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WHY WE NEED TO CHANGE THE WAY WE WORK

REPORT OF THE MOTHERS IN MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE 1999

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mothers in management



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WHY WE NEED TO CHANGE THE WAY WE WORK

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foreword by Shirley Conran

The committee which set up the conference on work-life balance held at the Savoy Hotel in September 1999 consisted of a dozen mothers, plus a father, a stepmother, a single man, a single woman and a grandmother.

We held our conference because of our concern that stress levels were becoming intolerable, and not just for adults. One in five children now suffers from a stress-related health problem. We wanted to start a debate at grassroots level and in the media; we wanted to work out what each person could do to solve this multi-faceted problem that probably affects everyone in Britain, directly or indirectly.

As working mothers are most visibly under stress, we invited the professional problem-solvers and opinion-formers among them to discuss a reappraisal of the workplace and its needs. We also felt strongly that people without children have an equal right to a life that holds time for their own interests, leisure, study, sport and personal responsibilities.

At the Savoy, we could all feel the energy and the sense of purpose, the involvement and commitment of delegates as they listened to

our first-class speakers - Cary Cooper, Dennis Stevenson, Susie Orbach and Joanna Foster - then put their own points of view, contributed their own ideas, argued, agreed, enthused...and wrote the three-inch pile of feedback summarised in this report. Hopefully, it retains that positive spirit and will to drive change.

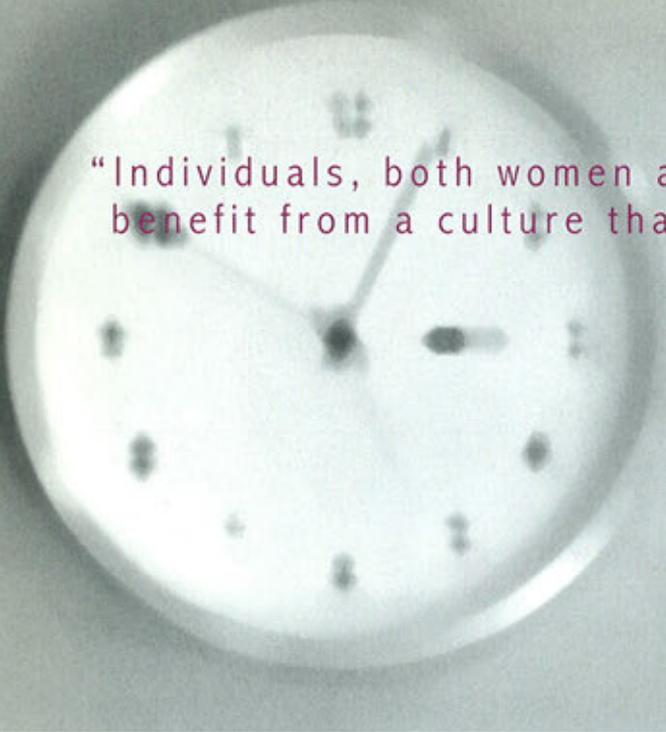
Afterwards we received many enthusiastic letters. Among them, Baroness Uddin wrote: "The hall was full of energy and it gave me a great sense of purpose." Lindsay Swann of Working Options wrote: "It is not often that one experiences something that will change the way people live their lives, but I did yesterday."

We have decided to remain a small, lean, media-based committee that can operate quickly and effectively to shape opinion, to provide ideas, advice and action. We intend to retain our independence so that we can air the kind of subjects which have become workplace taboos, but which will never be resolved until openly and honestly discussed.

We will continue to support the two organisations which advised us during the leadup to

the conference and produced this report for us: ANTIDOTE: Campaign for Emotional Literacy; and PARENTS AT WORK, the charity originally founded by a group of working mothers to provide mutual support, information and opportunities to network. By working together, we can attain our long term goal of stress reduction, and of creating a more humane working environment for everyone.

With best wishes from Shirley Conran on behalf of the MOTHERS IN MANAGEMENT committee: Jennifer d'Abo; Zenna Atkins; Lynda Bellingham; Vanessa Bloom; Janet Fitch; Kathy Gilgunn; Rosie Glaisher; Jacqui Graham; Liz Kaye; Najma Kazi; Rufus Olins; Maureen Rice; Penny de Valk; Peter York.



“Individuals, both women and men, and society as a whole benefit from a culture that allows family life to flourish.”

Baroness Jay

introduction: an unsustainable way to work

The 300 men and women who attended the Mothers in Management Conference are committed and professional people from many backgrounds and disciplines, united by a real concern about our current attitudes to work. In the course of an overwhelmingly positive and energising day, we discussed the ways in which ‘downsizing’, increased competition and insecurity, the pace of technological change and the growth of the 24 hour economy are combining to produce a workforce that feels stretched to its limits.

The burden of stress on all workers - and the knock-on effect on their families - has become an epidemic costing the National Health Service an estimated £2 billion annually, and industry millions of lost working days a year. We agreed that the long hours culture, in particular, presents a significant threat to the health of every individual that is caught up in it, as well as to the well-being of our children, the vitality of our communities and the state of our relationships. Nor is this by any means a purely ‘management’ issue. The long hours culture permeates every aspect of modern

working life. Ultimately, too, we believe that its effect will be to undermine the performance of our businesses and other organisation. Over-long hours are inefficient as well as inhumane: it is unrealistic to expect company performance to keep improving *ad infinitum*.

Of course, many of us find our work stimulating, deeply engaging and a source of satisfaction. We acknowledge that there are times in every job - a deadline to meet, a client’s needs demanding attention - which genuinely do require people to focus on their work to the neglect of everything else. We accept, too, that there are global forces driving companies to intensify individual work loads.

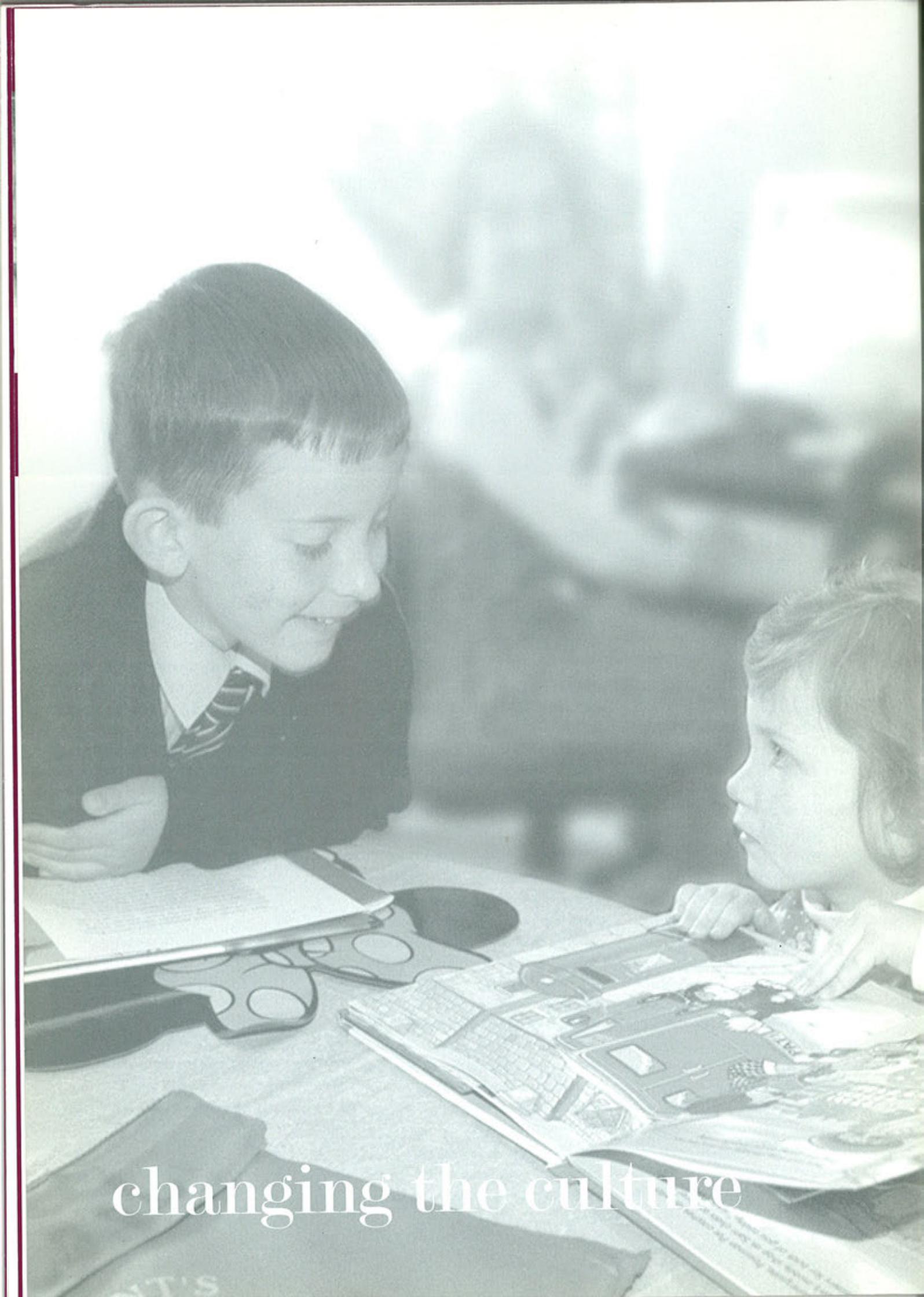
But we also believe that it is plainly short-sighted for individuals to be put under pressure to work in ways that are likely to impair their own performance, and contribute nothing to the success of their companies. We think it is crazy to stretch people to the point where they are likely to buckle under the strain. And we believe that serious consequences will follow from a situation where people are prevented by the demands of the workplace from fulfilling their commitments to their children, their parents, their friends, their communities or their personal interests.

