

Recreating Constructing

Country: England

Project Name: Women Building London

Web page: www.womanbuildinglondon.org

A new campaign – Women Building London – overcomes barriers which women have so far encountered at building and repair sites. It will allow 1400 women gain skills and experience in such crafts as plumbing, carpentry, painting and repair of rooms.

Building sites in England have lacked qualified workers for years. It might seem shocking, but this problem is most visible in London. Constant growth of the enterprises capital means that building industry needs thousands new employees each year. About 8 thousand of them are needed in the area of the Greater London only. The demand on the market amount to 4 thousand, as only 4 thousand persons start education in this field!

There is a growing awareness that women, who amount to 1% of construction workers at present, are a potential source of employees. Therefore, organization Women Training for Building prepared project “Women Building London” co-financed by London Development Agency and European Social Fund.

The project provides

- counselling in the field of building and choice of specialization,
- information on support and training,
- assistance in finding job offers
- assistance in starting building companies by women.

The project, anticipated to cover 15 months, gained a wide appreciation since it was started in September 2003. Ms Sue Rossiter of the Building Training Board for the area of the Greater London says: “We need building industry which would be like Great Britain, and Great Britain is not only men and white. The Board is prepared to increase the number of women undertaking training in profession related to building by 10% a year. There are numerous programmes which support it, but the image of the British building industry can be permanently changed only through such campaigns as “Women Building London”.

Within the project, contacts are established with developers and construction companies in order to provide employment to the participants of the project. A change of deeply rooted clichés is also very important. Too many employers still think that a women only brings chaos to the building site and requires special treatment – flexible working hours, separate toilets and cloak-rooms.

This project is addressed to such persons as Esme Butterfield, a mother of two children, who started her career as a visage specialist in cinema and television. Now she cannot reconcile long shooting days with motherhood. Her partner is a painter. She started to learn her profession from him. The flexibility of self-employment made her come to the qualification interview of the project. Esme completed a carpentry training and plans to start her own company.

Judith McLaughin, who worked as a baby-sitter, decided to change job at the age of forty. A friend brought her to the headquarters of the organization where she was offered a chance in

every building profession available. She liked the profession of electrician most. In June, Judith passed her last examinations but it was difficult for her to find a job without any experience. Her skills were often questioned. She managed to overcome the problem and found a job with Thames Accord.