



## **The Hidden Unemployed - An Untapped Labour Force in the Craigavon Area (2000)**

This report draws attention to the well-known structural reasons for women to not be in paid employment (eg. lack of access to affordable childcare, lack of suitable hours of work). It also highlights how changes to employment equality could be achieved through changing mind-sets, values and opinions, throughout life stages of women in Craigavon. Considering the mind-sets, values and opinions of the 16 year olds, the future women of the area, changes need to be made at a young age, lest their ambitions be curtailed for the same reasons the “hidden unemployed women” have experienced. Changes in both structural barriers and mind-sets cannot be considered an individuals concern, but ought, for the benefit of employers and for equality, be approached as a partnership of key players, including the private and public sectors and government agencies.

### **Main aims**

- 1 To delineate the nature and incidence of economic inactivity and non-employment among the population in the Greater Craigavon Area
- 2 To provide up-to-date information to employers, government agencies and community based organisations on the economically inactive population in Craigavon and the obstacles they perceive to labour market participation
- 3 To examine the relationship between labour market participation and women’s access to flexible and affordable childcare
- 4 To enable employers in the Craigavon area to specifically target non-employed females by providing them with up-to-date empirical evidence of untapped labour resources and perceived obstacles to participation
- 5 To influence policy and decision makers in areas which have a direct impact on working women’s lives such as family friendly policies, positive action measures and childcare
- 6 To advance the call for a partnership of key players, including the private and public sector and government agencies
- 7 To establish an effective strategy to attract and retain more female employees

### **Main findings**

- 1 Marriage and having children were the most important factors in women leaving employment. Once all children are at school the preferred work is of a part-time nature. On return to work, having up-to-date skills and employer perceptions are the most create the most significant problems

- 2 Being out of paid employment brought with it a change of values towards employment and a change of motivators to engage in paid work
- 3 Lack of education qualifications was seen as a serious problem in accessing jobs and considered by women to be a standard requisite
- 4 Community based training and education programmes were highly praised
- 5 The issue of affordable, accessible childcare remains a major obstacle to higher female participation in paid employment