The majority of those who attended the conference were mothers, and much of the discussion was given to considering the specific

needs of working parents. It was generally recognised, however, that the challenges facing parents in the workplace are only one aspect of a general problem affecting everybody - the tendency of work to take up a disproportionate quantity of our lives.

This report articulates the call from conference delegates for a fundamental shake-up in our attitudes to work, one that will benefit individuals, families, communities and businesses. This will require:

1. A shift in our values. Paid employment has become the overwhelming measure of our ‘success’ and ‘worth’, at the expense of other parts of our lives;
2. A movement for change that has the potential to draw support from every element in the working population - fathers as well as mothers, non-parents as well as parents;
3. A willingness on the part of individuals to take responsibility for achieving more balanced lives;
4. All of us having the courage to be open and honest about the commitments we have, the pressures we experience and the changes we want to happen;
5. A major campaign to change hearts and minds.



changing the culture

“We believe that policies will change nothing without the right attitudes and culture pushing them.”

Conference delegate

Many companies have given some thought to how they can make life easier for working parents. Some have been innovative in catering for the particular needs of their workforce. Individuals, too, have found new and creative ways to fulfil their responsibilities at work alongside family commitments.

Nevertheless, the culture within which such new practices are developing remains in many ways hostile to these goals. The long hours culture is so widely entrenched and accepted that its consequences have not been seriously considered, nor properly challenged. Westminster MPs, for example, are regularly required to endure late-night sessions, sending the message, literally from the top, that this is the right and responsible way to work. And our education system separates the personal and social development of an individual from the public examination targets by which their performance is measured.

The result of these attitudes is that family-friendly policies, where they exist, only affect our workplaces at the edges. There are many mothers and fathers, not to mention non-parents, who do not take them up because they are afraid of being left behind, or being stigmatised by 'special pleading'. And many com-

panies feel under no pressure to implement good practice in this area. That is why conference delegates argued for the need to re-think:

1. The importance we attach to work in relation to the rest of our lives

It is wrong that we should be seen as committed and capable only if we consider work to be the most important part of our lives. Nor should it be expected of us that we make our family lives effectively invisible for fear that their presence or demands will damage our standing at work. Work and family should be seen as inter-related parts of our lives, each of which makes demands on us, each of which may need to take priority over the other.

2. The value of output versus input

Long hours do not in themselves assure productivity. Individual commitment should be assessed on what people have managed to achieve, not on how long they took to achieve it. It should not matter where, when or how a job is done, so long as it is completed well and on time. It may even be that, the more scope individuals are given to find a way to work that suits them, the greater their contribution will be.

3. Our meek acceptance of stress in the workplace

If willingness to endure stress and over-demanding schedules is seen as heroic, individuals will carry on staying at work even though their brains have gone home for the day. Such behaviour has a knock-on effect on the entire workforce, damages emotional and physical health, with serious consequences for morale and productivity.

4. Individual problems, individual solutions

One size really does not fit all. Each parent needs to negotiate a strategy that works for them.

5. The importance of personal development

This might include study, sport, charity work, community service, travel and entertaining. All such interests develop people - and what they bring to their job. All such interests are at risk of being sacrificed to the Long Hours Culture.

the cost of juggling

Many of us on all points of the economic scale are desperately over-worked. Many of us have insecurities about our employment. Most of us - mothers and fathers that are doing active parenting - periodically go out of our minds with worry about our responsibility to kids, to our partners if we have them, to our friends, and to ourselves. Getting through, though this often means being unable to think about what we want, but busying our minds with the scheduling, negotiating this bit of child time, now this bit of work, this bit of looking after relatives, the next trip to Sainsbury's, endeavouring to see a friend, and forget about downtime. All of this really is nightmarish, no doubt about it. There are enormous mental health costs engendered by the irrationality of our present situation, because no-one, but no-one, with children, can maintain equilibrium. Intense juggling can lead to the negative kind of stress which headline writers capture well when they run stories on work-generated stress such as "Mums running out of steam" or "Children neglected by work-addicted parents".

Susie Orbach

damaging productivity

In the mid-nineties the Industrial Society asked senior personnel people and personnel directors throughout the UK: What are the major sources of stress? They said that, after divorce, moving house and marriage - it was increased workload due to downsizing, job insecurity, rapid change, long hours and difficulty balancing home and work.

In the UMIST/Institute of Management *Quality of Working Life* survey, we asked a cohort of 5,000 individuals: Your organisation has made this major change or re-structuring, what impact has it had on you? At every level, they said that loyalty, morale and motivation had declined, and job insecurity had massively increased. And that was at every level except director level in organisations. Most surprising was that the senior management just below board level had the same view as the junior and middle managers, which was that the board was engaging in activities - a short-term contract, long working hours and 'change for change sake' culture - which were damaging the individual and the family. It was affecting morale and loyalty in the organisation.

Then we decided to ask this cohort of 5,000: What's happening to your working hours? Over a third always or often work at the weekend. Nearly 60 per cent work every night. And three out of four work above their contracted hours every week. We then asked them the following question: What do you think of these long hours? 87 per cent said it was damaging their social life and leisure time; 86 per cent said it was damaging their relationship with their kids; 71 per cent said it was damaging their health; and, interestingly, 68 per cent said that those long hours were damaging their productivity. When we broke the sample down between directors and everybody else, even the directors, chief executives and chairmen said it was damaging their family life. And yet they are responsible for developing the long working hours culture.

Cary Cooper



the case for business

Shirley Conran sent me a very impressive survey showing that those of the FTSE companies who had pursued family-friendly policies made more money for their shareholders. If you want to make progress, I think it's very much the wrong way to look at it. Let me put it concretely - the sell which says: "Oh, head of a business, you should pursue these family-friendly policies because they are good for your shareholders." There are going to continue to be hugely successful businesses run by non-people with no humanity, making huge returns and highly rated on the stock market.

I personally think the right way to approach it is from an optimistic view about human progress, and persuading, blackmailing, incentivising the people running things to want things to be better. I mean most of us, although we have our selfish genes, actually want the same happiness for others as we'd like to achieve for ourselves, and I think that is the right way to approach it. And certainly in terms of a campaign, a mission, an evangelical push, I strongly advise against the argument which says - if you pursue enlightened policies, which will ensure that more of your able women stay with you because you're more flexible, you'll save on your recruitment costs, you'll make more money and this and that.

Dennis Stevenson

the community case

We have to make the business case, getting the arguments really well honed so that businesses can take on board this issue with comfort. Unless we do that they won't do it. But there is a wider issue to argue for as well. Look, for instance, at some of the corporate social responsibility issues. Many companies are saying, we are a fine company and we take our corporate social responsibility seriously. You can't just be a socially responsible organisation without enabling men and women to be socially responsible and good citizens themselves.

Joanna Foster



this issue concerns everybody



“It’s about men, it’s about women, it’s about equality for all”

Conference delegate

The changes in our working lives sought by conference delegates have the potential to benefit *everyone*. “Work-life balance,” said one participant, “is good for all of us - whether we have children, are looking after elderly parents, or want to keep pigeons in our spare time.”

If the policies designated as ‘family-friendly’ are seen as being there only for one group in the working population, they will have a relatively low take up, even by the working mothers for whom they are specifically intended. People are reluctant to take advantage of arrangements that will put them at a disadvantage against their colleagues, especially if they are men.

The reason why some men are not as vocal as women in demanding alternative ways of working may be because they prefer to escape domestic and parenting responsibilities. Some men would prefer to work late on a creative report rather than face a crying baby and a washing machine full of unironed clothes. Other men fear the consequences of standing out from their male colleagues and saying that they want to fulfil their lives in other ways.

While some delegates argued that work-life balance is achievable only for those who are not overly ambitious, others passionately believed that ways could, and should, be found to enable working parents to contribute at every level of an organisation.

Taking up leadership and senior management positions, they argued, should not mean having to neglect other responsibilities. Everyone needs the freedom to look after nephews and nieces, to make time for their own passions and interests, and to play a part in their local community.

bring on the new men

What we need is much more flexible working arrangements for both men and women. Research has shown consistently that the sources of stress are significantly higher for women than for men. That is because men don't engage in any domestic role. We constantly hear about the new man, but does he exist? We have some new-ish men out there, and you know women's magazine writers, keep telling us about the four of them. But we don't really have a new man.

