

SET TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Less than 10% of working women in the United Kingdom hold jobs in SET, or in other words, in Science, Engineering and Technology. For the EQUAL Development Partnership (DP) JIVE this figure highlights not only a major lack of equal opportunities for women in these growth sectors but also the fact that employers are missing out on the opportunity to tap into talents and skills that are urgently needed to boost productivity and innovation in the UK. To break down the numerous barriers that hinder women in pursuing a career in these sectors, JIVE has developed a multi-faceted approach, which is fully in line with national policy priorities. *“From the Prime Minister down, we in Government recognise the science base as the bedrock of our economic performance,”* said Jacqui Smith, Deputy Minister for Women and Equality and Minister for Industry and the Regions at the recent ‘SET to Make a Difference’ conference that was organised by the JIVE DP. She also stated that *“Engineering and technology are growth sectors which are increasingly encountering skills gaps. We understand that our economy will only be truly successful when it harnesses the skills and talents of all the population and that includes women.”*

REGIONAL DESEGREGATION HUBS GENERATE INNOVATION

Led by the Let’s Twist Initiative, (Let’s Train Women In Science and Technology) based at both Bradford College and the Sheffield Hallam University, JIVE has forged a powerful coalition of women’s training centres, employers’ organisations from the most segregated sectors of the labour market, mainstream training and educational institutions, careers services and the National Equal Opportunities Commission. In a common effort, these partners that had never worked together created a network of regional ‘Desegregation Hubs’ to open up career paths for women in male domains of the labour market and to support employers in establishing a more diverse workforce. Hubs are defined as focal points, headquarters, competence centres or physical/virtual structures that develop and disseminate innovation. The three regional hubs (South-East, Yorkshire & Humber, Wales) established by JIVE fulfil all of these functions. Managed by women-only providers that specialise in training for traditional male occupations, each regional hub offers a package of interrelated measures which comprise the following elements:



- **Gender equality courses for managers, lecturers, trainers and support staff of further and higher educational institutions and work based training providers**, enabling them to meet the learning needs of women who are training for employment in male-dominated growth areas. These courses provide accredited training in gender equality practice, follow-up advisory services and ongoing support for the development of gender equality action plans in the participants’ organisations. JIVE partners were aware that most lecturers and trainers in engineering, construction and technological subjects are used to dealing with large groups of male students and often feel ill equipped to address the issues that arise when women enter such a learning environment. The new training is very practical and draws on the experiences of current, or former, students that can help the course participants to understand the need for gender inclusive learning and to acquire skills to encourage, support and coach female students;
- **Modular training for careers guidance professionals and careers teachers** which assists them to become “change agents” who can overcome stereotyping and encourage girls and women to consider working in the engineering, construction or technology sectors as a potential career path;

- **Support for companies in the use of a gender and diversity audit** developed by JIVE, to help analyse any recruitment and retention issues that companies may be experiencing. This is followed by a second phase of support and guidance to assist employers in making gender equality and diversity a reality in everyday working life;
- **Encouragement and on-going support for women and girls** who are considering a career or already working and/or training in male-dominated sectors within the three regions.

PARTNERSHIP DRIVES DISSEMINATION AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Some of JIVE's activities were also organised at the national level and involved relevant employers' organisations, training and educational institutions, equal opportunities bodies and NGOs.

A NATION-WIDE MENTORING SCHEME FOR WOMEN IN SET

Working with a national women's organisation specialising in the development of training and education for women and best practice on gender equality in learning, JIVE developed a mentoring programme offering professional and personal support during the early stages of training and career development. The scheme operated across schools, learning providers and enterprises and its basic philosophy was to create a 'learning partnership' between the mentor and the mentee. Each mentor was selected on the basis of her capacity to act as a role model for a less experienced woman.



