Gender and the Labour Market in South East England

Volume 2:
Employers' Policies and Practices

Susan Corby
Celia Stanworth
Barbara Green

The views expressed in this report are the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the South East of England Development Agency (SEEDA).

Acknowledgements

Further enquiries to:

Susan Corby and Celia Stanworth,
Work and Employment Research Unit (WERU),
The Business School, University of Greenwich, Old Royal Naval College, Park Row, London SE10 9LS.

Tel: 020 8331 8000

Emails: S.R.Corby@gre.ac.uk C.M.Stanworth@gre.ac.uk

1 86166 219 X

September 2005

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

Table of Tables

Abbreviations

Acas	Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service
CHSS	Centre for Health Service Studies, University of Kent
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
EOC	Equal Opportunities Commission
EPR	Equal Pay Review
ESF	European Social Fund
HR	Human Resources
ONS	Office of National Statistics
PRP	Performance-related-pay
SEEDA	South East of England Development Agency
WERS	Workplace Employee Relations Survey

Glossary

Part-time work = any hours of work that are less than those of an equivalent full-time worker.

Executive Summary

Objectives

This research on gender and the labour market in South East England was funded by the South East of England Development Agency/European Social Fund. In volume 1 we set out the context: theoretical explanations for gender equality, the legal framework and organisational factors. Moreover, using a range of published data, we answered the first of our research questions: how does the labour market position of women in the government region of the South East of England compare with that of both men in the South East and that of women in Great Britain/United Kingdom?

In this volume we turn our attention to our other research questions:

- What policies and practices do employers in South East England adopt in respect of gender equality?

- What barriers do employers and women employees in South East England identify in respect of gender and employment?

Methodology

A two strand approach was adopted. First, a postal survey was conducted. The survey was distributed to all employers who had 50 or more employees in their organisation in the region.. It produced 454 usable responses, a response rate of just over 13 per cent, and was analysed by CHSS, University of Kent, using SPSS, with cross-tabulations by sector and size of firm. The questions were predominantly factual, but there were four attitudinal questions using a Likert scale.

Respondents to the survey were asked if they were willing to be contacted for a follow-up face-to-face interview. Accordingly, interviews were held with the person responsible for HR in 40 workplaces. Some of those interviewed were dedicated HR specialists, especially in medium-sized organisations (100-249 employees), while often in organisations of 250 employees and above there was a team of HR specialists, quite often with the HR director having a seat on the board. In the smaller organisations, however, the managing director or the finance director might also be responsible for human resources. In addition, interviews with 74 women were conducted, who filled different positions in the organisational hierarchy. The interviews were taped and transcribed and analysed

using a grounded theory approach. The interview topic guides are shown in appendix C and details of the sample are shown in sub-section 2.2.1.

Survey findings

The vast majority of our 454 respondent organisations had written policies on equality and diversity and most of these policies specifically covered the different equality strands, but the communication of these policies was primarily through staff handbooks and induction. Moreover, over half did not consult their staff, either indirectly through their representatives or directly, on their equality policies. Also few organisations provided maternity leave above the statutory minima, though maternity pay above the statutory minima was somewhat more common, being provided by one in four organisations. There was very little gender monitoring for instance in respect of occupational categories, short-listing, promotions and training. As to flexible working patterns, the most commonly offered and the most commonly used was part-time work, with take-up by women far exceeding take-up by men.

Just over one third of respondents said that they had carried out an equal pay review but a further question suggested that at least some respondents confused an equal pay review with a pay review. Moreover, very few organisations (about 1 in 20) took proactive measures to boost the quality and/or quantity of women's jobs.

When we cross-tabulated our findings by sector (private services, private manufacturing and public sector) we found that the public sector reported having by far the most gender equality measures in place. Similarly when we cross tabulated our findings by size, ie number of employees in the SE region (under 100; 100-249, 250+), large organisations (250+) reported having more gender equality measures in place than smaller organisations. It should be noted, however, that there is somewhat of an overlap between the public sector and large organisations: 40 per cent of public sector organisations had 250 or more employees, compared to 26 per cent in private manufacturing and 35 per cent in private services.

The four attitudinal questions indicated general satisfaction (or indeed some might argue complacency) that their organisations were an equal opportunity employer.

The views of those responsible for Human Resources (HR)

Interviews were held with those responsible for HR to explore responses to our questionnaires. In the main our private sector interviewees demonstrated a limited view of equality. They equated it with procedural fairness and considered that they provided equal pay because they had equal pay for broadly similar work. Moreover, in the main they did not consider equal pay for work of equal value or conduct equal pay reviews.

They provided part-time work for the less senior positions and considered that they had coped well with the statutory right to request flexible work, while many were considering the new child care voucher scheme.

By and large, however, those responsible for HR even in medium-sized firms considered that monitoring was not necessary because they were not large enough. Also they felt that women did not reach the top, not because of organisational policies and practices, but because women wanted to work limited hours. Other findings were that:

- o the business case was rarely a spur to equality measures, but legal provisions were;
- o progressive views on equality could not be equated with the sex or the specific role of the interviewee, or the size of the organisation but it could be correlated with sector: interviewees from public sector organisations not only held progressive views, but also had comprehensive action plans aimed at achieving substantive equality outcomes.

The views of female employees

Chance seemed to have played a large part in many interviewees' work histories and where they had reached senior positions they mainly ascribed their success to hard work, luck and to a lesser extent training. Furthermore, many of our interviewees seemed to have struck an implicit bargain with their employer. For example:
- part-time work, but no promotion opportunities,
- location near home/child's school, but less pay than might be obtained if there was commuting,
- an acceptable level of remuneration, but a lack of understanding of the basis on which the organisation sets pay,
- a senior position, but not as well remunerated as male equivalents,
- a job in a predominantly male environment, but an exclusionary or sexist culture.

These compromises and trade-offs seemed to operate not only where women had dependant children, but also often where they had not.

Case studies

Combining information gathered both from the postal survey and face-to-face interviews, case studies of five organisations were depicted. These organisations, of varying sizes and proportions of female employees, were drawn from four sub-sectors identified by SEEDA as employment growth areas in the region: advanced manufacturing, care, financial services and information technology. In addition, a public sector case study was included.

In all the cases outlined, both public and private sector, there appeared to be good coverage of equality issues in written form. In terms of communicating policies, in most cases the channels were limited, with greatest emphasis on the staff handbook. In line with the survey results, the case organisations generally followed the minima in terms of maternity leave and pay, with the public sector case giving enhanced maternity pay and the care home longer leave. The public sector case was unusual as it had a workplace nursery, while the financial services firm was innovative as it provided a childcare helpline for its staff.

Overall in the private sector case study organisations, there was little or no monitoring or evaluation of policies, an absence of formalised pay structures and virtually no special measures to increase women's representation in management. The exception was the public sector case, which was a clear exemplar.

Although the existence of a long hours culture was frequently denied in the survey, these cases tended to show that it existed amongst some managers and typically higher management was expected to give a '24/7' commitment. Perhaps somewhat paradoxically, however, those interviewed in the case organisations usually felt that their employer was generally supportive to women and tried to foster work-life balance.

Conclusions and recommendations

One striking finding from both from the survey and the interviews was the noticeable difference between the public and private sectors in the implementation of sex equality measures, with many organisations in the public sector, unlike the private sector, seeking to achieve substantive outcomes. This difference may be related not just to ownership differences (i.e. public/private) but also to the fact that the public sector organisations tended to be larger and collectively organised. Not surprisingly in this context, two women interviewees expressly recognised the public sector as an employer of choice.

Another striking finding was a clear contrast on the one hand between employers' satisfaction with their sex equality practices as revealed both in the survey and the interviews and, on the other hand, the statistics in volume 1 of this report showing the continuing stark nature of women's disadvantage in the South East labour market. Most private sector employers in the South East survey appeared to be conforming to the 'no difference' and 'like treated as like' concept of equality. Procedural fairness and compliance with equality laws was seen by them as good enough. There did not appear to be a perception of a 'rational' business case that would lead them to go further, by removing obstacles within the organisation to encourage women to advance their careers and/or break down horizontal and vertical occupational segregation.

One explanation for this could be that employers perceive few problems in resourcing the organisation at present and can access sufficient people with the

required skillsets. Another explanation could be that employers may equate success in dealing with equality by an absence of litigation.

Most of our interviews took place in small and medium sized firms, which make up the majority of firms in the UK. Also as in our survey, manufacturing was over-represented. This highlighted to us the particular problems and needs of SMEs in terms of implementing equality measures often on a tight budget. It is clear that many of the national initiatives by government and other bodies are designed for implementation by large firms and require a level of resources and expertise that are not available in SMEs. This is not to provide an excuse for smaller companies to discriminate however – rather we feel that more account should be taken of scarce HR resources and the operational realities.

Against that background and the findings from this research we have drawn up a 'stepping stones' action plan for employers in the South East deliberately keeping the list brief and suggesting small incremental steps and where free expert advice can be sought, rather than unrealistically ambitious change programmes as follows:

Stepping Stones to Progress:
Women in the Workplace

These recommendations are drawn from this research.

1. Are you selecting your staff from the widest possible pool?

- Good staff can be hard to find and currently many firms in the South East are having difficulty recruiting the right people. This situation is likely to get tougher as the working population ages. Recruiting women for jobs traditionally done by men gives you more options.

- Make it clear in your advertising and at interviews that flexible working requests can often be accommodated.

- When you approach employment agencies, tell them that you would particularly welcome applications from the under-represented sex and, where appropriate, make contact with schools and/or colleges. Don't just sit back and wait for the gender balance to change by itself.

- Many SMEs do not have a full-time HR manager, let alone an equality or diversity specialist. Consider hiring a reputable HR consultant to work out a strategy in terms of your staffing needs.

2. Are you making the best use of your existing workforce?

- When technical or managerial opportunities arise, advertise internally and encourage women to apply. Include administrative staff - often women – with no direct 'ladder' into managerial jobs.

- Use the opportunities afforded by maternity leave, long term sickness or other temporary vacancies to develop staff. Think laterally. For

instance you could ask a woman to 'act up' or try out a different sort of job.

3. Do you have equality policies and procedures?

- Relying on line managers to use 'common sense' is not enough. Small firms need policies and procedures as much as major multinationals.

- Review your policies and procedures regularly as legislation often changes and your practices may need updating.

- Make sure your equality policies are easily accessible to managers and employees. Publicise them widely and ensure that all employees know where to find them.

4. Are your equality policies being implemented?

- Managers need training to understand equality policies, the reasons for them and how to implement them in a consistent way.

- As well as briefing new managers at induction, don't forget that long serving managers also need reminding of policies, especially where they have been updated, and that messages need to be frequently repeated.

5. Do you know if your equality policies are working?

- Collect information periodically at least about recruitment and promotion, ie the women and men applying, being short-listed and appointed.

- When you collect information, analyse it and create a "to-do" list to improve the gender balance.

6. Do you encourage work/life balance?

- Recent research shows that recruitment and retention benefit from flexible working patterns. Consider extending reduced working hours/job shares to higher status occupations, including management posts.

- Encourage line managers to adopt a 'can-do' attitude to staff requests for flexible working.

- Set a good example and encourage your managers to do likewise. Long hours working should be the exception, not the rule.

7. Do you support women working in predominantly male areas?

- Ask your managers to make it clear to all their staff that women may feel excluded by male 'banter'.

- Ensure that all your employees know that they will not be victimised or thought 'soft' if they report harassment, including sexist remarks.

- Set up a 'buddy system' or mentoring scheme to help women feel less isolated.

8. Is your pay system transparent and fair?

- All employees and managers should be able to understand the basis of pay in your organisation and your pay scales should be published.

- Make sure you are paying for the job and not the person. Men may be more assertive in negotiating higher starting rates than women, leading to pay anomalies.

- Where you have a pay anomaly but cost prevents you from ironing it out all at once, work out a plan to put it right in stages over a limited time period.

9. Could you save recruitment and training costs by encouraging more women to return to work after childbirth?

- Consider giving a bonus payment to women who return after maternity leave and stay for three months.

- Offering help with childcare does not necessarily mean expensive options such as workplace nurseries; child care vouchers, for instance, are a much cheaper but still valuable alternative.

10. Why not seek FREE expert help?

- **Diversity Means Business, funded by SEEDA/ESF offers 100% subsidised diversity training, information handbooks and one-to-one advice across the South East region. Contact Karen.barber@portsmouthcc.gov.uk or 023 9284 1610.**

- **The Advisory, Conciliation & Arbitration Service (Acas) (www.acas.org.uk) has a helpline which provides free, confidential help and information on work issues on 08457 47 47 47. It also has an advisory booklet which can be downloaded free, 'Tackling Discrimination and Promoting Equality – a good practice guide for employers'.**

- **Equality Direct is a free, confidential telephone advice service for employers run by Acas on 0845 600 3444 or go to www.equalitydirect.org.uk**

- **The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) has a free, confidential telephone helpline on 0845 601 5901. Also it has many advisory booklets which can be downloaded free of charge. The EOC homepage is www.eoc.org.uk**

- **CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) produces reports into equality/diversity, pay and flexible work issues, many of which can be downloaded from www.cipd.co.uk/surveys. You do not have to be a member.**

- **DTI (Department of Trade and Industry) has a useful employment relations section (www.dti.gov.uk/er)**

1. Introduction

1.1 Aims and objectives of the research project

This research is funded by the South East of England Development Agency (SEEDA) and the European Social Fund (ESF). The overall research objective of the project is to identify barriers that prevent women from making a full contribution to the labour market in the South East (SE) of England and to disseminate best practice. In line with this overall objective, our research questions are:

- Analysing official statistics, how does the labour market position of women in the South East region compare with that of both men in the region and women in Great Britain/United Kingdom (UK)?

- What policies and practices do employers in South East England adopt in respect of gender equality?

- What barriers do employers and women employees in South East England identify in respect of gender and employment?

In the first volume of this report we set out the context for this research, looking at the economic and sociological theories of gender inequality in the workplace and the legal position. We also sought to answer the first of these research questions: analysing official statistics a comparison was drawn between the labour market position of women in the South East region with that of men in the region and with that of women in Great Britain/United Kingdom.

In short, looking at median hourly earnings in 2003 of full-time women in South East England, we found they were 19 per cent less than those of men. Among the lowest earners the gender pay gap was comparatively narrow at 10 per cent, but amongst the highest earners men were paid 30 per cent more than women, compared to 20 per cent for Britain as a whole. We also found that the proportion of women managers and senior officials in the South East region was higher than the UK average. Moreover, the percentage of women living in the South East educated to degree level or equivalent was roughly the same as the percentage of men in the South East; and among regions in Britain the South East came second only to London. Similarly, the region had a lower percentage of women without qualifications than any other in Britain except London. Further details can be found in volume 1.

In this second volume of the report, we address the second and third research questions:

- What policies and practices do employers in the South East Region adopt in respect of gender equality?

- What barriers do employers and women employees in South East England identify in respect of gender and employment?

We answered the first of these research questions using a questionnaire distributed by post to employers in the South East and the second by interviews in 40 workplaces with the person responsible for human resources (HR) and women employees.

1.2 The structure of this report

This report is structured as follows:

o In <u>chapter 2</u>, we describe the methodology that was used and the limitations of our findings.
o In <u>chapter 3</u>, the findings of the postal survey are outlined.
o In <u>chapter 4</u>, the interviews with those responsible for HR are discussed.
o In <u>chapter 5</u>, the interviews with female employees are discussed.
o In <u>chapter 6</u>, there are five case studies, one each from an organisation in the following five sectors: advanced manufacturing, care, financial services, information technology and the public sector.
o In <u>chapter 7</u>, the findings are summarised and conclusions are drawn
o In <u>chapter 8</u>, recommendations are made aimed at small/medium sized employers in the form of 'Stepping Stones to Progress: Women in the Workplace'.

2. Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology employed both for the postal survey and for the interviews.

2.1 The postal survey

2.1.1 Development

The postal questionnaire was designed to ascertain the policies and practices SE employers adopted in respect of gender equality. Thus a number of issues were investigated including organisational size and sector, proportion of women staff, equality policies, equality practices, equal pay reviews, employee development, flexible working requests, litigation under the Sex Discrimination Act and Equal Pay Act and non-standard working patterns offered and used by women and men. The extent of gender monitoring of policies was also explored. Furthermore, a number of Likert scale attitudinal questions were incorporated and the respondents invited to add comments.

The questionnaire went through a number of reiterations, and was put before the Steering Group in draft form for comments, which were incorporated in the final version. A copy of the final survey instrument is in the appendix A. The final version has 45 questions on four pages, and incorporates the covering letter. Given the sensitivity of the topic, respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity.

It was also decided, with the agreement of the University of Greenwich Business School, to offer a prize draw in order to enhance the response rate. The prize was a free place on a postgraduate programme in the University's Business School. A flyer outlining the draw was designed and printed for distribution with the survey. In addition a map of the area covered by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) was included, in case respondents were unfamiliar with the geography of the government region of the South East.

2.1.2 The database

The specification for this research, drawn up by SEEDA, required a minimum of 400 responses to the questionnaire and we estimated that we would receive a 12 per cent response rate. After investigation we purchased a Dun and Bradstreet database of all organisations in the SEEDA area with 50 or more employees. The database included 3,394 entries, and it was decided to distribute the survey to all the organisations listed, in effect a census.

We emphasise that this database had drawbacks, because it was organisation based, not workplace based, and thus excluded multi-site organisations which did not have a head office in the South East, although they had establishments in the South East.

2.1.3 Distribution

The postal survey was distributed to named persons who were responsible for human resources (HR). In some organisations this person was the dedicated HR manager, ie only responsible for HR, not other matters. In other organisations, however, the named person was the managing director or another manager, for instance the company secretary, who was responsible for HR and other areas too.

The first postal distribution of the survey was carried out in October 2004 and elicited a response of approximately 160. In the light of this it was decided to send out a complete second mail-out, and this was done in November 2004. The two mailings resulted in a usable total of 454 responses, which exceeded the SEEDA requirements and represents a response rate of just over 13 per cent.

2.1.4 Analysis

The data from the 454 responses were entered and analysed by the Centre for Health Service Studies (CHSS), University of Kent in SPSS version 12.1 and there were cross tabulations by sector and size of firm. See appendix B.

2.1.5 Limitations of the survey

The response rate is considered to be satisfactory, given the current overload on HR managers in terms of surveys. It is to be expected that those who responded will tend to be those who have at least some interest in the issue of gender and employment, and non-response would tend to indicate those with little or no interest, and/or employers who are far from being exemplars in this area. Given this limitation, the findings of the survey should be used with caution.

2.2 The interviews

2.2.1 The sample

Those responding to the postal questionnaire were invited to volunteer to be contacted for follow-up interviews. Our aim was to interview the person responsible for human resources in 40 organisations. In smaller organisations that person was normally the finance director or the managing director. In larger organisations there was normally a team of staff dedicated to HR. Additionally we aimed to interview two women in each organisation, ideally one towards the top of the hierarchy and one towards the bottom.

SEEDA were particularly interested in five areas: advanced manufacturing, care, financial services, information technology and pharma-bio and from the responses to the survey it was known whether those willing to be interviewed fell into those sub-sectors. Accordingly interviews were first arranged with those respondents, though some respondents who had classified themselves as 'advanced manufacturing' turned out to be manufacturing.

To achieve the total of 40 workplaces, volunteer respondents in other sectors/sub-sectors were then contacted with the aim of obtaining a variety in terms of location and size. We also sought variation in activity and our 'other' respondents included a restaurant chain, a visitor attraction, two construction companies, three local authorities and an agricultural organisation. Given the sensitivity of the subject and the interviewers' wish to encourage interviewees to talk frankly, anonymity was promised. Details of our sample are shown in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: Organisation by sector and size

No.of Employees	Manufacturing	Care	IT	Financial Services	Others	Public Sector	Total
Less than 50	1	1	3	1	2	0	**8**
50 – 99	4	1	1	0	4	0	**10**
100-249	2	2	1	1	2	0	**8**
250-499	1	2	0	0	2	2	**7**
500+	1	0	0	3	1	2	**7**
Total	**9**	**6**	**5**	**5**	**11**	**4**	**40**

Table 2: Organisation by sector and county

County	Manufacturing	Care	IT	Financial Services	Others	Public Sector	Total
E.SUSSEX	3	1	0	0	1	0	**5**
W.SUSSEX	1	0	0	0	1	1	**3**
KENT	2	1	1	1	1	2	**8**
BUCKS.	1	1	1	0	1	0	**4**
BERKS.	1	0	0	0	0	0	**1**
SURREY	1	2	0	1	2	0	**6**
OXFORD	1	0	1	0	2	0	**4**
HAMPSHIRE		2	2	3	2	0	**9**
TOTAL	**10**	**7**	**5**	**5**	**10**	**3**	**40**

2.2.2 The interview schedules

Interviews were conducted between February and May 2005 and the interview schedules are shown in appendix C. The questions for the person responsible for HR were tailored to the responses that person had given to the survey. Nevertheless, in every case the interviewee was asked about his/her career to date; whether he/she was CIPD qualified; the proportion of women on the board and/or at senior management level; how the organisation had coped with the recent provisions in respect of family

friendly legislation and the interviewee's views on proposed changes; how pay was determined and, if the survey respondent had said that an equal pay review had been carried out, what exactly had been done. The interview was also designed to probe why the interviewee had not carried out certain measures, for instance in respect to gender monitoring and/or to limit occupational segregation and whether there were barriers in the organisation which had the effect of holding women back.

Interviews with women employees similarly sought to elicit information about their career to date; whether promotion had been sought and if so what had occurred; whether interviewees identified any gender barriers in the organisation; what further measures the organisation should adopt to help women to advance their career and how their pay compared with men at an equivalent level. In addition the senior women were asked what they thought were the most important factors that had enabled them to achieve their position, what difficulties they had encountered on the way and how they had overcome them.

<u>2.2.3 The analysis</u>

Interviews were held in 40 organisations with the person responsible for HR. In addition in these 40 organisations, interviews were held with 74 women who held a variety of jobs. These included health care assistants, production operatives, data entrants, project managers, accounts managers, a matron, a geophysicist and women in sales and marketing.

The interviews lasted about half-an-hour or more and were taped and fully transcribed, except in respect of five interviews where the interviewer had to rely on notes because there had been a technical hitch. The interviews were analysed using a grounded theory approach. Themes were identified and then the interviewees' comments were clustered under the themes and then, after further refinement, reclustered.