Women are pursuing jobs and careers, and saying: "We want to have a domestic life as well." But by pursuing a career job, they are also saying indirectly that they feel it's important in terms of your own status to have a career and to be successful, as well as being successful at bringing up a family. At the same time they're saying to men: "Now come into the home, and do the job we're just attempting to leave and trying to get you to do more of". Do you get the message? As a psychologist there's a really interesting dilemma here for men. Because men don't want to do this anyway - they see the domestic part of their life as less intrinsically satisfying. It's not something which gives them status. They're making a mistake, because any man who's had a heart attack and has had to spend time at home realises the significance of a close relationship with a partner, and children, and what those relationships can give them as human beings.

Although we have the IT to work partly from home and partly from a central office, the UMIST/Institute of Management survey has found that less than ten per cent do so. How are two-earner families going cope, unless there's real flexibility. What we have to demonstrate is that there is not only a health and relationship case for flexible working but also a business case. And I believe flexibility will work, not only for the health of individuals and the family, but also for the productivity of organisations as we enter the knowledge-based economy. So, the challenge is to train senior male managers to relinquish their control, to avoid calling meetings at unsocial hours and to avoid the long working hours culture. Change your attitude men, and do it soon. And we also have to change men's views about the family. We have to get men to realise that they don't have to be the main breadwinner. They can be career-orientated, but also husbands/partners/fathers - in other words, rounded human beings.

Cary Cooper

tipping the balance

I earn more money than my partner and have consistently done so, but it is still assumed by his employer that it is my responsibility to look after the children. So it is less acceptable for him to say: "I'm going to leave, I have to go and pick up the children from school". Despite the fact that he does participate in the home, for me, if something comes up, my first thought is how I am going to manage the childcare. He doesn't have that same kind of automatic response. I think the thing that we need to change is the culture rather than the legislation.

Alison Theaker, Institute of Public Relations



this is not a gender issue

I think it's unhelpful to be one gender specific. It is massively obvious that there has been a dramatic change in men's attitudes to their roles. And in the surveys I've read of the extent to which men work in the home, they are still pathetically unskilled. But those who are under the age of 40 are far more skilled, and far more likely to recognise that they have things to do in the home. When I look around at my friends, I can see a lot of marriages and partnerships where, if they were doing it all over again, maybe she'd be the hunter-gatherer, and he'd have done more things of the domesticated kind. In my children's generation, it is happening. The issue of how to combine being in management with a domestic life is not just a female issue. And if you make it a female issue you'll stop men doing it.

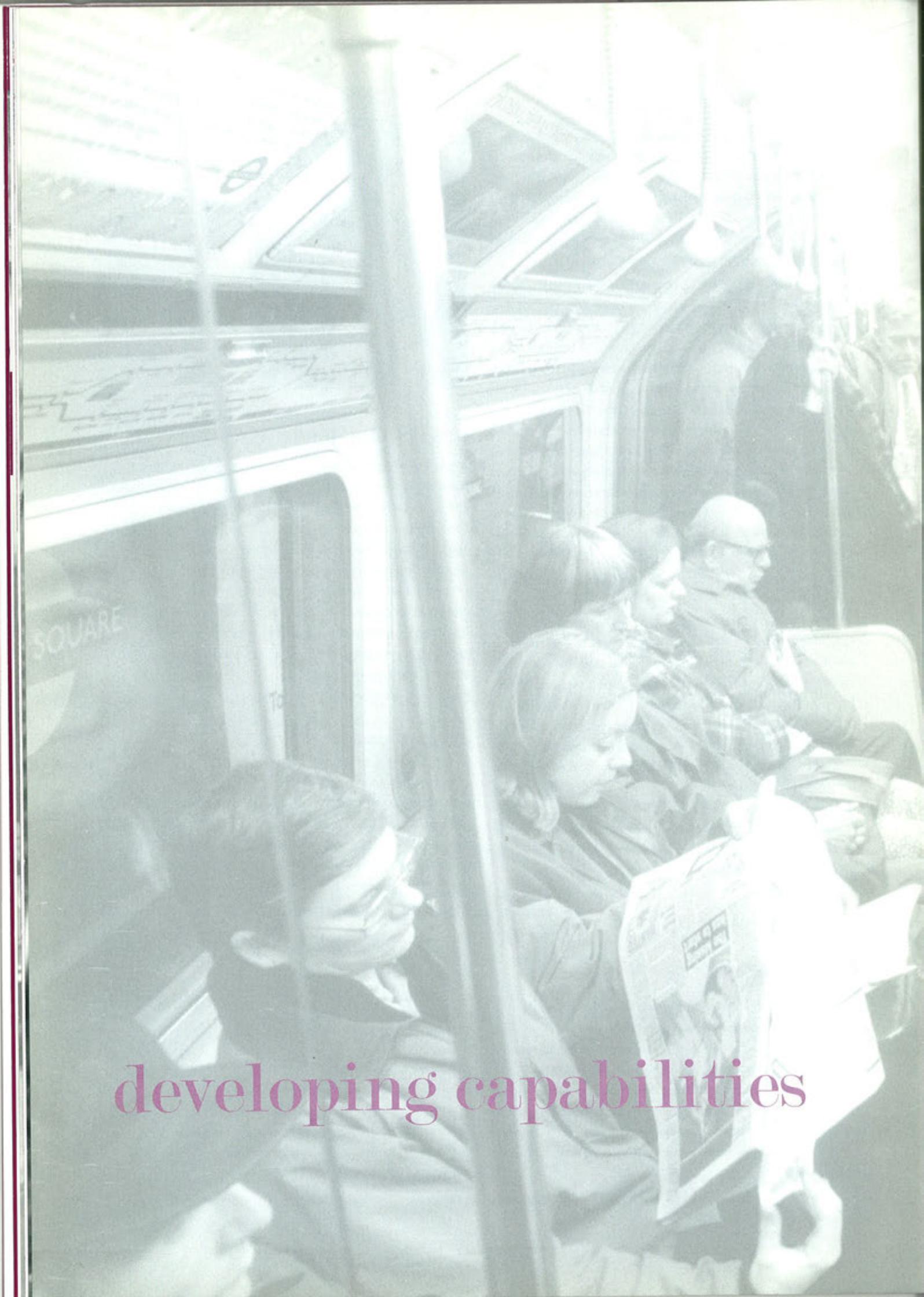
Imagine a man who is the ultimate workaholic character from central casting. He is working away flat out. The woman is doing everything for him. There are an awful lot of marriages like that, where the man works jolly hard and the woman doesn't work very much in a paid job. Does that mean you shouldn't ask the question as to whether the man can have a fulfilling domestic life and be a good father? Does that mean you shouldn't be starting to persuade people that men working full-time in jobs can so organise their lives, taking advantage of the new technologies, so that they can see their children, help their children, help their partners? Of course it doesn't.

Dennis Stevenson

under forties

I would like to reinforce what's been said before in terms of this being a both gender issue, not just a women's issue. The men that I work with under the age of 40 really struggle with work / life balance - they really want to be there and to have a full life - and often the women I work with are looking at how they can get higher and further, so it's not simple.

Maire Brankin, Oxford Executive Coaching



developing capabilities

The achievement of real flexibility within the workplace requires employers and employees to rethink the way they work. Companies need to find ways of dissolving rigid decision-making structures while individuals have to give up automatic assumptions, and also be aware of the workloads of their colleagues as well as the needs of their business.

Conference participants spoke about wanting to "be able to work at home whenever necessary", and avoiding "very early or late starts for meetings." A lot of interest was expressed in part-time working and a shorter working week. These were not a request for favours,

or an insistence that personal needs took priority over those of the workplace. They were a statement of belief that, with imagination, as well as the right attitude and will on both sides, it is possible for individuals to create a working pattern which suits the needs of family and business.

The workplace participants spoke about was one where:

- * Individuals are trusted to take responsibility for getting their job done in the way that suits them best;

- * They are offered opportunities to take real control over their working lives,

- * The organisation can hear what individuals are saying about what they want to change in the workplace;

- * Individuals are encouraged to come up with imaginative solutions to the challenges that confront them in seeking to reconcile their various commitments;

- * There is scope for real negotiation between employers and employees so as to enable them to reconcile their interests;

- * There is a culture of respect and support for the importance of child raising.

Enhancing the quality of working life is not the only reason why companies need to respond to this call. If they are to become more responsive to the changing taste of their customers, and more attentive to shifts in the marketplace, they need to ensure that people at every level in their companies are able to share knowledge and develop thinking. The task of finding a better balance for their employees between work and life is in many ways linked to the challenge of creating companies that are capable of surviving in today's marketplace.

Companies need to find ways of giving individuals a voice about how they work, and employees need to engage in thinking together about what sort of working life they really want. Individuals need to be aware of forces that draw them into the long hours culture and how those needs can be satisfied elsewhere. They should be encouraged to ask for the solutions they want, while simultaneously suggesting alternatives to possible workplace problems or obstacles.