Rather than transferring her knowledge, she was required to facilitate the learning process by creating the optimal learning environments for her mentee. *"Mentoring is like having a helping hand"*, says Vicki Bache, a trainee Site Engineer and Civil Engineering Undergraduate at the University of Bradford. *"It means a lot to me to have a mentor, it guides me into the wider field of engineering showing me the options and giving me the information that I possibly wouldn't get from someone else"*. Kate Hall, her mentor who is an associate in an engineering firm adds, *"I have learned that mentoring really makes a difference. As a woman working in a traditionally male dominated area I have experiences that I have been able to share with my mentee. Also, this mentoring programme spurred me to get my training up to date too. I have gained a new skill in mentoring, which will help*

me manage my own teams at work which consist of new graduates, technicians and non-technical staff, so it benefits my own career and my company."

The programme met with a large demand from throughout the country which led JIVE to create the position of 'super mentors'. These are women who were trained by the DP to build and coordinate regional mentoring networks and provided supervision for the other mentors in their area. The networks included initiatives specifically designed and run by women from minority ethnic communities and also work with lone parents.

JOINING FORCES WITH EMPLOYERS' ORGANISATIONS

Another example of successful activities at the national level is the cooperation with the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB). Given alarming projections of skills gaps, the ECITB is seeking to integrate gender equality and diversity into its largest training programme, the National Apprenticeship Scheme for Engineering Construction. This scheme is part of the Advanced Modern Apprenticeship Programme, which is a priority aspect of the UK Government's agenda for vocational training, and leads young people to a National or Scottish Vocational Qualification level 3 in either a craft or a technician specialisation. JIVE's support for the ECITB's endeavours has generated significant changes which will continue after the end of the project. For instance, ECITB's national training organisation has set up support networks and mentoring for women apprentices that are based on the DP's new mentoring scheme. Taster weeks for school students, tested under EQUAL, are now becoming regular events. Nearly all the training board's personnel including senior managers, head office administrators and field staff received gender equality training, and these participants feel that this learning will continue to influence their future practice.

Obviously, employers' organisations are well placed to pass on examples of good practice to their members and thus, JIVE's gender and diversity audit called "Culture Analysis Tool" (CAT) was piloted with ECITB companies. "The CAT has proved to be a useful tool", says Project Manager Ros Wall, "it not only delivers the analysis of recruitment processes, training environments and working practices, but also functions as a catalyst for discussion around any change needed within the organisation. Thanks to EQUAL, such change processes could then be further supported by JIVE."

Other Industrial Training Boards, which have to comply with the national workforce development targets that include aspects such as gender and diversity are now following ECITB's example. Let's Twist, as the 'mother organisation' of JIVE and now increasingly the regional hubs, are experiencing a growing demand for gender and diversity training, particularly from work-based training providers. Also, after the pilot phase, the CAT was fairly easy to market, particularly within the construction sector, as the skills shortage and aging profile of its work force has been widely publicised by the government and its Sector Skills Councils.

SYNERGIES WITH NATIONAL POLICY PRIORITIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

The involvement of the National Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) ensured that JIVE achievements contributed to relevant UK policy priorities. These priorities include the elimination of the gender pay gap and of labour market segregation, as three-quarters of all women employees are to be found in just five occupational sectors in which the pay is a staggering 18% lower than in those sectors dominated by men.

"This is a time when government and others are recognising the importance of addressing the equality, stereotyping and segregation agenda for the success of their vocational skills programme and for individual success," explains Ann Madden who represents the EOC in the EQUAL partnership, "and we believe that the products of JIVE can support positive change in culture and practice and reduce occupational segregation. We hope to help in the process of joining the key delivery agencies with JIVE products and services so that good equality and anti-stereotyping practice is built into mainstream provision as the norm."



In fact, a JIVE partner was invited to sit on the steering group of the EOC's General Formal Investigation (GFI) into occupational segregation and many aspects of the recommendations of this investigation were inspired by the work of JIVE. Having been awarded EQUAL Action 3 funding, the EOC is currently leading, together with JIVE, a [national information campaign](#) that is encouraging young women to consider a career in engineering, construction, information technology or the craft sector.

Directives from Central Government and the devolved Assembly of Wales now ensure that gender equality is included in inspections of vocational training. The role of JIVE in this respect has been to provide the know how to incorporate gender strategies into the Learning and Skills Development Agency which is the body that is responsible for improving standards in vocational education.

