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In 1983, Sally Randles obtained her first degree in Management Sciences (B.Sc. Hons) from the University of Lancaster. After two years working as a Market Research Executive in London she joined the Consumers' Association as a Survey Officer, from there she worked with an Enterprise Agency in Hammersmith, West London, helping small firms with their marketing activities. After a further two years she moved the geographical focus of her work to East London, managing a training project for unemployed youth and adults in Spitalfields. She relocated to Bedford in 1990 where she worked for four years as a Principal Economic Development Officer responsible for a team working on local economic strategy and regeneration. In 1991 she completed her Master's degree in Business Administration, awarded by the University of Kingston, Surrey. In 1996 she was awarded an E.S.R.C. grant to study for a PhD with the School of Geography at the University of Manchester.