

The Workplace of the Future: Reconciling Pregnancy, Parenting and Employment

A REPORT ON THE SEMINAR PROCEEDINGS

A seminar hosted by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency and the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies, Trinity College Dublin.

7th November 2007

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Introduction

Background

The Workplace of the Future: Reconciling Pregnancy, Parenting and Employment was a joint venture between the Crisis Pregnancy Agency and the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies, Trinity College Dublin. By bringing together Irish and international speakers, the aim was to raise awareness and understanding of the link between parenting, pregnancy decision-making and workplace issues and investigate what is required in the workplace of the future to support workers who are parents or facing parenthood.

Rationale

Work-life balance policies are usually designed to help workers combine employment with family and personal commitments. A review of research commissioned by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency and carried out by the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies, Trinity College Dublin, strongly suggests that when women are faced with a crisis pregnancy situation their decisions about whether or not to continue with the pregnancy and whether or not to continue in work if they decide to become parents are influenced by workplace policy and culture.

Overview of Proceedings

The seminar took place on November 8th 2007 in the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, No. 6 Kildare Street, Dublin 2. The event was opened by Mr. Martin Cullen, T.D., Minister for Social and Family Affairs. Over two sessions, ten speakers outlined trends and evidence in the areas of economic sustainability and labour-force participation; challenges to implementing flexible workplace policies; models of best practice; and national and international policy developments on the reconciliation of work and family life. The sessions were chaired by Mr. Peter Finnegan, Managing Director of Communiqué International and Crisis Pregnancy Agency Board member, and Mr. Pat Hayden, Principal Officer with the Employment and Training Section of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The event was attended by sixty-eight delegates, including employers, trade union representatives, human resource executives, academics, government officials and NGO representatives.

Opening Of Seminar

Key Points raised by Ms. Katharine Bulbulia, Chairperson, Crisis Pregnancy Agency

- The Crisis Pregnancy Agency and the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies share an interest in looking at issues of work-life balance and workplace policy.
- Most employers recognise that flexible work practices improve staff morale, retention and commitment and enable organisations to respond more flexibly to changing market demands.
- Pregnancy and pregnancy decision making do not feature in mainstream literature as issues that workplace policy-makers or employers need to be conscious of.
- The seminar aims to present evidence demonstrating that people tend to consider their work situation when making pregnancy decisions.

Key Points raised by Mr. Martin Cullen, T.D., Minister for Social and Family Affairs

- Reconciling pregnancy, parenting and employment is an area of central importance to the workforce and the economy of the future and to improving the quality of life for families who must manage the demands of work and family life.
- The seminar is evidence of the increasing importance of the need to facilitate employees in achieving a good work-life balance.
- Issues of work-life balance, workplace culture, maternity and childcare are of high relevance, especially to those faced with an unplanned pregnancy, and may be a key point of influence in the decision to continue with a pregnancy.
- Employers need to promote available work-life balance options, and employees need to be made aware of these options, in particular in the event of a crisis pregnancy.
- Legislation and policy have been developed to help workplaces become more family-friendly.
- The National Workplace Strategy 2006-2010 recognises that addressing issues concerning equality and diversity in the workplace will be critical to meeting the future needs of the economy.
- On the key issue of childcare, it is a priority for stakeholders to work together to develop practical solutions for the provision of effective childcare arrangements. The Office of the Minister for Children works to develop and deliver policies and programmes that will help to ensure children's well being. The Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme was created to develop childcare services to meet the needs of parents in employment, education and training; the National Childcare Strategy features the National Childcare Investment Programme 2006–2010, which has committed €575 million towards developing childcare services.
- The Government is committed to making workplaces more family friendly by the provision of statutory entitlements including maternity leave, adoptive leave, carers' leave and parental leave, along with all the other employment rights legislation. The National Framework Committee for Work-Life Balance policies aims to facilitate the voluntary development of family friendly policies in workplaces.
- The body of research that underpins the seminar was commissioned by the Agency in 2005 and compiled by the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies. The seminar touches on substantial range of important issues. The event is most welcome and helpful in highlighting the issues and bringing the research to a wider audience.



Session 1:
Organisational Culture,
Employment Policy and
Family Formation -
International and Cross-
Cultural Research

Session 1: Organisational Culture, Employment Policy and Family Formation -International and Cross-Cultural Research

Mr. Peter Finnegan, Managing Director of Communiqué International and Crisis Pregnancy Agency Board member, chaired the first session. It aimed to explore current trends in the labour market, family formation, employment policy and social discourse. Policies that encourage a balance between female participation in economic life and male participation in family life were explored by Irish and international speakers. Research examining the rationale for workplace policies that reconcile professional, personal and family life was presented, focusing on how workplace policies relate to building economic growth, prosperity and competitiveness; promoting productivity, satisfaction and sustainable economic development; reducing the level of crisis pregnancy and making it easier for parents to reconcile work and family life.

Caroline Spillane, Director of the Crisis Pregnancy Agency - The Link between Crisis Pregnancy and Workplace Policy

"A crisis pregnancy is a pregnancy which is neither planned nor desired by the woman concerned and which represents a personal crisis for her. The Agency understands this definition to include the experience of those women for whom a planned or desired pregnancy develops into a crisis over time due to a change in circumstances."