"A prerequisite for the kind of diversity we are looking for is to build organisations that communicate effectively, are empathetic, where people are sensitive to other people's needs."

Conference Report

the emotions that drive the long hours culture

Many women and men have unexamined attitudes towards work. Certainly those who have jobs which have a good deal of interest and satisfaction in them. Unwittingly our own lack of awareness of our emotional dependence on work and what it offers us, the ways in which we use it, the ways in which we need it, the way mothers, every bit as fathers, can use work as a place to retreat, where they can feel effective and valued, can get adult recognition and stimulation, can have their sexuality reflected back to them and so on, leads us into a situation in which we're less direct and honest with ourselves than we need to be.

As a result we may be unable to really engage with our own hesitations to give more than lip service to the demand for shorter working hours, and a re-conceived relationship between work and private life.

Many of us, particularly those of us who are able to structure large parts of our working lives, find the challenges work brings ever more engrossing. Or if they aren't engrossing, then the volume of work that we generate and the demands that it makes on us allow us to feel both effective and wanted in ways which may be far less problematic than in the rest of our lives. The executive or professional who has scores of easily answerable e-mails waiting for her or him, and people crowding up to get a decision or a view or a reflection, has the sense that what they have to offer and what they do, is of considerable value.

This can be in contrast to home life, where the demands upon a parent are ever-changing and rarely acknowledged. The workplace relationship offers the individual the satisfaction that their productions and what they do is necessary, vital and good.

One of the difficulties that women have faced in relation to the transition from home to work is the articulation and recognition that they have needs too. Raised until recently to be the nurturers and carers of others as well as midwives to their activities, the fact that one is needed at work and yet there is a boundary to what one is giving, can be psychologically very reassuring. At the same time, because work offers its own satisfaction, it's a kind of indirect way of getting personal needs addressed without actually owning up to the fact that one is doing that.

The longer hours we work, the more absorbing our work becomes, the more we become unconsciously complicit in a process in which our energy for work triumphs, while our energy for other things diminishes. Instead of confronting what is difficult, we find we have to work late or bring work home or work over the weekend. We expend a lot of energy on getting satisfaction from our work which is quite understandable, but we fail in that process to question quite why we're so caught up in it and how scared we are to do something different.

Susie Orbach

can you have it all?

NO

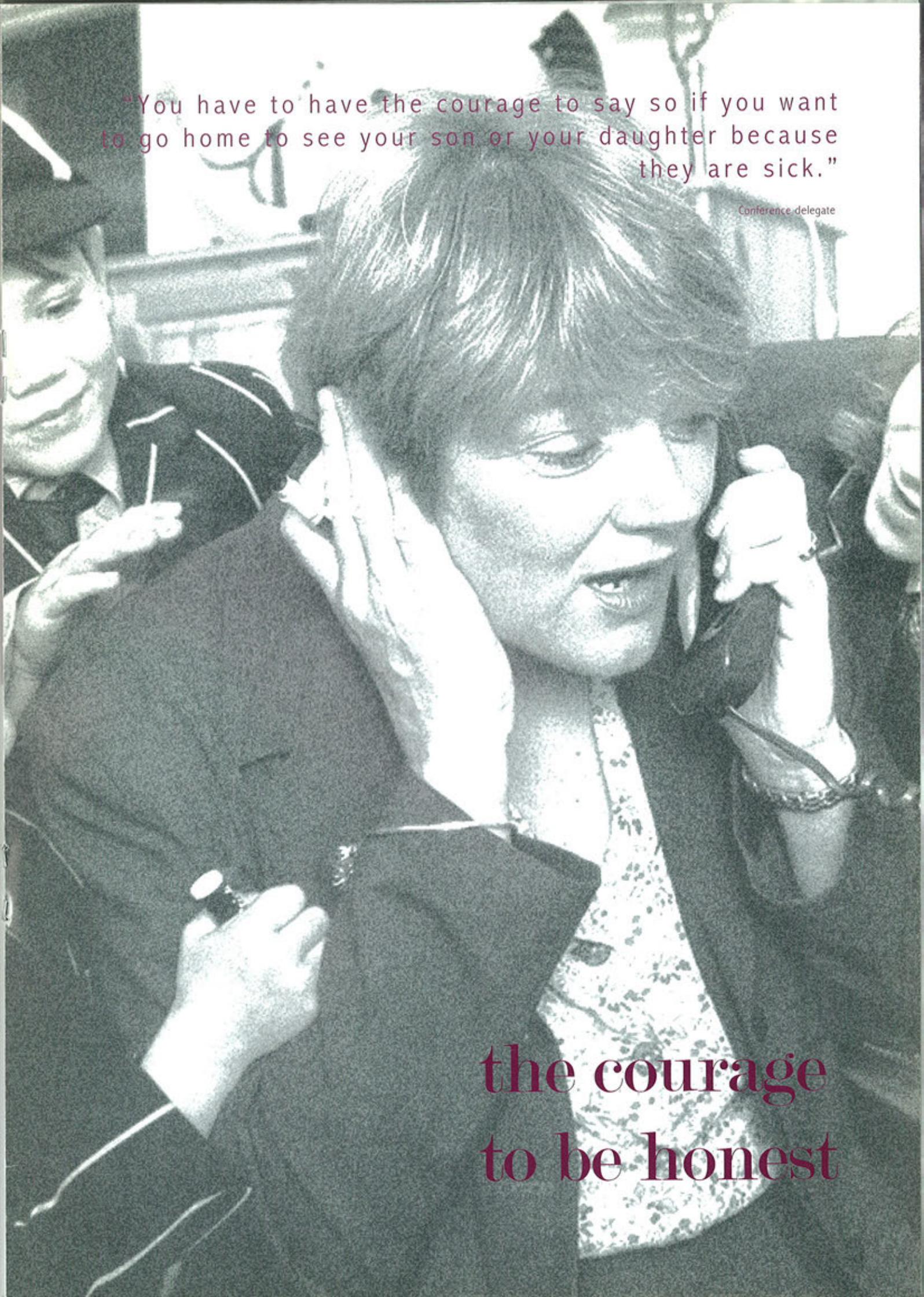
The policies have to be accompanied by a realism about what can and cannot be done by human beings. If, for example, we take a notional 34 year old woman working in Pearson, or man, who is running one of our new businesses, employing several hundred people, making £20 million profit. If someone like that wants to make a change in their lives, because of the advent of children or something else in their personal life - it's a net sum gain. They almost certainly can't go on doing that job and it's absurd of anyone to expect that they can.

Dennis Stevenson

YES

I'd like to take up a point that Lord Stevenson made which is about being at a certain level in the organisation and not being able to pursue a high-level job. I would say that's an indictment of the whole structure which is underneath the person in the organisation and that is one of the core issues we have to deal with.

Alison Winch, Whitbread



"You have to have the courage to say so if you want to go home to see your son or your daughter because they are sick."

Conference delegate

the courage
to be honest

In the week before the conference, the *Guardian* had posed a 'dilemma for the week' which struck a chord with conference delegates: Your child is sick, the column ran, and you need to take time off work. Do you tell your boss the real reason for your absence? Or do you pretend that it is you who are ill?

Many recognised the temptation to fabricate some kind of 'acceptable' excuse, to apologise, to conceal their family commitments, to deny that there will be occasions when their children must come first. They recognised that, in failing to challenge the rules that sustain the long hours culture, they were complicit in its continuation.

The psychotherapist Susie Orbach took up this theme. "Forced to hide," she said, "the emo-

tional significance of our children's needs, and our own need to be there for them, we unwittingly perpetuate the notion that emotional life can be safely tucked away after hours, and that it has little impact on our appetite for work."

There were two ways in which this sort of dishonesty brought costs to business. It made it easier for employees to call in sick for a day when perhaps all they needed was to leave the office for two hours so as to take their son to a dentist. At a deeper level, it made it more difficult for individuals to be authentic at work, to actually 'be themselves'.

The long-term solution to this situation must be to promote trust and transparency in the workplace, to create a situation where peo-

ple's commitment is measured by what they have achieved, rather than by the hours they have spent in the office.

The belief grew during the day that the only way we would ever reach that situation is if people with families, or with other responsibilities, can find the courage to be completely upfront about their needs. Those who are low down in the corporate hierarchy might find that putting their head above the parapet in this way risked their being labelled as troublemakers - instantly disposable in an insecure marketplace. People in the workplace have to find ways of networking, forming alliances, providing support for each other in asking for the arrangements that will work for them. However it is done, participants agreed that it is time to stop kidding ourselves, and our bosses.

