

LONDON MATHEMATICAL

The Society is very aware of the low numbers of women mathematicians and actively seeks to address the many issues involved in a number of ways. For example, the Society recently changed its rules concerning Prizes so that these are now defined in terms of years of relevant experience (allowing for career breaks and part-time working) rather than restricted by age.

In 1999 the Society set up a Women in Mathematics Committee and this has a number of roles. The Committee keeps under review issues relating to women mathematicians and, where appropriate, proposes and carries out actions aimed at ensuring equality of opportunity and treatment. It liaises with other bodies working in the area of women in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) in the UK, at a European level and elsewhere. Recently the committee persuaded the EPSRC (the main funder of mathematics research in the UK) to change its rules on part-time working for its Advanced Research Fellowships and also made representations to the Higher Education Funding Councils for more specific wording to be put into the Research Assessment Exercise guidelines on part-time working.

The Committee also organises two events each year. The first of these – the Mary Cartwright Lecture, named after a very eminent mathematician of the 20th century – aims to increase the awareness of women in mathematics by ensuring that at least one important Society lecture each year is given by an outstanding women mathematician. The second event brings women mathematicians from across the country together for one day to share their mathematical research and experiences. This is attended by many postgraduates and we hope it encourages them to continue in their mathematical careers.

Finally, the Committee runs two grant schemes. The Grace Chisholm Young Fellowship provides some support when a mathematical career has been interrupted by family responsibilities, relocation of a partner or other similar circumstances. The financial support provided is small but it provides the holder with a position in an academic institution and thus access to resources and other mathematicians – prerequisites to remaining current in the subject. The Society also offers childcare grants which can be claimed to help offset the additional childcare costs incurred when attending a conference. Both schemes are open to all UK-based mathematicians, not just to members of the Society. We would be happy to provide details of these schemes if it would be helpful.

The Committee is very aware that the number of women mathematicians in academia drops at higher levels. In particular, there is a dramatic drop in the numbers of women between the ages of 30 and 40. We have been very disappointed by the fact that most universities and funding councils will not allow expenses such as extra childcare costs to be included when claiming funding for conference trips (or other similar activities). Also, many grants and fellowships are for a fixed time period and can not be extended *pro rata* when the holder seeks to work part-time. Any pressure that you could exert to change this situation would be much appreciated.

I hope this response is helpful to you.

Yours sincerely

Peter Cooper
Executive Secretary