KEY POINTS

- **Over 1 in 5 women between 25 and 34 experience a crisis pregnancy. 81% of women in this age category are in employment.**
 - **75% of women with a crisis pregnancy choose to parent the child.**
 - **One-third of Irish women surveyed at a UK abortion clinic said that job related reasons and career had strongly influenced their decision to terminate their pregnancy.**
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- The Crisis Pregnancy Agency was established to bring strategic focus to the issue of crisis pregnancy. This seminar relates in particular to the Agency's second mandate: to reduce the number of women who opt for abortion by offering services and supports which make other options more attractive.
 - Over 1 in 5 women between 25 and 34 experience a crisis pregnancy. According to CSO figures, 81% of women in this age category are in employment. The average age at which crisis pregnancy occurs is 23 for women and 25 for men.

- A pregnancy is often defined as a crisis when it occurs at a point in a woman's life when she feels conditions are not appropriate to have a child and her future opportunities will be limited.
- A large proportion of women enter higher education and aim to establish careers. Finance and childcare are key considerations to women experiencing a crisis pregnancy. Younger women, in particular, feel that it is very difficult to balance a family and a career.
- The majority of crisis pregnancies result in birth: 75% of crisis pregnancies end with the child being parented by the birth mother; 15% end in abortion; 1% result in adoption. One-third of Irish women surveyed at a UK abortion clinic said that job related reasons and career had strongly influenced their decision to terminate their pregnancy.
- The context of child bearing and childrearing has dramatically changed. The fertility rate is declining and is below replacement level. Women and men are waiting longer to have children and are having fewer children than in previous decades.
- Central to parenting and the workplace is the availability of affordable childcare. 30% of disposable income in Ireland is spent on childcare, compared to the EU average of 8%. Affordability of childcare is a problem especially for those facing lone parenthood. In Ireland, it is common for parents, and particularly lone parents, to depend on family members for childcare support.
- A woman's perception about whether a pregnancy is a crisis or not is influenced by her life conditions at the time of the pregnancy. A range of factors such as career and education plans, family and partner support and level of financial security will impact on how a woman responds to an unplanned pregnancy.
- There are multiple implications to failing to reconcile pregnancy, parenting and employment:
 - Falling fertility levels
 - Lower levels of women in the labour force
 - Inequalities faced by women
 - Career-development issues
 - Decreased competitiveness for workplaces
 - Absenteeism
 - High staff turnover
 - Stress
 - Lower productivity
 - Increased levels of crisis pregnancy and abortion
 - Concerns about early childhood care, education and development.

Caroline's presentation can be downloaded from or listened to on this webpage:

<http://www.crisispregnancy.ie/seminars.html>

Dr. Carol Baxter, Head of Development, the Equality Authority - Work-Life Balance, Workplace Culture: the Lessons of Equality and Diversity

KEY POINTS

- Female participation is necessary to combat shortages in the labour market.
- There is currently a gender imbalance in the uptake of work-life balance arrangements.
- Investment in equality and diversity initiatives leads to improved organisational performance.
- The business case for work-life balance needs to be highlighted to employers to promote work-life balance possibilities for men and women and to challenge long-hours cultures.
- It is possible to successfully transform the culture of an organisation.

- A high rate of female labour-force participation is necessary to combat labour shortages. With increased labour-force participation by women and older workers, work-life balance options are expected to become more important, as more workers will have caring responsibilities, both for children and for older people.
- There is a gender imbalance in uptake of work-life balance and alternative working arrangements. Possible reasons for this are:
 - Most work-life balance arrangements involve a financial penalty for the worker, e.g. parental leave is unpaid. As women are often the lower earners in a couple, it is often they who avail of the work-life balance option.
 - Society still assumes that women are the natural carers.
 - Workplace culture tends to be resistant to work-life balance and the culture of a workplace influences the worker's attitudes to work-life balance.
- The long-hours culture that prevails in Irish workplaces represents an obstacle to career progression for women with caring responsibilities. Men are reluctant to avail of work-life balance arrangements if the workplace culture is one where presenteeism is valued.
- To challenge the long-hours workplace culture and to promote work-life balance possibilities for men and women, it is necessary to highlight the business case to employers to make commonplace a workplace culture that accepts parenting as the right of all employees and that enables all employees to reconcile work and parenting.
- Research has found that companies that integrate equality into their policies experience reductions in absenteeism and labour turnover, improved employee relations, and greater innovation and creativity among employees. This shows that organisational cultures can be transformed successfully and these outcomes should also occur where companies implement work-life balance policies.
- *The Business Impact of Equality and Diversity* report found that, at a strategic level, there was a positive linkage between the existence of equality policies and enhanced organisational performance. Similarly, there was a link between diversity in top team membership, including higher representation of women on management teams, and enhanced organisational performance. Equally, work groups with a diversity of members were found to be a source of creativity and innovation.
- Based on this research, the following factors are critical in getting an organisation to embed equality and diversity into its way of working:

1. Commitment by top-level management to work-life balance.
 2. Organisational commitment to work-life balance reflected in the organisation's mission and business plans.
 3. Responsibility for work-life balance embedded throughout the organisation.
 4. Training for staff at all levels on work-life balance.
- The sharing of caring tasks between men and women is crucial for the achievement of gender equality for women. Change in workplace culture can help to convince men to take up work-life balance possibilities and to take on more caring responsibilities.