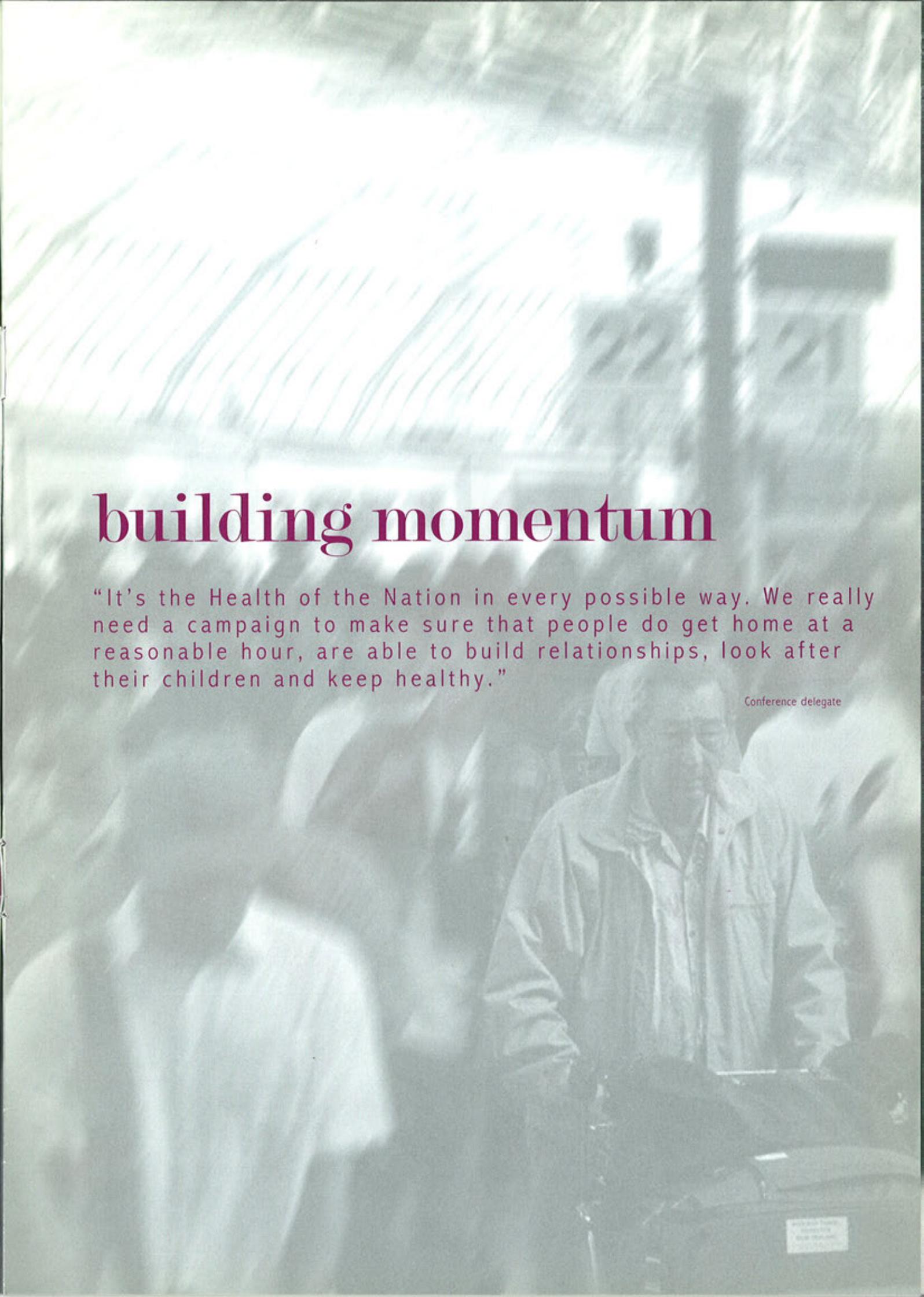


the football match story

About two years Marjorie Scardino, the Chief Executive of Pearson, and I had a meeting all morning. I said to her "I've got to go". By implication, it was something very important. So I left a quarter of an hour early because my fourteen year old son was playing football in Battersea Park. I went there and it was one of these ghastly sort of drizzly cold days. As I was watching him, I looked over my shoulder through various parents and umbrellas, and there was a man who looked very familiar. Blow me down, it was Marjorie's driver. I did not know that his children went to the same school as mine. So another

look. There was Marjorie, and she had been deeply pleased that I had left the meeting early because her son was at the school which was represented by the other team. So you had the Chairman and Chief Executive of Pearson both skiving off on a Tuesday afternoon. Now that story is well-known within Pearson as well as the attitude of mind which says: "Hey, everybody should be able to handle their lives that way so long as they so manage their work that they can do that as well."

Dennis Stevenson



building momentum

"It's the Health of the Nation in every possible way. We really need a campaign to make sure that people do get home at a reasonable hour, are able to build relationships, look after their children and keep healthy."

Conference delegate

Whatever individuals and companies do to change the way we work will be all the more effective, and more sustainable in the long term, if it takes place in the context of an effective campaign to outlaw the practices that damage individuals, families and businesses.

Such a campaign would need to make it unacceptable to retain the kind of work practices that act to the detriment of our families and our lives as individuals; it would challenge the argument that such practices are necessary to the achievement of a vibrant economy. And in making the case for a different workplace culture, it would come to win the support of chief executives, company chairs, leading politicians and all of those whom they employ.

Antidote, PARENTS AT WORK and MOTHERS IN MANAGEMENT are committed to working together, and with other organisations, to make this happen. By supporting them, you can help to ensure that men and women throughout the country are in a position to find ways of working that work for them as well as for their employers.



focusing the campaign

We really do need a campaign to reduce this long hours culture. And there is such energy here that we can do something on a grand scale. On the scale of the drink-drive campaign. I would like to feel that we could harness this and raise some funds so that we can shame people into leaving work earlier, much as we shame people into not drinking and driving.

Rufus Olins, Editor-in-chief Management Today

assembling the campaign

I have been enormously encouraged and excited by the potential for change that I see gathered together in this room. By joining together, we have the power to effect change in our own workplaces. And the more we can work together, the more effective we will be at bringing about national cultural change to the benefit of all of us and of our families and our children's children.

In 1996 PARENTS AT WORK ran 'Go home on time day' to draw the nation's attention to the fact that we are all working crazy long hours, and that we need to go home for our own mental health, physical health and the health of our children. We're ready to do it again, and clearly so are all of you. 'Go home on time day' should be an annual event. As others have said, it needs to be the drink-drive campaign of the first decade of the century.

Sarah Jackson, CE of PARENTS AT WORK

local action

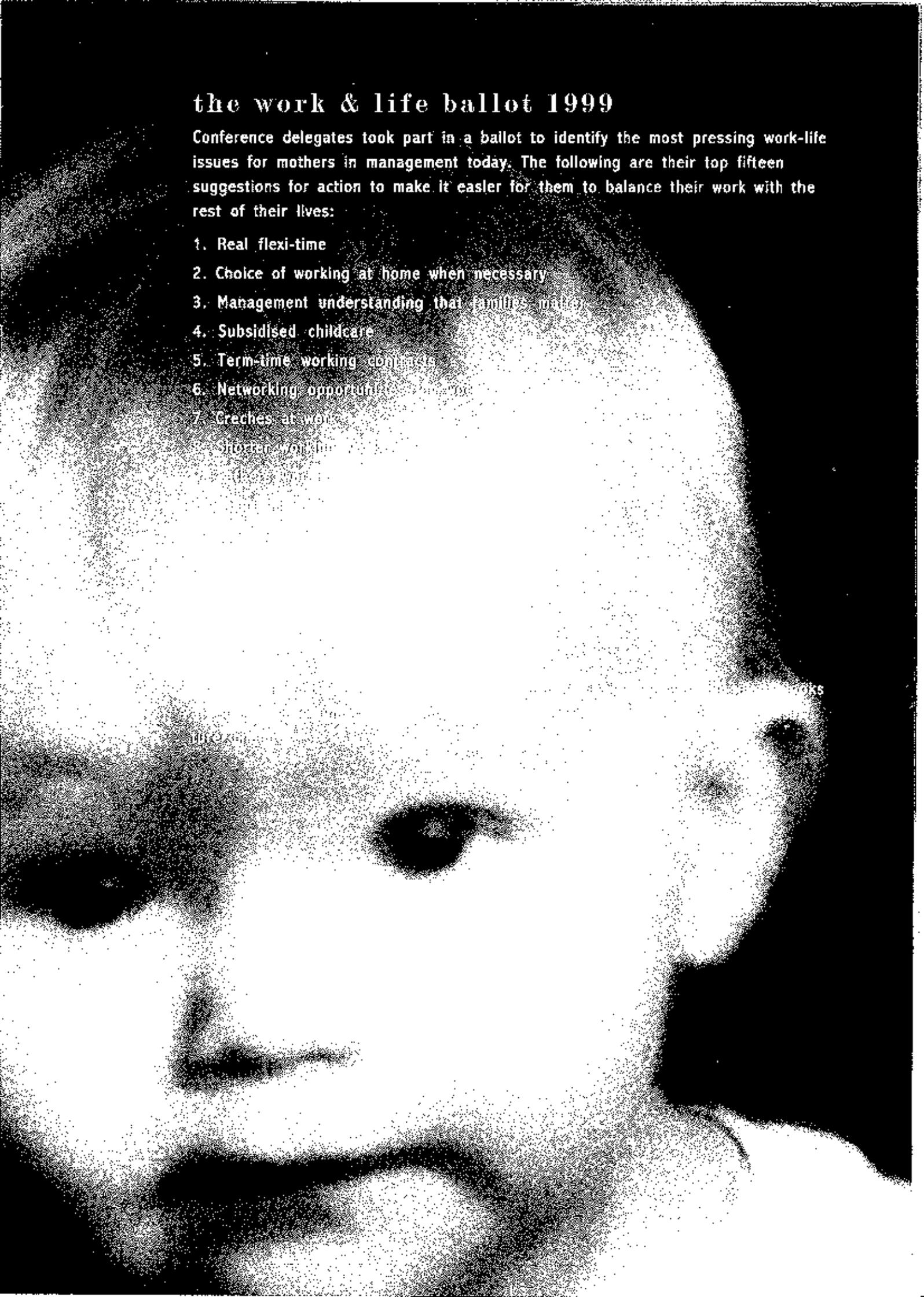
What I'm going to take back and set up is something very simple and very practical. I'm going to establish a network in Portsmouth and south-east Hampshire of people, not just mothers, to take up the issue of work-life balance. We will look not only at the business agenda, but at the local political agenda as well, and drive it forward at a local level.