<u>2.2.4 Limitations of the interviews</u>

The sample was essentially self-selecting as those who responded to our survey volunteered to be interviewed and thus were more likely than not to be interested in gender issues. Also, those responsible for HR were asked to provide two female employees for interview. Although often the interviewers were consulted, essentially these women were chosen by the person responsible for HR, not the interviewer. These limitations should be recognised when this report is being considered.

2.3 Summary

The postal questionnaire was designed to ascertain the gender policies and practices of employers in the South East of England. It was distributed to all employers who, according to a Dun & Bradstreet database, had 50 or more employees in their organisation in the region. It was sent out in October 2004, with a reminder in November 2004. It produced 454 usable responses and was analysed by CHSS, University of Kent, using SPSS, with cross-tabulations by sector and size of firm.

Respondents to the survey were asked if they were willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview. Accordingly, interviews were held with the person responsible for HR in 40 workplaces. In addition, interviews with 74 women were conducted. The interviews were taped and transcribed and analysed using a grounded theory approach.

3. Findings

In this chapter, the findings of the survey are outlined, including further analysis in terms of cross-tabulations by size and sector. It should be noted that although we received 454 responses, not every respondent replied to every question, so the number is often quoted along with the percentage. Where possible and relevant, our results are compared with findings from other published surveys.

3.1 Demographics

3.1.1 Sector

49 per cent (212) of the responses came from private service firms, 31 per cent (133) from private manufacturing and 20 per cent (87) from the public sector. According to figures from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) based on NOMIS, 59 per cent of organisations in the South East were in private services, 16 per cent in manufacturing, and 25 per cent in public administration. Accordingly manufacturing was over-represented in our responses compared to NOMIS figures, with the public sector and private services being under-represented.

SEEDA wanted the research to focus on five sub-sectors: care, financial services, pharma-bio, information technology and advanced manufacturing. They represent either employment growth sectors or sub-sectors that are already well-represented in the region. For example, 23 per cent of employees in the South East work in financial and business services. We only, however, had responses from 13 firms (3 per cent of organisations) in financial services. This could be due to the fact that the database was organisation, not workplace based so local branches or sites of financial sector firms with head offices elsewhere were excluded. Looking at these five sub-sectors, our highest responses (11 per cent, n = 50) came from organisations in care and the lowest from organisations in pharma-bio (3 per cent, n = 12).

3.1.2 Size

Just over half (53 per cent) of our respondents indicated that their organisation operated only in the region, not elsewhere in the UK. As to size, as measured by number of employees, we asked about numbers in the South East and numbers in the UK as a whole. 42 per cent (191) of our respondents employed less than 100 people in the UK; 31 per cent employed between 100-249 and 27 per cent employed 250 or more.

According to the ONS, 50 per cent of organisations in Great Britain employed between 1-99 employees. Thus the responses to our survey, which used a database purportedly of organisations with 50 or more employees, are probably not markedly out of line with the figures nationally.

As this report focuses on the South East we ascertained from our respondents the number of employees in the South East. Figure 1 expresses this as a percentage. As can be seen the public sector was proportionately more likely to be large (in terms of numbers employed in the South East) than private sector firms.

Figure 1: Proportionate size in SE
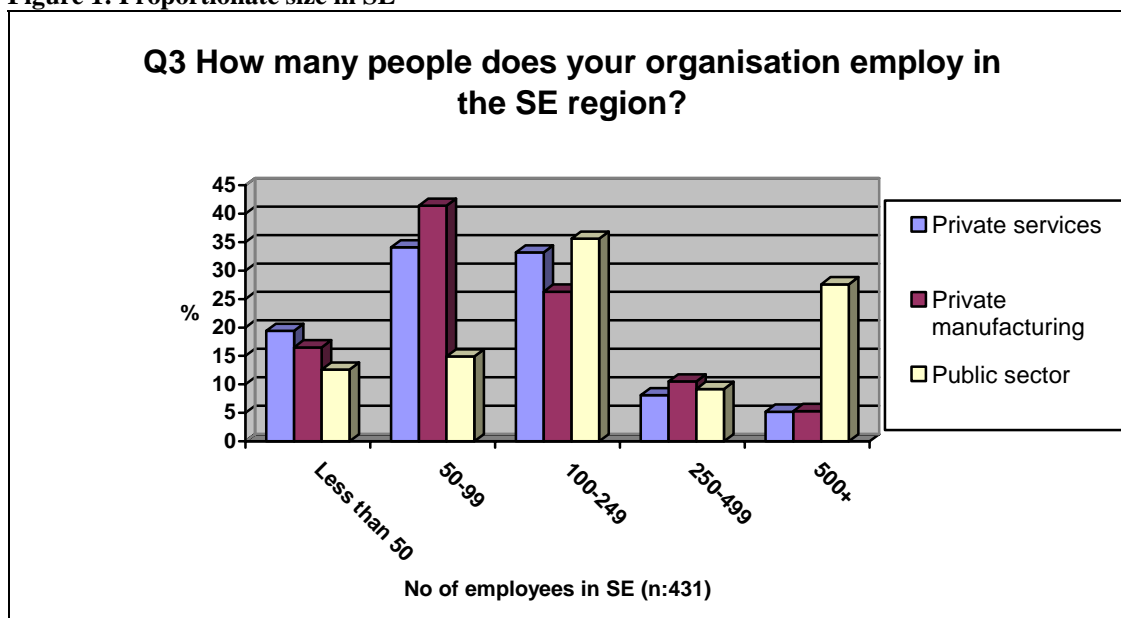
Figure 2: Proportion of female employees by sector
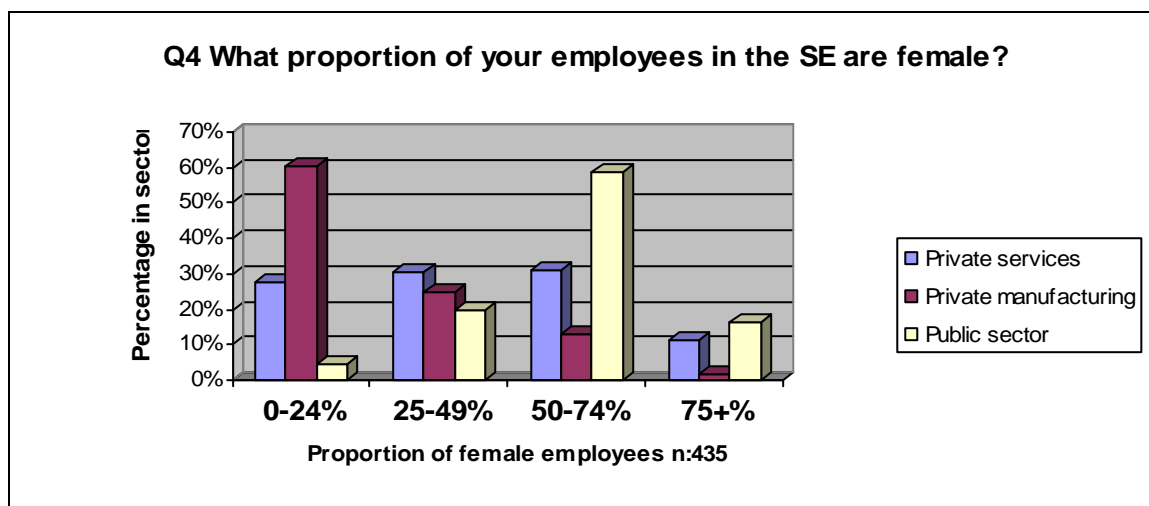
Interestingly as Figure 1 shows, 18 per cent (79) of respondent organisations in the South East employed less than 50 people, even though the database was aimed at those organisations employing 50 or more. This suggests that the database was not up-to-date. Perhaps some organisations on the database had recently downsized or were hovering on the 50 or more mark, so the departure of one or two employees would bring them into a different size-band.

We also looked at the proportion of female employees by sector. As can be seen from Figure 2, the proportion of women employed in private manufacturing was much less than the proportion employed in the two other sectors.

3.2 Equality policies

3.2.1 Written policies

86 per cent of respondent organisations had a written policy on equality and diversity. The Workplace Employee Relations Survey (WERS) found that 73 per cent of workplaces had a written equal opportunities policy in 2004 (Kersley et al, 2005:25). Our higher figure may be a reflection of the fact that the WERS sample was based on workplaces with 10 or more employees, whilst ours was based on organisations listed in a database as having 50 employees or more; smaller workplaces are less likely to have written personnel policies and more informal arrangements than larger ones (Hayward et al, 2004).

Figure 3: Written policies by sector
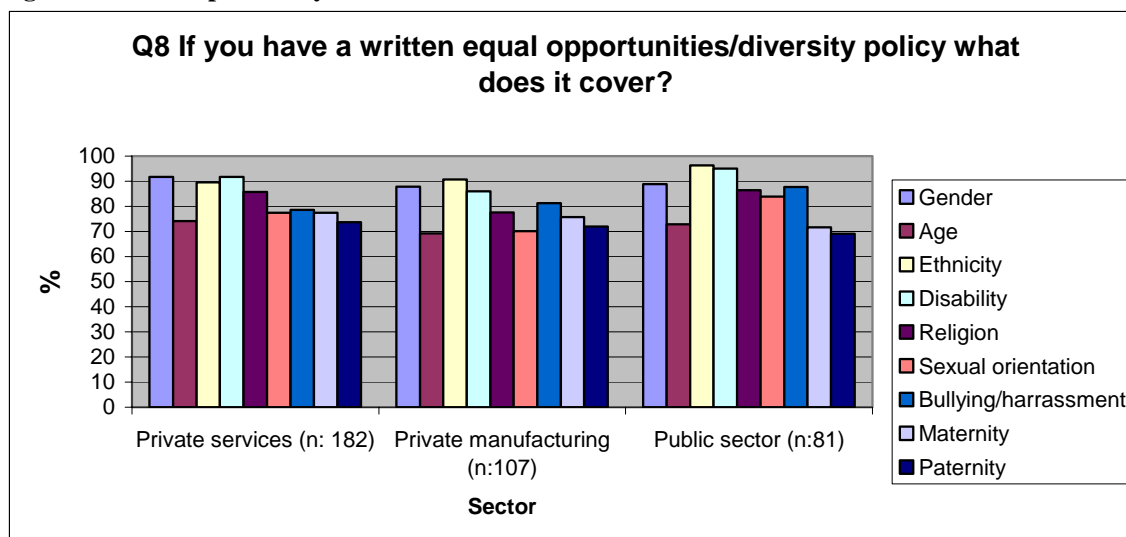
Of our respondents with a written policy, most of these policies specifically covered the different equality strands: the vast majority covered the various equality strands of gender, ethnicity and disability (91 per cent), with bullying/harassment at 81 per cent, and age and paternity having the lowest coverage with both at 72 per cent. There was little variation by sector as Figure 3 shows.

3.2.2. Communicating and consulting on policies

We also asked those organisations which had equality policies how they communicated them to employees. By far the most common channel of information was the staff handbook (88%, n = 339). It is significant that equal opportunity/diversity policies were far more likely to be covered at induction (64%, n = 250), than in ongoing training within organisations (33%) but the public sector was far more likely to have on-going training than the private sector, see Figure 4, as were

larger organisations (250+). 'Other' responses included notice-boards; contracts of employment; starter pack; hard copies circulated to staff.

Figure 4: Methods by which policies are communicated
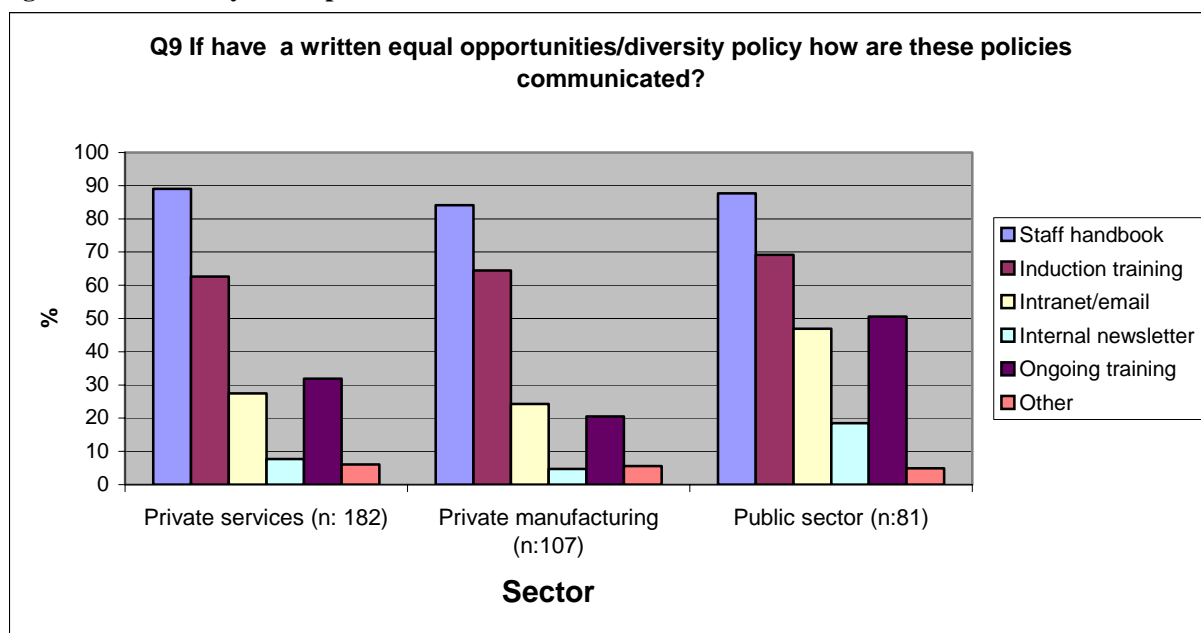
Over half (53 per cent) the organisations which had equality policies did not consult their employees about them. Of the 47 per cent of organisations which did, there was a difference both in sector and in size: over three quarters of public sector organisations consulted employees on equality policies. This compared with just over a third of organisations in private manufacturing. See Figure 5. Also over two in three large organisations (250+) consulted, compared to one in three smaller organisations (less than 100).

Figure 5: Consultation with employees
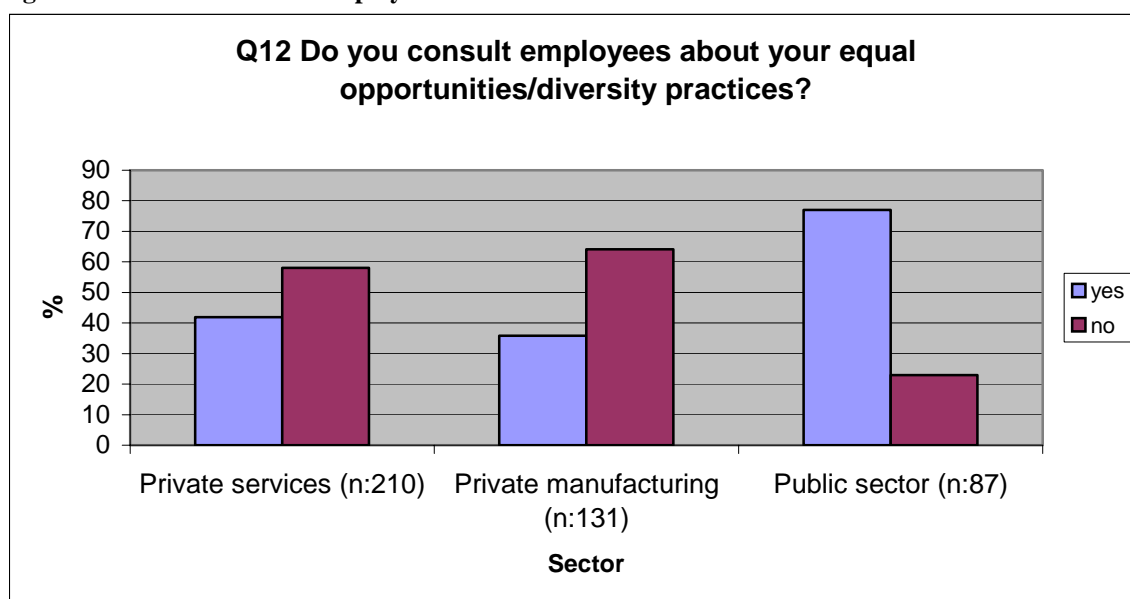
Of those who consulted, the most popular channels were consultative committees, followed by staff surveys. But even the most popular channel was only used by half of the organisations who consulted. 'Other' responses included informal discussions and interviews. Respondents also mentioned memos, staff handbooks and notice-boards, but these are communication methods, not consultation methods.

<u>3.2.3 Litigation and policies</u>

While only 18 organisations (4 per cent) said that they had been involved in litigation in respect of the Sex Discrimination Act or Equal Pay Act in the last three years, this had spurred five organisations to make changes, mostly in respect of revising their equal opportunities policies, as well as training staff on those policies.

3.3 Pregnancy and childcare

Maternity *leave* above the statutory minima was only provided by 14 per cent (n = 65) of firms. Maternity *pay* above the statutory minima was more common being provided by 25 per cent (n = 111) of respondents, with the public sector far more likely to provide it than the private sector as Figure 6 shows.

Only 13 per cent (n = 57) of responding organisations offered any help with childcare. Of those that did workplace nurseries and childcare vouchers were the most popular forms of help. Other responses included children allowed to attend work; a subsidy for lower-paid staff; subsidised attendance at school (this respondent was a school); a scheme with the local council to subsidise places; an arrangement with a local nursery for reduced fees; a fund for childcare related travel; a contribution to costs if staff have to attend training outside normal hours; provision of flexible working patterns.

Figure 6: Maternity leave/pay above the legal requirements
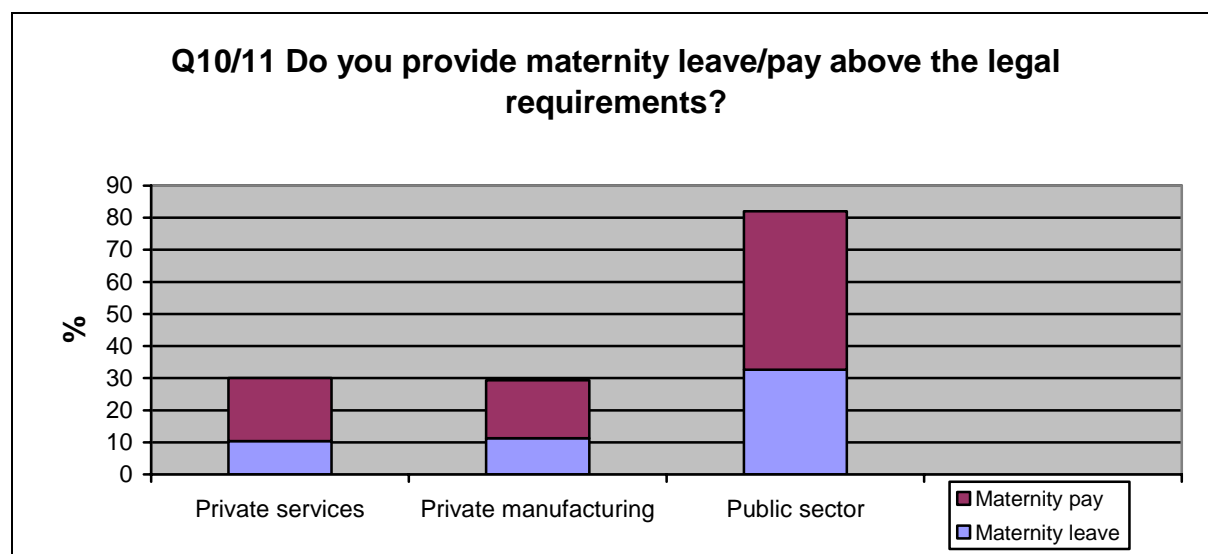
3.4 Gender monitoring

We asked respondents whether they monitored the gender profile of their workforce in the following areas: job applications, occupational categories, shortlisting, selection, ethnicity, disability, training, absence, age, promotion and grievances. Overall, gender monitoring was a minority activity. See Figure 7. Just over 1 in 5 (n = 99) respondents monitored job applications by gender, the area where most monitoring was carried out, but this dropped to just over 1 in 10 for promotion. This suggests that respondents focus on initial entry only. Furthermore, these findings are in line with those from WERS 2004: 24 per cent of all workplaces monitored recruitment by gender but just 10 per cent of workplaces monitored promotion by gender (Kersley et al, 2004).

The second most popular area for gender monitoring (18 per cent) was occupational categories, with grievances (8 per cent) the least popular. Ethnicity (monitored by 15 per cent), age and disability (14 per cent each) were rarely monitored alongside gender, so in the main respondents did not look at the extent of multiple disadvantage. As Figure 7 shows, gender monitoring was much more likely to be carried out in the public sector than the private sector.

We also asked about the monitoring of the proportion of women returning after maternity leave. Here there was much greater activity: 30 per cent (n = 132) of respondents said they did so, while 62 per cent monitored requests for flexible working.

