

## **Crisis Pregnancy Agency Request for Tender**

### **To carry out**

### **A comprehensive study of women's experiences of pregnancy at work with a view to assessing levels of pregnancy related discrimination in Ireland**

#### **1. Introduction**

The Crisis Pregnancy Agency (the Agency) seeks to commission a research project exploring women's experiences of pregnancy at work with a view to assessing levels of pregnancy related discrimination in the workplace in Ireland. The Agency invites third level institutions, research organisations and individuals to tender for this piece of research.

The overarching aims are to assess the impact of the workplace on pregnant women with a view to estimating levels of pregnancy-related discrimination; to understand the causes of discrimination of this nature; to assess levels of awareness among women of their employment rights as they relate to pregnancy and to explore the factors that impact on women when deciding whether to return to work after having a child.

The research will take place in two stages. Stage 1 will involve reviewing relevant literature and the current legal framework with regard to employment rights and maternity leave; analysing the procedures for redress for women who report cases of maternity related discrimination; and designing and piloting a comprehensive questionnaire in relation to the research aims. Stage 2 will involve coordinating a national survey and generating data on a representative sample of women who became pregnant while in employment, providing an academic analysis of the findings and making a series of recommendations.

Interested tenderers should note that there is no guarantee to the successful tenderer that both stages of the project will be commissioned. Stage 1 will commence in December 2008. Commencement of Stage 2 is dependent on funding commitments for 2009 which have yet to be confirmed. Before making applications, tenderers should be aware that the Agency is under no contractual or legal obligation to award Stage 2 on the basis of awarding Stage 1.

#### **2. About the Crisis Pregnancy Agency**

The Crisis Pregnancy Agency is a planning and coordinating body established to bring strategic focus to the issue of crisis pregnancy and to add further value to the work of existing service providers. The Agency was established by Statutory Instrument in 2001 and is funded in its entirety by the Department of Health and Children. The primary

function of the Agency is to prepare and implement a strategy to address the issue of crisis pregnancy. The Agency's second Strategy was officially launched in 2007. It outlines the Agency's objectives for 2007-2011 and details how the Agency collaborates with statutory and non-statutory bodies to ensure its successful implementation.

The Agency has three mandates:

- a. A reduction in the number of crisis pregnancies by the provision of education, advice and contraceptive services.
- b. A reduction in the number of women with crisis pregnancies who opt for abortion by offering services and supports which make other options more attractive.
- c. The provision of counselling services, medical services and other health services for the purpose of providing support, after crisis pregnancy, as may be deemed appropriate by the Agency.

### **3. Background to this Research**

Legislation to protect pregnant workers from dismissal due to pregnancy was introduced in 1977 under the Unfair Dismissals Act of the same year. The protection leverage for pregnant employees was increased by the subsequent enactment of the Maternity Protection Acts (1994 & 2004) and the Employment Equality Acts (1998 & 2004). Notwithstanding these safeguards, some women continue to report discrimination due to pregnancy in the workplace and do not appear to be fully aware of their rights.

The influence of workplace cultures on women's responses to crisis pregnancy is a theme that has recurred for the Agency since the consultation undertaken to develop its first strategy. Employed women who experience a crisis pregnancy, must consider how they will manage to balance parental duties with work; how their career progression might be affected; how they will be able to afford childcare and how their employer will react to the news of the pregnancy.

The Agency has carried out a number of initiatives in recent years in an attempt to gain a greater understanding of the relationship between the workplace and the perspectives of those facing crisis pregnancy. The Agency commissioned a comprehensive literature review that outlines and analyses existing research on work-life balance, workplace culture and maternity/childcare issues. (The successful tenderer should consider this review closely, particularly in relation to Stage 1 of the research design). <http://www.crisispregnancy.ie/pub/reportsixteen.pdf>.

In 2007, the Agency organised a seminar to raise awareness and understanding of the link between parenting, pregnancy decision making and workplace issues and to investigate what is required in the workplace of the future to support workers who are parents or facing parenthood. <http://www.crisispregnancy.ie/seminarreport.pdf>.

### **4. Rationale**

Despite the aforementioned initiatives to explore these issues further, knowledge gaps still exist around women's experiences of pregnancy at work, their level of knowledge around maternity rights and the extent to which pregnancy related discrimination occurs in Ireland. The Agency is seeking to increase the knowledge levels around this complex area with a view to developing evidence-based policy proposals on the workplace and reproductive decision making that will aim to improve the experience for pregnant women in the workplace.