Zenna Atkins, CE of Portsmouth Community Safety Partnership

the work & life ballot 1999

Conference delegates took part in a ballot to identify the most pressing work-life issues for mothers in management today. The following are their top fifteen suggestions for action to make it easier for them to balance their work with the rest of their lives:

1. Real flexi-time
2. Choice of working at home when necessary
3. Management understanding that families matter
4. Subsidised childcare
5. Term-time working contracts
6. Networking opportunities
7. Creches at work
8. Shorter working hours
9. Flexible working hours
10. Part-time working
11. Flexible working hours
12. Flexible working hours
13. Flexible working hours
14. Flexible working hours
15. Flexible working hours





good news : good practice & action you can take

a. flexible working

Whenever parents are asked what they most want, flexible working comes out top. Delegates highlighted many different aspects of working patterns which concern them, but they can be summed up in the cry for real flexibility. In today's competitive marketplace, employers are increasingly aware that flexible working options can help them to attract the best people. This is as true for small organisations as it is for big business.

◆ **The Littlewoods Organisation** has made flexible working and work-life balance into a mainstream business issue for all managers. The Shareholders' Charter includes a commitment that "equality of opportunity and dignity at work" should be maintained. Equality Action Plans are linked to business plans for each business unit. Individual line managers are appraised against work-life targets for themselves and for their staff.

◆ **Lloyds TSB** launched their WorkOptions scheme in the spring of 1999, with the aim of making the opportunity to work flexibly available to every employee. It is a business-focused, employee-initiated process which enables managers and staff to develop alternative working patterns. This is not a right. Each employee must present a business-based case in support of their request. The focus across the whole organisation is on business outputs rather than hours worked. Employees do not have to demonstrate positive business ben-

efits to gain approval for a new way of working, they only have to show that it is business neutral.

◆ **Client-facing organisations** are increasingly finding that, as their clients start to work flexibly, flexible working within their own organisations is becoming acceptable. Jones & Warner, a small City law firm, was set up by a group of lawyers who all wanted to work flexibly. Feedback from their clients is very positive. Major City law firm Linklaters and Alliance have recently introduced a flexible working scheme for partners.

◆ **The SME Sector** is often the most flexible of all. In a small business, success is based on keeping your good people, whom you know well as a manager. You can be more accommodating because you know trust is reciprocated. Classic Cleaners, a small company in Kingston, has no formal policies or practices but the owners and staff recognise the benefits of flexibility and get around the issue by planning work rotas well ahead. The owner has been rewarded by long-term commitment from her staff.

action you can take

If you want to make changes to your own working pattern

- Learn about the types of flexibility available so that you can find the form of working that is most suitable for you;
- Find out about your legal entitlements when considering change;
- Look at your own need for flexibility: what would you like to gain from a new working arrangements? How can your needs be matched to the tasks which need doing?
- Think about the ways in which working flexibly might enable you to make a more valuable contribution to your workplace by, for example, increasing energy, motivation and creativity;
- Present a carefully-argued case to your employers as to why flexible working will benefit the organisation;
- Keep an open mind about which option might work best; so that you and your manager can come to a mutually-acceptable agreement on what would fit your particular circumstances.
- To help you, turn to:

PARENTS AT WORK free fact sheets
Flexible Working and Your Legal Rights to Family Friendly Hours;
The Employee's Guide to Flexible Working (PARENTS AT WORK, £3.99)

inc p&p) has more information on types of flexibility and how to put your case; New Ways to Work flexible working helpline - 020 7930 3355;

Change at the Top: working flexibly in senior and managerial jobs (£12.50 inc. p&p from New Ways to Work, 22-25 Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5AP);

Working Options, tel. 020 8932 1462, a recruitment agency specialising in part-time senior positions;

If you want to look at the working patterns and policies of your organisation from your perspective as a manager, PARENTS AT WORK offers:

Free factsheets for employers:

The Employers' Guide to Flexible Working (£19.50 inc. p&p), which covers the business case, how to draw up a policy, tips on working with line managers (including responses to the most frequently heard arguments against change), and outlines of the commonest forms of flexible working;

Support and information via corporate membership;

Also recommended is *Time for Change: a guide to flexible work patterns for small and medium-sized enterprises* (£16.00 inc. p&p, from New Ways to Work).

b. childcare

Getting childcare right is an investment in the people of the future, as well as in the confident and productive parents we hope to find in the workplace. Yet there is still an acute shortage of childcare: only one registered childcare place for every 7.5 children under the age of eight.

There is a lot which employers can do to help their employees with childcare, and even the smallest business should be able to make sure that local childcare information is available on the staff noticeboard.

◆ **Elida Faberge** in Leeds provides financial support to a local childminding network. In return, employees have access to a network of registered childminders who will give priority to Elida Faberge referrals. The company subsidises children who are with childminders on an hourly basis and will also retain a place for a parent returning from maternity leave.

◆ **BP Amoco** have for many years offered support and information to parents. The Parental Advisory and Networking Service (PANS) has helped the company to improve maternity return rates. This is an on-site service staffed by two part-time specialists who provide information on childcare options and broader parenting issues. Parents are helped to plan and select childcare, and are given information about facilities in their local area

as well as guidance on cost and formalities. PANS also runs a nanny register which provides opportunities for parents and nannies to network and get mutual support, and to set up nanny-shares.

◆ **Workplace nurseries** tend to be more popular away from the larger cities: few parents welcome the prospect of long-distance commuting with their children.

◆ **HSBC** were pioneers in the field of employer-provided nursery care, and in 1999 celebrated 10 years of their childcare service. They have 100 nurseries up and running.

◆ **Addenbrooke's Hospital** has a large nursery. In the buoyant employment market around Cambridge this provision is vital to help with recruitment and retention of staff. Workplace nurseries are often well-suited to large, campus-style organisations.

◆ **The Body Shop** is an example of a business which offers childcare vouchers on a sliding scale to its employees. These work in the same way as luncheon vouchers, giving maximum parental choice in how to use them, and enabling the employer to target the benefit at lower income employees

action you can take

- Get yourself on to your local Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership as a working parent representative - your local authority is charged to find out what parents need and to come up with a strategy which will deliver it;
- Join the national childcare campaign: Daycare Trust, Shoreditch Town Hall Annexe, 380 Old Street, London EC1V 9LT, 020 7739 2866, info@daycaretrust.org.uk;
- Join Playpen, the campaign for nanny registration. Information from 01332 343029;
- For local sources of childcare contact National Childcare Link Information Line (08000 960296) or website (www.childcarelink.gov.uk);
- If you are a manager, your organisation can help its parent employees by buying (or receiving free if you have 100 or fewer employees) a copy of PARENTS AT WORK's *Childcare Pack for Employers* (£19.50 inc. p&p).

c. leave

Many delegates prioritised their wish to be able to take time off to spend with their children. This is vital when a child is ill, or when childcare arrangements break down; but there are also times when a child needs extra time with their parent - perhaps when starting a new school, or moving to a new home. Time off to cope with emergencies raises issues of trust and transparency in the workplace: many parents still feel that family responsibilities are not an acceptable reason for taking time off work. One delegate said, "my husband can ring in with a hanger after entertaining clients but he can't say that he needs time off if our child is ill."

The new rights to parental leave set a minimum standard which few organisations yet exceed, although many are considering schemes which will provide more.

◆ **Market Monitor** is a small telemarketing company in Princes Risborough. Like most small businesses, the company does not have many formalised policies, but there is an open door attitude to talking about work-life issues. If there is a family emergency "no questions are asked - if you've got to go, just go - hours

can be made up later". Absenteeism and turnover rates are very low.

