



A research project examining family friendly policies in public and private sector organisations in the Greater Craigavon Area – A summary report (June 1998)

The New Opportunities for Women (II) project – “Craigavon Equality for Women in Training and Employment” carried out this research as part of its campaigning effort to increase female participation in the labour market by raising awareness of the barriers to entry to employment and retention of females in the workforce. The research specifically aims to establish the nature and extent of family friendly policies and positive action measures among employers in the Greater Craigavon area. It also seeks to gauge the views and opinions of employers to the development of these types of policies.

Main aims

- 1 To establish the nature and extent of the provision of family friendly policies and positive action measures among local employers
- 2 To ascertain the views of local employers on gender equality issues with particular emphasis on family friendly policies and positive action measures
- 3 To measure the impact of these initiatives on the local community

Main findings

- 1 All employers in the project had equal opportunities policies and provide selection and interview training
- 2 Many employers already offered some family friendly policies. Part-time working, temporary working and shift work are commonly offered but job-sharing, flexi-hours and term-time working were only offered by a few. Policies such as compressed hours and annualised hours were not currently offered
- 3 Leave provisions offered ranged from statutory maternity leave and bereavement leave (all employers) to paternity and emergency leave (just over 40% of employers) and carers leave (17%). Few employers offered enhanced maternity or parental leave (although legislation now affects this). Childcare policies, in the form of childcare vouchers, were offered by only one employer
- 4 In relation to positive action measures, 64% of employers used a broad equal opportunities statement in their recruitment advertising; 40% used a welcoming statement; 25% used pre-employment work experience and 14% attempted outreach training
- 5 Employers' opinions of family friendly policies were largely positive but less so in relation to positive action measures. Childcare provision or assistance was viewed by most employers as the most unattractive and difficult to sell policy because of the perception of the costs associated with it. Many employers felt that awareness of these types of policies had increased greatly in the past 2 years

- 6 Most employers accepted the business case for developing family friendly policies (reduced absenteeism, lower turnover and recruitment costs) and especially those operating in tighter competitive labour markets. Nonetheless, all employers recognised that there remain barriers to developing these policies including the perception of cost, extra administration and employee abuse.