

## Opportunities with Experience - O-W-E – C. I. C



**Helping Women and Young Adults Work in  
Construction Trades 2016 - 2017**



# Company Report 2016 - 2017



## Our Vision

Opportunities with Experience – O-W-E - C.I.C exist to tackle low attainment of women and young adults with educational disadvantage in the construction industry working in manual trades. The series of workshops we run around the Kent and the South East London areas aims to provide a practical and inspiring learning experience for women who wish to 'have a go' at a trade before deciding on whether to pursue a career in building maintenance.

The taster sessions consisted of practical training work in trade skills including basic DIY, tiling and painting and decorating led by qualified trades trainers. Our participants are also informed of career opportunities in manual trades in the interior decorating sector and the progression and support systems open to them.

We collaborate with community projects, housing associations and work programmes, to increase access rates into industry for mainly women and young adults from low-income backgrounds leading to increased employability over time.

In the short-term, our training programmes support these individuals in improving their educational grades, confidence and expectations so each of our learners knows what it takes and has the ability to challenge for future employment prospects.





## ***Our Training Programmes***

Our training programmes are designed to enable each of our students to become independent and resilient so they can succeed at getting a job and crucially holding it down long term so ultimately developing a career so they can lead the lives they want.

We focus on building and improving the skills and academic attainment of learners and giving them the tools to improve their attitude to learning and work ethic. Through this, they are better placed to challenge for working within the construction industry.

## ***Our Impact So Far***

During 2016 / 17 we worked with 164 learners across two counties, London and Kent.

77 who completed our 3 day CSCS Labourers card training programme of 2017, 70% are working on construction sites. Our 10 day Pop Up Interior Decorating programme targeted mainly women and we welcomed 87 completing participants. 16% have found work with painting and decorating companies and 12% have gone on to enrol on or complete level 2 diploma in painting and decorating courses at their local FE College. As well as being nominated for the Constructing Excellence in London and the South East Awards 2016 and winning the Achiever of the Year – Highly Commended, our successes in promoting the opportunities and encourage mainly women and young adults into construction within their local community is due to our programme ambassadors, volunteers and committee. Everyone is invaluable and help to keep us going.

## ***Our Future , looks bright***

Next academic year, we aim to expand the impact of our work so we can enable more women to succeed while ensuring the quality of our programme stays high and evidence-based. We need to help the women who have childcare issues to attend our programmes. Childcare is stated as the top reason women do not attend or complete our programmes. We will be returning to Northfleet to help women find employment in the building trade by providing childcare, training, mentoring and networking opportunities. This venture links well with potential for local employment on the proposed Ebbsfleet Garden City building 15,000 homes over the next 15 years. In summer 2018, we will be launching a seventeen week workshop, particularly aimed at supporting unemployed women and young adults aspiring to new challenges. We have planned visits to construction sites; trying out different trades (such as dry-lining) in hands-on sessions. We are also collaborating with a local based organisation who will deliver our self-employability training as well as extending contracts with our current partners for the next three years. We work to reach out to women and young adults; our mission assist women who are suffering in silence and require friendly hands. We raise mentors who support women in leadership development roles in order to affect their lives and community positively; we are a group of women using our skills and experiences to empower other women to reach their potentials.



## From the Founder & CEO



Since its inception, Opportunities with Experience – O-W-E –C.I.C has focused on quality and success. The organisation is quickly becoming recognized across Kent and South East London as the go-to place for women and young adults who are serious about a career in trades. To date, we have trained and placed more than 100 women and young adults into the construction sector. They are now painters & decorators, carpenters, welders, electricians, and tillers. In 2016, more than 300 women and young adults interested in exploring a career in trades contacted O-W-E –C.I.C; another milestone in our efforts to help meet South East immediate and future construction workforce demands.

This report details how far we have come in two short years to support those wanting to work in the construction industry from low-income women and young adults; helping them build confidence, improve their employability prospects and understand how to work towards long-term goals. It also details the impact, successes and mistakes we have made over the year (2016/17) as well as the fantastic organisations we have collaborated with who share our mission. We want participants to leave us with the right tools and confidence so they can succeed at a career in construction. Equally, we want our participants to have the right attitude and mindset so when they progress from our courses into work, they thrive. There have been countless highlights and success stories.