◆ **Asda** runs a shift-swapping scheme in which one-off arrangements may be set up directly between employees.

◆ **South Lanarkshire Council** offers employees career breaks of up to four years.

◆ **Time Out Magazine** offers new fathers four weeks paid paternity leave around the time of childbirth. This is far in excess both of the statutory allocation - one or two unpaid days to attend the birth of a child - and best practice: three to ten days' paid leave.

action you can take

- ◆ Find out about your statutory rights as an employee: a *Parental and Emergency Leave* factsheet is available free from PARENTS AT WORK;
- ◆ As an employee or manager, encourage your organisation to do better than the government's fallback scheme. The regulations are available from the DTI, Employment Relations Directorate, Parental Leave, Bay 293, 1 Victoria Street, SW1H 0ET, 020 7215 6207, www.dti.gov.uk/er/erbill/htm;
- ◆ As a manager, look at carer leave. PARENTS AT WORK's *Carer Leave Pack* for employers covers the business case, how to draw up a policy and convince your line managers of its worth, and an outline of the main forms of carer leave currently found in the UK (£19.50 inc. p&p).





d. culture change

Over the past 20 years we have made real progress around flexible working, childcare and carer leave, but the most difficult thing to tackle is still workplace attitude: the attitude that denigrates the value of work-life balance and children.

Flexible working for fathers

A lot of organisations make this possible, but often fathers do not want to ask for it. It is generally not considered a smart career move to be known as a hands-on, responsible father (as opposed to the company man working long hours with photos of wife and lovely children on his desk). However surveys consistently find that women managers still do more at home than their male counterparts, and it is clear there is still a long way to go before our culture considers true equality as a norm. Yet Lloyds TSB found a 50/50 take-up of term-time working when it was offered in one of their divisions - fathers jumped at the chance just as mothers did.

Part-time does not mean uncommitted

There is still a widespread belief that working part-time somehow means that you are not taking the job seriously. To shift this pre-conception will require a real culture change on the part of employees and managers alike. In the meantime we have examples such as the law firms mentioned above, and new recruitment agencies such as Working Options specialising in senior part-time positions.

Hours do not equal productivity

Overwhelmingly the message of the Mothers in Management conference was a cry of opposition to the long hours culture, which measures achievement in terms of presence - or presenteeism - rather than outputs. This is a challenge for organisations and managers everywhere. To meet it, we must radically change the way we understand management and supervision. We must face up to our own fear as managers and must find new ways of measuring success. Meeting the challenge will impose the need for improved communication - real, person to person communication. New technology opens up all sorts of new opportunities for us, but we must make sure that we do not become place-flexible but time-bound, constantly responding to the mobile phone or e-mail.

action you can take

- ◆ Network with other working parents via a local or workplace based group
 - The Chair of the City Working Parents Group says "Many of the best bits of information and advice I've ever had on combining my career with active parenting have come through the group."
(lauracarlenser@daughterandmum.com)
 - PARENTS AT WORK can put you in touch locally, or offer advice on setting up something yourself.
- ◆ Network via e-mail. Zenna Atkins recently set up a support network for senior women managers in the Portsmouth area: "It is entirely via e-mail - quick communications, and a great source of advice and support"
(z.atkins@can-online.org.uk)
- ◆ Have a look at the Work-Life Manual (£75 + £4.50 p&p), available from the Industrial Society, 0870 400 1000, customercentre@ndsoc.co.uk
- ◆ Have your organisation join PARENTS AT WORK as a corporate member;
- ◆ Contact PARENTS AT WORK's Work/Life Balance Consultancy;
- ◆ Have your organisation join Antidote's Emotional Literacy Development Group or commission an Emotional and Social Index from Antidote: 020 7588 5151. (james@antidote.org.uk).

a quick guide to government policy

a. flexible working hours

The government has launched a campaign to get more employers signed up to work-life balance. The priority is to promote awareness and take-up of practical policies on work-life balance in organisations of all sizes, in all sectors and regions. They want to show that more and more businesses are already seeing the benefits of making work-life balance a part of their strategic approach to business planning. They have published a set of guidelines, *Changing Patterns in a Changing World*, and set up a Work-Life Challenge Fund.

- ◆ Find out more about the government's work-life balance campaign from 020 7273 5626 or work-life-balance@dfee.gov.uk
- ◆ Secure a copy of *Changing Patterns in a Changing World* from DfEE Publications on 0845 60 222 60 (ref.wlbcpcw) or on the internet at www.dfee.gov.uk/work-balance

An opportunity to improve the rights of part-timers is provided by the EU part-time Work Directive. The government's consultation document on the new legislation published in February 2000 excluded many part-time workers and failed to cover the promotion of part-time work opportunities.

b. childcare

One of the first major policy initiatives launched by the new Labour government in 1998 was the National Childcare Strategy (NCS), a response to the observation that childcare provision was patchy and standards uneven. The NCS goes some way to addressing many of the major childcare challenges, promoting the principles that childcare should be of high quality, accessible, and affordable:

1. Your local authority is charged to find out what parents need and to come up with a strategy to deliver. This has to be approved by government before funding is released.
2. There is to be a major expansion of out of school provision with the creation of After School Clubs and holiday playschemes. By the end of 1999, some 76,000 new places had been created.

3. The Childcare Tax Credit was introduced in October 1999 to help with childcare costs in the hope that far more parents, especially single parents, will now find these costs manageable.

4. The government is concerned that, with less than 50 percent of childcare workers having a relevant qualification, adequate training is vital, as is making childcare a more attractive career. Steps are being taken to improve the childcare training system.

c. leave

The Employment Relations Act of 1999 constitutes an important advance for the rights of working parents by promoting improvements to parental leave, emergency leave and maternity leave. However, campaigning is still essential if leave is to be paid, enabling all parents to benefit, and if the right to parental leave is to be extended to parents of children born before December 15, 1999.

- ◆ **The Parental Leave Fallback Scheme** establishes a legal minimum, but wherever possible, employers and employees are encouraged to come to an agreement about how leave will work in a particular workplace. Key elements to the scheme include: a maximum qualifying period of one year's continuous employment; provision for 13 weeks unpaid leave for each child under the age of five; with a maximum of four weeks leave in a year; flexibility and leave entitlement until a child is 18 given to parents of disabled children; entitlement for part-timers to be in proportion to the time they work; rights to return.

- ◆ **Emergency Family Leave** provides for a short amount of time off to enable an employee to make emergency care arrangements for a dependent (defined as the employee's spouse, child or parent, or a member of the same household).

- ◆ **Improvements to maternity leave** include the extension of ordinary maternity leave from 14 to 18 weeks; the qualifying period reduced from two years to one.

A happy family life *and* a fulfilling career?

A successful business *and* employees with active interests outside work?

Too much to ask?

We don't think so.



moving forward with

PARENTS AT WORK campaigns for a better balance between work and family life, for the benefit of our children, of ourselves, and the organisations we work for.

For over 20 years, we have been offering practical support and information to working parents. We also work in partnership with employers, providing the advice and resources they need to build positive work-life practice. As individual parents, we can change ourselves, we can change the arrangements we make for our children. However, real change - and positive benefit for working families - must come in the workplace.

You can support our campaign for change both as an individual working parent, and as a manager within your organisation.

At the heart of our work is the need of individual working parents for information and support. We offer:

- ◆ A comprehensive range of free factsheets on childcare options, flexible working, employment rights and in-work benefits;
- ◆ Publications such as *The Employee's Guide to Flexible Working*, *Balancing Work and Home* and a widely used pro forma nanny contract;
- ◆ A network of local and workplace groups, or advice on setting up your own;
- ◆ A chance to add your voice to a growing cry for change that will not be ignored; parent membership costs £18 p.a., and includes our members' newsletter *Balanced Lives*, as well as discounts on events and publications.

If you are approaching the issues raised by *TIME BOMB* as a manager, PARENTS AT WORK can offer support and guidance to you, including:

- ◆ Regular best practice events to keep you up to date with developments in the work-life field. Throughout 2000, we shall be running a programme of regional best practice seminars for Employers for Worklife balance;
- ◆ Our publications include three packs for employers - on Flexible Working, Carer Leave and Childcare;
- ◆ Opportunities to network with other employers;
- ◆ Corporate membership, bringing discounts on events, workshops and publications, a regular bulletin and a ready source of advice and contacts (cost £200);

◆ the PARENTS AT WORK Work:Home Balance consultancy team can provide more detailed advice, and offer help in developing the business case, understanding the needs of your employees, implementing work-life policies as well as in monitoring and evaluating progress. The team brings together public and private sector experience, gained as HR practitioners and senior managers.