Figure 7: Gender monitoring
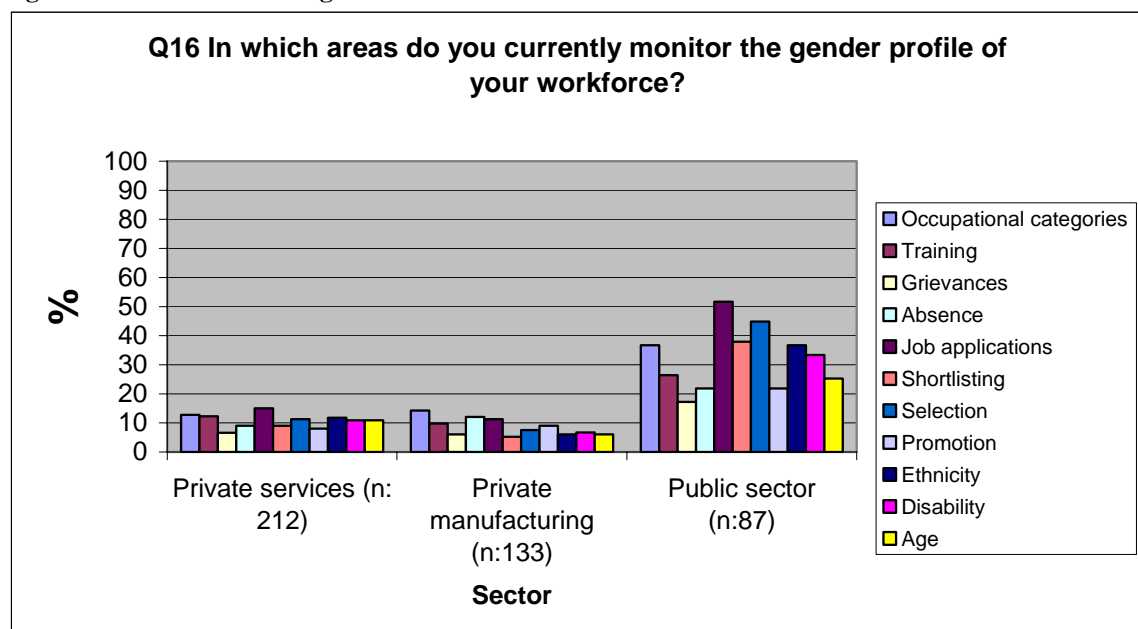
We asked organisations which had monitored requests for flexible working how many they had received. The most popular reply was two requests. Only four organisations reported having 20 requests, and 16 per cent had had none. Moreover,

in only a minority of cases were requests refused. We did not, however, attempt to ascertain whether employees knew they had a legal right to ask in certain circumstances (essentially those with a child under six years of age). A recent survey by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) found that employees were generally not aware of the right to ask (EOC, 2005a), but another survey found that 62 per cent of employees in the South East region were aware of the right to ask and that 14 per cent of employees in the South East region had made such a request over the last two years (Holt and Grainger, 2005).

As to employer responses to flexible working requests, mostly these were granted or compromises reached and two thirds reported that they had not refused any requests. These responses may perhaps indicate that the legislation has not proved to be onerous for employers, but this was further explored in the interviews. (See chapter 4, section 4.4).

3.5 Pay Issues

3.5.1. Equal Pay Reviews

Just over one third (36 per cent) of responding firms had carried out an equal pay review (EPR) in the last three years. This can be compared with the latest Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) (2005) annual reward survey which found that over half their sample of 477 organisations nationally had carried out or planned to do an EPR. This does mean, however, that 47 per cent of the CIPD sample, and 64 per cent of our sample have not carried out an EPR. Only 8 per cent of those who had conducted an equal pay review had identified gender pay gaps as a result of carrying out an EPR but of those identifying problems, nearly all made changes as a result (11 out of 13 firms). Changes made were:

- budget implications investigated;
- equal pay extended to non-teaching staff in an educational institution;
- increases in salary for certain staff, including non-teaching staff in an educational institution and technicians;
- job evaluation to be carried out.

Other steps taken were 'salaries realigned based on merit not gender' and 'pay adjusted to align with external market'. These responses suggest that those completing the questionnaire, who said that they had carried out an equal pay review, did not really understand what an EPR entailed and perhaps confused it with a pay review. This calls into question our finding that over one third of respondents had carried out an EPR.

We also found that 36 per cent of the total respondents were planning an equal pay review in the next year. Some of these may be planning a second EPR, so that we cannot conflate the responses from those who have already carried one out, with those planning to do so.

The CIPD survey found that those who had not done a review were complacent, felt that there was not a problem, and that existing pay systems were non-discriminatory (Hope, 2005). We did not ask organisations why an EPR had not been carried out. Volume 1 of this report, however, showed that the median gender pay gap in the South East region was 19 per cent in 2003, rising to 30 per cent for the highest decile of earners, and that these gaps were the highest for any English region. Not all of the gap can be attributed to discrimination, but recent research has found that only a certain proportion of the disparity between men and women's earnings can be explained by factors other than discrimination (Anderson et al, 2001; Olsen and Walby, 2004).

3.5.2 Contingent pay

Less than 1 in 5 of respondents who had performance-related-pay monitored outcomes by gender. Of those that provided bonuses, only 13 per cent looked at the gender profile of recipients. Research, however, suggests that performance pay and bonus payment schemes often disadvantage women relative to men; see, for instance, Bevan and Thompson (1992) and Wright (2004).

3.5.3 Collective bargaining

Only 18 per cent (n = 80) of respondents organisations bargained with trade unions over pay in respect of at least some of their workforce. These finding can be compared (using some caution as to comparability) with national figures from WERS for 2004, where 30 per cent of workplaces recognized trade unions for collective bargaining over pay (Kersley al 2005). This seems to indicate that the SE Region may have fewer workplaces where there is collective bargaining than nationally. This is consistent with the finding that trade union density amongst employees in the South East region was 23 per cent in 2004, compared to 29 per cent nationally (Grainger and Holt, 2005).

Further analysis of our findings indicates that 38 per cent of public sector organisations bargained with trade unions over pay in respect of at least some of their workforce, compared to 15 per cent of organisations in private manufacturing and 11 per cent in private services. Collective bargaining was also associated with size, ranging from 46 per cent of large organisations (250+) to 9 per cent of small organisations (less than 100).

Collective bargaining coverage is a factor in gender equality because research indicates that where there is collective bargaining, the dispersion of pay is lower, pay inequality is narrowed and the pay floor is raised. As women are more likely to be found in the lower reaches of the pay structure, they are more likely to benefit from the upward compression of earnings (Heery, 2000). Recently also, some trade unions, particularly Amicus, have been pressing employers to undertake equal pay reviews (Neathey et al, 2003).

3.6 Flexible Working Patterns

We asked organisations whether they offered various types of flexible working patterns. As can be seen from Table 2, by far the most popular flexible work pattern offered was part-time work. Almost 4 out of 5 firms offered this. Flexitime/ flexible working hours were offered by just under a third of the respondents, but this included both formal policies and informal arrangements. Job sharing, work at home and term-time work were sometimes offered, but career breaks were rarely offered. Shift work was mentioned by 14 respondents, likely to apply both in manufacturing for men and care work for women.

Table 3: Percentage offering flexible work options

Working Pattern	*Percentage offering*
Part-time work	79.3
Flexitime/flexible working hours	32.4
Job share	31.3
Home-office work	29.1
Term-time work	27.1
Career break	13.4
Other (shift work)	3.1

WERS (2004), which looked at workplaces in Britain, found that part-time work was available to at least some employees in 70 per cent of workplaces, i.e. a lower figure than was found in our survey, which looked at organisations in the South East region. The WERS figures, however, of 36 per cent in respect of flexitime and 26 per cent in respect of home-office work were broadly similar to the equivalent figures in our survey (Kersley et al, 2005).

We then asked organisations which had those working patterns, what percentage of their female employees and what percentage of their male employees worked them. Looking first at part-time work, about a third of respondents reported that less than 5 per cent of women worked this way, but there was also a fair spread of take-up in that 12 per cent (47 organisations) reported that 50 per cent or more of their women worked part-time. There was a clear gender split, however, especially in private services. Overall, only nine respondent organisations reported that 50 per cent or more of their male employees worked part-time and over two thirds of organisations had less than 5 per cent of their male employees using this pattern. See Figure 8.

There was little gender split in respect of other flexible working patterns. Job sharing, home-office work and career breaks were rarely used either by male or female employees. The take-up of flexitime was more widely spread, with 1 in 5 reporting that 50 per cent of their male employees and 50 per cent of their female employees were using this option. Surprisingly 23 per cent (n = 30) of organisations that provided term-time working reported that 50 per cent or more of their female employees worked term-time only, while the equivalent figure for male employees was almost the same (n = 23). This might be a reflection of the normal working pattern in educational establishments, rather than the provision of term time working in organisations whose normal activities span the entire year.

Figure 8: Part-time working by gender and sector

Q43/44a Roughly what % of women and men in your SE workplaces work part-time
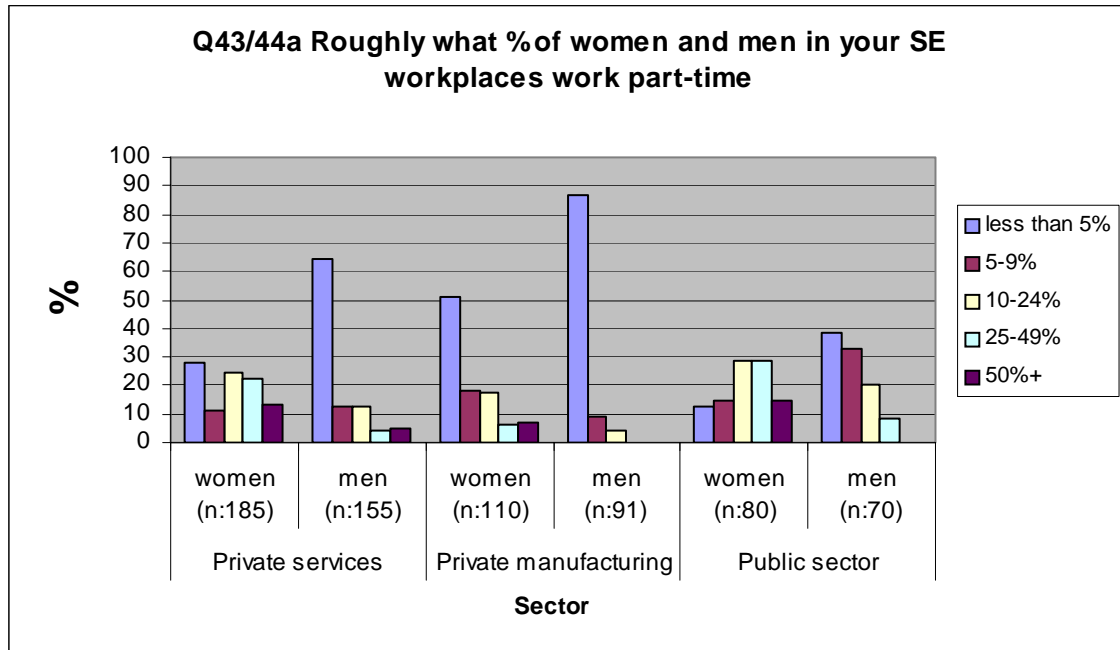
3.7 Employee Development

3.7.1 Line management training

Line managers are often responsible for the day-to-day implementation of equality policies, but research indicates that they vary in their ability and willingness to put policies into practice (see for example Collinson et al, 1990). Overall 18 per cent (78) of our respondent organisations said that they had provided line managers with formal training on gender issues in the last year, with organisations in the public sector most likely to provide such training. See Figure 9. Recent qualitative research with line managers in a large retail organisation indicated that very little diversity training had been provided to line managers (Foster and Harris, 2005). This suggests that our findings relating to the South East are not untypical of Britain as a whole.

Figure 9: Line management training

Q18 Have you provided line managers with formal training on gender issues? (n:428)
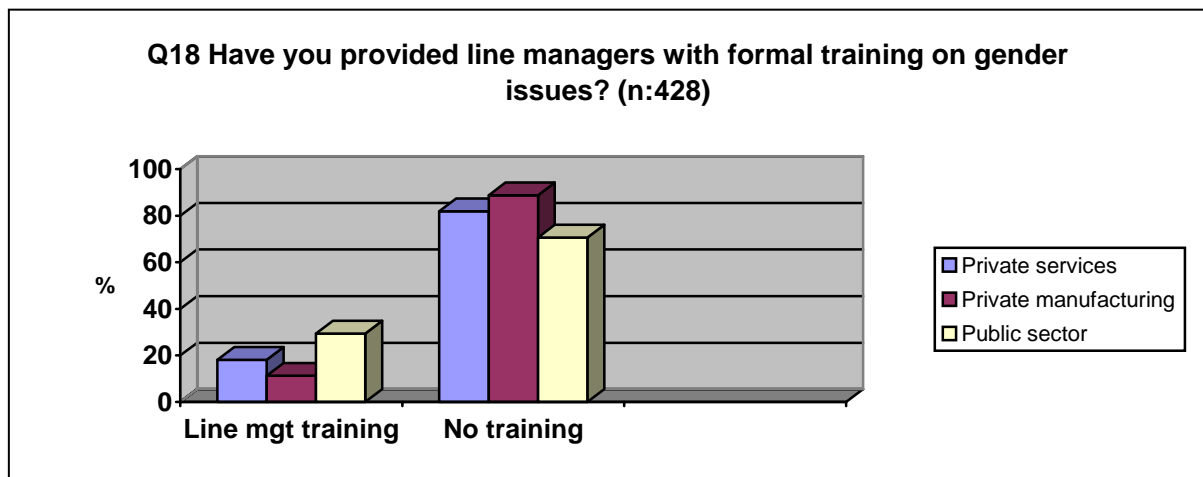
3.7.2 Breaking down barriers

We asked a number of questions about the measures organisations took to help women to advance their careers. In short, we found that few organisations (about 1 in 20) took such measures. Thus only 6 per cent (n = 26) of respondent organisations had an action plan for improving women's representation at senior levels; 6 per cent had a formal mentoring scheme for women into management; 5 per cent had numerical goals for the representation of women in management and 5 per cent had a network for female employees.

We also asked respondent organisations if they took any specific measures to encourage women to enter jobs currently filled by men and/or vice versa. 12 per cent reported that they took measures to help to break down occupational segregation. This represented 53 organisations.

We then asked those organisations what measures they took. The most popular response (n = 36) was 'advertising' which may mean that some indication of the organisation seeking to attract applicants of the shortage sex was included in job advertisements. Nine organisations visited schools, while only four provided single sex training courses or published leaflets. Other responses included visits to training colleges and universities; training line managers to use statistics about the workforce to promote diversity; and during interviews, trying to encourage women to become sales executives.

3.8 Viewpoints

3. 8.1 Attitudinal questions

Although most of our questions were designed to elicit factual information, we asked four attitudinal questions employing a Likert scale. The responses to these questions by and large indicated satisfaction that their organisations were an equal opportunity employer. Thus 72 per cent (n = 327) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that 'the culture of our organisation disadvantages working mothers'. Similarly, 69 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement 'employees who wish to get promoted in this organisation have to put in long hours'. (Research suggests that long hours disadvantage women; see Coyle, 1995).

An even larger majority (88 per cent) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that 'there is a gap between equal opportunity policies and practices in this organisation'. Furthermore, 57 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'senior managers' commitment to gender equality is strong in this organisation'.

3.8.2 Additional comments

81 comments on gender equality issues in their organisation were received from respondents, and these were analysed by content. The following main breakdown is shown in Table 3.

Table 4: Additional comments

Issue	*Number of comments*
Gender is not a problem	30
Occupational segregation of the sexes	27
Equality of pay rates	6
We are an exemplar	2
We should aim to do better	3

Each of the issues in the Table 4 will now be discussed in more detail.

3.8.3 Gender is not a problem

30 respondents commented that their human resource (HR) policies operated on merit not gender. Typical comments were: 'Everyone is treated equally regardless of sex'. 'We don't have goals, reviews etc. as men and women are just accepted as equal.' 'Gender is not an issue in this company – you get paid for the job you do, not your gender.'

If there were few women in the organisation, doubts were expressed as to the relevance of the survey. For instance one respondent said: 'Our industry does not seem to be attractive to women. Only one has applied to work in the factory in the past nine years.' Conversely if there were a good proportion of women at all hierarchical levels in an organisation, respondents often also felt that gender was no longer an issue. For example, one respondent said: 'With 66 per cent of our staff being women plus the MD and FD being women we do not feel the need for formal gender action plans and networks for women etc.'. Another said: 'We recruit female graduates as well as male ones. They are promoted on ability not gender and some (women) are proving to be stars.'

3.8.4 Segregation of the sexes

27 comments were received on segregation of the sexes at work. Construction and manufacturing involving heavy manual work were mentioned as sectors/occupations that did not attract women. Conversely social housing, education (in particular all female institutions) and the care sector were aware of the imbalance and a few were thinking about attracting more males to apply for posts, but did not mention any measures in their comments. We have shown above that proactive approaches to encourage women to enter jobs currently filled by men and/or vice versa were rare and these comments suggest that while some employers are aware of occupational segregation, they do little to rectify it. Possibly they feel that occupational and qualification choice is a matter for the education system and they can only select those who apply.

3.8.5 Other comments

Six respondents commented on equality of pay. Typical comments were 'all employees doing the same role are paid the same regardless of gender', indicating

that respondents were solely focusing on equal pay for like work, not equal pay for work of equal value.

Only two respondents considered that they were exemplars in the area of sex equality, while three respondents admitted that they could do better in this area. One was from a Japanese-owned firm and the HR manager felt that cultural factors were at play that mitigated against women. Another said that they had recently got an HR person on the Board, so that gender in the future would become a mainstream issue. These, however, were very rare comments.

Overall the comments indicated that most employers feel that gender is not a problem in their organisation now and this finding was investigated further in the interviews.

3.9 Summary and comment

The vast majority of our 454 respondent organisations had written policies on equality and diversity and most of these policies specifically covered the different equality strands, but the communication of these policies was primarily through staff handbooks and induction; there was little communication once the employee had joined the organisation. Moreover, over half did not consult their staff, either indirectly through their representatives or directly, on their equality policies. Also few organisations provided maternity leave above the statutory minima, though maternity pay above the statutory minima was somewhat more common, being provided by one in four organisations. There was very little gender monitoring for instance in respect of occupational categories, short-listing, selection, promotion and training. As to flexible working patterns, the most commonly offered and the most commonly used was part-time work, with take-up by women far exceeding take-up by men.

Just over one third of respondents said that they had carried out an equal pay review but a further question suggested that at least some respondents confused an equal pay review with a pay review. Moreover, very few organisations (about 1 in 20) took proactive measures to boost the quality and/or quantity of women's jobs. For instance few organisations had an action plan for improving women's representation at senior levels, formal mentoring schemes, numerical goals or took measures to help break down occupational segregation.

When we cross-tabulated our findings by sector (private services, private manufacturing and public sector) we found that the public sector reported having by far the most gender equality measures in place. Nevertheless, only around a third of public sector organisations, for instance, provided formal gender training for line managers during the last year or offered help with child care, with even less than having numerical goals for the representation of women at senior levels.

Similarly when we cross tabulated our findings by size, ie number of employees in the SE region (under 100; 100-249, 250+), large organisations (250+) reported having more gender equality measures in place than smaller organisations. It should be noted, however, that there is somewhat of an overlap between the public sector and large organisations: 40 per cent of public sector organisations had 250 or more

employees, compared to 26 per cent in private manufacturing and 35 per cent in private services.

Most of our questions were designed to elicit factual information about policies and practices, but we also asked four attitudinal questions employing a Likert scale. The responses to these questions indicated general satisfaction (or indeed some might argue complacency) that their organisations were an equal opportunity employer. The survey responses were explored further in interviews with those responsible for HR; see the next chapter.

4. The views of those responsible for HR

The views illustrated below are drawn from face-to-face interviews with those responsible for human resources (HR) who had previously responded to our survey, (see chapter 3). Accordingly, questions were adjusted to the questionnaire response that had been received from the interviewee. The interviews were conducted in 40 workplaces and the method of selection of the sample and the method of analysis are shown in chapter 2, while the interview topic guide is in appendix C. Some of those interviewed were dedicated HR specialists, especially in medium-sized organisations (100-249 employees), while often in organisations of 250 employees and above there was a team of HR specialists, quite often with the HR director having a seat on the board. In the smaller organisations, however, the managing director or the finance director might also be responsible for human resources. Accordingly the person's job title is shown next to the quotation used.

4.1 Approaches to equality

4.1.1 Attitudes

In the main those responsible for HR had a 'like treated as like' attitude to equality, with procedural fairness paramount, and they were confident that they did not discriminate on grounds of gender.

> *We don't focus on equality at all because we treat people equally by nature. That's just what we do and I think it would be a retrograde step to start going back and thinking about equality because then you sort of try to highlight differences and things* (Finance Director, IT).
>
> *Every applicant that comes in is treated equally. We don't put in our adverts that we don't discriminate against gender etc. etc. because we don't. It's as simple as that. We employ the best person for the job* (HR Manager, Manufacturing).
>
> *Well we treat everybody the same, I have to be honest* (HR Manager, Insurance).
>
> *We try to be fair to everybody, regardless of whether they're male or female* (HR Manager, Care).

Interviewees in the public sector were of the view that 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating' and had equality action plans focussing on measures to achieve substantive outcomes. Also, a few private sector HR managers were conscious of the need to go beyond procedural equality and were trying to influence their organisation to take further measures. Sometimes this needed dogged persistence to get the issue on to the top management agenda; in other cases there might be a champion of HR issues at top level:

> *I had equal opportunities on the agenda for three years and every year it got taken off the agenda because there was not the resource to do something and it wasn't felt to be an issue... It was quite challenging to write a business case to get the support which we did in the end. We did get a senior director to act as champion* (HR Manager, Financial Services).
>
> *Our finance director. She sits on both the group boards and we've got the UK board and she takes forward the HR issues... Certainly the work I've done in the family friendly area, she's very much supportive* (HR Manager, Agriculture).

In a few other cases those responsible for HR had considered going beyond procedural equality but had decided against it, either because there was no business case or because 'just a personal point of view, I don't feel strongly enough to be proactive'.

4.1.2 Outside influences

Interviewees in US subsidiaries commented that while priority was given to gender issues in the USA, this was not the case in the UK.

> *An action plan... it's not in the UK. It's actually more of a US thing to be honest'* (HR Manager, Private Scientific Services).
>
> *[The US parent] actually has an objective this year around diversity, not just women... They don't see it as a problem here. I think it's mainly the States quite honestly* (HR Director, Manufacturing).

Interestingly two private sector interviewees remarked that outside intervention by a public body was a spur to further action on equality.

> *We had an ALI [Adult Learning Inspectorate]. We'd never had one of those before and it was a very, very steep learning curve for us because they picked up on the fact that we don't monitor the workforce. We don't do this. We don't do that and we've started to do it* (Group HR Manager, Restaurant Chain).
>
> *So when it comes to tenders [from public sector bodies] we're being asked questions in terms you know of what monitoring do we do, what processes have we got in place to deal with sort of racial issues or equality issues* (HR Manager, Advanced Manufacturing).

The responses to our survey indicated that only four per cent of organisations had been involved in litigation in respect of the Sex Discrimination Act or the Equal Pay Act in the last three years. Not surprisingly, therefore, our interviewees did not regard the possibility of a legal claim as a spur to equality measures.

> *It's not top of the agenda because as I said I don't think we have a discrimination issue here... I can't think of an instance where someone's come up to me and said I'll put in a complaint because I'm a woman and they're treating me differently* (HR Manager, Manufacturing).

