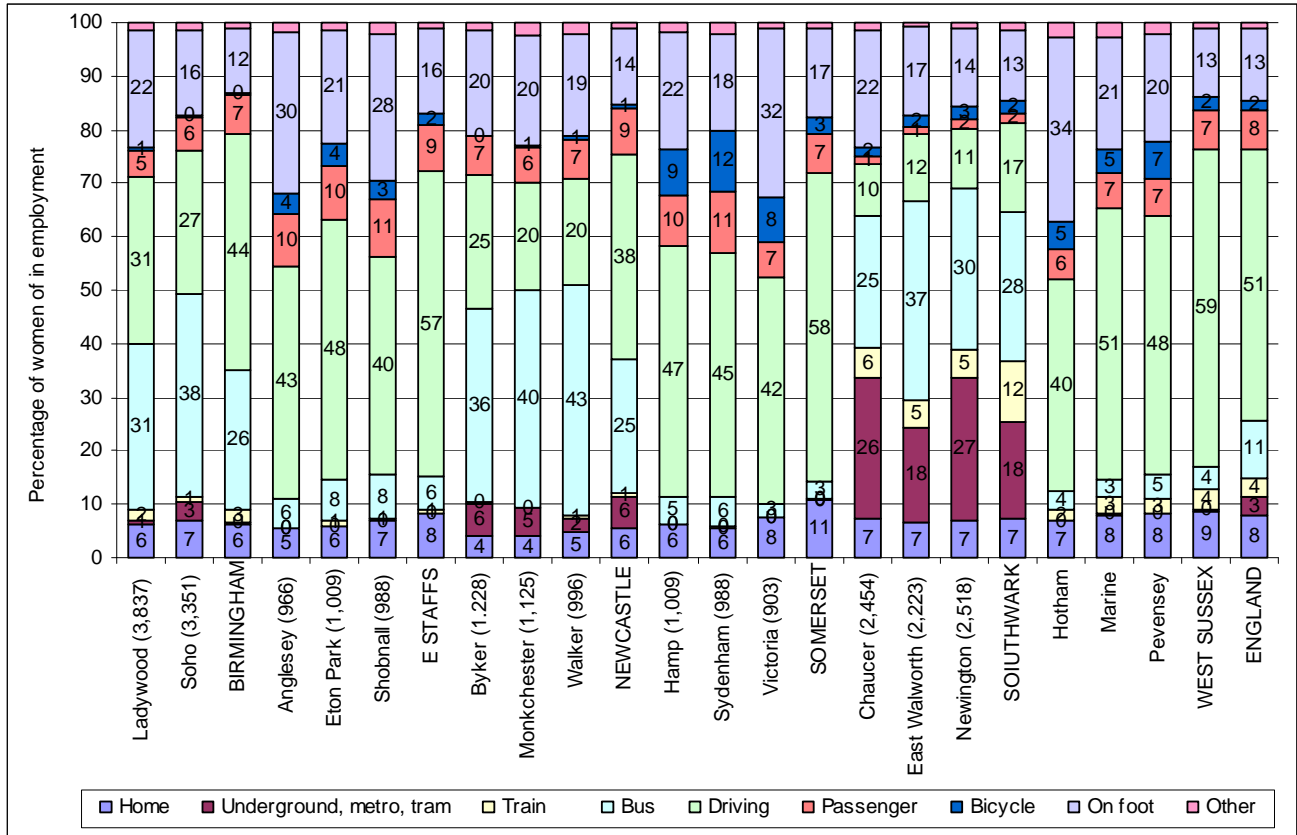
Note: Missing values due to changes in ward boundaries between 1991 and 2001

FigureA2 Former main occupations and industries for women of working age who are unemployed or economically inactive

	Occupation (%)				Industry (%)			
	Manager, professionals, assoc.	Admin./secretarial	Sales & Customer services	Elementary occupations	Manufacture	Wholesale, retail, hotels, restaurants	Education	Health and social work
Ladywood	3	15	18	27	12	21	8	12
Soho	3	13	15	27	19	20	9	17
BIRMINGHAM	5	17	18	24	13	22	9	16
Anglesey	10	11	15	31	17	25	4	20
Eton Park	7	11	20	25	17	27	6	19
Shobnall	8	14	14	33	15	22	3	21
EAST STAFFS	7	16	16	25	14	23	9	19
Byker	4	14	20	36	8	21	7	19
Monkchester	5	10	24	38	6	27	5	19
Walker	4	11	21	37	7	23	6	15
NEWCASTLE	4	16	20	29	6	22	9	16
Hamp	4	14	20	30	15	27	5	14
Sydenham	7	9	18	35	16	28	4	16
Victoria	1	11	19	28	18	25	6	11
SOMERSET	7	16	16	21	11	22	11	19
Chaucer	7	21	17	18	4	19	7	17
East Walworth	5	20	18	22	4	21	6	16
Newington	8	17	16	20	5	19	6	15
SOUTHWARK	7	19	17	18	6	20	8	16
Hotham	2	11	25	23	8	24	6	22
Marine	5	15	14	21	7	19	10	20
Pevensy	6	12	21	24	11	22	6	24
WEST SUSSEX	8	21	16	16	7	20	9	19
ENGLAND	7	18	17	21	11	22	9	16

Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Figure A3 Travel to work by method: women of working age



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Addressing women's poverty: local labour market initiatives market initiatives: synthesis report

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