Carol's presentation can be downloaded from or listened to on this webpage:

<http://www.crisispregnancy.ie/seminars.html>

Dr. Tom McCarthy, Chief Executive, Irish Management Institute - Economic Change and Future Productivity: the Case of Ireland

KEY POINTS

- **The expectations of 25-34 year old women in the labour force are exactly the same as those of men.**
 - **To maintain and improve current Irish standards of living, productivity needs to increase. To improve productivity, talent needs to be attracted and retained.**
 - **The retention of talent involves creating an organisation where people can develop in a flexible way and step in and out of the labour force at different points in their career.**
- There has been enormous change in Ireland over the last forty years. Significant changes include universal access to second-level education since the 1960s; the expansion of the third-level education system in the 1970s; the break away from sterling in 1979; and the emergence of the Euro currency in 2002.
 - Ireland has moved from having a poor telecommunications infrastructure to hosting the headquarters of some of the most significant multi-national corporations in the world.
 - The population in Ireland has grown by 25% in 30 years. The number of people in work has doubled in the fifteen years from 1990 to 2005.
 - We should expect considerable changes to continue in the next ten to twenty years and workplaces need to plan for this.
 - The average labour-force participation rate is 80% for men and 60% for women while over 80% of women aged between 25 and 34 are in the labour force. This is the age group in which crisis pregnancy is most prevalent.
 - The career expectations of women between 25 and 34 who are in the labour force are exactly the same as those of men.
 - There has been a significant recognition in recent years of the importance of lifelong learning and we should aim to be leaders in the delivery of lifelong learning.

- To maintain and improve our standard of living we have to drive productivity. To improve productivity, the emphasis has shifted from creating jobs and working more to attracting and retaining talent.
- Working smarter involves using good management practices and IT and being innovative in terms of the technology and business models that are used.
- Research shows that productivity is not about creating jobs and working more, but is about attracting and retaining talent. This involves creating an organisation where people can develop in a flexible way and can step in and out of the labour force at different points in their career. It is important that people recognise the company has a life-long interest in retaining them.
- There are great opportunities from IT in terms of a unification of communications to provide opportunities for more flexible work environments.
- Discussion about flexible work environments and work-life balance policies is part of identifying the type of work environment that will allow Ireland to maintain its place in the premier league of global economies. Ireland's future competitiveness will be determined by the extent to which new business models are innovated.

Tom's presentation can be downloaded from or listened to on this webpage:

<http://www.crisispregnancy.ie/seminars.html>

Dr. Rosalind Chait-Barnett, Brandeis University, Massachusetts - Parental Concerns about After-School Time, Job Disruptions, and the Agile Workplace: A Study of Employed Fathers and Mothers

KEY POINTS

- **'Usable' flexibility is defined as "workplace flexibility options that can be used without any career penalty".**
- **Research found great changes when employees were given more control over where and how they worked.**
- **Employees with children who were unable to avail of workplace flexibility were found to experience high levels of stress during after-school time when children were unsupervised.**

- The Agile Workplace is a new term that differs from traditional notions of flexibility. Rather than focusing on policies, it focuses on goals and results. It involves open dialogue with and among managers, supervisors and employees.
- The Agile Workplace has been defined as having a lack of rigidity that enables workers to "work smart" and perform better, focusing on goals and results. Usable Flexibility has been defined as workplace flexibility options that can be used without any career penalty.
- Dr. Barnett presented findings from Results Only Working Environment (ROWE), a randomized control study on how Agile Workplaces operate. A ROWE gives employees more control over when, where or how they work. Researchers reported tremendous changes in the work-family interface, as workers:
 - Were able to choose time to begin work and end work to suit their schedules
 - Had greater control over where they worked

- Were less likely to have problems with communicating
 - Were less likely to come to work when sick and more likely to attend a doctor
 - Were sleeping more than seven hours per night and experiencing improved quality of sleep
 - Were less likely to do unnecessary work, had fewer experiences of interruptions at work and felt less pressure to work overtime
 - Were more likely to view the work culture as being family friendly, had greater organisational commitment and reported more job satisfaction.
- In an environment with high usable flexibility, employees' concerns are lower. Those with lower concerns in turn have positive impacts on personal organisational outcomes. A crucial component of the agile workplace is that employees have greater access to usable flexibility.
 - Dr. Barnett also presented results from another study, Parental Concerns about After School Time (PCAST), which measured the degree to which employed parents are concerned about the welfare of their children during after school hours. There are approximately 15-25 hours per week that children are out of school while parents are in work, termed as 'the out-of-school gap'.
 - Research found that PCAST is related directly and indirectly to several negative employee organisational outcomes. PCAST affects all employees regardless of race, area or level within the organisation. Protective factors against PCAST include:
 - Work scheduling control
 - Employee control over work schedules and days off
 - Understanding supervisor
 - Child being in care of other parent
 - Satisfaction with the after-school arrangements
 - Having an older child who parents trust to be left unsupervised.

Rosalind's presentation can be downloaded from or listened to on this webpage:

<http://www.crisispregnancy.ie/seminars.html>

For further information about Rosalind's research:

<http://www.brandeis.edu/centers/cfwp/topics.html>

**Dr. Aline Masuda, Instituto de Estudios Superiores de la Empresa (IESE) ,
Business School, Barcelona, Spain - Harmonizing Pregnancy, Parenting and
Work: Family Responsible Policies Across Countries and Organizations**

KEY POINTS

- **Single-parent families or families where both parents are working experience problems in terms of caring for children.**
- **Usable flexibility can be achieved when top management in organisations believes that flexible policies are bottom line and the organisational culture is comfortable with the policies.**
- **Positive benefits to a family friendly organisation include enhanced recruitment; staff retention; improved employee morale, satisfaction, commitment, productivity and innovation.**