A MAINSTREAMING SUCCESS STORY

Building on the achievements and expertise of the JIVE DP, some of its partners formed a consortium in 2004 and made a successful bid for a government contract to host and run a [National Resource Centre for Women's Training in Science, Engineering and Technology](#). The consortium includes Bradford College, Sheffield Hallam University, the Open University and Cambridge University. The new centre was opened in February 2005 and is an important component of the [UK Government's strategy to increase the number of women in SET](#). Its concept is linking equal opportunities policies to forward looking strategies enabling the country to face the challenge of demographic change and to tackle emerging skills gaps. The mission of the centre is to establish a dynamic central hub that provides accessible, high quality information and advisory services to employers including academia and the research councils, professional

bodies, Sector Skills Councils, careers professionals and higher and further education to promote best practice in the recruitment, retention and progression of women in SET and the built environment. The Centre is mapping, coordinating and building on the good practice that has already been developed in this field and provides a strategic focus for driving forward the UK women and SET agenda.

Clearly, the strength of the new institution is rooted in the consortium's long standing experience in educating women in non-traditional occupations and in developing environments supportive to female careers in male domains. As a laboratory EQUAL has also paved the way for the adoption of many concepts that are now high on the agenda of the new infrastructure. This includes, for instance, the development of a recognition scheme for good employers in SET, support and mentoring programmes for different female target groups and also the creation of a network of those regional hubs that are focusing on the promotion of women in SET.

TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION ADDS VALUE

JIVE participated in two Transnational Partnerships (TPs) that were both addressing desegregation and developing strategies for cultural change. The TP entitled 'Breaking the barriers – Cultural change and support for women in Technology' (735) had partners in Germany and France and was primarily focused on gender equality in the information and knowledge society. The main thrust of the 'Gender and Technology' TP (3018), with partners in Finland and Denmark, was widening vocational choices at the earliest possible stage through the targeting of primary and secondary schools and also young women and men on the threshold of tertiary education and training.

According to the project director, transnationality is immensely important and valuable to all JIVE partners. *"Considerable learning took place at transnational exchange events. While much of this arose from exploring differences in culture and context, we discovered common ground across these differences which is a basis for learning from each other",* says Ros Wall, *"even if those meetings do not always result in direct application of learning, there are many other benefits. Joint meetings were unique opportunities to learn about research, policy and publications which may only be available in the language of a particular national partnership. Consideration of policy work has been informed by a comparison of contexts and approaches in different countries and transnational events have provided a forum for involving experts and implementers of policy."*

Learning was an important, but by no means sole, outcome of transnational exchanges. The DPs also identified a renewed sense of purpose, direct influence on decision makers and an increased profile and priority for their work, as being other benefits. When 'WomenIT' members from Finland saw that JIVE Partners were working with their national equality body they realised that they should seek to influence policy and practice through their own national gender equality mechanisms, which was something they had not previously considered or thought possible. Moreover, tangible products were shared amongst partners. JIVE's training materials for career advisors were imported by the German partner and adapted to the national and regional context of this DP. In a common effort, and based on JIVE's mentoring model, the partners developed a good practice manual and European guidelines for mentoring and careers guidance.

Transnational activity was also instrumental in raising the profile of partner organisations and in reinforcing the value of national aims and objectives. For JIVE partners, the profile of their Welsh hub was raised significantly through the gender mainstreaming seminar organised with the Welsh Assembly, in Cardiff, in May 2004. This seminar was sparked off by a similar event held in Berlin the year before. 'WomenIT,' JIVE's Finnish partner, has started to develop women's resource centres in Oulu and Kajaani that are shaped on the model of the UK Resource Centre on Women in SET. *"We have subsequently had study visits from the Finnish Government to meet with members of the JIVE consortium and with the relevant people at the Department for Trade and Industry on this matter,"* reports Ros Wall, *"and another meeting is currently is being set up to investigate single sex schools for girls in the UK. Both initiatives are a direct consequence of our transnational partnership."* Clearly, the transnational dimension of EQUAL has not only yielded substantial advantages for the organisations that were directly involved, as it has also triggered the transfer of new ideas for policy development between Member States.

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