> *I feel very pessimistic about quite a lot of changes. They're not going to happen, not until something happens in law and either we get taken to court in which case we will buy it out and then amend or there's a dawning realisation that you cannot avoid change* (HR Manager, Boarding School).

4.2 Line managers

4.2.1 Attitudes

Much of the people management of employees is carried out by line managers, so their attitude to gender equality is of prime importance and some dedicated HR staff had worries about the attitudes of some of their line managers.

> *I have very specific examples of things that they have said and actions; you know just one or two individuals that really concern me* (HR Manager, Advanced Manufacturing).
>
> *In terms of attitudes, there are a couple of men who aren't as well trained in the gender stuff as me* (Training Manager, Advanced Manufacturing).
>
> *I want our men, or some of our men, to act less male chauvinistically* (Managing Director, Construction).

4.2.3 Dealing with negative attitudes

HR people were adopting a number of strategies to deal with line managers' negative attitudes. Mostly HR people were seeking to tackle negative attitudes of some by instituting training for *all* line managers and perceived this to be beneficial.

> *Their manager may possibly be a woman. Some of them have struggled with that perception... Having said that, since I've implemented several training programmes, they're far more open and receptive* (HR Manager, Food Manufacturing).

There were instances in more serious cases, however, of dismissal of the line manager concerned. A Director of a food processing company said that he had had to sack a supervisor 'who was quite good at what he did, but couldn't work with women on the same level'. Similarly, the Group HR Manager of a restaurant chain said that a chef, found after investigation to have bullied kitchen staff, was dismissed.

HR people also used their influencing skills to alter line managers' behaviour, particularly with regard to persuading them to allow some of their staff to work more flexibly. They recognised, though, that influencing attitudes was a long-term process.

> *We've got a lot of long-serving members of staff here and they're traditionalists... We have to work on them slowly, bringing them round and show them that there is benefit* (HR Manager, Insurance).
>
> *I've had to push managers before* (HR Manager, Financial Services).

4.3 Equal opportunity policies and monitoring

4.3.1 Written policies

The responses to our survey indicated that 86 per cent of respondents had a written policy on equality and/or diversity and most of these policies specifically covered the various equality strands/areas (see chapter 3). Maternity/paternity policies enjoyed the least coverage, however, and one interviewee said that he would draft a maternity policy when it was needed.

> *Well we haven't had the situation yet. If it does happen, then we will identify what is required of us* (Managing Director, Financial Services).

4.3.2 Monitoring

Just over 1 in 5 respondents to our survey monitored job applications by gender but this dropped to just over 1 in 10 for promotion (See chapter 3). Similarly only a few of our interviewees carried out any gender monitoring at all. Unusually a Director of a small organisation that employed 26 people said: 'I think, we've got to be on top of all the statistics, be it staff or machines'. Also a few respondents said that they had introduced a new electronic HR information system and were about to start monitoring.

> *We just had a new database and we're getting the system up to date so we're not currently, but we will be* (HR Manager, Financial Services).
>
> *We've now got a new on-line recruitment system coming into place this year which will be live in September 2005 which will track gender and so on* (HR Manager, Manufacturing).

Some respondents, however, admitted that they collected information but did not go further; they did not analyse the figures in order to construct an action plan.

> *I mean you're monitoring it, yes; you've got all the numbers. Then what do you do, say other than yes – we've got 80 per cent women and 20 per cent men; now what? It's knowing what to do with it* (HR Manager, Private Hospital, 200 employees).

The main reason given for not monitoring was essentially that it was not necessary because of the small size of the firm, though sometimes an interviewee used a similar rationale where the organisation was medium sized as the box below illustrates.

> *I don't monitor anything... I suppose I thought we're not big enough* (HR Manager, Manufacturing, 65 employees).
>
> *No we haven't got procedures where you monitor and things. We're not big enough to be able to while we can recall it off the top of our heads* (Finance Manager, IT, 150 employees).

Other reasons given were that it was not necessary because there had been no legal claim brought against the organisation or because monitoring was only necessary if one was to go on to target employees of one gender.

> *I know people do need systems in order to be able to back up what you do, but I think we're so well inclined towards equal opportunities. I don't think anybody brings any kind of discrimination against us. It almost seems a bit irrelevant and I know that's not a good enough reason not to do it* (HR Manager, Care Charity).
>
> *We're not specifically targeting anybody. I didn't feel there was any need.* (Manager, Care Home).

4.4 Flexible working patterns

4.4.1 The right to request

Interviewees generally felt that they had coped well with returning mothers' right to request flexible working, though one or two interviewees did not want the legal provisions to be further extended.

4.4.2 Part-time work

By and large interviewees were very positive about part-time working and it extended to employees beyond those with a legal right to request it. They thought it enhanced staff commitment and retention and that it was very short-sighted of companies to prevent or limit it. Moreover where there was seven day a week working, as the Managing Director of a Visitor Attraction said, 'you couldn't run this operation' without part-time working. Similar points were made by those responsible for HR in the Care and Insurance sectors.

> *I'd rather keep hold of them on a part-time basis than lose them altogether* (Director, Food Processing).
>
> *Sometimes it's actually been a good thing, not only in the loyalty you get from staff, but also it's helped me to save costs occasionally* (Managing Director, IT).
>
> *Our view is that we would much prefer to retain the skills on a part-time basis with flexible working, than lose them* (HR Manager, FE College).
>
> *I had a woman who applied to us for a job and she was only leaving her other job because they would not let her take her child to school and pick it up. What's the matter with them? She's only losing the end of the day and the first half in the morning. Why is it such a big deal? She was in accounts. It wasn't a key position.* (HR Manager, Manufacturing).

A few interviewees, moreover, positively encouraged applications for flexible working.

> *We did do a leaflet drop in terms of trying to encourage more working mums to join, without being specific about that. We were offering job shares and flexible hours to try to get more people in.... The other thing we thought of was mums could do week about, look after each other's kids... so that was mentioned on the leaflet* (Finance Director, IT).

A few interviewees, however, pointed to some problems with part-time working. One HR Manager, in an organisation where there was only a little part-time working, said that the US parent set a headcount for the UK subsidiary. 'You can only have so many heads and we'd rather have one full-time person for that head'. Another HR Manager said that part-time employees 'got a percentage' if they missed a Bank Holiday and that was 'an administration nightmare'. Furthermore, mostly part-time work was limited to relatively junior jobs and there was a belief by managers that senior jobs required a jobholder to work full-time and put in yet more hours on occasions.

> *From the point of view of the trustees, they seem to have very fixed ideas as to the type of person they want in the top job, possibly male* (HR Manager, Care Charity).

We did, however, find a couple of examples of flexible working at senior levels. A managing director of a small IT consultancy worked part-time, to 4.30 pm each working day (see next chapter). Also, a Head of Service post in a local authority was job shared, with the interviewee commenting that as each job sharer brought different attributes to the post, the employer benefited.

4.4.3 Working from home

In two IT companies, there were formal arrangements for working from home. More commonly though it was senior people in the organisation who occasionally worked from home on an informal basis.

> *It's something we do at a senior level informally... but where it's difficult is if you start offering it as a permanent option for people. It's all the insurance stuff and making sure the home is a safe environment and those sorts of things that we find more difficult* (People & Learning Director, Care).

4.5 Maternity, paternity and childcare

4.5.1 Current maternity/paternity legislation

Interviewees were asked how they had coped with recent improvements in the maternity/paternity legislation. Most interviewees considered that they had coped well and pointed out that they had plenty of time to plan for maternity/paternity leave, as compared to sick leave.

> *In terms of having policies and procedures in place, we've coped well. We're always ahead of the game* (Training Manager, Advanced Manufacturing).
>
> *We don't see it as a problem* (HR Manager, Private Services).

> *Yes, there are times when the role is critical, but maternity you know, you've got nine months to plan* (HR Manager, Manufacturing).
>
> *It's been pretty straight forward... Having a baby was nothing compared to what [illnesses] some people have. I had someone off with Cystic Fibrosis waiting for a heart/lung transplant. We've had [L] who's had massive corrective spinal surgery. For us to have someone go off and have a baby is peanuts. The other thing on that, maternity leave and paternity leave, if you look out there at the visitors, a lot of them are on maternity and paternity leave, so we benefit.* (Managing Director, Visitor Attraction).

Nevertheless, some interviewees displayed ambivalence.

> *Clients' expectations are paramount and the client will be upset they can't speak to their solicitor because they're not working. So it's not easy. It's not ideal but one accepts that's what we have to conform with* (Practice Manager, Solicitors).
>
> *I can probably see both sides of it. I can see that it's a benefit; that if you do that you can retain good people. However I also see that for some of the smaller businesses that can be really challenging to do* (HR Manager, Financial Services).

Moreover, two interviewees regarded the current legal provisions as too onerous.

> *It's been totally disruptive because if we lose one person there's two elements to it. First of all you lose that person. Secondly you're in total darkness for a period of six to nine months as to whether that person's going to come back or not.* (Finance Director, Manufacturing).
>
> *I have to check every box and if I'm spending time doing that I'm not spending time earning the company money* (Managing Director, Financial Services).

4.5.2 Voluntary improvements to the maternity arrangements

In our survey we found that 14 per cent of respondents said that they provided maternity *leave* above the statutory minima and 25 per cent provided maternity *pay* above the statutory minima. Accordingly, we asked those interviewees who did not provide voluntary enhancements why they did not do so. Essentially respondents replied that there was no business case for so doing.

> *I guess we truly haven't seen the need to do it* (HR Manager, Private Services).
>
> *It's a question of costs really* (Finance Director, Pub Chain).
>
> *It's fair to say that the thought has floated through my mind but hasn't got any further than that because, at the end of the day, we're running a business and the impact is significant* (Practice Manager, Solicitors).

4.5.3 Proposed changes

Some interviewees were positive about proposed changes to the maternity/paternity legislation.

> *Invariably it's easier to find somebody to cover maternity leave for 12 months than it is for six months. You question the quality of candidates sometimes that you're getting for fixed term appointments, short appointments and the longer the fixed term, the better quality of candidates* (HR Manager, Local Authority).
>
> *The majority of people if they're going to come back, they want to come back because they need the money or they come back because they want to continue with their career and they've got financial security to provide baby care... If the maternity's extended, no, I don't believe it would cause us any grief* (HR Manager, Manufacturing).

A few interviewees, however, were opposed to proposed improvements in maternity rights, with the same interviewee who found the present maternity arrangements disruptive and onerous, arguing that it would be counter-productive for women, as employers would be loath to employ them. Similarly one interviewee was opposed to improvements in the legal right to request flexible working.

> *The obligations and so forth will count against females in certain cases... You've got two people who come to you. Everything else is 100 per cent identical and basically the woman is of childbearing age, just got married. So that's in the back of your mind and it doesn't matter what the regulations or law says* (Finance Director, Manufacturing).
>
> *I think the newest plan to extend the right to have a change in working patterns considered to people [who have children] beyond the age of six will be very difficult for companies of our size* (Training Manager, Advanced Manufacturing, 75 employees).
>
> *Let the government do that if they want. I get frustrated that as a nation we are being mollycoddled to all these sorts of things* (Managing Director, Financial Services).

4.5.4 Child care

A significant number of our interviewees were looking at childcare vouchers, a new tax efficient/salary sacrifice scheme, which was just being launched by the government at the time of the interviews.

> *I think it's a retention issue, looking at the voucher system. It's tax effective as well, I believe, so that again is an incentive for staff and for the company and also we've had requests for it* (HR Manager, Insurance).

Two interviewees, both from the public sector, said they had a workplace nursery but there was more demand than places and in one small company (26 employees) the interviewee said that 'we had paid for the lady's child to attend a nursery'. Furthermore, a large private sector organisation with over 1,000 employees was potentially looking at moving to another site and 'one of the proposals would be to have something like a creche'.

By and large though, interviewees considered that they did not have the resources and/or the demand for a workplace nursery.

> *Things, like mentoring, child care doesn't enter into it at the moment. What would restrict us, I suppose, it would be the cost of things* (HR Manager, Agriculture).
>
> *We're a small business. We haven't got the* resources (Finance Director, Pub Chain).
>
> *Perhaps to have childcare, we'd have to subsidise it which we can't afford to do* (Finance Director, IT).
>
> *They've either got grown up children or no children* (HR Manager, Care whose workforce was predominantly female).

4.6 Pay

4.6.1 The basis of pay decisions

Few of the respondents to our survey (18 per cent) recognised trade unions and conducted collective bargaining over pay (see chapter 3). Similarly few of the organisations interviewed did so.

We asked those who determined pay unilaterally how their pay decisions were made. Many interviewees, even those in the larger organisations, (see, for example, the larger organisations in the box below) said that there was no formal pay structure and the market rate was a guide, but only a loose one. Also some private sector companies took account of relevant public sector collective agreements, for example those in the Care sector took NHS agreements into account and a boarding school took the awards stemming from the School Teachers' Pay Review Body into account. Against that background a new recruit often negotiated his/her starting pay.

> *It's finger in the air and by the agricultural rate. But the majority of staff, agricultural wages wouldn't apply to that, so a bit of what I was earning before, a bit of local (*HR Manager, Agriculture 37 employees plus seasonal workers).
>
> *I am a bit concerned that when somebody new comes into the organisation, you know particularly when we're doing recruitment for example, it's a bit kind of you know stick your finger in the air, see which way the wind is blowing* (HR Manager, Manufacturing, 80 employees).
>
> *There isn't a formal rates and scale structure. It's rather based on... I mean we look across departments and see where everybody else is and obviously we're influenced by NHS pay scales and what people want and what they expect to get; but no formal structure... a knee jerk reaction* (HR Manager, Care, 200 employees).
>
> *We look at what our competitors pay. We kind of go from there... There's nothing formal. There's nothing that's laid out* (HR Manager, Private Services, 250 employees).

As to pay increases once an individual started work, again market rates were a guide, together with some performance pay, often based on a mixture of individual and business performance, but the criteria were often opaque to the women employed, as chapter 5 (section 5.6) indicates.

> *All staff and to different extents have a performance bonus. So sales people... maybe 50 to 60 per cent of their overall package would be based on performance. That goes right through to the lady who greeted you at reception. She will probably have 10 per cent of her overall package based on the performance of the business* (Managing Director, IT).

4.6.2 Formalisation

A few of our interviewees had recently formalised their pay structures or were about to do so for some of their junior staff. At the same time they recognised that there were still anomalies in other areas where there was no formal pay structure.

> *Well last year we implemented a new pay structure [for the shop floor]. I prepared it, basically looking at how we compare in the labour market, a three tier pay system... Every time we recruit for the office we basically have a look at the going market rate and see how we compare with that... Yes, we have some anomalies* (HR Manager, Manufacturing).
>
> *We have a very rigid salary structure for the kitchens and the management team... At a senior level, as HR manager, I'm privileged to know everyone's salaries and there are a few anomalies that I'm in discussion with our managing director about* (Group HR Manager, Restaurant Chain).

4.6.3 Confidentiality

Where there were no formal salary structures, the organisation sought to ensure that employees did not share their pay information.

> *We always say at every opportunity that our staff are not to discuss their salaries with each other* (HR Manager, Care).
>
> *The bonuses for operations staff, they're supposed to be confidential. And then with salaried staff ... they're told it's confidential* (Finance Director, IT).
>
> *We don't broadcast what the salary levels are for the various levels* (Managing Director, Construction).

In contrast where there was a formalised pay structure, there was openness.

> *Salary ranges are published... and whilst we don't have a union, we do have a staff consultative committee* (HR Manager, Financial Services).
>
> *We have published pay scales. It's probably on the notice-board somewhere* (HR Manager, Insurance).
>
> *When we introduce a salary and grading plan [next year], I would like to publish it* (HR Manager, IT).

4.6.4 Equal Pay

There seemed to be a limited understanding of the concept of equal pay particularly among those who just had HR added on to their role of Finance Director or Managing Director. Essentially equal pay was often interpreted as solely relating to equal pay for the same or broadly similar work and not encompassing equal pay for work of equal value, with market rates 'trumping' equal pay considerations.

> *We treat people pretty equally, so in terms of their abilities there's no discrimination... There can be cases where maybe two people of equal ability, but you've had to go and recruit one out new and the market's gone up by £5,000, so you could end up paying one person £5,000 more than another one... but you can't afford to lift the other person up. So there can be instances like that which is nothing to do with sex equality* (Finance Director, IT).
> *What really matters is whether or not two people doing the same job are paid the same and we have no reason at all to pay anybody differently* (Managing Director, Financial Services).

4.6.5 Equal Pay Reviews

Just over a third of the respondents to our survey said that they had carried out an equal pay review (EPR), but we suggest that this figure should be treated with caution. This was because responses to the question asking what changes had been made as a result of an EPR indicated that at least some respondents might have equated an equal pay review with a pay review. Our interviews largely confirmed this as we asked interviewees who said they had carried out an EPR, what they had done.

> *It wasn't a gender pay review. It was a pay review regardless of gender. In a sense gender doesn't make a difference and we ignore it* (Training Manager, Advanced Manufacturing).

Interviewees who had not carried out an equal pay review were asked why they had not done so. The Finance Director of an IT company said that 'there was no discrimination so I don't think we need to put in equal pay reviews'. More commonly though, those in the private sector who understood what an equal pay review was and who had not done one, argued that it was inordinately resource intensive.

> *Well resources, who's going to do it? I don't feel like suggesting it because I'd have to do it and there's so much other stuff going on* (HR Manager, Manufacturing).
>
> *Equal pay reviews: I've tried to do one of those and I tell you what, they're a lot of effort, a huge amount of work to be done because you have to compare each individual job. So I actually think it comes down to business priorities and it's my experience that business doesn't see it as a priority unless there's a specific issue with it. So to spend – I think we costed it was going to take one FTE six months to complete an equal pay review. Companies don't have that kind of resource* (HR Manager, Financial Services).

The HR managers in the two local authorities were planning to carry out an EPR because the 'Audit Commission's going to have something to say about it if we've not completed one'. The Practice Manager at the Solicitor's firm was also planning to carry out an EPR 'because of course the perception may be totally different to the reality that you find when you've done the exercise'.

4.7 Horizontal and vertical segregation

4.7.1 Acceptance

Interviewees often readily commented on the occupational segregation (horizontal segregation) in their organisation. Many took the view that they could only recruit those who applied and if the under-represented sex did not come forward, the problem perhaps lay in the education system and/or the socialisation process.

> *It's all men [in our factory] purely because no female ever applied* (Finance Manager, Manufacturing).
>
> *We haven't got one female site employee. That's not because we don't want them, but they ain't about* (Managing Director, Construction).
>
> *It is predominantly male orientated. There's no rhyme or reason* (HR Manager, Food Manufacturing).

Unusually one interviewee thought that the reason for occupational segregation was biological.

> *It's probably left brain/right brain, natural tendencies... men will come out with a much higher proportion on one side and women will come out with a much higher proportion on the other side and the side that men have a much higher proportion is probably more geared up for IT* (Finance Manager, IT).

Some interviewees were of the view that men did not apply in the predominantly female Care sector because of the relatively low pay.

> *You know we don't particularly pay well so you know you end up with more women in part-time roles* (HR Manager, Private Hospital).

4.7.2 Glass Ceilings

Interviewees were asked whether they thought there were barriers preventing women reaching the top in their organisation. Essentially responses fell into four areas: first there was denial that there was a glass ceiling. Interviewees said that there were no identifiable barriers, though some noted that nevertheless the most senior positions were currently male-dominated.

> *They can go right to the top but all the executive directors and the chief executive are male* (HR Manager, Financial Services).

> *What my manager said to me was that he did think that the company has a positive attitude towards women in more senior roles, but then it actually comes down to looking at the Board of Directors and there's not a single woman there* (HR Manager, Manufacturing).

Secondly, some interviewees thought that women, by seeking to avoid long hours or by working part-time, limited their career potential.

> *Women opt out when they have children, have different priorities and you come back to the workforce and you don't want to do those long hours ... and hobnob with the right people* (HR Manager, Care).
>
> *Being part-time yes, I think it limits you to where you can go* (HR Manager, Pensions Services).
>
> *If you work full-time there's a greater opportunity to get promoted and I think that's because the business, rightly or wrongly, carries the view that jobs at a certain level from a business perspective need you to be there full-time* (HR Manager, Insurance).

Another reason given by some interviewees for women's failure to reach the top was that it was very difficult to change the gender profile of the workforce because promotion opportunities were limited.

> *I can't think of a second tier officer off-hand, one that's possibly turned over in the last 10 years. So the opportunity to appoint people, just the opportunity, hasn't arisen* (HR Manager, Local Authority).
>
> *It's got nothing to do with men and women. The trouble that you have is you can't keep growing the top layer... Promotion is not attributable to whether someone's male or female. It's their ability to do the job, but also to the structure of the firm* (Practice Manager, Solicitors).

Fourthly, some said that because few women entered the organisation at a junior level, women were not represented at the top.

> *Because there are not as many women that go to the sciences, we've had a hard time coming up with people... So then that starts to affect how many women can go into senior management, how many women can go into executive positions, because it's very limited if you can't recruit a lot or an equal amount at the bottom* (HR Manager, Private Scientific Services).

Finally, one interviewee, a Finance Manager in construction, made it clear that she would no longer recruit female engineers. She said that the firm had had a couple of female trainee engineers but they had not been able to cope with all-male construction sites so she 'discontinued that'.

4.8 Summary and comment

In the main our private sector interviewees demonstrated a limited view of equality:
- *Equality was equated with procedural fairness.*

- *Equal pay was equated with equal pay for like work, not equal pay for work of equal value.*
- *Equal pay reviews were sometimes equated with pay reviews.*
- *Flexible working patterns were generally equated with part-time work for the less senior positions.*
- *Help with child care tended to be equated with the new voucher scheme.*

By and large even medium-sized firms considered that monitoring was not necessary because they were not large enough. Also they felt that women did not reach the top, not because of organisational policies and practices, but because women wanted to work limited hours. Other findings were that:

- o *by and large interviewees had coped well with family friendly legislation, but some voiced concerns about proposed extensions to rights;*
- o *the business case was rarely a spur to equality measures, but legal provisions were.*

Progressive views on equality could not be equated with the sex or the specific role of the interviewee, or the size of the organisation. For instance a male Managing Director of a small organisation in Financial Services had less than progressive views, as did a female Finance Manager in IT and a female HR Manager working for a Care Charity. Similarly, progressive views were held by a female HR Manager in Financial Services and a male Managing Director of a food processing company. In the latter case, the company was small (26 employees) and an HR consultancy and a legal firm were contracted to handle more difficult issues where necessary.

