

NEWS IN BRIEF

EOC: UNIONS STILL HAVE MUCH TO DO

Unions have played a vital role in encouraging employers to give women workers a fair deal, but there is still a lot to do, Britain's top equality official has warned. Julie Mellor, chair of the Equal Opportunities Commission, told a meeting with union heads: "The unions have done more than anyone else to help the lowest paid workers in this country," but warned "we also need to act together on several fronts if we are to close the pay gap, which actually got wider last year." She said it was important to address gender discrimination, part-time, low wage job ghettos and other issues, including work-life balance. "The EOC and the unions have a vital role promoting the new rights for parents of young children, ensuring they are taken up and working together to extend rights and challenge the long hours culture," she said. "We know that the union movement is committed to tackling these fundamental injustices. The EOC wants to work with you to help make all Britain's workplaces good workplaces, where every worker knows they can expect to be treated fairly and with respect." EOC helpline: 0845 601 5901.

WOMEN WIN ON CALL BATTLE

Nine women wardens have won a legal battle that could have major implications for people who are forced to remain on standby after completing their hours of work. The GMB members lived in sheltered homes for the elderly in the London borough of Harrow and worked a basic 37 hour week – but they were kept on call for another 76 hours. An employment tribunal said the council had breached working time regulations and awarded the women £1,500 compensation each. The tribunal said the council had not given the women proper daily rest or given them the national minimum wage for their time on standby. It decided the 76 hours the workers were on call counted as work. A European Court of Justice ruling this month

has reinforced the working hours rights of on call workers. A German doctor successfully argued that any time he was on call – including time sleeping – should be counted as his working hours, not just the time he spent treating patients.

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

October was the 10th anniversary of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Women from around the world gathered in Westminster to lobby their MPs for improvements in breast cancer services. They asked their MPs to help reduce the unacceptable waiting times that exist for breast cancer patients needing to start their radiotherapy treatment. Those attending the "Westminster Fly-in" participated in a full day of training workshops and discussions to prepare themselves for meeting their MP the following day. Taking place on 27-28 October, the event cost as little as £65 per delegate including accommodation. To find out more about the Westminster Fly-in or the work of the UK Breast Cancer Coalition (UKBCC) that organised the event, call Joanna on 0208 543 4455 or email Joanna@ukbcc.org

SEND GORDON A POSTCARD

A postcard campaign to make quality affordable childcare accessible to all families has been launched by Daycare Trust. With a Treasury review of childcare under way, the postcard campaign is urging Chancellor Gordon Brown to: Develop children's centres in every community, providing affordable, quality childcare, early education, health, family and employment support; make childcare more affordable by improving the childcare element of the working tax credit; introduce new tax and national insurance incentives for employer supported childcare; and encourage employers to extend flexible working practices for all employees, including longer paid parental leave to give parents more choice in the crucial first year of a child's life. See www.daycaretrust.org.uk for more information.

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CHILDCARE FACILITIES FOR YOUR MEETINGS
 The working parent is often faced with problems of good childcare for their children while at business meetings. These needs are met by our mobile crèche facility.
 What do we get?
 1. The correct number of childminders per ratio as set down by the Children's Act 1989. Our staff have had the relevant checks made on them by the appropriate authorities and have a good relationship and understanding with children.
 2. Play equipment, which consist of things such as; ball pools, soft toys, books, painting, crayoning, soft play, bouncy castle, videos, sing-a-longs etc.



Play Time at work at the FBU Women's School in 2002

We aim to suit all the ages we are working with.
 3. Safety equipment; A check maybe required by the local authority although when we arrive the room is made child safe by the use of safety mats, plug covers, safety gate, fire guard and anything else that maybe required.
 4. Peace of mind so you can attend your meeting knowing your child is happy, safe and close by, and that you can still spend your breaks and meals with them if you wish.
 The number of children to childminders required and the distance of travel govern the cost.
 An approximate guideline is £13.90 per hour per childminder including all equipment.
 For individual quotes and advice please call JANE on the above numbers.

A POLL commissioned by PCS union shows that just under half (48%) of UK workers regularly feel pressurised to work longer than their contracted hours either by their employer or their workload with just over one in four (28%) feeling pressurised always or often. General Secretary Mark Serwotka says: "It has taken European legislation to limit working time in the UK, but the 48 hour working week still doesn't apply to all workers. Its time the working time directive was fully implemented."

DISCRIMINATION by employers against women who become pregnant is rife, according to a new survey by the EOC. One in five people know a mother-to-be who had become affected by the problem, including being given unsuitable duties, facing unpleasant remarks or even dismissal. Sacking a woman for maternity reasons amounts to sex discrimination and anyone affected can submit a claim for unfair dismissal.

WOMEN are significantly more likely than men to be poor, but the true extent of their poverty is still hidden, according to a report from the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC). Gender and poverty in Britain adds that the assumption that women have a man's income to fall back on is out of touch with the reality of many women's lives.

WORK is having a devastating impact on all areas of women's home lives, from sex to their sanity, according to a survey for Good Housekeeping magazine. Half of working mothers are so pressurised they would leave their jobs if they could, with well over half of women who work full-time (61 per cent) saying work has damaged their family life.

AUSTRALIAN families are being pulled apart by the long working hours. Almost half of all fathers in the state of Victoria work extended hours and one in five work 11 or more hours overtime each week, according to new research. A third of fathers with dependent children would prefer to work fewer hours and go home.

AND IN MELBOURNE...a mum shown the door by Australia's largest company only hours after returning from maternity leave is back on the job – thanks to her union. Mother of two, Anne-Marie, pronounced herself "ecstatic" at Telstra's about-face and said it wouldn't have happened without the intervention of the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU).

Sources: TUC, EOC, UNISON, PCS

INJUSTICE



THE FILM THE POLICE DON'T WANT YOU TO SEE!

A film about the struggles for justice by the families of people that have died in police custody.

This award winning film, banned from UK television, is now available on video.

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