We are proud to present our Annual Report **2016-17**. It represents the contribution and achievements of all members of the O-W-E - C.I.C team including the Board of Directors/committee members, staff, volunteers, ambassadors, and past students.

Whether you're a construction trainer, assessor, internal verifier, employer, developer or supporter, if you want to join in tackling educational disadvantage then do consider this your call to action - we would love you to get in touch!

*Angela Steele*

Founder & CEO





### Meet Ellie.

In July 2015, Ellie completed our 10 pop up interior decorating course. She gave 100% commitment and decided at the end to go to college to complete her L2 painting and decorating course after two years of studying; Ellie successfully completed her level 2 Diploma in painting and decorating and in October 2017 start working as a sub-contractor for our female interior decorating Intodecor.

She says, "My dad is a builder and I liked going to work with him. And I especially liked P&D. My brother-in-law told me about Angela course so I thought I would try it out. I really didn't want to go to college but the trainer and Angela told me how good I was and I should go and they would still be there if I need help. I am so glad I did the course it was so much fun even though I was the only girl out of three to complete".

Ellie is one of our first participants to complete a painting and decorating qualification and is a true champion of progression into construction trades. Ellie initially struggled academically at sixth form; she showed real resilience to bounce back stronger. To see her working as a qualified tradeswoman is a heartwarming moment for us all at O-W-E - C.I.C. We salute her and our many participants who began the leap to study for a CSCS card this academic year.

### Ellie, Painter & Decorator



### Meet Cheryl

"Thanks once again to everyone at O-W-E – C.I.C and Intodecor for giving me the opportunity to complete the programme and helping me to get to where I am today, a sub contractor. I wouldn't have made it here without you and I will always be grateful for the encouragement, support and understanding that you amazing women gave me."

### Cheryl, Painter and Decorator



Cheryl on site with Intodecor Lead Painter Danielle



## WHY WE EXSIST

**Though progress has been made, working in construction in the UK is still unfair with disadvantaged people such as women facing social or economic barriers and women much less likely to gain employment often preventing them from reaching their full potential.**

Remaining high on the political agenda over the last decade, there is still a skills shortage in the construction industry. The trade recruitment market is always crying out for qualified workers and the industry remains a vital area for employment. In a report by the Construction Industry training Board (CITB)<sup>1</sup> they estimate that more than 36,000 new workers a year will be needed to cover the current demand. It is predicated that 1 million construction workers are needed by 2040.

Gainor Keeton, Mears Project Manager, said, "Only 1% of construction trade operatives in the construction sector are female. We are determined to do better than this and to increase the number of tradeswomen across the social housing building maintenance sector. We also support other organisations to get the message out that there are good careers for women to be had in social housing maintenance. This is not only the right thing to do but we know that the best workforce is one which reflects the communities in which we serve."

The government hopes to build 275,000 affordable homes in this time; so there is still much to be done.



Our report reveals we are on an upward journey but can still do more. Shortening the skills gap in the UK can be better. Much better, much fairer and far more inclusive.

In 2017, we saw record applications from young adults living in disadvantaged areas applying for work in construction. Significantly, the chances of a women with childcare from a low-income background or unemployed going on to work in construction is 10% higher than just 5 years ago and rising.





## APPROACH 101

### INCREASED AWARENESS, READINESS AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

#### RAISING AWARENESS – THE FUTURE

We will be launching The O-W-E – C .I .C Opportunities for Women in Construction Awareness Programme which is specifically designed to attract women into the construction sector. The Programme is set to reach more than 1000 women in 2019-20 through a mix of advertising, public relations, a web presence, social media and information sessions.

O-W-E – C .I .C Information Sessions will help women learn about the wide variety of opportunities within the construction sector including residential, commercial, institutional and industrial. They are introduced to the industry, how the work gets done, where it's done and which trades do the work. They learn about unions and open shop and how projects today are using a combination of both to get the work done. They are introduced to the companies that support O-W-E – C .I .C and about their current and future job opportunities. Once women begin to understand the world of construction it becomes more real and possible. Women continue to be surprised to learn that industry would consider hiring them. The message we are delivering to women—that industry needs and wants them—must continue.