Progressive views on equality, however, were associated the public sector. All four interviewees from public sector organisations not only held progressive views, but also had comprehensive action plans aimed at achieving substantive equality outcomes, indicating that they had moved beyond procedural or 'treating like as like' equality. The challenge in the South East is to spread a more ambitious view of sex equality amongst employers and to gradually move organisations from what Cockburn (1989) calls a short equality agenda to a more transformative long agenda.

5. The views of women

The views of women illustrated below are drawn from 74 interviews at 40 workplaces in the South East region that were conducted with both junior and senior women (defined by their position in the organisation). Their roles varied from company directors to catering and care assistants and encompassed a range of occupations and specialisms. The selection of the sample is explained in chapter 2, while interview topic guides are shown in appendix C . An analysis of the taped and transcribed interviews revealed some broad themes which are discussed below.

5.1 Selection of job

5.1.1 Background

Very many of our interviewees had had a varied background before embarking on their present job. For instance a HR Director's previous jobs included working as a PA to a property developer doing 'everything from buying the teabags to ordering company cars', helping her then husband run a business, briefly working as a computer programmer and working as an administrator in an IT company. A Receptionist in a Care Home had been a technical insulator and cartographer before she was married. She had taken time out of the labour market when her children were young but since then had worked as an administrator in insurance, as a gardener and as a carpet cleaner. A Matron at a Boarding School had previously done secretarial work, lived and worked in a religious community, organised activities for the elderly in a nursing home, worked as a home help and 'enjoyed everything that I've done'. A Purchase Administrator in manufacturing had previously worked as a sales assistant, a clothes shop manager, a waitress, on the deli-counter in a supermarket and as manager of a Mexican restaurant.

Just a few women had entered into non-traditional fields and sometimes they had been influenced by a parental role model. For instance an interviewee who was a manager in an IT company said that her mum, a computer programmer, was 'a bit of an inspiration'. Miller at al (2004:42) cite research in the UK and Australia which found that the mother's attitude 'influences the development of favourable attitudes towards an occupational area'. Another had a father who was a lorry driver, who encouraged his daughter to enter the motor parts trade, a male-dominated sector.

Another interviewee in a senior position in IT had first become an engineer, saying that her father had been an engineer. Another interviewee who had helped 'Dad around the house' became an apprentice, but she 'found it quite difficult working with so many men… me and 49 men'. Partly because of that and partly because she was 'struggling with the college work', she transferred to administration.

Interviewees who had embarked on non-traditional jobs, however, were very much the exception and horizontal and vertical segregation by gender was common. In

many manufacturing workplaces the factory was entirely male and the office was mainly female administrators with male directors. In care, the staff was mainly female.

> *If you take the people that are out on the factory floor, we've got one female, but that isn't because we don't like having women out on the floor. There just doesn't seem to be very many women applying for those types of roles... If you look at HR, the HR team are female* (HR Administrator, Manufacturing).
>
> *I can't think of a man doing this job* (Receptionist, Care Home).
>
> *I was at a meeting today... marketing... and I was the only woman there which I find really depressing* (Marketing Manager, Specialist Services).

Managers argued that applicants from the minority sex did not come forward, but as chapter 4 shows, employers rarely took measures to encourage such applications. Moreover, a manager of a care home for the elderly said that because the residents were mainly female, they would not want men to perform personal care for them. A manager in a construction company said that they had recruited female trainee engineers, but they were not 'strong enough' to handle matters in the all male construction sites, so the company no longer recruited such women.

5.1.2 Serendipitous Careers

Some of our interviewees, especially those in finance, had deliberately chosen their career specialism. Often though, women were in their present job by chance. This was especially, but not solely, the case in respect of human resources and IT. Some had begun their work lives in support or administrative roles, where there is no direct career ladder into technical or managerial work.

> *I got into computing completely by accident from the retail side of things at W. H. Smiths. When they were implementing their point of sales system, I got trained up to train people in other stores* (Director of Professional Services, IT).
>
> *I came down to act as Senior Administrator within the training function. What actually happened was on the first day the then manager announced that he was relocating … to leave me to run the training department on my own* (HR Director, IT)
>
> *I started by going into secretarial/administration. There was an assistant office manager role... HR and office management. So I kind of fell into it really.* (HR Manager, Solicitors).

5.2 Selection of Employer

5.2.1 Location

Some women interviewed said that a key factor in their choice of employer was location. Even though they knew that they might earn more if they worked in central London, they had chosen an employer near their home as this entailed less commuting time, making it easier to combine work with domestic responsibilities.

For instance a Finance Manager working for an employer in Surrey, whose son suffered from haemophilia, had chosen her employer so that she could be within 10 minutes drive of her son's school if an emergency arose, rather than earn more money in central London. Choice of employer because of location, however, was not limited to this case. See the box below for further examples.

Anderson et al (2001) point out that women who have location restrictions will have a smaller pool of jobs from which they may choose. Moreover, their analysis of Labour Force Survey data indicated that difference in men's and women's travel-to-work-times accounted for one percentage point in the gender pay gap.

> *So really, when I look for a job, it has got to be within a certain location* (Administrator, Financial Service).
>
> *I chose jobs that were based close to home; so I restricted myself in doing that but that was my choice... If I'd gone to work in London I could probably have had a better career, but I wouldn't have been able to get home till 8 o'clock and that causes conflicts* (PA, Electronics).
>
> *I chose [---] partly because it was closer to home to be quite truthful* (Project Manager, IT).

5.2.2 Recruitment by word of mouth

The Equal Opportunities Commission's Code of Practice warns against word of mouth recruitment, because it 'may unnecessarily restrict the choice of applicants available (EOC, 1985). The method should be avoided in a workforce predominantly of one sex, if in practice it prevents members of the opposite sex applying'. Yet interviewees in assembly manufacturing, where the workers were predominantly female had obtained their jobs by word of mouth recruitment. This type of recruitment method appeared to be common in the smaller workplaces we visited.

> *I was living at home at the time... Not doing anything. Mum worked here. I had a phone call from her saying Karen, there's a job going here. Get yourself up for an interview. So I did. If you introduced someone you used to get a bonus of £50. We encourage family* (Production Co-ordinator, Manufacturing).
>
> *She worked here on nights my mum did and she got me the job here, so I've worked all the way up* (Quality Inspector, Manufacturing).

5.2.3 Public sector

Some interviewees recognised that the public sector was a better employer for women with childcare responsibilities than the private sector. Indeed one interviewee who had formerly worked for the Civil Service and at the time of the interview worked for a firm of solicitors said that if she were thinking of having a family she 'would definitely change jobs just before'.

> *I think local government is pretty good and I think that's why I'm here... It's the one area where women are beginning to rise up* (Policy Manager, Local Authority).

5.3 Career progression

5.3.1 Training and Development

All the female employees, whose employer had supported their training, voiced their gratitude and said how helpful it had been in their career development.

> *They pay for my course. They pay for my exam fees and everything like that and they give me half a day off each week [to attend College]* (Payments Officer, Care).
>
> *They've helped me with training and what have you... They're very proactive* (Customer Services Advisor, Project Management Consultants).
>
> *When I came into the organisation I wanted to do my MBA and I've nearly finished now. They paid part and I paid part* (Quality Manager, Private Medical Clinic).

One interviewee, whose employer was not prepared to help her out with her training for the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT), had deliberately sought out and obtained employment elsewhere explicitly so that she would receive paid day release for training. Training was especially valued by women where it enabled them to move out of administration into technical or managerial posts. For instance a personnel/training officer at a Boarding School, who had been PA to the head, 'was given a day off a week' to take her Certificate in Personnel Practice and then 'was given a new title and remunerated appropriately'.

Managers in some organisations realised that training was a win/win scenario, i.e. it benefited the organisation as well as the employee.

> *Your service is only as good as your staff and if you give them thorough training.... We're just introducing some new stuff this year... We couldn't be more committed I don't think ... I believe people will stay with us for a longer period of time as a result of the fact that they do receive proper training* (Operations Director, Restaurant Chain).

Sometimes, though, interviewees complained about the lack of training given. For instance a manager in IT said that training 'tends to be something in this company that certainly gets pushed to the bottom of the pile' and an administrator in a pub chain said: 'there's no sense of value put on, I suppose, learning basically'.

A team leader in manufacturing who had been on some internal courses which she had found useful, said that these were residential courses. As she had a baby and a five year old child 'that could be a bit of a struggle'. A further interviewee (a marketing manager) voiced some resentment that she had not been selected for a 12 day training course in the USA because, she later found out, it had been assumed that she would not want to go on it because she had a young child, though in fact she could probably have made child-care arrangements. Assumptions such as these are

barriers to women's advancement, as women fail to acquire the necessary skills. This also applies in terms of workplace learning where women are 'protected' in a paternalistic way from certain experiences. For example an agricultural firm had some managers who excluded women from experiencing the dirtier jobs, or training for tractor driving.

5.3.2 Promotion

Informal career progression processes are to be found in the private sector as the examples in the box below show. It is commonly held that such informal practices may operate in a discriminatory way. Our interviews, however, suggested that this sometimes worked to women's benefit and that, unless asked, these women would not have had the confidence to put themselves forward. As one interviewee (a chief executive) said: I think a lot of women undersell themselves and don't actually apply for the next senior job'. Another interviewee in another workplace bore this out. She was a food technician, who was offered the assistant manager's job by the company's owner and 'really did have to think do I want to take this on'. When later the manager's job became vacant, it was advertised externally and the woman had the confidence to apply and was selected out of a shortlist of six.

> *I don't know why I was chosen as auditor. I suppose Ian asked me* (Auditor, Manufacturing).
>
> *About a year later the HR administration director decided he wanted to retire, so they said to me would I like to do it* (Practice Manager, Solicitors).
>
> *I've never had to apply for jobs here. I've always been approached* (HR Administrator, Manufacturing).

In some cases, such was the informality that there was not even any promotion, rather the employee took on an extra skill and then received enhanced pay.

> *Karen asked me if I wanted to learn that and I said 'well yes; I'll give it a go'… sort of an extra skill as such, so I do get an extra amount of money* (Factory Operative, Manufacturing).
>
> *The job just grew* (Supervisor, Pub Chain).
>
> *I sort of came in purely as [IT] support… I've sort of worked my way through to having my own systems to look after. I was just asked to* (IT Applications Engineer, Advanced Manufacturing).
>
> *Certainly it wasn't formal, sort of you're going to be interviewed for this position or anything like that. It was more of an evolvement really.* (Export Manager, Manufacturing, formerly the Export Director's assistant).
>
> *I just got singled out. It was quite good… All of a sudden I'm given something else and it just went on like that* (Production Controller, Manufacturing).

By and large women in administration could not see any career ladder. The main examples that this research uncovered were women being promoted to HR from administration. It was rare to be promoted from administration to a more technical

job, though a few instances in IT were found. One female administrator in an IT company moved to project management. She explained that when she noticed that a job had been advertised externally she went and spoke to HR. She was selected and received training to compensate for her lack of technical skills and it was 'a great career opportunity'. Another female administrator in the same company was waiting to hear if her application for marketing had been successful.

> *If you're an administrator, you're an administrator; to actually move on and become a sales person; this is the first time where there's been an opportunity ....They're very much for promoting within, to them bringing someone from the outside costs them a lot more money than to promote someone from within (Administrator, IT).*

5.3.3 Factors in success

While recognising that training and luck were important ingredients of career success, virtually all the interviewees who had reached a senior position thought that the major factor in their success had been their determination to succeed, allied with a degree of confidence.

> *Confidence, willpower* (HR Manager, Financial Services).
>
> *Right place at the right time but clearly I have worked very hard* (Operations Director, Restaurant chain).
>
> *A positive attitude towards the job* (Sales Administrator, Advanced Manufacturing).
>
> *I think it's my personality really* (Supervisor, Pub Chain).
>
> *I suppose having confidence in myself* (Quality Manager, Private Medical Clinic).

Another key factor for women with children who worked full-time was the help with childcare received from parents and/or other close relatives.

> *My father was the principal child care person because he got made redundant at 63* (Finance Manager, Food Manufacturer).
>
> *My parents now live in Italy, so we go out now [in the summer] for two weeks and my son then stays for four weeks and my mum and dad bring him back. My son loves it... and luckily I've still got my aunt here so far as picking him up from school and bits and bobs like that* (Support Engineer, Advanced Manufacturing).

Additionally some women thought that the key factor in their success had been the qualifications obtained, whether or not they had been given support from their employer.

> *The most important thing for me to achieve it was getting the qualification... that's got to be the most important thing* (Estates Manager, Local Authority, who received paid day release).

> *The Certificate in Management altered my life and really made me very, very aware, a much bigger picture* (Quality Assurance Manager who studied on an open learning basis in her own time).

5.3.4 Negative Factors

A few interviewees reported that they had been held back, or suspected that they were being held back, because they were women and/or had had children.

> *I used to work for [--]... I had done exceptionally well, got exceptionally good reports and, had I been a man, I would have been promoted earlier.* (Chief Executive, Care).
>
> *I think always at the back of somebody's mind is – shall we employ a woman? Is she going to be wanting a family as opposed to a man. I think that's probably in any workplace* (Secretary, FE College).
>
> *Since I've been back from maternity leave... there's a little bit like being written off a bit, but that is there, definitely* (Marketing Manager, Specialist Services).

On the other hand a Sales Administration Manager in Advanced Manufacturing said that the company knew she 'was actually trying to start a baby' and that did not affect her promotion chances in any way.

5.4 Flexible work patterns

5.4.1 Availability

Part-time interviewees were extremely grateful that their employer allowed them to work reduced hours. In nearly (but not every) case, female employees worked part-time because of their childcare responsibilities. A few interviewees in IT companies enabled home-working for staff – 'for them it's brilliant'.

> *A company like this is extremely flexible. They know they need to be flexible. They've allowed me to work the hours that I wanted to work at the times I wanted to work. If I went to another job I'd find it difficult* (Administrator IT).
>
> *I couldn't see them being any more flexible than they are, because they really are flexible* (Gardener, Tourist Attraction).
>
> *That's the good point of a job here; flexible* (Data Entrant, IT).
>
> *They were actually very good with me in all of that in changing to doing job-share, full-time and now four days a week* (Assembly worker, Manufacturing).

Employers also recognised that they had to offer flexible working patterns if they wished to retain staff. 'If you're not, they'll vote with their feet' said a manager.

Female employees were also extremely grateful that they were allowed to vary their hours in an emergency, or for a special occasion.

> *They let me work from home when my child was sick* (Project Manager, IT).
>
> *When I had domestic problems with my father they let me have a lot of paid time off that is beyond the rules* (Administrator, Manufacturing).
>
> *I don't think I could work for someone if I didn't have flexible hours. I had, for example, my son's assembly the other day at school and I knew that it was absolutely fine to come in at 11.00* (Policy Manager, Local Authority).
>
> *I've got my daughter's school play on Thursday... so I'm going to come in earlier so I can do my hours, so it's very flexible* (Administrator, Financial Services)

However, not all interviewees were given such flexibility when their child was sick. Furthermore, one interviewee said that when she was offered a senior job at a local authority, she asked if she could work four days a week for the first six months (i.e. till her child started school). This was refused as 'it would set a precedent', so she did not take the job. Another interviewee said that in her workplace it was up to the line manager whether or not flexibility was permitted. Her previous line manager had been 'absolutely brilliant' and allowed her to vary her hours according to her husband's shifts. Her present line manager was not accommodating. 'Different managers are different.'

Two interviewees complained that the burden of staying at home fell on a female employee, not a man, and that that was unfair.

> *Sometimes you wish they'd do flexible for men... He would be docked pay straight away if the school phoned him up and he had to go and pick up a child. It's ridiculous.* (Administrator, Advanced Manufacturing).
>
> *I always keep five days holiday throughout the year, just in case I need to; in case [my son's] off sick... Last year when my husband came home I would then come in here and I'd be here till 8 at night... I just felt I had to show them that OK fine – I have got a sick son but I can come in... The blokes don't do that because their wives are looking after their children* (Support Engineer, IT).

5.4.2 Pros and cons of part-time work

Hakim (1991, 2002) employing preference theory, divides women into three ideal types: home centred women whose priority is family life, adaptive women who prefer to combine work and family without giving a fixed priority to either and work centred women whose family life is fitted round their work. The part-time women we interviewed tended to fall into Hakim's 'adaptive' type. They welcomed the

opportunity to work reduced hours because it enabled them to spend time both with their children and at work. See the box below.

> *I work part-time actually and I have a little boy to look after... I'm lucky to work part-time and I like that balance* (Export Manager, Manufacturing).
>
> *It's just nice to be able to balance the two. You feel that you're not neglecting the home and also to be able to come out and help others as well* (Finance Assistant, Care).
>
> *I like to keep the balance between work and the family commitments* (Data Entrant, IT).
>
> *I think I'm lucky in that I've got exactly what I like, because I've got my work life. I've got my home life, my family life* (Team Leader, Manufacturing).

On the other hand, these women were of the view (whether rightly or wrongly) that it would be well nigh impossible to do the job above theirs on a part-time basis and/or that decision makers would not countenance a more senior job being filled on a part-time basis. This echoes the findings of Smithson et al (2004) in respect of part-time accountants. Also Coyle (1995: 60) in her research found that women 'have to make a stark choice between their careers and their families' and where women worked reduced hours 'those that were doing so knew that it signalled death to any further advancement'. In Davis v Shropshire County Council, however, a part-time teacher was refused an interview for a head of year post because the employer said that the post-holder had to work full-time, but the employment tribunal held that the teacher was discriminated against on the grounds of sex and part-time status (IDS, 2005).

> *I could not get promoted to deputy on part-time work* (Gardener, Tourist Attraction).
>
> *The next stage up was like a team leader, supervisor, that type of thing, but because I worked part-time [9 to 2.30, Monday to Friday]... that was the barrier* (Administrator, Financial Services).
>
> *It's been suggested to me that to be taken seriously I would need to do at least an extra day a week* (Admin Assistant, Local Authority who works 2½ days a week).

Accordingly, some women managers interviewed said they had deliberately rejected the option of part-time work even though they had young children.

> *I don't think I could do the job I'm doing like that [part-time]* (Marketing Manager, Specialist Services).
>
> *You cannot do a senior management job if you're not there all the time* (Finance Manager, Food Manufacturing).

Even some women who worked full-time but wanted flexibility occasionally, 'for instance to leave a bit earlier at half-term' felt that they could not ask for promotion. A Chief Executive, who was the owner's daughter, however, worked part-time, (every day with reduced hours) but she recognised that there were problems.

> *I'm part-time... It's unusual. It also doesn't work very well... you're in the middle of a discussion... it gets to 4.30 and I have to say, 'I'm terribly sorry; the nursery's about to close. It was really interesting and I really need to be involved with this, but someone else is going to have to take notes...' I don't think if I wasn't the owner's daughter, he would put up with it.* (Chief Executive, IT).

5.5 Harassment, exclusion, culture

5.5.1 Harassment

Interviewees rarely reported serious harassment and where they did so, this tended to be with their previous employer and rather than voice a complaint they had voted with their feet, and sought a more woman-friendly employer.

> *The one that I worked at before... that company was horrible; there was harassment all over the place: rudeness, lewdness, perversions everything going on. It was absolutely horrible... They might promote women because they're pretty or they've got large breasts. I got bullied* (Administrator, IT).

In their present jobs, women of managerial status reported problems dealing with male subordinates or males at the equivalent level because of their sex, but they had refused to let that put them off their stride. In some cases the female managers had not been supported by their boss, but in one other case the female manager had. The Wainwright Trust (2002) recommends that dealing with such problems should not be left to the particular woman, but should be a matter for the most senior management.

> *Some time ago there were some comments and I mentioned this to [my boss]. He asked whether he should have a word, but I said 'no'. That person is now on long term sick. There are a few comments now but I ignore them. I take no notice* (Finance Manager, Manufacturing).
>
> *It's a very male orientated culture. You know I have to deal with all the managers, male managers and sometimes it's difficult* (Production Co-ordinator, Manufacturing).
>
> *Sometimes you feel it when you ask someone to do something; it's obvious because you're a woman; sometimes I feel that they don't want to take orders. The reaction's different. If I was a man...* (Design Engineer, Construction).
>
> *The reason I was given the title of director was because I was working with a particularly difficult gentleman at the time... He didn't take kindly to me being his boss. So the owner of the business decided that if I had the title of director, that it would obviously make things very clear who was in charge. Certain nationalities don't like working for women, I think perhaps you know, European countries where it's very much a man's world* (Operations Director, Restaurant chain).

5.5.2 Corporate Culture

Commonly interviewees who worked in a predominantly male area reported an exclusionary culture that made them feel uncomfortable. Maddock and Parkin (1994)

call this locker room culture where men exclude women by talking and joking about male preoccupations such as sex and sport.

> *I wouldn't say it's harassment. I would definitely say there's a male sense of humour in the office: attractive ladies that were at the gym, women drivers and things like that and mums* (Marine Geophysicist, Specialist Services).
>
> *You know you have to sort of turn your ears down a bit... Well you know, just office banter, that kind of thing. You couldn't be too sensitive I don't think working where I do* (Technical Accounts Manager, IT).

Some of the more senior women operating in a male environment felt that they were sometimes stereotyped, regardless of their status, with men always assuming that they were junior.

> *They have an equal opportunity policy but you know that if you're sat next to a bloke and wanted someone to get the coffee, you'd be asked to do it... it's an instantaneous decision* (Finance Manager, Food Manufacturer).
>
> *I'll be in a meeting and I'll be the only female and I may be more senior than other people in there and I'll get asked to make the tea* (Estate Services Manager, Local Authority).
>
> *I've had instances where I was a technical consultant and I've gone out and project managers have ignored me or always asked a male counterpart* (Head of Service Delivery, IT)
>
> *When I first started marketing to oil companies, I was getting awful comments [from corporate customers] like you are the receptionist. Really outrageous remarks but I stuck to it. But now of course I'm quite well known.* (Marketing Manager, Specialist Services).

Others, however, felt that this was not a handicap and being the only female had its advantages in that they stood out and were noticed.