- A number of factors can affect one's ability to reconcile pregnancy, parenting, and employment: Individual, family and organisational issues, and national culture and policies.
- Family structure influences working parents' ability to manage childcare issues. Changes in family structure have brought new problems in terms of caring for children. In the case of many couples with children, both partners are working. People who are parenting alone experience greater difficulties in finding solutions to balancing work and parenting.
- People do not expect to remain in the same job for a life-time as in the past. People are increasingly basing career decisions more on the ability to reconcile work and life outside of work. IESE Business School in University of Navarra found that the two main factors influencing a person's decision to work for and/or remain in an organisation were (i) intellectual challenge and (ii) lifestyle and work-family balance.
- IESE Business School uses the term 'family responsible' instead of 'family friendly'. It can be argued that it is the social responsibility of an organisation to provide a family responsible environment. A family responsible organisation is one that promotes 'usable flexibility' and where employees are aware that they have access to certain policies. It is achieved by (i) top management believing that the family responsible policies are the bottom line (ii) the culture of the organisation being comfortable with these policies. The provision of family responsible environments is not just an ethical matter but a matter that affects business productivity.
- IESE outlined the benefits for businesses that become family responsible: Enhanced recruitment; staff retention; improved employee morale, satisfaction, commitment, productivity and innovation. Technical areas include improved transportation; parking; time-saving due to less traffic. Those who work in flexible companies and perceive that they have 'usable flexibility' are happier at work and have less work-family conflict.
- Many organisations still value the long-hours culture, as traditionally it has been equated with higher productivity. This culture can engender feelings of guilt amongst employees when they leave at the normal time. It is a difficult culture to change.
- There can be issues in companies for part-time workers who do not get promoted. The Netherlands has anti-discrimination laws for people in part-time work.
- Within the global economy, there are several jobs that do not necessitate work from nine to five. For certain employees, introducing a work schedule that facilitates work outside the regular nine to five can improve employee morale, commitment and performance.
- National culture is important, but it is the culture of an organisation that really influences the satisfaction and commitment of employees, particularly the extent to which this culture enables employees to balance work and family life.

Aline's presentation can be downloaded from or listened to on this webpage:

<http://www.crisispregnancy.ie/seminars.html>

For further information on IESE Business School:

<http://www.iese.edu/en/>



Session 2: Reconciling Work and Family Life - Leading Initiatives and Models Of Best Practice

Session 2: Reconciling Work and Family Life - Leading Initiatives and Models Of Best Practice

This session was chaired by Mr. Pat Hayden, Principal Officer with the Employment and Training Section of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The session presented initiatives and case studies that have responded to new and emerging issues in the workforce. Employers discussed the experience, benefits and challenges to implementing work-life balance initiatives. The implications of these policies on gender equality, quality of work, performance and competitiveness, quality of family life and family formation were referenced.

Mr. Eddie Sullivan, Secretary General (PSMD), Department of Finance - The Evolution of Family Friendly and Work-Life Balance Policies in the Civil Service

KEY POINTS

- **The Civil Service is recognised as a leader in the provision of work-life balance working arrangements.**
- **It has been able to recruit high calibre staff and to reduce the number of staff members that resign for family reasons.**
- **By allowing staff to work in a more flexible way, the Civil Service benefits from a highly skilled workforce that can deliver a more professional service to the public.**

- About thirty years ago there was a 'one size fits all' approach to employment conditions in the Civil Service. On return to work following the birth of a child, full-time work was the only option and many women found it difficult to keep up their job and raise their family. Managing a pregnancy alone was challenging, and the Civil Service did not address the needs of its female employees and lost many talented workers.
- Today, the Civil Service offers a variety of working patterns and arrangements that are designed to provide more options to staff who are raising children and remaining in work.
- Equality policies in the Civil Service began to emerge in the 1980s, when it was recognised that flexible working arrangements were needed to encourage women to continue with work and progress with their careers. Measures that were introduced gradually included job sharing/work sharing, flexible working hours and term-time arrangements.
- Today, career breaks can be taken for a number of years and career prospects are not affected by choice of working pattern. Employees who have had career breaks or who work reduced hours are entitled to apply for promotions. The option to revert to full-time working is also available.

- Unpaid arrangements are available for staff faced with domestic crises, including unpaid leave of up to six months to care for an ill spouse or child. E-working arrangements are currently being explored on a pilot basis.
- Family friendly arrangements rely on cooperation between management and staff and have made the Civil Service an attractive employer. In 2001, the Civil Service put in place a programme for the provision of reasonably-priced workplace crèches for the children of civil servants. There are now crèches in six locations, providing places for over 200 children in or near to their parents' workplaces.
- An Employee Assistance Service was established in 1974 to assist staff faced with problems such as bereavement, addiction, financial or relationship issues, bullying, work-life balance issues, or stress.
- The Civil Service is generally recognised as a leader in the provision of work-life balance working arrangements. It has been able to recruit high calibre staff and to reduce the number of staff members that resign for family reasons. By allowing staff to work in a more flexible way, the Civil Service benefits from a highly skilled workforce that can deliver a more professional service to the public.
- The Work-Life Balance Review 2006 found that facilitating staff to work in a balanced way reduced the incidence of stress and lowered casual sick leave and staff turnover. It also improved staff morale and effectiveness on the job.
- A Work-Life Balance Network of HR staff has been formed. Its main aim is to systematically examine the operation of all the schemes with a view to identifying and adopting best practice across the Service.