We will persist in looking for new and innovative ways to reach women throughout Kent and Medway. We launched our website blog and a presence on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. By the end of 2018 we will launch our YouTube and our new video conferencing technology allowing us to deliver information sessions to women no matter where they live. These social media applications will extend our reach and attract even more women to careers in the construction sector. We are working to re-focus our programme throughout Kent and Medway, building the awareness that is necessary to attract this available and local source of workers to the construction sector.

#### ASSESSMENT

Our assessment process is vital to selecting students who are ready, willing and able to commit to excellence. O-W-E – C .I .C graduates are known for their attention to health and safety in a construction environment by gaining a CSCS card. One way we maintain this quality is through our rigorous self-employability assessment of potential students. The Career Decision Making Workshop will be a key part of this process. It helps women determine their readiness for a career in construction given their current lifestyle, academic level, work ethic, transferable skills and work experience. All participants must attend a Career Decision Making Workshop. Our awareness programme and assessment process will provide exactly what the construction sector needs – access to a growing, local source of workers who are serious about becoming successful tradespeople and who have the necessary academics, work ethic and commitment to bring that dream to fruition.



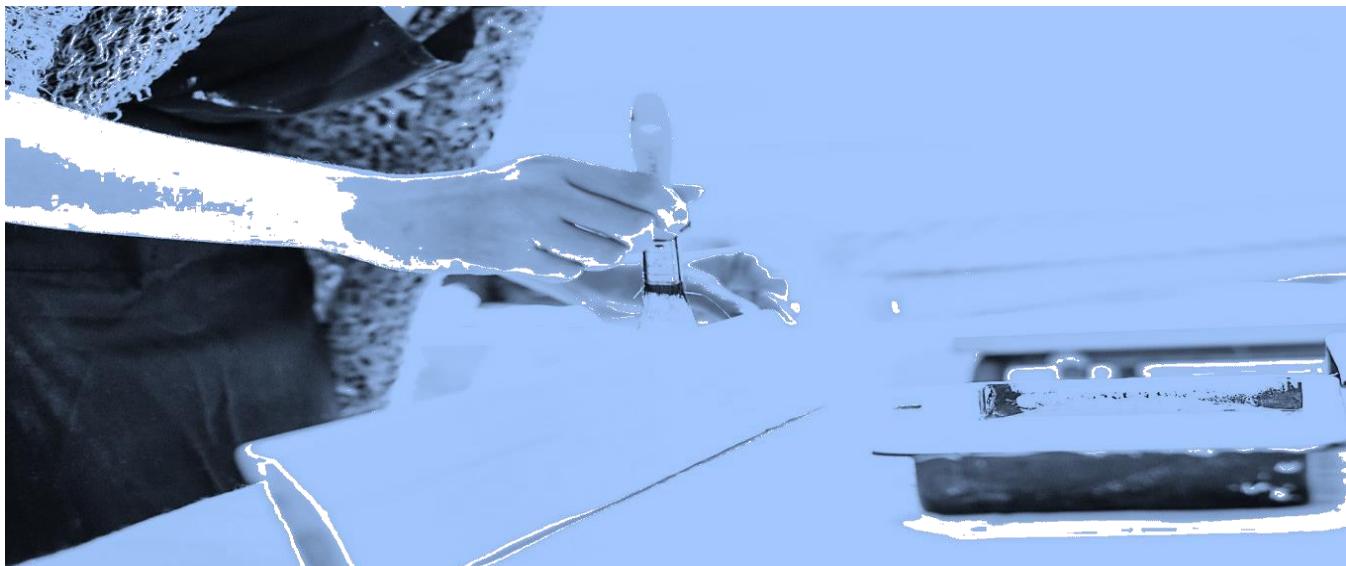
## TRAINING

Between April 2016 – September 2017, 101 women completed the O-W-E – C.I.C 10-day Interior Decorating programme and 72 women completed programme. The O-W-E – C.I.C Workplace Culture Awareness module is to be integrated in all O-W-E – C.I.C programmes. Its purpose is to help our students understand the world of construction, job performance expectations and the construction workplace culture—including informal, unwritten and unspoken assumptions, attitudes, roles and norms. In 2017, a project was initiated to create a standalone certificate programme of this module for non- O-W-E – C.I.C students. The programme will be offered as a stand-alone course for other pre-trades and apprenticeship programs throughout Kent and Medway.

