



Equal



Equal 2 Agender

Fork Lift Truck Driving for Women

Final Report



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Aims and Objectives of the Project

The research, funded through the Equal 2 Agender Project, had four main aims.

- To produce an analysis of local employers' attitudes to employing women as fork lift truck FLT drivers
- To run a focus group on women's perceptions of FLT driving as a job
- To have helped 10 women consider a career in FLT driving
- To produce a marketing leaflet that attracts women into FLT driving

The research was intended as a precursor to identifying women from four Children's Centers who would be willing to try a taster session on FLT driving and undertake the training course which could lead to the achievement of a 3-year licence.

Description of the Delivery of the Project

Employers of FLT drives interviewed

Managers of three firms employing FLT drivers were interviewed. Using a semi-structured questionnaire to accommodate varying scenarios¹ two interviews were conducted over the telephone, the third at the employers place of work.

JobCentre Plus (JCP) contact

A local JobCentre Plus office was contacted to discover which companies were advertising for FLT drivers. The number of jobs being advertised in and around the area was also ascertained from JCP. Three recruitment agencies were also contacted with two responding to requests for telephone interviews. These interviews were to establish local employers' attitudes to women FLT drivers from the perspective of the agencies and again the type of work available.

FLT training providers contact

Three training providers were contacted. Again only two responded to requests for information on training. Contact has since been established with one other provider so as to be able to compare prices and services on offer for taster sessions and training. The aim of this communication was to establish the costs likely to be incurred for FLT training as well as the length of training, opportunities for tasters and importantly what 'flexibility' was possible if women's training had to be 'fitted' around child care. It also proved useful as another avenue to try and ascertain employers' attitudes to women FLT drivers. Once more the questionnaire was adjusted to reflect the training providers function in relation to employers of FLT drivers.

¹ Possible scenarios were that only men were employed or that women were employed or that women had applied for jobs but not been successful



Individual interviews & desk research

A woman holding a current licence for FLT driving was contacted and interviewed as a way to capture an insight into a woman's experience so as to add knowledge to the research project's findings and recommendations.

Desk research discovered two examples of women advocating and endorsing FLT driving as an enjoyable job worth pursuing.

An interview was also carried out with a man who had just undergone the training and secured his licence. This was felt to add value in gaining a fuller awareness of what was entailed during training courses.

Women's Focus Group

A woman's focus group was organised and facilitated at one of the Children's Centre. Ten women were invited to attend with 9 participating on the day.

A focus group schedule was loosely divided into 4 main parts consisting of:

- Introductions by all the group
- Focussed discussion on 'male & female' roles and jobs
- Flash cards
- Draft leaflet / flyer

Draft leaflet / flyer to promote FLT driving tasters & courses for women

Two draft flyers were designed and given to the focus group members for comment and re-designing to provoking an interest amongst women. Comments were noted and incorporated into the final leaflet to be used to advertise the taster session and training course in the four children's centres in the north area of Birmingham.

Outcomes of the Project

The research project, in line with the Equal Agender remit, looked at Fork Lift Truck Driving being a vocational sector traditionally linked only with men and not favoured or promoted to women. The outcomes of the project are as follows:

- Interviewed managers of 3 employers of people holding FLT driving licences
- Interviewed 2 recruitment agency managers placing FLT drivers into temporary employment (which might be followed by permanent positions)
- Interviewed 2 training providers of FLT courses / licences
- Interviewed 1 woman FLT driver
- Interviewed 1 male newly qualified FLT driver
- Analysed interview findings to integrate into final research project
- Organised and facilitated a focus group with 9 participants to consider gendered vocational sectors including FLT driving
- Analysed focus group discussion to integrate into final research project

- Help 9 women in focus group to consider FLT driving as a career
- Produced a leaflet to be circulated promoting the opening of a new children's centre which included, amongst other training possibilities, the offer of a FLT driving taster
- Identified 2 women interested in having a taster course through circulation of a leaflet promoting the opening of a new children's centre
- Produced a draft leaflet promoting FLT driving tasters & courses as an option for women to be discussed at a focus group
- Produced a flyer/leaflet emanating out of the focus group discussion to be circulated to 4 children's centres in the north area of Birmingham
- Produced a thematic research report integrating data collection from the various methods of research undertaken for this project
- Production of a final report for the research project

Comments on the Success of the Project

Having money available to pay for refreshments, vouchers, childcare if needed and a suitable venue made all the difference to the project. The coffee and cakes were a welcome refreshment contribution which worked with the women both creating a relaxed atmosphere as well as an encouragement to stay and chat after the focus group had finished. The £10 voucher to thank them for their time and willingness to be involved was also well received. In addition, the focus group was carried out at the Lakeside Children's and Family Centre. The facilities at the centre, in essence a warm, clean and bright venue with a suitable room for the discussion, a café to provide the coffee & cakes and nursery; it was the ideal site for running a group of this kind.