Eddie's presentation can be downloaded from or listened to on this webpage:

<http://www.crisispregnancy.ie/seminars.html>

Ms Freida Murphy, Equal Opportunities Manager, ESB – A Case Study

KEY POINTS

- **Companies need to create a climate where individuals feel supported when looking for work-life balance options.**
- **Negative perceptions amongst employees can affect the successful implementation of work-life balance policies.**
- **People on reduced hours often maximise their time at work by avoiding outings or long lunches associated with full-time work.**

- In 1990, an equal opportunities review carried out in the ESB found that more flexibility was required in the workplace, particularly for female employees. Pro-active steps and further equality audits have been carried out by the company since then.
- Where possible, the ESB offers part-time working, reduced hours and job sharing.
- 6% of the ESB's 7,500 staff members are availing of non-standard working setups; 92% of these are female. There is a very low uptake amongst senior managers.

- Other work-life balance options include 'life balance time', which is similar to term time working but can be taken for purposes other than caring for school-going children, and 'enhanced maternity leave'. The ESB also allows bereavement leave, marriage leave and study leave and it has a breast-feeding support room.
- Negative perceptions can affect the successful implementation of work-life balance policies. These include perceptions that working reduced hours or taking time out can affect your career prospects; that customers will be negatively affected; that you have to be seen to be at work even if you are not working (presenteeism); that if people take time out, the people that are left behind have to carry the workload.
- The reality is that people on reduced hours may maximise their time in the office by avoiding unnecessary social outings and long work lunches, etc. The challenge is to change attitudes towards life-work balance issues and flexibility. This can be achieved bit by bit, e.g. by establishing a work-life balance steering group, and by organising speakers to explain the principles and benefits of work-life balance initiatives to staff, especially senior managers.
- Organisations have a duty of care to look after their employees. Companies have to create a climate where individuals feel supported in looking for work-life balance options. Together the company and the individual can create a workable mix and promote the positive effects on business.
- How work-life balance policies are promoted in the ESB:
 - The intranet.
 - Booklets.
 - The company's Equal Opportunities Website, which has contact details for people to explore the options. There is online information on elder care, child care, emergency family related services and parenting.
 - There is information for managers on how to explore with their team the possibilities of providing greater flexibility.
 - Staff members are updated by email if there is news relating to work-life balance policies.
 - Official launches are held when new initiatives are being introduced, in order to raise their profile.
 - National initiatives are supported.
 - Recruitment advertisements, including those for senior staff, state that tailored working arrangements will be considered.
 - A work-life balance steering group made up of senior managers has been established. The group looks at bringing in new initiatives and monitors how the company is performing. The group recommended that a conversation about work-life balance should become an integral part of individual training and development plans. This has since been implemented.
- A Quality Audit in 2002 found that the majority of people participating in employee focus groups expressed satisfaction with the working environment. Most felt that the ESB was one of the best companies to work for. Employees also praised the flexibility of local managers in matters relating to family needs and issues.

Freida's presentation can be downloaded from or listened to on this webpage:

<http://www.crisispregnancy.ie/seminars.html>

Mr Bob Lee, CEO of the Great Place to Work Institute Ireland - Work, Family Life & Creating a Great Place to Work

KEY POINTS

- **A major aspect of successful work-life balance is that employees perceive that they will be supported by employers if a personal crisis was to occur.**
- **It is widely recognised that when you help people to achieve work-life balance, you are helping your business.**
- **By referring to policies as 'family friendly', companies may alienate people who do not have children. This can impact negatively on the sense of camaraderie in the workplace.**

- Some employers carry out an excellent job in helping employees to feel supported in the event of a personal or family crisis. A major part of that is the employees' perception that they would be supported by employers if a personal crisis was to occur.
- Based on a 57-statement questionnaire, the Great Place to Work Institute annually publishes a list of the best companies to work for in twenty countries around the world.
- A *great place to work* is one where you trust the people you work for, have pride in what you do and enjoy the people you work with.
- Chief Executives are placing increased value on companies/organisations being seen as an employer of choice. It has become more widely recognised that when an organisation helps people to achieve work-life balance, the business itself benefits.
- Attracting and managing the best people effectively will get the best results and give your business an advantage over competitors.
- The terms 'work-life balance' and 'family-friendly' are not the same. By referring to policies as family-friendly, people who do not have children can become alienated. This can impact negatively on the sense of camaraderie in the workplace, as staff without children can feel that they are carrying the burden of mothers who are availing of work-life balance options.
- *Great workplaces* enjoy:
 - More and better-qualified job applicants
 - Lower level of employee turnover
 - Reductions in costs of hiring and training
 - Higher customer satisfaction and loyalty
 - Higher productivity and profitability
 - An enhanced reputation as an organisation that can be trusted to 'do the right thing'.
- Getting employees to engage in flexible work patterns is often a challenge. A *great place to work* can be achieved by:
 - Making policies accessible to people. Businesses risk losing staff who are facing a personal crisis and/or pregnancy when they feel that existing work-life balance policies are not accessible.

- Making employees feel supported. Sharing success stories is very effective in showing that work-life balance is not just a policy but a statement of intent.
- Convincing employees that taking time out of work will not damage their career.