## **5. International Research**

Large-scale research projects have been carried out in the UK on pregnancy related discrimination and maternity rights. The then-titled Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) (now the Commission for Equality and Human Rights) carried out a two-year investigation into pregnancy related discrimination in the UK. The results found that the incidence was greater than expected. Seven per cent of the sample reported that as a result of their pregnancy they were made redundant, dismissed or treated so badly that they felt they had no option but to leave employment.

[http://83.137.212.42/sitearchive/eoc/PDF/suffer\\_summary.pdf](http://83.137.212.42/sitearchive/eoc/PDF/suffer_summary.pdf)

The Department of Work and Pensions, UK, commissioned the Maternity Rights Survey 2007, the latest in the maternity rights survey series, which has been monitoring take-up of benefits and mothers' post-birth employment decisions since the late 1970's. Since a wide range of policy initiatives have been introduced to support working families in the UK, in more recent times the study provides the opportunity to consider how the policies might affect mother's employment trajectories after childbirth.

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2007-2008/rrep496.pdf>

These studies will provide guidance to the development of a questionnaire and project plan suited to the Irish context. The Agency requires that broadly comparable data to measure levels of knowledge on pregnancy rights and discrimination are prerequisites to the deliverables of the proposed project.

## **6. Access to Sample Population**

The Agency will facilitate access to 5,000 women who have a child aged twenty-four months or younger and who were in employment when they became pregnant. The data will be gathered by means of a postal survey. The protection of individuals' rights to privacy in accordance with the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 will be fulfilled by the research methods employed. The utilisation of robust State-generated data will provide for reliable reporting and robust research outputs.

## **7. Research Process**

The aims of the research will be explored in two stages:

### ***Stage 1***

#### **(i) Research Aims**

1. Attain an understanding of existing national and international research literature in relation to women's experiences of pregnancy at work, pregnancy related discrimination and awareness of maternity rights.
2. Provide a clear outline of EU Directives and Irish legislation governing maternity and employment protection and an analysis of the legal framework, its process and effectiveness. Inclusion of statistical and judicial analyses of cases brought to the Equality Tribunal on the grounds of gender discrimination due to pregnancy.
3. Design a questionnaire aiming to:

- a. Assess the impact of the workplace on pregnant women with a view to estimating levels of pregnancy-related discrimination;
  - b. Understand the causes of discrimination of this nature;
  - c. Assess levels of awareness among women of their employment rights as they relate to pregnancy;
  - d. Explore and tease out the factors that impact on women when deciding whether to return to work after having a child;
  - e. Assess the impact of the workplace on women experiencing pregnancy and on defining a pregnancy as a crisis;
  - f. Provide robust estimates of the levels of up-take of maternity leave, the various types of maternity pay and levels of awareness of maternity rights among mothers in different circumstances (employment; relationship; access to childcare etc).
  - g. Investigate how mothers who return to work and mothers who stay at home after birth differ in terms of socio-economic characteristics. Explore what factors influence their decision-making (partner's employment circumstances/ partner's uptake of flexible policies; number of children; access to childcare; access to family friendly arrangements; employers/colleagues attitudes towards pregnancy/motherhood etc).
4. Pilot the draft final questionnaire and analyse and report findings to the Agency to ensure that the questions yield useful answers in line with the research aims and produce a final questionnaire for Stage 2 of the project.

**(ii) Research Objectives**

1. An understanding of the main issues in relation to the research aims addressed in literature.
2. A clear analysis and description of the legislative framework and cases related to pregnancy related discrimination.
3. A comprehensive questionnaire designed to generate comprehensible data in relation to the research aims.

**(iii) Research Outputs**

1. A clear overview and analysis of the main issues addressed by national and international literature as they relate to the research aims.
2. A systematic analysis of the legislative framework, reporting processes and judgements as they relate to the research aims.
3. A questionnaire designed and piloted according to the specification of the research aims, in consultation with the Agency.

## **Stage 2**

### **(i) Research Aims**

1. Coordinate the implementation of a large-scale questionnaire with a sample population (5,000 women), facilitated by the Agency.
2. Collect and analyse findings. Link identifiable factors to socio-economic status, ethnicity, relationship status and age.
3. Provide an academic analysis of findings in report-format and a list of evidence-based recommendations to inform policy proposals.

### **(ii) Research Objectives**

1. Describe the factors that contribute to pregnancy related discrimination in the workplace in Ireland.
2. Generate an understanding of womens' knowledge, uptake of and attitudes towards maternity leave in Ireland.
3. Describe the impact that workplace policies have on pregnant employees in Ireland.
4. Explore factors such as age, relationship status, socio-economic status and ethnicity and how they relate to the uptake of maternity leave and decisions around returning to employment, or not, after the baby is born.
5. Fully address any methodological issues arising, including limitations with respect to the reliability, validity and generalisability of research findings.