In October 2016, Kent Association of Training Organisation (KATO) and Renaisi Works approached O-W-E – C.I.C to create a new three day accredited training programme for mainly young males 19+ on or work with the probation service; the first program of its kind for both organisations. Our 3 day health and safety training continues to give young men a qualification and CSCS card and the readiness to start work on a construction site. We commend KATO and Renaisi vision and commitment to help these challenging young adults into the construction workforce!

## JOB PLACEMENT AND RETENTION

Our 2017 job placement rate for completers was 33%, reflecting the slowdown in the economy. However, we are building relationships with employers to strengthen their hiring confidence. More and more employers will come to value O-W-E – C.I.C for its role in attracting the right kind of people for the construction sector and more and more women are coming through our doors looking for a way into the industry. This year we aim to add over 30 employers to our list of workforce development partners and that list will continue to grow as more major industrial and commercial projects come on stream.





*Ultimately we would like to see the number of women in construction increase substantially from the current 1%–6%. The good news is that we continue to see a steady growth in the number of employers who express interest in hiring more women.*

This year, we reached out to construction developers, unions and non-union associations to explore ways in which we might work together to increase the recruitment and retention rate of tradeswomen. In December 2016 we started the Womaletics committee. The committee was set up to work with a number of tradeswomen, HR and industry expert to develop an Employer's Guidance on Best Practices for Contracting and Retaining Tradeswomen. The guide and its accompanying short workshops will be piloted at the South East Construction Expo 2018 on 13 September 2018. Partnerships with industry are critical to the work we do. We must forge strong relationships with leading organisations in the South East such as major developers working with Ebbsfleet Development Corporation. These major developers play a key role in the development of Northfleet and Swanscombe economy by making sure that schools, roads, community and commercial buildings and mega projects are built safely and maintained to high standards. O-W-E – C.I.C will be proud to be counted as a workforce development partner with these organisations.

One way of training for the future occupation is by pursuing a dual vocational training programme. Our new 17 weeks programmes will offer plenty of opportunity for on-the-trade training and work experience. Programmes usually last between ten and fifteen days initially and comprise theoretical as well as practical elements. Women will spend one or two days a week, or several weeks at once, at our pop up vocational school where she will acquire the theoretical knowledge that she will need in her future occupation. The rest of the time will be spent learning off site. This way she gets to apply her newly acquired knowledge in practice, for example by learning to operate machinery. She will get to know what the company does, learn how it operates and find out if she can see herself working there after completing the training.

This combination of theory and practice gives women a real head start into the trade: by the time they have completed the training, they will not only have the required technical knowledge, but will also have hands-on experience in their chosen trade. We are fully accredited to deliver around 22 officially recognised vocational training programmes by Awarding Body Edexcel, so chances are good that one of them will suit our student's needs, interests and talents. We are also collaborating with a local based organisation who will deliver our self-employability training.



Employment prospects for students who have completed a 17 weeks vocational training programme are very good. This is one of the reasons why this kind of training is very popular with women and young people: around two thirds of all students leaving school go on to start a vocational training programme.

#### **BEST FORM OF RECRUITMENT FOR COMPANIES**

We are confident developers that take part in our dual training scheme will consider our vocational training for tradeswomen to be the best form of personnel recruitment. Why, because developers not only save on recruitment costs but also avoids the risk of hiring the wrong employee for the job. Investment in first-class training is a key factor for success in an increasingly competitive world.

The main benefit for women is that they receive market-relevant training that improves their chances on the labour market which is constantly evolving and upgrading skills in response to the latest innovations of the digital age while simultaneously broadening their social and democratic participation.