Bob's presentation can be downloaded from or listened to on this webpage:

<http://www.crisispregnancy.ie/seminars.html>

Ms. Lucy Fallon-Byrne, Director, National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCP) - The Workplace of the Future

KEY POINTS

- **Ireland needs to embrace diversity to remain successful.**
- **Workplaces need to have structures and processes that facilitate collaboration and consultation.**
- **Implementing change can improve organisational and company performance, as well as improving the quality of work for the employees themselves.**

- Ireland is in a very competitive international environment now, and to remain successful we need to embrace diversity in terms of our policies, our strategies and our culture.
- Organisations need to focus on openness in the workplace. Openness goes beyond strategies and policies; it is about how people think and behave. Organisations should aim to be open to change, to embrace diversity and to accommodate the diverse needs of their workforce.
- A report published in June 2007 by the NCP and the Equality Authority provides an overview of international research on the business case for diversity.
- The benefits of diversity are:
 - People: higher calibre workforce; diverse range of talents
 - Increased market opportunities: access to more diverse markets; better understanding of customers
 - Enhanced organisation reputation: with customers, suppliers and future employees
 - Changes to organisational culture: improved working conditions; greater collaboration; higher levels of innovation
- A diverse workplace can engender different perspectives and ideas that work to cultivate innovation within an organisation.
- Partnership is the methodology to achieve an open workplace. It is through dialogue that the needs and wants of employees can be determined. It is necessary to have structures and processes for collaboration and consultation.
- A brochure entitled "Working on a Partnership Approach" sets out the kind of practices that help to build an innovative workplace and shows the characteristics of the workplace of the future. Implementing changes can improve organisational and company performance and the quality of work for the employees themselves.

- In relation to the National Workplace Strategy, 42 recommendations are currently being implemented. These include issues raised at the Forum of the Workplace of the Future to do with access to opportunities, e.g. tackling the difficulties some women face in getting childcare, to enable them to access the workplace. Ireland has an integrated approach and is moving forward. The Strategy's priorities are commitment to workplace innovation, capacity for change, developing future skills, access to opportunities and quality of working life.
- Research found that working mothers were six times more likely to feel guilty about being away from their family than working fathers. Mothers were twice as likely to suffer excessive levels of stress as fathers (49% to 24%) and twice as likely to be tired all the time.

Lucy's presentation can be downloaded from or listened to on this webpage:

<http://www.crisispregnancy.ie/seminars.html>

Dr. Maryann Valiulis, Director of the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies - 21st Century Challenges to Reconciling Pregnancy, Parenting and Employment

KEY POINTS

- **Paid paternity leave in Ireland needs to be introduced in all sectors of the economy to promote parental equality.**
- **Research from the U.S. indicates that a large number of women are leaving the workforce – this is called the 'opt-out revolution'.**
- **Is it possible to work part-time and to have a career?**

- We must be very cautious about how flexibility and work-life balance will impact on certain sections of society, particularly the most vulnerable.
- We need to go beyond just focusing on the number of women in the labour force and focus on retaining them.
- If the challenge in the 20th century was to enable women to enter the labour force, the challenge in the 21st century is to enable men to stay at home.
- We tend to think of maternity leave as normal but we don't think of paternity leave as normal. This suggests that if men take paternity leave, they are somehow less committed to work. There needs to be a change in thinking around paid paternity leave.
- Many employers do not offer men paternity leave, and men tend not to request it because of the perception that it will have a detrimental effect on their career. There is evidence that men choose to take 'sick leave' around the time of the birth of their baby, to avoid the perceived negative implications of taking paternity leave.
- Women, and particularly mothers, find it hard to be taken seriously by management. Does society see work and family as mutually exclusive entities?
- Retention of workers is important. Research from the U.S. indicates that large numbers of women are leaving the workforce. The ESRI published a report that projected that in areas such as law, business, and other professions many women would be in managerial roles in the future. However, these findings are premised on the assumption that they stay in the workforce and are promoted.

- The Centre for Gender and Women's Studies is currently researching a number of key questions: Is women's ambition different to men's? Is ambition related to age? How is ambition related to retention? Women take time off work for various reasons and then find it difficult to re-enter the work-force. Do women have to remain in the work-force full-time to succeed?
- Are women who work part-time expected to have jobs as opposed to careers? Is the option of choosing a career available if you work part-time?
- How do we harmonise work and family life? If work is the engine of society and families in all their multiplicities are the building blocks and children are the future, we need to harmonise work and family and create a society that works for all of us.

Maryann's presentation can be downloaded from or listened to on this webpage:

<http://www.crisispregnancy.ie/seminars.html>

Key Messages

Pregnancy Decision-making, Parenting and the Workplace

Research suggests that workplace policies can have a direct impact on pregnancy decision-making. Women's decision-making around pregnancy, in particular crisis pregnancy, can be compounded where a long hours culture is valued, working hours are inflexible and work-life balance options are not available. Key considerations for employees who become pregnant or who are parents include:

Cost of childcare:

A major obstacle facing pregnant women and their partners is a lack of affordable childcare, particularly for those on low incomes. In the absence of a statutory childcare provision, parents in Ireland are faced with the financial burden of paying for private childcare. In many circumstances, women who decide to give birth must reduce their employment to part-time hours or must refrain from working altogether because private childcare is not affordable. Lone parents in particular face the trap of employment not being financially worthwhile and without access to independent financial means women who parent alone invariably find themselves at risk of poverty.

Pregnancy Discrimination:

Managers and co-workers' attitudes to pregnancy and parenting can contribute to unplanned pregnancies being perceived as crisis pregnancies. The possibility of dismissal or forced resignation is a reality that many women face when they become pregnant. This resonates particularly for women in temporary or part-time employment for whom there is no provision for maternity leave or illness.

Women in full-time positions have a legislative right to maternity leave. However co-workers can be expected to cover work-loads for the duration of an employee's maternity leave. This can create friction amongst employees and can negatively impact on employee relations and the overall reaction to pregnancy and child-bearing within an organisation.

Women have reported experiencing negative treatment from employers and employees when they returned to work after having children. Some reported a career 'slow-down' and felt that having children had reduced their chances of promotion.