### **(iii) Research Outputs**

1. A comprehensive, robust data-set and set of outcomes that are broadly comparable to international studies on pregnancy related discrimination and maternity rights.
2. An in-depth academic analysis of the data gathered including a series of reliable and valid conclusions with respect to the development of a set of policy proposals to guide future developments.
3. An interim and a draft report submitted at a point in project to be determined in the contract.
4. A clear understanding of the reliability and validity of research data, any implications for developing understanding in the research area and an understanding of the limitations involved in carrying out this kind of research.

## **8. Tender Requirements**

Tenderers are required to describe in detail a project plan for Stage 1 *and* Stage 2 that clearly outlines how they propose to design, conduct, manage and formulate the outcomes to meet the aims and objectives of the project.

The project plan will involve undertaking a number of steps that include, but are not limited to, those set out below.

Tenderers are asked to elaborate on the following with regard to each phase:

1. The skills and experience of the researcher(s) proposing to conduct the literature and legislative review; questionnaire design and pilot; fieldwork analysis; academic report and how the skills and experience meet the challenges outlined and a break-down of time allocation for each member of the research team (if more than one person).
2. Outline how they intend to manage the project on a day-to-day basis, including how they would go about allocating resources and coordinate effective levels of correspondence with the Agency.
3. Describe how they will conduct risk assessment of potential elements that may impact on the project, including how to address issues around response rate (outlining probability and impact and strategies to overcome risks associated with this project).
4. Describe how they will include any ethical guidelines or considerations that should be made when working in this area.

## **9. Evaluation of Tenders and Award Criteria**

The contract will be awarded from the qualifying tenders on the basis of the most economically advantageous tender applying the following award criteria, (weights in brackets):

- (a) Comprehensiveness and quality of the approach to the assignment (40%)
- (b) Expertise, experience and resources allocated to the research (30%)
- (c) Value for money (30%)

## **10. Timetable for Reporting Process**

The deadline for completing Stage 1 is April 2009. The deadline for completing Stage 2 may be agreed upon completion of Stage 1.

## **11. Budget Guidance**

The Agency requires a full break-down of costs for Stage 1 *and* Stage 2 of the project.

VAT amounts at the appropriate rate(s) should be shown separately. The VAT rate applicable for each type of service should be indicated. Expenses, if appropriate, should also be indicated.

The prices stated must be the total all-inclusive prices for the duration of the tender. Price increases during the term of the tender will not be accepted. All costs must be stated in Euro.

The cost of the tender must be the tenderer's best and final offer. The successful tenderer will be required to submit a tax clearance certificate.

Stage 1 will be awarded in December 2008. Funding for Stage 2 has yet to be confirmed. The Agency is under no contractual or legal obligation to undertake or remunerate for Stage 2. If funding is not confirmed, any contract entered into shall terminate at the end of Stage 1 without penalty to the Agency.

## **12. Submitting Tenders**

Proposals should be emailed to [mobrien@crisispregnancy.ie](mailto:mobrien@crisispregnancy.ie) with 'research tender' marked in the subject line or placed in a sealed envelope, marked 'research tender' and addressed to:

Maeve O'Brien  
Policy Officer  
Crisis Pregnancy Agency  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
89 – 94 Capel Street  
Dublin 1.

Tel: (01) 8146292  
Fax: (01) 8146282  
Email: [mobrien@crisispregnancy.ie](mailto:mobrien@crisispregnancy.ie)

**The deadline for receipt of tenders is Friday November 28<sup>th</sup> 2008 at 12 noon *sharp*.**

**Tenders received after the deadline will be returned unopened to the tenderer.**

**Proposals will be opened at 2pm.**

### **DISCLAIMER**

The Request for Tender contains no contractual offer of any kind. Any submission will be regarded as an offer by the tenderer and not as an acceptance by the tenderer of an offer made by the Agency. No contractual relationship will exist except pursuant to a written contract signed by the Agency and any successful service provider(s) for specific services. The Agency is under no obligation to appoint any service provider as a result of this competition. Tenderers should note that receipt of an offer does not guarantee appointment as a service provider even if that offer contains what appears to be an acceptable proposal.

### **Notes**

Tenders will be awarded in accordance with article 45, EU Directive 2004/18/EC of 31 March 2004 (co-ordinating procedures for the award of public works contracts, public supply contracts and public service contracts).