**Supporting Working Parents: Pregnancy and Return to Work National Review**

Submissions from women and men who have experienced discrimination at work while pregnant, or while on or on return to work after taking parental leave

**Submission Number: 35**

**Part C Submission Response**

When I was pregnant I got the feeling from my manager that it was desirable that I work as long as possible before the birth (even right up to when I pop!) I remember towards the end of my pregnancy she wanted me to travel around the area visiting clients which I refused to do as I would have found it to be extremely uncomfortable getting in and out of a vehicle and sitting in a car for long periods, driving around the region (at the time I was about 8 months and 1 week pregnant and had swollen ankles).  
  
I was supported by my organisation during my maternity leave and was allowed to return part-time for the first year however when I wanted to continue part-time this was not put forward as an option to me even though flexible work arrangements are a condition offered by my employer, it is not being offered at this site by my manager. I have been trying to negotiate that my current job-share arrangement continue as it is working and according to the policy it can only be refused on "reasonable business grounds" which have not been presented. I have had to speak to the director, if I do not have any luck from him I will have to speak to the director on top of him. Because of all this I have also been in contact with the Union to clarify my rights in this situation and to get advice and maybe support. I do not want to have to bring in the union, but if I am not being offered flexible working arrangements which are a workplace condition offered by my employer I do not see what choice I have. The union also said that they cannot take this matter to court that it is really up to the manager coming around (this makes me feel that I do not have "a leg to stand on" and what is the pint of the policy then? If I have to return to work full time it affects my whole family. I will have to put my child into day care which so far I have avoided. I have also been feeling very stressed because of this situation both at work and at home.  
  
I also feel that I have been sexually discriminated against. Recently there was a new position up for recruitment and neither myself or another colleague (who went on maternity leave at a similar time to me) were successful. Even though we have worked for the organisation the longest and had the most relevant skills. I now believe that we have been sexually discriminated against because our manager is concerned that we will have another baby. This is hard to prove and I am not sure what action, if any to take about this. So career wise I feel that there are no opportunities here for me now that I have a small child. I am also still breast feeding and after hours work is difficult. These seems to frowned upon sometimes.  
  
What would help in this situation, well I feel that my director was/is not aware of flexible workplace conditions. His background is as a health professional, not managing people in a University/office environment. I feel that the "middle management" has too much power. They can advise higher up with no consultation with workers. I also feel that the selection process is easily manipulated.  
  
There needs to be more transparency from management. If they cannot provide a good reason they need to be accountable to someone as to why they are refusing entitlements. Flexible work conditions, once in place, should be the norm, not something that has to be begged and pleaded for. There needs to be something implemented so that it is a first consideration, or must be offered to the employee and then only refused by the employee or on reasonable grounds by the organisation.  
  
I did not receive any information about maternity leave or flexible working arrangements, I sourced this information myself from the organisations website. Perhaps if it was mandatory that this information be distributed to employees and middle and higher management then this may have helped, unsure.  
  
The maternity leave policy which was followed really did support me here, I received financial support from my employer and 12 months leave which was great. Also the government paid parental leave helped.  
  
From this review I would like to see that flexible workplace arrangements become normal and are accepted by management. I would also like to see that recruitment processes do not allow for sexual discrimination, I am unsure how this can be achieved if best practice is not being followed.  
  
With the new gender equity act (not sure of correct title) staff who have been on maternity leave should have the opportunity to submit directly to government feedback about their workplace conditions and how they have been treated (what options did they have in the workplace pre and post), so that year by year organisations are being directly and honestly monitored.  
  
Thank you for giving people the opportunity to share their experience.