PARENTS AT WORK Projects include

- ◆ Waving *not* drowning: a support and contact network for families trying to combine paid employment with caring for a child with a disability or special need;
- ◆ Legal advice for working parents on lower incomes about employment rights and in-work benefits;
- ◆ The PARENTS AT WORK/Lloyds TSB Employer of the Year Awards, which recognise and reward best practice in the work-life field. These prestigious awards have been running since 1990 and are supported by the DfEE. A collection of case studies from the Awards 1999 - *Tomorrow's Companies Today* - is available;
- ◆ Balancing Work and Home in the Voluntary Sector is a three year project promoting work-life balance to voluntary sector organisations, managers and trustees. From June 2000 a best practice helpline will be open;
- ◆ PARENTS AT WORK/Lloyds TSB Best Boss Competition asked working parents to nominate the manager or boss who made it possible for them to balance work and home. Nominations flooded into this new competition, confirming to us that there is a lot of good work going on which needs to be recognised and rewarded.

For details about PARENTS AT WORK:

email: info@parentsatwork.org.uk,

telephone: 020 7628 3565

fax: 020 7628 3591

24 hour order line for working parents' factsheets:

tel: 020 7628 3578

Waving *not* drowning helpline: 020 7588 0802



moving forward with **Antidote**

Antidote was set up three years ago to develop strategies for embedding emotional literacy in organisations, education and society at large.

The organisation sees emotional literacy as an essential component in any effective response to the challenge of change, and works with organisations to help them develop the creativity, resourcefulness and thinking power of individuals and teams.

There is growing evidence that emotional literacy is the key to high performance in today's fast-moving marketplace. This is because an emotionally-literate culture helps individuals and organisations to respond quickly but intelligently to changes in society, the marketplace and their own competitive position.

Antidote has developed a tool, the Emotional and Social Index (ESI), which organisations can use to understand how their structures, processes and traditions work to enable, or frustrate, the ability of employees to draw on their emotional resources in the work that they are doing.

The Emotional and Social Index works in three ways:

1. It enables organisations to see how emotional factors affect their business performance, ensuring that these are given due weight in decision-making processes;
2. It provides a guide for the implementation and evaluation of strategies to enhance the emotional literacy of organisations;
3. It enables feelings that may be blocking performance to be addressed in a safe and manageable way.

Companies with an interest in trying out the tool, and in learning how they can use emotional literacy to strengthen their organisation, can join Antidote's Emotional Literacy Development Group. Alongside opportunities to attend seminars and conferences on the Index, this will enable them to become involved with Antidote's work in education – designed to ensure that tomorrow's workforce has the qualities it will need.

In the longer term, Antidote intends to develop the Index as an indicator of emotional well-being regionally and nationally. This will provide policy-makers with a guide to the emotional dimensions of the goals they have set themselves, whether these be to reduce crime, to rebuild communities, to enhance educational attainment, or to meet the challenge of global competition.

Antidote's supporters include company directors, property developers, academics and management consultants alongside teachers, psychologists and doctors. All want to contribute to the discussion about how organisations can use emotional literacy to become more effective at pursuing their goals, and how this can contribute to the development of a sustainably prosperous and healthy society.

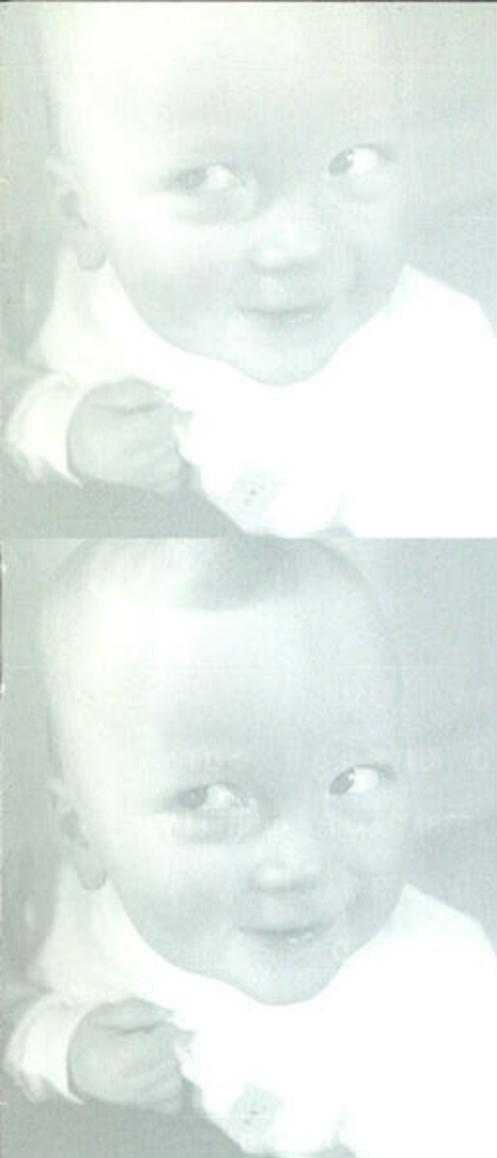
For details about Antidote: Campaign for Emotional Literacy:

Look at <http://www.antidote.org.uk>

email: james@antidote.org.uk

telephone: 020 7588 5151

fax: 020 7588 4900



"I work for an international IT company. As my daughters approached secondary school-age they really didn't need a full-time nanny, but I also became aware how much more they needed me at home when they came back from school. I negotiated an arrangement which allows me to leave work at 3.30pm every day, and to complete my hours in the evening. Obviously my colleagues know about my working pattern, but to clients - who I deal with by phone only - it makes no difference."

Eileen

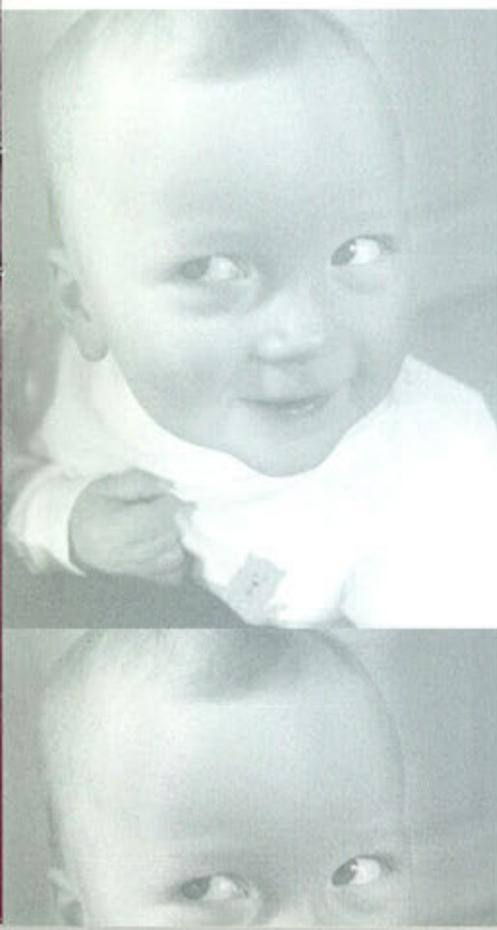
"I have a senior marketing position which I love, but last year I was finding it harder and harder to reconcile my hours with my need to spend time with my daughter. My boss asked me what I thought would help, and I said really all I needed was to be able to leave work one day a week in time to pick her up from school. She said, well do it then - it's such a little thing, and it has made all the difference."

Margaret

"I am the constituency secretary for an MP. I have two children, and a husband with his own demanding job. During term-times I work in the Westminster office, but during the holidays most of what I do gets done from home. 'My' MP is very family-friendly, and my outputs are easily measurable - if the case work and correspondence didn't get done, it would soon become very obvious. An answerphone and mobile phone, and the trust of someone I have worked with for a long time, give me the flexibility to combine children with an extremely responsible job."

Helen

how the way we work is changing



"We had just moved to a new area, and found childcare which I was happy with, when the new childminder was rushed to hospital and was out of action for ten weeks. With no support networks locally I was desperate. I work a three day week anyway, and so we arranged it that I did four part-days at home during school hours, with my assistant fielding calls at work and creating the appearance of 'presence' for me in the office. All external meetings and staff supervision and so on were programmed into one long day each week. Childcare for that day we patched together via visiting grannies and my husband using up his leave one day at a time."

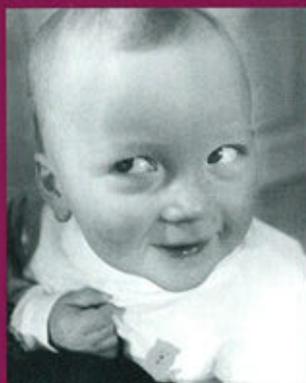
Rashna

"I negotiated a part-time return to work after maternity leave. It wasn't and isn't easy, I am the first part-time analyst the company has had, and they don't really know what to do with me. A major problem was fitting childcare around my hours - I have to be at my desk before the markets open, but could not find anyone to come to our house at 6am. In the end the solution was my mother, who has taken early retirement to look after my son."

Rowena

"My wife has always worked. We both have our careers, and we both want to be able to change our working patterns so that we can have time for family life. But corporate man is so slow to change! I can't wait for gradual change, for things to be better for my kids when they start a family. I want change right now, for me."

Conference Delegate



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