In most research having 'gatekeepers' pays dividends by enabling a smooth path for the initial contact. This was highlighted in the ease of the women's reactions to the facilitator who they did not know. The names of the women invited had been provided by Enta's IAG² worker and the previous SRB5's Learning Negotiator. Even though they did not know the facilitator of the focus group when she rang them she received an immediate "Yes, I'll be there" or "Yes, I'll give it a go". This response and their subsequent attendance was in large part, if not wholly, due to the goodwill that existed between these women and the work that had been carried out in the past via the Children's Centre. They also trusted the staff that they had previously had contact with. Having a gatekeeper of this kind with a name or names that can be mentioned and recognised creates a good will relationship.

This ease of access was less true with the employers and in particular the recruitment agencies. In the latter case asking to speak to the managers always

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resulted in, as would be expected, “what is it in connection with”. Once a manager’s name was known it was easier the second time around as asking for someone by name usually meant the call was put through without question.

For all this difficulty and more-so time consuming all who were interviewed did patiently answer my questions including one interviewee even though I arrived in his warehouse without an appointment. These interviewees were generous with their time and interested in what we were trying to do.

Suggestions for Changes and Future Developments

One member of Enta’s staff facilitated the focus group discussion whilst another planned to take notes. Even though the group was taped it was felt to be good practice to take notes in case there was a hitch in the recording process. All the women were aware and agreed to both the tape and the notes being taken.

However, the staff member entrusted with the role of taking notes was called from the room a number of times because of parents dropping in to see her. If this kind of work is ever repeated it would need to be a dedicated member of staff who could not be disturbed. There were no repercussions from this situation as the tape recorder did work however had it not a lot of important data would have been lost.

There were no known ‘gatekeepers’ for employers which resulted in ‘cold calling’ which made it harder to get interviews. Identifying the recruitment agencies role meant a wider interviewing option. Yet here again managers were protected by front line staff and needed to be bypassed for interviews to be successfully conducted.

The focus group schedule worked quite well, however, it might have been improved had there been time to carry out a small pilot as well as allowing the facilitator to become more familiar in the flow of the schedule.

Having project contracts on time so that the action plan can be carried out as planned when the bid is first conceived would make a significant contribution to the smooth running of any project.

The following recommendations, emanating out of the research project, were made to the Agender DP to action

1. As the evidence suggests that Forklift Truck Driving jobs are rarely discrete, training for a licence needs to be part of a package of training to suit possible job roles.
2. The possible complementary or linked job roles need to be identified to assist women in working towards paid work which will then utilize their

- interest, give options for in-house training or give experience to endorse the licence they have achieved.
3. As 'some experience' is consistently a criterion for employment there is a need for access to an Adult ILM (Intermediate Labour Market). This might require setting up an ILM either in, or as a, partnership with a private employer or training provider.
 4. As Forklift Truck Driving jobs are not plentiful any future project would need to have a dedicated employment / support officer for the women involved within the training to assist in gaining employment or identifying routes into paid work.
 5. Although the project was linked to Children's Centres consideration needs to be given to travel and cost issues as jobs will not necessarily be readily available in close proximity to all these centres.
 6. JCP vacancies indicate that most work was via recruitment agencies. Consideration needs to be given to issues affecting women if employment is 'sessional' or temporary e.g. Tax Credit, Varying sites and times etc.
 7. Consideration given to targeting FLT tasters, training and job promotion in geographical areas where there are local employers of FLT drivers
 8. Work with recruitment agencies to assist overcoming some of the barriers and help in the encouragement of employers to give trials, placements and work to women holding licences without experience in the workplace
 9. Invite women FLT drivers to help raise awareness of and promote the work as a viable employment option
 10. Work with all those who advise on job opportunities, for example, schools, Connexion PAs, Nextstep, IAG workers etc to widen their vision of employment choices which could be presented to women
 11. Work closely with Birmingham Employment Hubs, e.g. North West City Jobs, Eastside etc to identify early the opportunities for FLT driving and related work to promote to women at relevant children's centres
 12. Work with employers to (re)consider how unintended barriers and obstacles might be negotiated without affecting their businesses
 13. Because of the (prohibited) cost of training make links with employers willing to employ women in roles where FLT driving training can then be an in-house option
 14. In order to advance more generally FLT training options to women encourage all employers who provide in-house training to consider tasters for all women workers as a way to further increase interest