> *Within Europe I'm the only woman [in the company in my type of job]. It gives me a bit of a push* (Support Engineer, Advanced Manufacturing).
>
> *I'm a qualified mechanical engineer... I spent 10 years designing and developing internal combustion engineers... It's high profile. You make a mistake; people will know about it. Equally if you do something well, people will know about it* (Chief Executive, IT).

5.5.3 Long hours

Women without children or with children who were grown up were often prepared to work long hours.

> *I don't have to. Nobody sits over me, but I work very long hours* (Manager FE College, grown-up children).

> *I personally put in long hours* (HR Manager, Advanced Manufacturing, grown up children).
>
> *You need to get the work done to get the promotion, to get the recognition and then I do long hours to do that. Occasionally I work the odd Sunday afternoon. I enjoy the job, so I don't mind* (Head of Service Delivery, IT, no children).
>
> *I don't have children. I think if I'd children I would find it more difficult* (Chief Executive, Care).

Occasionally women resented this. One woman, despite the fact that her children were grown up, had left one public house chain to join another because of the quality of life. Her previous job, unlike her present job, had involved a lot of travelling and long hours. Similarly, a manager for a restaurant chain had decided that she no longer wanted to manage a restaurant because of the long hours/seven days a week working that the job entailed. She said that she 'wanted a bit more social life and I went to the Directors and said I don't want to leave but I can't do it [long hours] any more'. They responded by creating a job for her as recruitment manager and sponsored her day release training.

Women with children were unhappy about working long hours. An administrative assistant in agriculture said that she had given up her job as a manager of a Travel Agency because of the long hours: 'I had my little girl, my daughter and I didn't want to work weekends. I just wanted my 9 to 5 Monday to Friday job'. A local authority manager with young children said that she had to work long hours because councillors had evening meetings. A PA who worked for a Japanese owned company criticised the Asian long hours culture – see the box below.

> *It's very much a Japanese culture to work long hours whether you're doing any work or not. I used to work for a very small company run by two Chinese gentlemen and you were expected to work long hours and they weren't sympathetic if you had to go because of the children and that was the worst I've ever experienced* (PA, Advanced Manufacturing).

5.6 Pay issues

Where there was collective bargaining, employees knew how their pay related to others (see the box below) and an accountancy assistant who had formerly worked in a car dealership but now worked in a local authority contrasted the 'structured pay scales' of her present employer with her previous employer where 'it was kind of what they feel like paying you at the time really'.

> *Pay is set by HR and Unison so I more or less know what other HCAs get* (Health Care Assistant, Private Care Home).
>
> *Certainly everybody knows APT&C and they know that all the jobs are advertised... within a particular scale* (Manager, Further Education College).

Where there was no collective bargaining, and this applied to the majority of organisations visited, there was widespread ignorance of what others earned.

> *Pay information is strictly private* (Team leader, Manufacturing).
>
> *I don't know what other managers earn* (Manager, IT).
>
> *I think [my pay] is similar but it's not something that is openly discussed* (Finance Administrator, Private Medicine).

Moreover, this extended to ignorance about the basis on which pay was determined. A compliance officer at a firm of solicitors, commenting on the lack of knowledge of how the pay system worked, said she was 'stunned' when she asked for a pay rise and received 25 per cent. She was grateful for the rise but had no idea at all as to how it had been calculated.

Although some women did not feel that what they earned was less than their male equivalents (though they usually had no objective evidence), a few other women interviewed felt that they did. Most of these women had dependent children and were grateful for the flexibilities in working hours that their boss allowed them and therefore none of them were prepared to rock the boat and ask for equal pay.

> *Mine's definitely slightly lower. I can't prove it ... I've no idea. I might be wrong* (Marketing Manager, Specialist Services).
>
> *When I started, I succeeded a man who was paid more than me. Men would definitely earn more than me* (Finance Manager, Manufacturing).
>
> *I would imagine the pay is still higher for men. I get that feeling* (PA, Advanced Manufacturing).
>
> *Not on a par by a long stretch* (HR director, IT).

In one case a male 'production manager' and a male 'production controller' had been made redundant and the two jobs were amalgamated and filled by the redundant production manager's wife, who became 'production co-ordinator'. She said that when she talked to her husband about what she was doing 'he says I used to do that. He knows what I'm getting paid. That's when it gets difficult…' She said that she had once threatened to give in her notice and she was offered more money but three years into the job she still earned less than her husband had done.

5.7 What should be done?

Many interviewees thought that childcare should be provided and that it would have to be provided by the government, because employers would not do it.

> *I've got some friends who haven't gone back to work, merely because of child care costs* (Team Leader, Manufacturing).

> *I think the government should do a lot more for mothers with children because it's now very expensive to pay for child care. Hardly any employers provide nurseries... That's what holds women back.* (Kitchen Worker, Care).
>
> *I've often thought actually that the government doesn't help the situation [child care] much* (Manager, Manufacturing).
>
> *Men need it as well. There's a little man down our road who's just lost his wife, got four children... He's got to give up his job. Now we need more nursery places* (Manager, Care).

Interviewees praised the very few places where there was a workplace nursery, for instance at a local authority, and a PA in Advanced Manufacturing who had two children said that if her employer had a workplace nursery she would have gone on 'to have more children!'.

Only one interviewee mentioned that the organisation should support women only networks because as a Care Home Manager remarked: 'most women bond better, don't they?' Interviewees tended to look outside their employing organisation for networks and said this was not to do with gender, but provided them with communities of practice. Informal networks of student cohorts, branches of the Chartered Institute of Personal and Development and Women in Business were among networks mentioned by interviewees.

> *In this industry, it's sort of incestuous and you do tend to sort of make friends. So a lot of my friends are within the industry, even though they may be working for other companies* (Manager, Restaurant chain).

Additionally, a couple of interviewees thought the organisation should do more to push women forward, comparing their present organisation unfavourably with their previous organisation, see box, but this was very much the minority.

> *Where I worked before... they were actually actively pushing women forward, trying to get equality in the number of male and female partners. I still talk to people there and they're still getting promoted whether they've got children, whether they're pregnant, they still get promotion. I'm not sure the same would happen here* (Finance Manager, Advanced Manufacturing).
>
> *When I was at [XXX] they were starting to promote women higher up the ladder than they'd been before. I presume their HR department was pushing them to do that* (Supervisor, Pub Chain).

5.8 Summary and comment

Chance seemed to have played a large part in many interviewees' work histories and where they had reached senior positions they mainly ascribed their success to hard work, luck and to a lesser extent training. Furthermore, many of our interviewees seemed to have struck an implicit bargain with their employer. For example:
- *part-time work, but no promotion opportunities,*

- *location near home/child's school, but less pay than might be obtained if there was commuting,*
- *an acceptable level of remuneration, but a lack of understanding of the basis on which the organisation sets pay,*
- *a senior position, but not as well remunerated as male equivalents,*
- *a job in a predominantly male environment, but an exclusionary or sexist culture.*

With the decline of trade unionism and collective bargaining evident in the South East, see Volume I, many individual women confronted with inequities at work no longer have voice. Instead they have the choice of keeping quiet and accepting the status quo or alternatively exiting. Thus even though in the last 30 years an increasing proportion of women have entered the labour market and legislation on sex discrimination and equal pay has entered the statute books and been strengthened by case law, this research indicates that many women are still 'putting up' with their position at work. Overwhelmingly they are taking the major responsibility for childrearing and making compromises as a result. But even where they do not have dependant children, in many cases at least some of these compromises and trade-offs still seem to operate.

6. Case studies

These case studies are designed to provide more detailed information on five organisations, which was gathered by the postal survey and face-to-face interviews. They are fairly typical of the organisations visited, though of course each organisation is unique, but they have not been chosen necessarily as exemplars of good practice. The case study organisations are drawn from four sub-sectors identified by SEEDA as employment growth areas in the region: advanced manufacturing, care, financial services and information technology. In addition, we have included a public sector case study because equality practices in the public and private sectors differ, with the former normally having a more formal, wide-ranging and proactive approach to gender equality and diversity issues. The five organisations profiled, as well as being drawn from different sub-sectors, also vary in size from 50 employees to 1,200 employees and in the proportion of female employees: from about a quarter to 90 per cent of the workforce.

6.1 Advanced manufacturing company

6.1.1 Background

The company produces digital imaging equipment and imaging analysis systems and associated software and is a subsidiary of a publicly quoted company in a continental European country. It has only one UK office which is situated in Buckinghamshire, employing some 80 people of whom roughly a quarter are women.

There is a dedicated HR manager, CIPD qualified, who covers not only the UK subsidiary, but also subsidiaries in three other northern European countries. She is assisted by a personal assistant (PA) and reports to the HR director of the parent company who has a seat on the parent company board. Gender issues, however, are dealt with at a UK level.

The UK senior management team consists of some 10 managers of whom only one, the HR director, is female. Sales representatives are predominantly male and the technical services team is all male. As an interviewee said: 'you don't see many female managers within the company'.

6.1.2 Equality policies and practices

The organisation's policies cover equality in respect of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, religion, sexual orientation, bullying/harassment, maternity and paternity. The policy is communicated through the staff handbook, induction and intranet/email but, induction apart, line managers have not received formal training in the last year on gender issues.

The company does not provide maternity pay or maternity leave above the statutory minima but it does provide paternity pay above the statutory minima: three days at full pay. It does not provide assistance with child care.

6.1.3 Flexible working patterns

The company offers part-time work, flexitime and home/office combination but the take-up among women is low, less than 5 per cent. The HR manager explained that the majority of the company's employees were sales representatives who managed their own time and thus had no need for formal arrangements. Interestingly more men than women made use of the home/office combination. The HR manager said that this working pattern was used by the technical services team which was all male.

As to office based staff, although the HR manager was of the view that the company had a flexible approach to working hours, that was not the view of an office based female employee interviewed who maintained that there were inconsistencies in the implementation of policy and practice. She considered that it was really up to the line manager. Her previous line manager had allowed her considerable flexibility in her working patterns (for instance to fit in with her husband's rotating shift patterns at another company). Her present line manager did not do so. For instance she wanted to come in half an hour later than the starting time so that she could take her children to school and make up for that by having only half an hour for lunch, still working full-time hours. Her line manager, however, would not allow that, because it might serve as a precedent, and she had to reduce her hours by half an hour per day. She commented, though, that a line manager of a different section permitted someone there to adopt the working pattern that she had failed to obtain.

6.1.4 Gender monitoring

The company does not carry out any gender monitoring or monitoring of job applications, short-listing selection or promotion. The HR manager, who had been less than a year in her job, had not yet had time to put systems in place. The company, however, was bidding for work in the public sector where questions about equality monitoring had been raised in the tendering process and she thought that would allow her to say to her boss: 'I need to have the time and space to do this, rather than hello, I'd really like to do this because I think it would be quite nice'.

6.1.5 Employee development

The company does not take measures to develop women such as an action plan for improving women's representation at senior levels, numerical goals for representation of women in management, a formal mentoring programme for women into management or any specific measures to encourage women to enter jobs currently filled by men or vice versa.

A female administrator interviewed thought that the company should do more to help women progress, for instance actively encouraging women employees to apply to be sales representatives. On the other hand, another female interviewee said that she had been promoted within the administration section, recently even though 'the company knows that I'm actually trying to start a baby'.

The HR manager was of the view that one reason for the company's failure to develop measures to help women advance their careers was lack of time. Another reason was the fact that the company operated informally, for instance only recently has it embarked on a formal performance management scheme.

6.1.6 Pay

There is no collective bargaining in the company and there is no formalised pay structure. Indeed an interviewee was of the view that 'we're not allowed to discuss wages' and she was not convinced that there was consistency between office staff in different sections, while another said that she 'had no idea' how her pay compared with men at an equivalent level.

The HR manager admitted that it was 'a bit kind of stick your finger in the air' for new recruits. However, she hoped to carry out some work on externally benchmarking pay in the forthcoming year and to introduce a formalised pay structure, but an equal pay review was not on the agenda at the time of the interviews (spring 2005).

6.1.7 Culture and attitudes

The HR manager was of the view that there was not a long hours culture in the company, compared with other organisations where she had worked previously. Most people, she said, took their lunch hour and left at five o'clock, apart from one or two individuals who were very much the exception. On the other hand, she admitted that she personally put in long hours and, if she said to her boss that the workload was too much, he would 'tend to have the work harder, work faster approach, rather than helping you to deal with it'. Moreover, a female administration manager said that she worked long hours, but emphasised that that was 'a personal choice' because she wanted to keep on top of her work.

The line managers, mostly men, had varying degrees of awareness of gender issues and one or two were reported to have made some discriminatory comments, for instance about women of childbearing age. The HR manager, who had been working for the company for less than a year, would shortly have an opportunity to bid for her own training budget. She wanted to bid for training for line managers on recruitment and selection, which would incorporate discrimination issues and could include some awareness training.

6.2 Care

6.2.1 Background

The organisation, which is in Buckinghamshire, is a care home providing personal and nursing residential care for elderly people over the age of 65. It, and two other care homes nearby, are under the same private ownership. At the time of the interviews (spring 2005) there were 46 residents in the care home, 12 of whom were publicly funded (i.e. from local authority social services).

The organisation is small. There are around 50 employees, of whom a large majority (90 per cent) are women and there is no dedicated HR function. The care home manager is a nurse and she is responsible for administration and for the standard and quality of nursing care, which includes some HR functions, while her deputy organises training for all employees. This includes training on health and safety, protection of vulnerable adults, lifting and handling, food hygiene, infection control and first aid.

The proprietors too, carry out some HR functions. For instance one proprietor draws up rotas and another has recruited staff from the Philippines. These staff had previously qualified as nurses, but to obtain registered nurse status in the UK they have to take an adaptation course which the organisation conducts in conjunction with a local university. (At the time of the interviews, spring 2005, five out of six had remained in the organisation after becoming registered).

6.2.2 Equality policies and practices

The organisation's policies cover equality in respect of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, religion, sexual orientation, bullying/harassment, maternity and paternity. These policies are communicated through the staff handbook, through induction training but, induction apart, line managers have not received formal training in the last year on gender issues.

According to the care home manager, staff are consulted about equality practices informally through staff meetings and the organisation provides maternity leave (but not maternity pay) above the statutory minima. It does not, however, provide help with child care.

6.2.3 Flexible work patterns

The organisation needs staff on a 24 hour, 7 day a week basis and, according to the manager, 'if you name any combination [of working patterns], we do it'. She said that some staff only did night duty, others only did mornings, and others varied their hours on different days and, by and large, staffs' wishes could be accommodated.

6.2.4 Gender monitoring

The organisation does not carry out any gender monitoring either in respect of recruitment or selection, occupational categories or the proportion of women returning after maternity leave.

6.2.5 Employee development

An interviewee pointed out that the vast majority of the residents were elderly women who needed personal care which they would not like a man to give them. Against that background the organisation does not adopt special measures to recruit men, though at the time of the interviews (spring 2005) it had only two male care assistants.

The organisation provides a considerable amount of in-house training, for instance NVQs for care assistants, courses for social services students and student nurses, first aid training and food handling/hygiene training, but it does not provide computer training for the administrator.

6.2.6 Pay

There is no collective bargaining. For healthcare assistants and nurses, however, pay relates closely to National Health Service rates, with enhancements for unsocial hours; but it is less clear how the pay of other staff is determined. As to pay increases, there is no performance pay and in the last two years increases have been across the board in line with NHS rises, because to do otherwise, said the care home manager, could create 'unrest'. There are no plans to conduct an equal pay review.

6.2.7 Culture and attitudes

The organisation is largely female. It is also shift and rota driven, with staff hours varying considerably. Against that background, long hours are not an issue, nor is sexual harassment.

6.3 Financial Services

6.3.1 Background

The organisation, based in Hampshire, has offices in other parts of the UK including Bristol, Leeds and Manchester. It is a mutual providing health insurance, both private medical insurance and insurance where NHS charges are incurred eg for dentistry and spectacles. It provides insurance directly to individuals and through company plans, covering over two million people. As a mutual it has a strong sense of social responsibility and has a charitable trust.

The organisation is large, with 1,200 employees, and there is a group HR function, a team of eight who provide strategic HR direction and support for the operational HR staff who are based in every location. At the headquarters site, where over 800 people

work, there are some 17 people in HR/ learning and development, but in Leeds there is one person.

There are five executive directors including the chief executive, of whom one is a woman. At the next level down (senior management level), women also comprise about 20 per cent. Overall in the organisation, however, the proportion of women is about two-thirds, with the customer service centre being predominantly staffed by women.

6.3.2 Equality policies and practices

The organisation's policies cover equality on grounds of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, religion, bullying/harassment, maternity and paternity. These policies are communicated through the staff handbook and at induction training. The organisation does not, however, consult employees about equality/diversity policies, nor, apart from induction, has it provided line managers with training on gender issues.

In terms of provisions for parents, the organisation does not provide maternity pay or maternity leave above the statutory minima, but it gives women returning from maternity leave a 'back to work' bonus. It also provides help with childcare in the form of a telephone helpline which provides information on specific childcare facilities and which all employees can access.

6.3.3 Gender monitoring

The organisation monitors gender by grade routinely but does not monitor the recruitment process by gender (i.e. job applications, short listing and selection) or promotion. It has the capacity to monitor the age profile by gender and the gender profile of performance-related-pay outcomes, though it does not do so routinely. As the HR manager said: 'It assumes that because there are no issues being raised, there aren't any problems, which I think perhaps is a bit of naivety'.

6.3.4 Flexible work patterns

The organisation offers a number of flexible work patterns: part-time work, term-time work, job share, flexitime, career breaks and home/office combinations. Of these flexitime is used by the majority of male and female employees, with part-time work being popular among female, but not male, employees. Such part-time work covers not only day time working, but also evening and weekend working and the range of flexible work patterns is specifically highlighted in recruitment advertisements to attract women with childcare responsibilities.

Only a small proportion of women, and no men, work on a job share or term time only basis, while a few professional staff (male and female) and sales representatives (mainly male) work a home/office combination.

6.3.5 Employee development

The organisation does not take special measures to improve the quality of women's jobs; for instance it does not have an action plan for improving the representation of women at senior levels, nor does it provide mentoring or set numerical goals for the representation of women in management. Furthermore, it does not take specific measures to encourage women to enter jobs currently filled by men, or vice versa.

More generally though, the organisation is 'very supportive of people going on further education' according to the HR manager. She said that a number of people were undertaking MBA programmes and that a Management Certificate had recently been introduced; sixteen employees had already completed that course, with another 32 about to start. The organisation provided 'a lot of support' for professional exams with paid time off for employees and financial incentives to complete qualifications.

It also gives women returning from maternity leave an ex gratia payment after they have remained with the organisation for three months.

6.3.6 Pay

The organisation does not bargain collectively. Salary ranges are published with employees being paid on any point within the range, with pay increases essentially being determined by performance and the cost of living. Meanwhile at the time of the interviews (spring 2005) the organisation was developing its own in-house job evaluation system and one of the employee representatives from the organisation's staff consultative committee was about to sit on the planned job evaluation committee.

The organisation has not carried out an equal pay review, nor does it intend to do so because it was estimated that it would take a full-time person six months to carry it out and there were more pressing matters.

6.3.7 Culture and attitudes

The organisation was one of the leading companies (out of 600) in the Sunday Times Best Companies to Work For award in 2005. The awards are based on an independent staff survey and the organisation's attitude to work-life balance was commended, particularly a day's paid leave for moving house or a child's first day at school. Nevertheless, an interviewee considered that, although there was not a long hours culture, the higher up in the organisation one went the more a 24/7 commitment was required; it was hard to reach more senior levels if an employee worked part-time and there were no job shares at senior levels.

The HR manager was conscious that the organisation could do more on equality for women. She would like it to join *Opportunity Now,* provide internal networking for women and more support to women in their 'late forties in terms of regenerating their careers' but recognised the difficulty in championing equality in the context of a crowded business agenda.

6.4 Information technology

6.4.1 Background

The company provides secure information and communications technology (ICT) across local, metropolitan and wider area networks, through consultancy service, management services and integration services. It is a subsidiary of a publicly quoted continental European organisation and has just over 200 employees in the UK of whom a quarter are women. Its head office, where half of the employees are based, is in Hampshire but it has six other offices in the UK.

The organisation has only one dedicated HR professional, the HR director, and she is the only woman at director level or above. There are seven other directors plus the managing director. There is a gender imbalance in other areas too; for instance the engineers are predominantly male and the administrators are virtually all female.

6.4.2 Equality policies and practices

The company's policies cover equality on grounds of gender, ethnicity, disability, religion, bullying/harassment, maternity and paternity. These policies are communicated through the staff handbook, at induction training and through the intranet/email. The company does not provide maternity pay or maternity leave above the statutory minima, nor provide any assistance with child care.

It has recently held road-shows/presentations in all its offices on discrimination: sex, race, disability, religion and belief, sexual orientation and bullying and harassment. An important motivation in this was that the company was trying to support a transsexual employee during the transition period.

6.4.3 Flexible working patterns

The company does 'not actively go out into the market and offer flexible working patterns', said the HR director, and does not have a formal flexitime scheme; rather it responds positively to requests from existing employees, particularly new mothers. At the time of the interviews (spring 2005) two employees were working part-time, while another was working a home/office combination i.e. working in the office in the morning until 1.30 or 2 pm and working the last two and a half hours at home, with the organisation providing a laptop and telephone.

In addition, the company is in practice flexible about working hours. A female employee confirmed this flexibility: 'They let you come in late if you've had to drop your child off' or when a child is ill – 'they're really good to working mothers'.

6.4.4 Gender monitoring

Gender monitoring has not yet been introduced and the organisation still operates informally in respect of many gender and HR issues. There was no specific HR function until the present HR director joined the organisation five years ago, initially for a year as an HR manager before promotion to HR director.

6.4.5 Employee development

The organisation does not take measures to develop women, such as an action plan to improve women's representation at senior levels, numerical goals for representation of women in management, a formal mentoring programme for women into management or any specific measures to encourage women to enter jobs currently filled by men or vice versa.

The company, however, tries wherever possible to promote from within, considering that such a practice is cheaper than bringing in someone from outside. Accordingly, although the administrators are predominantly women, administration is not necessarily a dead end career-wise. There are a few examples of women moving into other areas such as sales and marketing and into male dominated, technical areas. One ex-administrator who had become a project manager of IT networks, explained that she, unlike her male colleagues, did not have an engineering degree background, but the company had given her technical training. The onus, though, is on a female administrator to 'speak up', rather than the company identifying, counselling and encouraging employees.