Career Progression:

Women tend to assess what affect having children will have on their jobs and careers. Younger women in particular feel that it is impossible to balance families and careers. Research found that some women decided to have an abortion because their current employment or financial circumstances were not conducive to parenthood.

Current Legislative Framework

Under equality and anti-discriminatory legislation, companies have a duty of care to their employees and are legally required to provide equal employment conditions to them. However, current imbalances exist in terms of the uptake of work-life balance arrangements by men and women and policies that are made available to them. It is widely acknowledged that part-time work and job sharing are more available to and taken up by women. Women, too, are more likely to report career slow-downs or give work up altogether after having children. On the other hand, men are rarely offered paternity leave and tend not to request it due to the perception that it will negatively affect their careers. Some of the speakers highlighted current gaps in workplace legislation that work to reinforce gender inequality and proposed introducing legislation to provide a framework to (i) legally support change in organisations (ii)

promote diversity and gender equality in workplaces (iii) propagate cultural change positively towards parenting, pregnancy and family life. Specific suggestions included:

- Paid paternity leave to promote parental equality
- The right of an employee to request flexible working arrangements
- Anti-discriminatory rights for part-time workers

Change within Organisations

Speakers highlighted evidence from primary research that supports the introduction by organisations of employment policies and strategies that aim to facilitate compatibility between working and parenting. Examples raised at the seminar include:

- **Work-life Balance / Family Friendly work arrangements:** Alternative work arrangements designed to suit individuals' lifestyles.
- **Usable Flexibility:** Workplace flexibility options that can be used without any career penalty.
- **The Agile Workplace:** A workplace that is agile in terms of working hours and presenteeism, which enables workers to "work smart" and perform better, focusing on goals and results.
- **Openness and Diversity:** Openness must surpass strategies and policies and affect the way employees think and behave. By opening up workplaces to a diverse range of talents, organisations have access to higher levels of innovation, greater markets.
- **Job sharing/work sharing:** The option to work part-time and share duties with another part-time employee.
- **Reduced hours work:** The option to work part-time with an entitlement for promotion and to revert to full time work.

These concepts have implications in several fields; for example, economic development and competitiveness; population growth and fertility; family formation and social issues, including crisis pregnancy and abortion. To achieve an effective system, management needs to ensure that employees (i) are aware of policies and (ii) perceive that they are accessible.

Reasons for Organisations to Implement Change

In Ireland's competitive international environment, it is widely recognised that helping employees to achieve work-life balance enhances business performance. Attracting and managing the best people effectively gets the best results and gives organisations an advantage over competitors. Companies that have integrated flexibility and work-life balance into their policies have reported:

- Enhanced reputation
- Increased market opportunities
- Greater productivity
- Reductions in absenteeism and labour turnover
- Improved employee relations
- A more professional service delivery

- Greater innovation and creativity
- Improved morale and reduced incidence of stress.

Speakers reported negative implications for organisations who had not implemented flexible or work-life balance options compared to those who had. These included:

- Greater difficulty retaining staff
- Higher levels of sick leave
- Lower levels of productivity
- Lower employee performance
- Lower levels of competitiveness
- Higher levels of stress amongst staff
- Lower levels of staff morale

How can organisations achieve these benefits?

Through research findings and first-hand experience, the speakers outlined the most effective methods for companies to successfully achieve and reap benefits from change:

- Leadership and increased understanding and knowledge of the need for workplaces to innovate and be open to change.
- Communication between employees and employers about the development of suitable policies.
- Ensure that employees are aware that they have access to policies in existence.
- Ensure that top management believes that the policies are the bottom line.
- Ensure that the culture of the organisation is comfortable with the policies.
- Ensure that line-managers are trained and react responsively to employees.
- Challenge and change:
 - Negative attitudes to work-life balance and flexible working amongst staff
 - Attitudes that equate productivity with long hours and presenteeism
 - Gender imbalance in the uptake of work-life balance policies.
- Promote work-life balance for all employees and ensure that people who do not have children can equally avail of work-life balance policies.
- Create an environment where individuals feel supported in looking for life-work balance.

Key Messages From The Delegates

The following points are based on questions and comments raised by delegates to consider:

1. How can employers/ HR departments adequately support women experiencing crisis pregnancy? How can we achieve a greater acceptance of crisis pregnancy in the workplace?
2. How can we address the needs of low-earning families and the needs of women who cannot compete at the higher level in the labour market? How can we apply today's discussion to employees in low-paid jobs working for companies who are not overly-concerned with the attraction and retention of talent?
3. How can we provide flexible options to parents seeking to train with FÁS? How can we support mothers trying to re-enter third-level education who experience barriers accessing flexible training, childcare, funding for childcare, maintenance grants?
4. In the successful companies that have been discussed, were the employees able to choose working hours to suit their schedule? Are part-time workers as valued as full-time workers in terms of productivity?
5. Are there policies or approaches currently in place in organisations aimed at supporting one-parent families?
6. Much of this discussion has been around a voluntary provision but when will a statutory provision be put in place for childcare?

The Crisis Pregnancy Agency will be pursuing work in this field over the lifetime of its second strategy (2007 – 2011). The Agency is open to receiving queries or suggestions on how best to bring about change to meet its mandate. Please contact the Policy Officer on 01 8146292 or at mobrien@crisispregnancy.ie.

Profile of Organisers

Crisis Pregnancy Agency

The Crisis Pregnancy Agency is a planning and co-ordinating 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 second Strategy to address the issue of crisis pregnancy was officially launched in November 2007. The strategy 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.