O-W-E – C.I.C has come a long way over the past few years and we have much to celebrate. 2017 marked a difficult year in our economy but it also gave us time to reflect and explore new ways of bringing more value to our stakeholders and improving both our bottom lines. We are building the foundations for a new business model that will deliver lasting social return on investment and increase business value for our funders. Innovation, aspiration, accountability, market-driven programming and future focused leadership are the benchmarks of this plan. Safety is the number one concern for industry and for good reason; safety is the key not only to the health and wellness of staff, but also to productivity. While our students receive a L1 qualification in health and safety in a construction environment and a CSCS card: a proof of knowledge of on-site H&S, we also keep our team up-to-date with safety issues on an organisational level through regular safety meetings and development of individual CPD. Governance and Financial Accountability O-W-E – C.I.C has strong, knowledgeable and dedicated volunteers, board of directors/committee. The O-W-E – C.I.C Board of Directors and management completed a number of key initiatives, including the development and approval of the 2016/2017 Strategic Plan and Business Plan. These plans clearly articulate the vision for the organisation and set the goals that will bring the vision to realisation.





*Overall, 2016 - 17 was a good year.*

More importantly, we began to take significant steps toward laying the foundation for future organisational and financial sustainability. Moving forward we will increase value for developers and retain their trust by focusing on their needs and for women through partnerships with post-secondary institutions, community organisations, construction industry and government. We are grateful for the many individuals and organisations that have adopted our vision and promote it as if it were their own. It is this collective purpose that will, over time, change the face of industry for good.



## **AWARDS**

CONSTRUCTING EXCELLENCE in London and the South East Awards 2016  
Achiever of the Year – Highly Commended

## **COMMUNITIES WE HAVE SERVED**

### **Sessions/Workshops**

Wallis Park, Northfleet

Council for Voluntary Service North West Kent, Northfleet

Fort Luton, Chatham

Slade Green & Howbury Library and Community Centre, Bexley

The Grand, Gravesend

Guru Nanak Sport Centre, Gravesend

Pound Park Children's Centre, London

Rotherhithe Community Centre, London

Temple Hill Community Centre & St Edmund's Church

St Augustus Church, Rochester

Career Fairs

Lawn Primary School, Northfleet

ABC Computers, Medway

KATO, Medway

University Academy of Engineering, London

## **SPONSORS/FUNDING**

ECO Communities, London

Affinity Sutton Housing, London

Big Lottery Awards for All

UnLtd & Big Local Northfleet

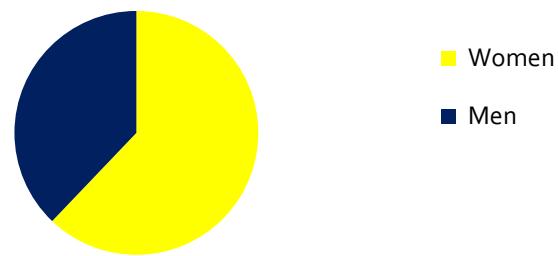
Rosa for Girls

Santander Developing Fund

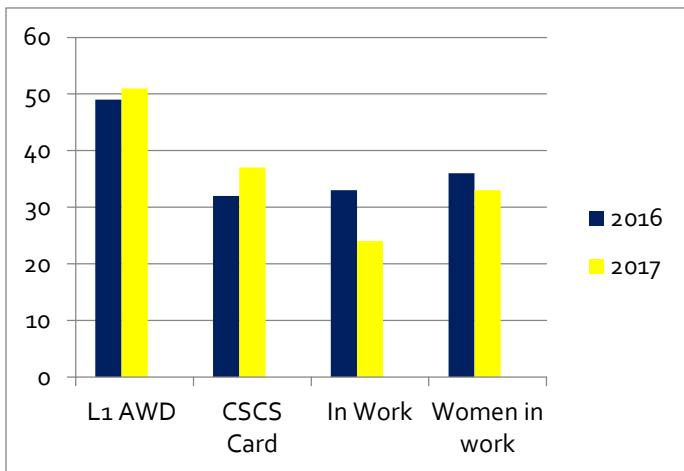
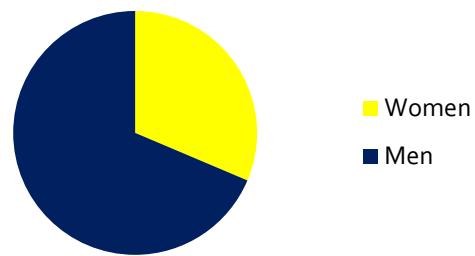
School of Social Entrepreneurs, London