6.4.6 Pay

There is no collective bargaining in the company and there is no formalised pay structure. The HR director tried to introduce a formalised salary and grading plan in 2001, but 'the organisation in the UK was not ready for it' at that time according to the HR director. Now, however, it is and the HR director will be putting one in place soon.

Meanwhile new recruits are paid according to the market rate, as advised by a consultant who is abreast of pay rates provided by competitor companies and pay increases are determined mainly by performance. This combination of pay mainly by performance and an emphasis on the market may lead to gender inequalities. Salaries are not transparent and one interviewee 'had no idea' whether her pay was the same as others on her level and the HR director was of the view that her pay was 'not on a par by a long stretch' with that of the other (male) directors.

6.4.7 Culture and attitudes

The HR director was of the opinion that in one particular area of the company there was a long hours culture where there were two single managers. Generally, however, both she and another interviewee considered that long hours working was not as

prevalent as it was three or four years ago. In addition, an administrator said that she was expected to work late and finish something only 'once in a blue moon'. She also contrasted her present employer with her previous one, where there was 'harassment all over the place'. In contrast, in her present employment there was a friendly and supportive atmosphere.

The company nurtures an informal approach. For instance it has a 'dress down' day every Friday and in some departments there is early finishing on Friday on a rota basis.

6.5 Public sector

6.5.1 Background

The organisation, a local authority in West Sussex, is a large employer. It employs around 800 people with a roughly equal gender split. The chief executive and three directors are all men, but five of the 16 heads of service (the next tier) are women and nearly a third of those in the organisation with earnings in the top 5 per cent are women.

The authority directly provides amenity services, housing, street cleaning, benefits and taxation administration and arts and community services. Some services, however, are provided indirectly through outsourcing, eg refuse collection, and some services are provided at county level eg library services, the fire service and education.

The HR function is located in the organisational development and improvement division. Headed by an HR and Equalities Manager, there are four areas: health and safety, human resources, equality and learning and development and altogether over a dozen people work in the HR function. At Council level, there is a councillor with responsibility for continuous performance and improvement which includes HR and equality issues.

6.5.2 Equality policies and practices

The authority has a wide range of policies covering gender, ethnicity, disability, religion, sexual orientation, bullying/harassment, maternity and paternity. These policies are communicated through the staff handbook, induction training, intranet/email, an internal newsletter and ongoing training. Indeed, the authority is currently delivering a revamped equality and diversity training programme for staff, managers and members of the Council. Consultation on equality practices is undertaken via union representatives and the consultative committee.

The authority provides maternity pay above the statutory minimum (but not paternity pay or maternity leave) and has a subsidised workplace nursery. It is also actively considering child care vouchers.

<u>6.5.3 Flexible working patterns</u>

The authority provides job sharing, part-time work and flexitime and it is about to launch a policy of unpaid career breaks/sabbaticals. As to take-up, job-sharing has been taken up at all levels: the head of service post for IT is a job share. Furthermore, the vast majority of employees work flexitime, i.e. all those apart from the directors, heads of service and those in the customer telephone contact service.

The flexitime scheme was recently made more flexible by abolishing set hours for the lunch break and is to be made even more flexible as the hours an employee can work for flexitime purposes are to be extended from 6.30 pm to 8 pm. There is a four week flexitime accounting period and staff are allowed to carry over ten hours and to owe four hours. Some staff, however, work a regular nine day fortnight, rather than taking accrued time off on an ad hoc basis.

<u>6.5.4 Gender monitoring</u>

The authority monitors the representation of women employees by grade/level in the organisation. In addition it monitors the recruitment process: job applications, short-listing and selection, but not promotion.

<u>6.5.5 Employee development</u>

In order to ensure equality of opportunity the authority normally advertises all posts internally and externally, rather than relying on internal promotion, and is opposed to succession planning because that entails some pre-selection. (The HR manager contrasted this with her private sector experience where succession planning was carried out annually.)

The authority delivers workshops in the community on how to apply for jobs, targeting schools, women returner groups and black and ethnic minorities. It also provides work experience, is developing a management development scheme to include mentoring and coaching and is scheduled to formalise its 'grow-your-own' scheme for graduate and trainee recruits and apprentices. In addition there is a Women's Development Group and 'springboard' training for women into management. The authority does not, however, take specific measures to encourage women to enter male dominated manual areas of work.

<u>6.5.6 Pay</u>

There is collective bargaining on pay with Unison as the largest union. The authority recently concluded an analytical job evaluation scheme and the pay structure is transparent. Later on in the year it is due to start an equal pay audit and assessment of pay and reward systems. Meanwhile, the authority is initiating a policy on flexible benefits, planned to start in April 2006 and to be administered externally with software which will support employee access.

6.5.7 Culture and attitudes

A female manager was of the view that some Councillors were 'very old fashioned' in respect of gender issues. Another interviewee, in an administrative role who worked just over half-time because of her domestic responsibilities, considered that she would have to increase her hours to be 'taken seriously', i.e. to obtain promotion.

Furthermore, two female employees interviewed said that, despite the flexitime scheme, there was a long hours culture especially, but not only, at senior levels. None of the women heads of service had children, while women at the level below who had children had to juggle between work and their family responsibilities because inevitably there was interface with Councillors who normally met in the evenings. On the other hand, this same interviewee realised that the authority was an employer of choice for women compared to employers in the private sector.

6.6 Summary and cross-case comparisons

6.6.1 Equality policies and practices

In all the cases outlined, both public and private sector, there appeared to be good coverage of equality issues in written form. In terms of communicating policies, in most cases the channels were limited, with greatest emphasis on the staff handbook. Some innovation was found, for example the use of intranet and email in the IT company. Most carried out induction training on equality matters, but recent training for line managers was far less common. This is surprising, given the plethora of legislative changes in this area.

In line with the survey results, the case organisations generally followed the minima in terms of maternity leave and pay, with the public sector case giving enhanced maternity pay and the care home longer leave. The public sector case was unusual as it had a workplace nursery and was also considering a voucher system; the financial services firm was innovative as it provided a childcare helpline for its staff.

The IT firm was a good example of the stimulus to good practice that a localised equality situation (in this case supporting a staff member going through gender reassignment) can give.

6.6.2 Flexible Working Patterns

All the cases outlined offered some flexibility in working hours, but they varied in terms of the formality of the schemes, the variation in working patterns offered and the take up of the options. The least formalised was the IT firm, which tended to respond to requests rather than having a formal policy. The public sector and the financial services firm offered the greatest variety of working patterns, but often the case firms were constrained by operational realities. The take-up sometimes reflected how proactively the policy was marketed by HR departments, for example the evening and weekend work in the financial services firm. It would seem that the

old 'twilight shifts' designed by manufacturing firms in the past for mothers have been replaced by office-based, service sector equivalents. Flexitime, as found in the survey as a whole, where offered, was widely used by both sexes.

Only in the public sector case, however, are reduced hours, in the form of job sharing, taken up by high status managerial staff, with most reduced hours options still found in low-paid and low-status occupations. The inconsistency of implementation between line managers found in the manufacturing firm was also reflected in other organisational responses from the female staff interviewed and tends to contradict the survey responses from managers who thought that there was little difference between policy and practice in their organisations.

6.6.3 Gender Monitoring

Overall the cases outlined reflect the general survey findings of little or no monitoring or evaluation of policies. The public sector case carried out the most extensive monitoring; the manufacturer, the care home and the IT firm collected or utilised no data. The financial services firm is a good example of the reactive nature of evaluation; data were available but not utilised because there were no current issues around age or performance-related-pay outcomes.

The possibility of contract compliance in the manufacturing company might be a trigger for monitoring equality outcomes and is one way of getting these issues on to the agenda using a business-based argument.

6.6.4 Employee Development

The cases reflect the survey findings that few organisations in the region take any special measures to increase women's representation in management. The exception is the public sector case, which is a clear exemplar in terms of equality of opportunity within the internal labour market and measures such as 'springboard' training for women into management. The IT firm was keen to promote from within, and also shows that there may be untapped talent amongst female administrative staff who have no direct career ladder into management. The reliance, however, on requests from women themselves puts the onus on women to take the initiative.

6.6.5 Pay

The absence of a formalised pay structure in some of the case firms may in part reflect their smaller size, but informality coupled with an absence of evidence-based decision making on pay levels (plus non-sharing of pay information) is often detrimental to women. The absence of collective bargaining in the private sector is also reflective of the region as a whole, so that management prerogative in terms of pay rates seems to be the norm. Again the public sector case is an exemplar, but realistically only larger organisations have the resources to undertake all the initiatives outlined. Equal pay reviews are currently only encouraged, not

compulsory, and probably beyond the capability of many of the firms surveyed (not just these cases) without hiring in extra resources.

6.6.6 Culture and Attitudes

Although the existence of a long hours culture was frequently denied in the survey, see chapter 3 sub-section 3.8.1, these cases tend to show that it exists amongst some managers, and typically higher management is expected to give a '24/7' commitment. Women still face sexist attitudes amongst male staff and reduced hours working means plateaued careers.

Perhaps somewhat paradoxically, those interviewed in the case organisations usually felt that their employer was generally supportive to women and tried to foster work-life balance. Indeed, the financial services firm had achieved commendation for its work-life balance, though the HR manager said that she would like to do more to advance women's careers, but faced a crowded agenda where sex equality was not necessarily the priority. Getting equality on to the corporate agenda in the private sector, though not the public sector, can be difficult, particularly where there is a perception that there are no pressing issues. Often the exceptional ability and interpersonal skills of HR specialists are crucial to successfully putting forward a business case for equality and being proactive, rather than reactive.

7. Conclusions

This chapter brings together the data from both the postal survey of employers and the face-to-face interviews with HR managers and female employees in 40 organisations in the South East region aiming to answer our two research questions:

- *What policies and practices do employers in South East England adopt in respect of gender equality?*

- *What, if any, barriers do employers and women in South East England identify in respect of gender equality?*

After some further comments on our findings, we put forward a 'stepping stones' action plan for employers which is principally aimed at small and medium-sized firms.

7.1 Employers' policies and practices

7.1.1 Written policies

The vast majority of our 454 respondent organisations had written policies on equality and diversity and most of these policies specifically covered the different equality strands, but the communication of these policies was primarily through staff handbooks and induction; there was little communication once the employee had joined the organisation. Moreover, over half did not consult their staff, either indirectly through their representatives or directly, on their equality policies.

In interviews we asked women staff where they would find out about equality policies, and found they were often unsure. In several cases, staff handbooks were not up to date and in one case the person responsible for HR said he would not draw up a policy on pregnancy or maternity until a member of staff became pregnant, whilst in another a female office worker reported that a company policy was drafted only when a colleague became pregnant.

7.1.2 Employers' practices

Few organisations provided maternity *leave* above the statutory minima, though maternity *pay* above the statutory minima was somewhat more common, being provided by one in four organisations. There was very little gender monitoring, for instance in respect of occupational categories, short-listing, promotions and training. The area where there was most gender monitoring was in respect of job applications, but that was only carried out by just over one in five survey respondents. In our interviews we asked managers responsible for HR why they did not monitor, (or monitor more extensively). The main reason given was essentially that it was not

necessary because of the small size of the firm, though sometimes an interviewee used this rationale where the organisation was medium sized.

Line managers have many people management responsibilities, but only 18 per cent of survey respondents had given ongoing or updating training to line managers in equality issues in the last year, despite the plethora of legislative changes in recent times. In our interviews we sought to explore this and found that in a few cases those responsible for HR were concerned about the attitudes of line managers. Where this was so, HR people often had sought/were seeking to tackle this by training and in two cases a line manager had been dismissed. We also found two cases where women reported that line managers were inconsistent in their application of flexible working policies and in general our findings echo those of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) that line managers are 'key to unlocking flexible working' (EOC, 2005a:30).

7.1.3 Pay determination

In the vast majority of organisations surveyed and the organisations visited for interviews there was no collective bargaining; (only 18 per cent of firms surveyed had any collective bargaining). Where there was not, we generally found that pay was determined unilaterally by management and pay scales were not published. Those responsible for HR whom we interviewed said that 'market rates' were a key consideration in determining pay, but how the market was translated into pay rates was often not at all clear; two interviewees admitted that the process was 'finger in the air'. Also, some interviewees responsible for HR admitted that there were 'anomalies' because starting salaries were open to negotiation and thus new recruits would sometimes earn more than long serving employees, although they were employed on like work.

Nevertheless, those responsible for HR typically said that 'gender is not an issue' and 'you get paid for the job you do, not your gender'. Furthermore, by and large interviewees in the private sector equated equal pay with equal pay for the same or broadly similar work and not with work of equal value. Where interviewees understood the concept of equal value, those in the private sector said that they were not going to carry out an equal pay review because it would be inordinately resource intensive.

Women sometimes suspected that they earned less than their male counterparts, but because they had no proof they could not raise the issue. In other cases women with young families kept quiet because although they earned less than men, they were grateful to be able to work flexibly.

7.2 Barriers

7.2.1. Those responsible for human resources

In small or medium-sized firms many of the managers responsible for human resources (HR) were combining this role with a number of others and in these smaller firms there was a tendency for them not to be CIPD qualified. In larger enterprises,

and in public sector organisations, there was greater likelihood for HR managers to be formally qualified and members of the professional body and they were more likely to be part of a HR team.

A few of those responsible for HR whom we interviewed indicated less than progressive views on gender equality and did not see any barriers, but others were concerned to do more on equality and diversity. Attitudes to equality, however, could not be equated with sex or with whether the post-holder was a designated HR specialist or not. Where those responsible for HR were successful in getting equality and diversity issues on to the agenda, this was usually through using personal influence and interpersonal skills over a long period.

7.2.2 The legislation

Essentially the family friendly legislation was not seen as a barrier (or problem) by managers responsible for HR. Those interviewed generally felt that they had coped well in terms of requests to work flexibly and this was supported by the survey findings.   Flexibility was largely equated with part-time work, extended to those who did not have a legal right to ask and interviewees were on the whole positive about it, commenting that part-time work had had beneficial effects on staff retention. Nevertheless, employers limited part-time work to less senior positions; we found only a few senior jobs being undertaken on a less than full-time basis.

As to recent improvements in the legal provisions on maternity/paternity, again by and large interviewees said that they had coped well and had not seen this as a barrier or problem. This finding is inconsistent with the EOC's view that managing maternity 'is regarded unequivocally as a "problem" by small employers' (EOC, 2005b:14). Furthermore, some interviewees responsible for HR, particularly those in larger and public sector organisations, felt that they were 'ahead of the game', though a few interviewees in smaller organisation were more ambivalent about the legislative changes. A few interviewees, however, noted that one had longer to plan for a maternity absence than sickness absence.

In the interviews, we asked about future changes to legislation such as extensions to maternity leave. Again many did not regard it as problematic, though some interviewees expressed worries about increased costs and, particularly in smaller firms, some feared there could be difficulties if several staff were away at the same time. Only one interviewee, however, said that all other things being equal, the cost and obligations of maternity would mean that he would not recruit recently married women of childbearing age.

7.2.3 Gender segregation

Gender segregation in the workplace is a cause of disparity in pay between the sexes (see Volume 1). We found some very limited breaking down of occupational segregation, in particular women in financial management, but in general women and men were still segregated into separate spheres, particularly in care and manufacturing. Employers tended to accept such segregation and not regard this as a barrier that they could dismantle: they received little or no applications from the

under-represented sex. For instance in the care sector, where women predominate, some managers responsible for HR admitted that the low pay in the sector was not attractive to men, so they did not apply. Similarly where women are the under-represented sex, a reason given for occupational segregation by those responsible for HR was that women did not apply. In one construction firm, women trainee engineers had been employed but the person responsible for HR said that had been discontinued because the women could not 'cope' with the men on the all-male construction sites. Overall, very few employers adopted proactive measures to overcome occupational segregation.

7.2.4 Barriers identified by women

Chance, hard work and training were mentioned by a number of women as being associated with success in climbing the corporate ladder. But in terms of barriers, women at all levels in organisations in the South East tended to accept the *status quo* and were grateful to get as far as they had. Often they had entered into implicit, or occasionally explicit, bargains with their employers, usually to their detriment. These 'bargains' were generally related to their need to create work-life balance and/or to combine work with domestic and child care responsibilities. For example women were grateful to be allowed to work part-time/reduced hours and accepted that this would limit their promotion. They took a job close to home and accepted that in so doing they would receive lower pay than if they had a long travel-to-work journey. They reached a senior position, but they knew, or suspected, that they were not as well-paid as their male equivalents.

Women who entered male-dominated occupations often met some stereotyped assumptions and office 'banter' which they found distasteful, while some female managers reported difficulties dealing with male peers. Furthermore, a few female interviewees maintained that being the only woman amongst men meant that they were noticed, for good or ill. Those we interviewed, however, did not report serious instances of harassment in their current employment, though several said that this was the reason for leaving their former employer. Also, two women reported leaving their previous employer because of the long working hours they had experienced there.

In the South East, as Volume 1 shows, women are investing in their human capital and their activity rate is increasing whilst men's is declining. Yet the statistics on the gender pay gap, and our own interviews, when we asked about women on the board and/or at senior management level, show that there is still gender inequality. In addition, with the decline of trade unionism and the coverage of collective bargaining in the region, many women have to confront equality problems on an individual basis, or keep quiet or 'vote with their feet' and leave the organisation to seek a more woman-friendly situation.

We did not encounter any women who had instigated a formal tribunal case and the incidence of gender-based litigation amongst the employers we surveyed was low; (four per cent had experienced such litigation in the previous three years). We feel that this does not necessarily indicate good practice in sex equality; rather it may reflect the weaknesses of the legal process, (see Volume 1).

7.3. Further comments

7.3.1. Equality strategy

Where managers were combining HR roles with other work, the best practice we found was in a food processing firm where the manager engaged a specialist HR consultant to whom he referred certain problems of people management. In the same way, a law firm was contracted to deal with legal issues when necessary. There was strategic thinking in this case, with clear boundaries drawn between issues dealt with in-house and those referred to specialists.

7.3.2 The gulf between public and private sectors

One striking finding from both from the survey and the interviews was the noticeable difference between the public and private sectors in the implementation of sex equality measures, with many organisations in the public sector, unlike the private sector, seeking to achieve substantive outcomes. This difference is reflected in our case studies in chapter 6.

This difference may be related not just to ownership differences (i.e. public/private) but also to the fact that the public sector organisations tended to be larger and collectively organised. Nevertheless the comparison, particularly in our interviews, was stark. Not surprisingly in this context, two women interviewees expressly recognised the public sector as an employer of choice.

7.3.3 Reasons for limited interventions

There was a clear contrast on the one hand between employers' satisfaction with their sex equality practices as revealed both in the survey and the interviews and, on the other hand, the statistics in Volume 1 showing the continuing stark nature of women's disadvantage in the South East labour market. Moreover, both in our survey and interviews we found that few employers were gender monitoring to check whether their policies and practices were effective and even fewer were taking proactive measures to redress disadvantage.

Most private sector employers in the South East survey appeared to be conforming to the 'no difference' and 'like treated as like' concept of equality. Procedural fairness and compliance with equality laws was seen by them as good enough. There did not appear to be a perception of a 'rational' business case that would lead them to go further, by removing obstacles within the organisation to encourage women to advance their careers and/or break down horizontal and vertical occupational segregation.

One explanation for this could be that employers perceive few problems in resourcing the organisation at present and can access sufficient people with the required skillsets. Thus there is no case for 'special measures' to attract the under-represented sex, or develop those already employed into new occupational areas. Some HR managers interviewed wanted to do more, but encountered difficulties getting equality onto the corporate agenda. Regarding pay, we have already indicated that some employers

may not fully understand the concept of 'equal value' and as a result may be discriminating unfairly against women. There is a clear need for education and enlightenment in this area. Finally employers may equate success in dealing with equality by an absence of litigation.

More feedback from, and involvement of, staff would alert managers responsible for HR to problems they seem currently unaware of, such as inconsistent implementation by line managers of equality policies and procedures, and feelings of inequity in terms of rewards. Looking at how they organize work might lead them to reassess ways of working that could raise efficiency, as well as reduce problems for both sexes. In this way Liff and Dickens (2000) feel employers could get away from sterile arguments about differences.

The respondents to the survey appeared to be satisfied because they felt they had achieved a limited procedural agenda. As noted above, this contrasts with the regional statistics on women's position in the South East labour market that are underpinned by (clearly not achieved) objectives of substantive equality. Unless employers adopt more ambitious views of equality, their satisfaction with very modest actions is likely to persist. We feel, however, that change has to begin with small steps, and the next section discusses why we are putting forward a modest 'stepping stones' action plan for employers which is aimed at small and medium-sized firms in particular.

8. Recommendations

Most of our interviews took place in small and medium sized firms, which make up the majority of firms in the UK. Also, as in our survey, manufacturing was over-represented. This highlighted to us the particular problems and needs of SMEs in terms of implementing equality measures, often on a tight budget.

It is clear that many of the national initiatives by government and other bodies are designed for implementation by large firms and require a level of resources and expertise that are not available in SMEs. For example, *Opportunity Now*, which has produced a plethora of recommendations, has mostly large public and private organisations in membership. Similarly, the Equal Opportunities Commission has campaigned for organisations to carry out Equal Pay Reviews (EPRs), but in our view EPRs would appear to be too difficult for many smaller enterprises to undertake successfully. This is not to provide an excuse for smaller companies to discriminate however – rather we feel that more account should be taken of scarce HR resources and the operational realities.

Against this background we have drawn up a 'stepping stones' action plan for employers in SMEs in the South East. The ten points draw upon the best practice we have found in SMEs in the region. We have deliberately kept the list very brief, suggesting small incremental steps rather than unrealistically ambitious change programmes. The result is intended to be printed as a card and to be hung on the wall.

Besides setting out 'Stepping Stones' which, as we said, are particularly aimed at SMEs in the region, a more comprehensive document is being put together, which will be published separately. This sets out a three-year Action Plan with the long-term objective of improving the situation of women in the region. In brief, it will set our recommendations for action by employers in organisations of all sizes (including plans for an electronic equality forum for employers) and for strategists and policy-makers at regional level.

Stepping Stones to Progress:
Women in the Workplace

These recommendations are drawn from this research.

1. Are you selecting your staff from the widest possible pool?

    - Good staff can be hard to find and currently many firms in the South East are having difficulty recruiting the right people. This situation is likely to

get tougher as the working population ages. Recruiting women for jobs traditionally done by men gives you more options.