For the period 2007 – 2011 the Agency has committed to:

- Develop a workplace project to improve the experience of working women (and men) facing a crisis pregnancy. The project will centre on the development of guidelines and protocols for managing statutory leave entitlements and on providing information to employees on benefits, rights and entitlements. The project will be piloted in a mix of workplace settings and through Employee Assistance Programmes. The pilot will be evaluated and the outcome promoted.
- Publish good-practice guidelines in partnership with professional bodies, for employers, regarding the law in relation to pregnancy and maternity and its impact on those experiencing crisis pregnancy.
- Publish a policy review on the workplace and reproductive decision-making.
- Participate in and organise policy fora on key issues, in partnership with others.

Centre for Gender and Women's Studies, Trinity College Dublin.

The Centre for Women's Studies was established in Trinity College in July 1988. In order to reflect the increasing diversity of its interests in areas such as sexualities and masculinities, the Centre expanded its title and remit to become the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies in 1999.

Since its inception, the Centre has developed and sustained an M.Phil programme and a doctoral programme, has undertaken significant research activities and engaged in both innovative and traditional community outreach. Members of the Centre are recognised both nationally and throughout the EU for their expertise on gender issues.

The research unit places specific emphasis on: gender and education; the changing nature of families; ageing; issues of work-life balance; and masculinities. The unit has received grants from organisations such as the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, the Human Rights Commission and the Crisis Pregnancy Agency.

List of Delegates

Ms.	Breslin	Kathleen	Abbot Ireland
Miss	Broderick	Siobhan	Jones Lang LaSalle
Ms.	Byrne	Moira	People with Disabilities
Ms.	Caffrey	Louise	One Family
Ms.	Calvert	Emma	Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)
Ms.	Campos McCormack	Karen	Trinity College Dublin
Ms.	Cannon	Orla	FÁS
Ms.	Clancy	Eleanor	Young Mothers in Education Project
Ms.	Crowe	Phyllis	Limerick Social Services
Ms.	Dalton	Katherine	Accenture
Mr.	D'Arcy	Brian	Equality Authority
Ms.	De Burgh	Sherie	One Family
Ms.	Dooley	Mary	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Miss	Douglas	Joan	Bank of Ireland
Miss	Dowler	Niamh	Longford County Childcare Committee
Dr.	Drew	Eileen	Trinity College Dublin
Ms	Dromey	Margaret	Treoir
Ms.	Duffy	Catherine	Health Service Executive
Ms.	Fantini	Alessandra	The Women's Health Council
Mr.	Fielding	Mark	ISME
Dr.	Fine-Davis	Margret	Trinity College Dublin
Ms.	Friel	Tracey	Young Mothers in Education Project
Mrs.	Furlong	Marguerite	Wexford School Completion Programme
Dr.	Gannon	Judy	
Ms.	Garvey	Kaye	Irish Nurses' Organisation
Ms.	Geoghan	Marian	Irish Bank Officials' Association
Ms.	Graham	Orla	Deloitte
Ms.	Haffey	Fidelma	Trinity College Dublin
Ms.	Harty	Leonora	Higher Education Authority (HEA)

Ms.	Hayes	Colette	Life Pregnancy Care
Mrs.	Heffernan	Julia	Life Pregnancy Care Service
Ms.	Inglis	Lorraine	National College of Ireland
Ms.	Irvine	Gemma	Higher Education Authority (HEA)
Mrs.	Kennedy	Anne	Life Pregnancy Care Service
Ms.	Kenny	Maura	FÁS
Ms.	Keogh	Claire	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
Ms.	Lloyd	Mary	Family Support Agency
Ms.	Loftus	Camille	OPEN
Ms.	MacNamara	Noirin	CGWS, Trinity College Dublin
Ms.	Maxwell	Gillian	Trinity College Dublin
Ms.	McCarthy	Clodagh	National Adult Literacy Agency
Ms.	McCarthy	Mary	Trinity College Dublin
Ms.	McDermott	Mary	National Women's Council of Ireland
Ms.	McDonnell	Bernadette	Department of Health and Children
Ms.	McGauran	Elaine	Irish Life and Permanent
Mr.	McGinty	Sean	South Dublin County Childcare Committee
Mrs.	McLoughlin	Marie	Department of Finance
Ms.	McTiernan	Patricia	Cura
Mr.	Menton	Colin	Department of the Taoiseach
Dr.	Moore	Jeanne	National Economic & Social Forum
Ms.	Moore	Aoife	AIB
Ms.	Morgan	Liv	Women Mean Business (WMB) Magazine
Ms.	Mullins	Jackie	University College Cork
Dr.	Murray	Aisling	Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)
Ms.	O'Connor	Anne Marie	Department of Social and Family Affairs
Ms.	O'Sullivan	Linda	Business in the Community Ireland
Ms.	Penrose	Aisling	Forfás
Ms.	Power	Louise	Trinity College Dublin

Ms.	Power	Marie	Great Place to Work Institute, Ireland
Ms.	Rooney	Patricia	Revenue Commissioners
Ms.	Roughneen	Caroline	WiSER, Trinity College Dublin
Ms.	Scott	Amanda	Change At Work
Dr.	Thornton	Maeve	ESRI
Ms.	Torode	Ruth	Trinity College Dublin
Ms.	Troy	Mary	Health Service Executive
Ms.	Walsh	Angela	UCD
Ms.	Ward	Sinead	Sherry Fitzgerald
Ms.	Jane	Williams	SIA Consulting