

MK Women Supporting Women - Launch March 13th 2009

'Fantastic!' was the resounding response to the exciting Symposium held by MK Women and Work Group. Women from across sectors of the community; private, public and voluntary, gathered together to share ideas about improving the situation for the Women of Milton Keynes and in turn their families and the local economy. The event marked the launch of the 'Women supporting Women' campaign, where Women and Work have asked successful women to help make a difference for the future of Women in Milton Keynes.



Kim Davies, the vibrant young Chair of Trustees for Women and Work stated 'These days 'feminist' has become a bit of a dirty word, but Women & Work has always been a feminist organisation and today I intend to reclaim the word to mean something positive.'

Avril Francome, Head of Women and Work spoke about their recent research, 'Women's Journey towards Sexual Equality' and the

additional Milton Keynes/National comparison document, showing that Milton Keynes has fewer part time jobs and fewer women in managerial or senior official roles than the national average. Women need part time work to balance their household and childcare responsibilities and often end up taking work far below their ability as these are the only jobs available. Avril explained 'Women spend twice as long doing housework and childcare than men, so where men see work life balance as relaxation time, Women need it as time to fulfil unpaid work obligations of childcare and domestic tasks.' The research and symposium highlighted the opportunity that the current downturn brings for employers to adopt more flexible ways of working, with more part time roles and family friendly policies, to allow the talents of Women to be utilised in a role equal to their abilities.

Sue Lickorish of *infusion coaching & development* facilitated a series of lively discussions and the event ended on a high with a surge of Women making a personal pledge of time, resources or skills to support Women and Work to make a difference for the Women of Milton Keynes. Isobel McCall Leader of Milton Keynes Council led by pledging her time to mentor clients from Women and Work.

20th March 2009