- Make it clear in your advertising and at interviews that flexible working requests can often be accommodated.

- When you approach employment agencies, tell them that you would particularly welcome applications from the under-represented sex and, where appropriate, make contact with schools and/or colleges. Don't just sit back and wait for the gender balance to change by itself.

- Many SMEs do not have a full-time HR manager, let alone an equality or diversity specialist. Consider hiring a reputable HR consultant to work out a strategy in terms of your staffing needs.

2. Are you making the best use of your existing workforce?

- When technical or managerial opportunities arise, advertise internally and encourage women to apply. Include administrative staff - often women – with no direct 'ladder' into managerial jobs.

- Use the opportunities afforded by maternity leave, long term sickness or other temporary vacancies to develop staff. Think laterally. For instance you could ask a woman to 'act up' or try out a different sort of job.

3. Do you have equality policies and procedures?

- Relying on line managers to use 'common sense' is not enough. Small firms need policies and procedures as much as major multinationals.

- Review your policies and procedures regularly as legislation often changes and your practices may need updating.

- Make sure your equality policies are easily accessible to managers and employees. Publicise them widely and ensure that all employees know where to find them.

4. Are your equality policies being implemented?

- Managers need training to understand equality policies, the reasons for them and how to implement them in a consistent way.

- As well as briefing new managers at induction, don't forget that long serving managers also need reminding of policies, especially where they have been updated, and that messages need to be frequently repeated.

5. Do you know if your equality policies are working?

- Collect information periodically at least about recruitment and promotion, ie the women and men applying, being short-listed and appointed.

- When you collect information, analyse it and create a "to-do" list to improve the gender balance.

6. Do you encourage work/life balance?

- Recent research shows that recruitment and retention benefit from flexible working patterns. Consider extending reduced working hours/job shares to higher status occupations, including management posts.

- Encourage line managers to adopt a 'can-do' attitude to staff requests for flexible working.

- Set a good example and encourage your managers to do likewise. Long hours working should be the exception, not the rule.

7. Do you support women working in predominantly male areas?

- Ask your managers to make it clear to all their staff that women may feel excluded by male 'banter'.

- Ensure that all your employees know that they will not be victimised or thought 'soft' if they report harassment, including sexist remarks.

- Set up a 'buddy system' or mentoring scheme to help women feel less isolated.

8. Is your pay system transparent and fair?

- All employees and managers should be able to understand the basis of pay in your organisation and your pay scales should be published.

- Make sure you are paying for the job and not the person. Men may be more assertive in negotiating higher starting rates than women, leading to pay anomalies.

- Where you have a pay anomaly but cost prevents you from ironing it out all at once, work out a plan to put it right in stages over a limited time period.

9. Could you save recruitment and training costs by encouraging more women to return to work after childbirth?

   - Consider giving a bonus payment to women who return after maternity leave and stay for three months.

   - Offering help with childcare does not necessarily mean expensive options such as workplace nurseries; child care vouchers, for instance, are a much cheaper but still valuable alternative.

10. Why not seek FREE expert help?

- **Diversity Means Business, funded by SEEDA/ESF offers 100% subsidised diversity training, information handbooks and one-to-one advice across the South East region. Contact Karen.barber@portsmouthcc.gov.uk or 023 9284 1610.**

- **The Advisory, Conciliation & Arbitration Service (Acas) (www.acas.org.uk) has a helpline which provides free, confidential help and information on work issues on 08457 47 47 47. It also has an advisory booklet which can be downloaded free, 'Tackling Discrimination and Promoting Equality – a good practice guide for employers'.**

- **Equality Direct is a free, confidential telephone advice service for employers run by Acas on 0845 600 3444 or go to www.equalitydirect.org.uk**

- **The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) has a free, confidential telephone helpline on 0845 601 5901. Also it has many advisory booklets which can be downloaded free of charge. The EOC homepage is www.eoc.org.uk**

- **CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) produces reports into equality/diversity, pay and flexible work issues, many of which can be downloaded from www.cipd.co.uk/surveys. You do not have to be a member.**

- **DTI (Department of Trade and Industry) has a useful employment relations section (www.dti.gov.uk/er)**

References

Anderson, T., Forth, J., Metcalf, H. and Kirby, S. (2001) *The Gender Pay Gap*, London: Women & Equality Unit, Cabinet Office.

Bevan, S. and Thompson, M. (1992) *Merit Pay, Performance and Attitudes to Women's Work*, Report No. 234, Brighton: Institute of Manpower Studies.

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2005) *Annual Survey Report*, London CIPD.

Cockburn, C. (1989) 'Equal Opportunities: the short and long agenda', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 20, 3, 213-225.

Collinson, D., Knights, D. and Collinson, M. (1990) *Managing To Discriminate*, London: Routledge.

Coyle, A. (1995) *Women and Organisational Change*, Research Discussion Series No. 14, Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission.

EOC (1985) Code of Practice on sex discrimination: equal opportunity policies, procedures and practices in employment, Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission.

EOC (2005a) *Flexible working survey of awareness*, Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission.

EOC (2005b) *Greater expectations,* Summary final report of a formal investigation, Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission.

EOC (2005c) *Part-time is no crime – so why the penalty?,* Interim Report of a formal investigation, Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission.

Foster, C. and Harris, L. (2005) 'Easy to say, difficult to do: diversity management in retail', *Human Resource Management Journal*, 15, 3, 4-17.

Fredman, S. (2001) 'Equality a new generation?' *Industrial Law Journal*, 30, 2, 145-168.

Fredman, S. (2002) *Discrimination Law*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Grainger, H. and Holt, H. (2005) *Trade Union Membership 2004*, London: Department of Trade and Industry.

Hakim, C. (1991) 'Grateful Slaves and Self-made Women: fact and fantasy in women's work orientations', *European Sociological Review*, 7, 2, 101-121.

Hakim, C. (2002) 'Lifestyle Preferences as Determinants of Women's Differentiated Labour Market Careers', *Work and Occupations*, 29, 4, 428-459.

Hayward, B., Peters, M., Rousseau N. and Seeds, K. (2004) 'Findings from the Survey of Employment Tribunal Applications 2003', *Employment Relations Research Series No. 33*, London: Department of Trade and Industry.

Heery, E. (2000) 'Trade unions and the management of reward' in White, G. and Druker, J. (eds) *Reward Management: a critical text*, London: Routledge.

Holt, H. and Grainger, H. (2005) 'Results of the second flexible working employee survey' *Employment Relations Research Series No. 39*, London: Department of Trade and Industry.

Hope, K. (2005) 'Equal Measures' *People Management*, 10 February, 14-15.

IDS (2005) 'Part-time teacher discriminated against', *Diversity at Work,* 12, June, 20.

Kersely, B., Alpin, C., Forth, J., Bryson, A., Bewley, H., Dix, G. and Oxenbridge, S. (2005) *Inside the Workplace: first findings from the 2004 Workplace Employee Relations Survey (WERS 2004)*, London: Department of Trade and Industry.

Liff, S. and Dickens, L. (2000) 'Ethics and Equality: reconciling false dilemmas', in D. Winstanley and J. Woodall (Eds) *Ethical Issues in Contemporary Human Resource Management,* Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Maddock, S. and Parkin, D. (1994) 'Gender Cultures and How They Affect Women At Work' in M. J. Davidson and R. J. Burke, *Women in Management*, London: Chapman.

Miller, L., Neathey, F., Pollard, E. and Hill, D. (2004) *Occupational segregation, gender gaps and skill gaps*, Working paper series no. 15, Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission.

Neathey, F., Dench, S. and Thomson, L. (2003) *Monitoring Progress Towards Pay Equality,* Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission.

Olsen, W. and Walby, S. (2004) *Modelling Gender Pay Gaps*, Working Paper Series No. 17, Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission.

Smithson, J., Lewis, S., Cooper, C. and Dyer, J. (2004) 'Flexible working and the gender pay gap in the accountancy profession', *Work, Employment & Society*, 18, 1, 115-135.

Wainwright Trust (2002) *Picking up the Pieces: How organisations manage the aftermath of harassment complaints*, Ware: Wainwright Trust.

Wright, A. (2004) *Reward Management in Context*, London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Appendix A: Questionnaire

October 2004

Dear Manager,

GENDER & THE LABOUR MARKET
IN SOUTH EAST ENGLAND

We do hope that you will participate in this survey of employers' policies and practices, funded by SEEDA and the European Social Fund.

If so, your organisation will be able to enter a draw. The prize is a FREE place on a postgraduate course in the Business School at the University of Greenwich, for one of your staff. The enclosure gives details of our part-time/block release courses; they are worth up to £8,000 and the winner of the draw will be able to select the member of staff (provided normal entry requirements are met) and choose the postgraduate course from those listed.

The survey findings will result in a Report and an Action Plan, which will feed into regional and national policy initiatives on gender and employment. These will be disseminated widely in the SE Region from autumn 2005, including through a conference and an employers' forum.

A pre-paid envelope is enclosed and all responses are **CONFIDENTIAL AND ANONYMOUS**. No names of organisations will be disclosed, though you need to fill in your details to participate in the draw, or to take part in a follow-up interview. If you are not responsible for equal opportunities/diversity in your organisation we would be most grateful if you could pass on this survey to the person who is. We hope that this survey will be completed by 19th November. We realise that you and your staff are very busy, but the survey should take only about 10 minutes to complete. If you have any queries or need a large print or Braille version of this survey then please contact us. Many thanks for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Susan Corby & Dr. Celia Stanworth

Tel: 020-8331-8000
S.R.Corby@gre.ac.uk C.M.Stanworth@gre.ac.uk

Please tick the boxes provided

ORGANISATION DETAILS

1. In which sector does your organisation operate ?

Private Services	A
Private Manufacturing	B
Public Sector	C

2. Does your organisation operate ONLY in the SE Region excluding Greater London ? (see enclosed map of region)

Yes	A
No..	B

3. How many people does your organisation employ in the SE Region, excluding Greater London ?

Less than 50...	A
50-99	B
100-249	C
250-499	D
500+	E

4. Of these, what proportion is female ?

0-24%...	A
25-49%..	B
50-74%..	C
75% and over	D

5. How many employees does your organisation have in total in the UK ?

Less than 50...	A
50-99	B
100-249	C
250-499	D
500+	E

6. Does your organisation operate in any of the following sub-sectors ?

Care	A
Financial Services	B
Pharma-bio..	C
Information technology	D
Advanced Manufacturing....................................	E
None of these..	F

EQUALITY POLICIES

7. Do you have a written equal opportunities /diversity policy?

> Yes.. A
>
> No .... B

8 . If yes, does it, or a separate document, cover: (please tick all that apply)

> Gender... A
>
> Age .... B
>
> Ethnicity C
>
> Disability .... D
>
> Religion .... E
>
> Sexual orientation .... F
>
> Bullying/harassment.............................. G
>
> Maternity .... H
>
> Paternity.. I

9. How are these policies communicated to employees? (please tick all that apply)

> Staff handbook...................................... A
>
> Induction training.................................. B
>
> Intranet/email C
>
> Internal newsletter................................ D
>
> Ongoing training.................................... E
>
> Other (please state) .... F
>
> _____

10. Do you provide maternity LEAVE above the legal requirements ? *(Essentially 52 weeks for employees with at least 1 year's service)*

> Yes.. A
>
> No .... B

11. Do you provide maternity PAY above the legal requirements ? *(Essentially 90% of pay for 6 weeks + £102.50 for a further 20 weeks for employees with at least 26 weeks' service)*

> Yes.. A
>
> No .... B

EQUALITY PRACTICES

12. Do you consult employees about your equal opportunities/diversity practices ?

> Yes.. A
>
> No .... B

13. If yes, how do you do this ? (please tick all that apply)

> Staff survey .... A
>
> Via union reps .... B
>
> Consultative committee......................... C
>
> Other (please state) ....

14. Do you offer help with child care ?

> Yes.. A
>
> No .... B

15. If yes, is it in the form of: (please tick all that apply)

> Workplace nursery... A
>
> Child care vouchers... B
>
> Other (please state)... C
>
> _____

16. Do you currently monitor the gender profile of your workforce in the following areas ? (please tick all that apply)

> Occupational categories .... A
>
> Training .... B
>
> Grievances C
>
> Absence .... D
>
> Job applications... E
>
> Shortlisting.. F
>
> Selection... G
>
> Promotion .... H
>
> Ethnicity... I
>
> Disability .... J
>
> Age .... K

17. Do you currently monitor the proportion of women returning after maternity leave ?

> Yes .... A
>
> No... B

18. Apart from induction, in the last year, have you provided line managers with formal training on gender issues ?

> Yes .... A
>
> No... B

PAY

19.   Have you carried out an equal pay review in the last three years ?

> Yes .... A
>
> No... B

> **If no, please go to question 23**

20. If yes, have you identified any gender pay gaps ?

> Yes .... A
>
> No... B

21. If yes, has this resulted in any actions ?

> Yes .... A
>
> No... B

22. If yes, briefly describe them:

_____

_____

_____

_____

23. Do you intend to carry out an equal pay review in the next year ?

Yes..	A
No	B

24. Do you monitor the gender profile of performance-related pay outcomes ?

Yes..	A
No	B
Not applicable	C

25. Do you monitor the gender profile of recipients of bonus payments ?

Yes..	A
No	B
Not applicable	C

26. Do you bargain collectively about the pay of at least some of your employees in the SE Region ?

Yes..	A
No	B

STATEMENTS

Please indicate your viewpoint for each of the following statements, ticking ONE answer option for each statement:

27. "Employees who wish to get promoted in this organisation have to put in long hours"

Strongly agree..................................	A
Agree	B
Neither agree nor disagree	C
Disagree	D
Strongly disagree	E

28. "The culture of our organisation disadvantages working mothers"

Strongly agree..................................	A
Agree	B
Neither agree nor disagree	C
Disagree	D
Strongly disagree	E

29. "Senior managers' commitment to gender equality is strong in this organisation"

Strongly agree..................................	A
Agree	B
Neither agree nor disagree	C
Disagree	D
Strongly disagree	E

30. "There is a gap between equal opportunities policies and practice in this organisation"

Strongly agree	A
Agree..	B
Neither agree nor disagree	C
Disagree	D
Strongly disagree..............................	E

EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

31. Do you have an action plan for improving women's representation at senior levels ?

Yes	A
No...	B

32. Do you have numerical goals for the representation of women in management ?

Yes	A
No...	B

33. Do you operate a formal mentoring programme for women into management ?

Yes	A
No...	B

34. Is there a network for women employees ?

Yes	A
No...	B

35. Do you take any specific measures to encourage women to enter jobs currently filled by men and/or vice versa ?

Yes	A
No...	B

36. If yes, what do you do? (please tick all that apply)

Visit schools......................................	A
Advertising..	B
Leaflets...	C
Single sex training courses................	D
Other (please state)..........................	E

_____

LEGISLATION

37. Do you monitor requests for flexible working ?

Yes	A
No...	B

38. If yes, since April 2003 how many requests have you:

    a) received .... :   _____   A
    b) granted .... :   _____   B
    c) reached a compromise .... :   _____   C
    d) refused................................. :   _____   D

39. Has your organisation been involved in litigation in respect of the Sex Discrimination Act and/or Equal Pay Act in the last 3 years ?

    Yes..   A

    No ....   B

40. If yes, did you make changes to any of your policies, procedures and/or practices as a result ?

    Yes..   A

    No ....   B

41. If yes, please briefly outline the changes:

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

WORKING PATTERNS

42. What working patterns do you offer in your workplaces in the South East (SE) region (excluding Greater London)? (please tick all that apply)

    Part-time work......................................   A
    Term-time work ....   B
    Job share   C
    Flexitime ....   D
    Career break..   E
    Home/office combination ....   F
    Other (please state) ....   G

    _____

43. ROUGHLY what % of WOMEN in your SE workplaces work this pattern (one tick per row):

	less than 5%	5-9%	10-24%	25-9%	50%+	
Part-time work ...						A
Term-time work..						B
Job share...........						C
Flexitime						D
Career break......						E
Home/office						F

44. ROUGHLY what % of MEN in your SE workplaces work this pattern (one tick per row):

	less than 5%	5-9%	10-24%	25-49%	50%+	
Part-time work ...						A
Term-time work..						B
Job share...........						C
Flexitime						D
Career break......						E
Home/office						F

45. Have you any other comments on gender equality issues in your organisation ?

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

We are carrying out a number of follow-up face-to-face interviews in organisations in certain sectors. If you are willing to be contacted, please fill in your details below. Please note that if you do so, your questionnaire responses will continue to remain ANONYMOUS.

Name of Contact:
Organisation:
Email address:
Telephone:

Thank you for your co-operation. Please return the completed survey form in the pre-paid envelope provided.

Appendix B: Survey analysis

Background to survey

The data for 454 respondents was entered and analysed in SPSS version 12.1.

Non-response and missing values

It was decided that a respondent who should have answered a question but gave 'no answer' should be categorised as missing in the analysis, along with respondents to whom a question did not apply. In the cross-tabulations and bar-charts these missing values are excluded and do not show. There are many cases in the questionnaire where the respondent only answered the next question if they answered 'yes' to the previous question. In these cases *only* people who answered 'yes' to the previous question are included in the analysis. Those respondents to whom the question did not apply and those who answered 'no' or did not answer the previous question are missing and thus not shown.

Bar-charts and question type

Some of the questions that were multiple answer questions in the survey are shown as bar-charts and so had to be entered in the SPSS data file as an individual variable for each individual answer. This means that each bar in the bar-chart for these questions equals 100% (or the 'n' stated) as each bar is one question answered. Bar-charts for 'one-answer' questions were also requested for certain questions and for these questions each cluster of bars in the bar-chart equals 100% (or the 'n' stated). This is also the case for bar-chart for the questions on working patterns.

Open answers and extra categories

Categories were changed or added to particular questions following the answers given to open questions, i.e. 'other'. Answers in open questions that were agreed not relevant to the question have been removed in comments and as 'other' in the database. However irrelevant answers which may be of interest generally have been kept in the open answers/comments file.

Questions Q42-44

These questions were about the work patterns offered in the work place. A cross-tabulation of Q42 (What working patterns do you offer…) was not produced because of the inaccuracy of this variable. It was initially thought that if no option in q42 was ticked and 'less than 5%' was ticked in questions 43 and 44, this could mean that none of their staff worked these types of work patterns. However it was found when checking for errors that these questions were not answered as clearly as this, i.e. many people who answered questions 43 and 44 in all sorts of ways for some reason did not answer q42 at all. Therefore these questions have been entered as seen.

Appendix C: Interview schedules

Person Responsible for HR

1. Are you solely an HR manager?

How long have you been in HR?
CIPD qualifications?

2. How long have you been with the organisation?

3. Tell me about your career?

4. Tell me about the organisation

- How many people does it employ?
- How many employees are women?
- In what areas do they work?

5.
a. Is there a Board member responsible for gender equality issues?
b. what proportion of women are in the senior management team?
c. what areas (functions) do top women manage?

6. How are people promoted in this organisation? Is there an interview or is it more informal?

7. There has been a lot of new legislation in the gender equality/family area (e.g. right to request flexible work, maternity/paternity leave). How do you feel you have coped with this?

8. You a written equality policy on x but not y. Why is that? *(Adjust in line with questionnaire response).*

9. You do not monitor your policies. Why not? *(Adjust in line with questionnaire response).*

10. How is pay determined? Do you have performance pay? Is there an analytical job evaluation scheme? *(Adjust in line with questionnaire response).*

11. You have not carried out an equal pay review. Why? OR you have carried out an equal pay review. What did you do? *(Adjust in line with questionnaire response).*

12.   You offer quite a number of flexible working patterns, mostly taken up by women. How has that worked? *(Adjust in line with questionnaire response).*

13.   You do not offer maternity pay/ leave above the statutory minima Have you thought of that? *(Adjust in line with questionnaire response).*

Prompt: no business case

14. Why do you not take positive steps to encourage women to join your organisation eg visit schools? *(Adjust in line with questionnaire response).*

15. Why do you not take steps to encourage women to develop in your organisation do more eg mentoring schemes? *(Adjust in line with questionnaire response).*

17 Why do you think women in your organisation generally do not work in non-traditional areas.

Prompt: They don't apply
Career guidance at schools

18. Why do you think that there are so few female managers in this organisation. *(Adjust in line with previous response)*

Prompt: Barriers in the organisation

19. Is there anything else you would like to say about women and employment?

Senior woman

1. Can you briefly say what your job is?

2. How long have your been with the organisation?

3. Tell me about your career to date

3. You have reached a senior position – what do you think were the most important factors that enabled you to achieve this – either in this organisation or another?

Helpful networks?

4. Are there any factors that have made it particularly difficult for you to achieve this senior position?

Prompt: Culture/networks
Long Hours
Work/life Balance
Glass ceiling

5. If so, how did you overcome them?

6. Do you think that this organisation has good policies and practices on gender equality?

If not, why not
Other managers aren't committed to gender equality

7. Is there anything else that you think that the organisation could/should do to enable women to progress their careers?

Prompt: more flexible work
*Help with childcare*
Training/development

8. How do you think your pay compares with men at an equivalent level?

Prompt: Do you know what colleagues at about the same level as you earn?

9. Is there anything further you would like to add?

Junior woman

1. Can you say briefly what your job is?

2. How long have you been with the organisation?

3. Tell me about your career to date, starting with your first job?

4. Have you ever sought promotion?

If so, tell me about it?   If not, why not?

Geog mobility
Exclusions from networks
Personal preference
Domestic responsiblities

5. Do you think that there are barriers in this organisation which have the effect of holding women back?

Prompt: culture
long working hours
lack of promotion opportunities for p-t women
male qualities valued more highly than female ones

6. Can you explain?

7. In your previous organisation do you think that there were barriers which had the effect of holding women back?

8. If so, what were they?

9. Do you think this organisation has good policies on gender equality?

10. If not, why not
Prompt: Other managers aren't committed to gender equality

11. Do you think that that there are measures which the organisation could/should take which would help you, and other women like you to progress your careers?
Prompt: more flexible work
Help with childcare
Training/development

12. Why do you think that the org hasn't taken these measures?
Prompt: senior managers aren't committed to gender equality
line mngrs make it difficult for employees to balance work & domestic responsibilities

13. How do you think your pay compares with men at an equivalent level?
Prompt: Do you know what colleagues at about the same level as you earn?
No male equivalents?

14. Is there anything further you would like to add?