

WOMEN IN SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

In her introduction, Marie-Noëlle Barton referred to the need for the Engineering Council to set up the Women Into Science and Engineering (WISE) campaign in 1984, to encourage more girls and women to consider engineering as a career.

She highlighted the difficulties experienced by girls and women, particularly:

- Problem of stereotype about engineering and about what is perceived to be appropriate for men and women to be and to do.
- Lack of experience that girls have in technology as they are not given the same toys and do not benefit from the same technical experiences as boys at an early age. As a result of this they do not have the same confidence in the subject.
- The teaching of subjects such as maths, science and technology is not always girl-friendly and, at times, teachers do not give girls the same time and attention as they do to boys.
- There is a lack of women engineers role models. Many girls will know women teachers or doctors but very few will have come across women engineers. They will therefore not consider the profession of engineering as one suitable for women.
- Industry needs to do more to attract and promote women within a company. Networks and membership schemes should be investigated as well as crèche and career breaks. Colleagues attitudes, if negative, needs to be handled.
- Finally, women themselves need to grow in confidence and self-esteem in order to compete in what is still a man's world.

She then referred to the various initiatives run by the Engineering Council to improve the situation. The targetted audience is girls and women themselves; parents; teaching staff in education and careers advisers; employers; politicians; and the media.

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