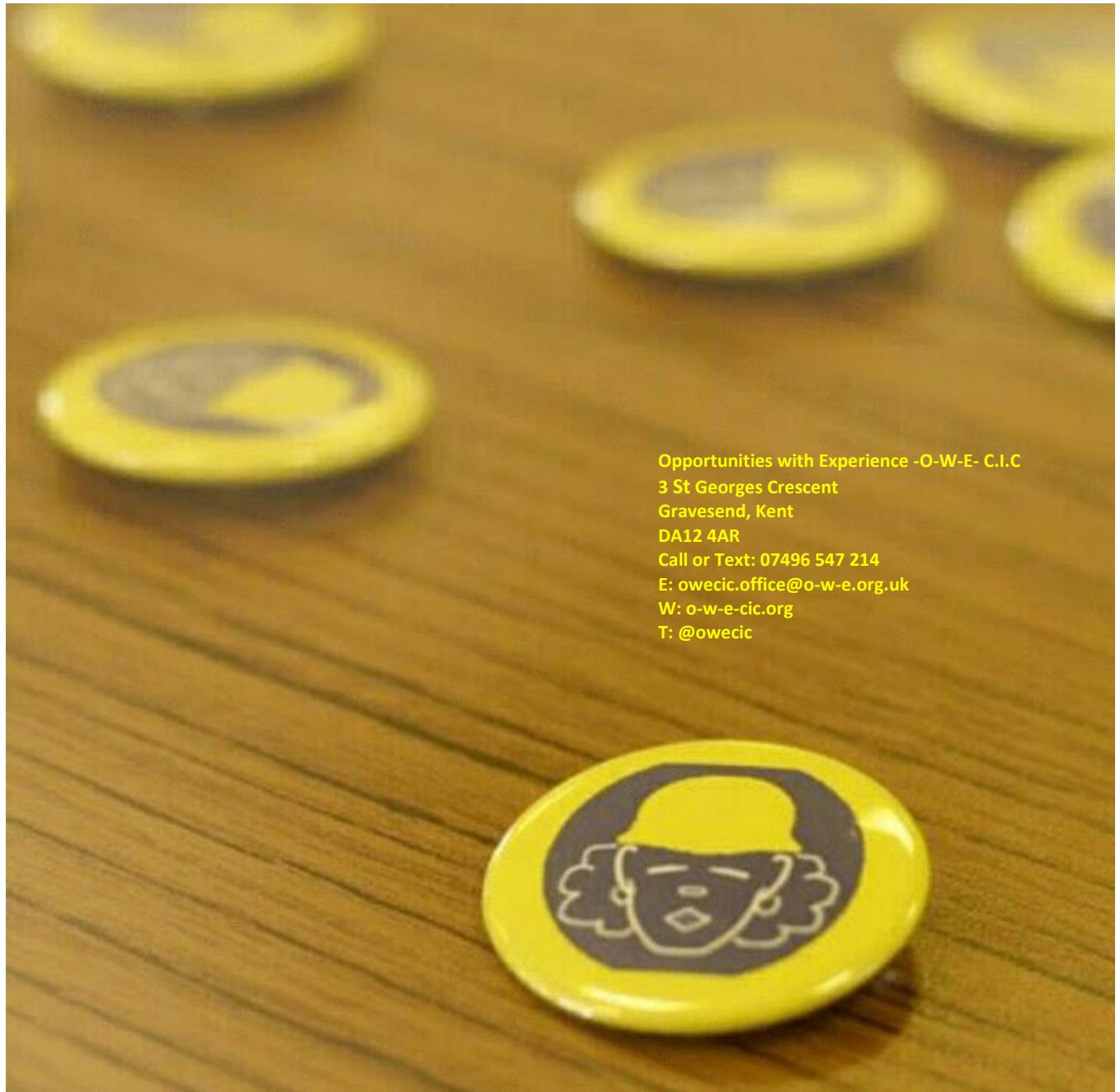


## Gender Divide on Programme 2016



## Gender Divide on Programme 2017





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