

Seminar 2: Work-Life Balance, Fairness and Social Justice during recession and austerity, University of Manchester: April 11th 2014

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Summary of seminar two

The seminar series brings together researchers and practitioners to seek solutions to a 'triple agenda': how to enhance employees' Work-Life Balance (WLB), organisational effectiveness and social justice. It identifies changes in work arrangements and WLB policies and asks:

- Whether WLB is becoming more difficult for everyone, or is the impact uneven?
- Are economic pressures reducing employers' willingness to implement WLB initiatives, or making it more difficult to do so?
- Which national and organizational WLB policies and services are resilient, which are adapting and which are being cut back?
- How do these developments impact on different groups of workers?

In this second seminar we consider these questions through a focus on occupational and contractual inequalities in working schedules and WLB, and the gender inequalities which are woven throughout. The seminar opens with an analysis of the situation in UK and France, and then locates the discussion in the wider European policy perspective. The afternoon session continues the discussion of the equality, diversity and social justice issues involved, with a break out session to consider practical implications and possible solutions. The seminar aim is to contribute to evidence-based debates about WLB policies and practices.

1. RECESSION, WORK-TIME AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE: CLASS INEQUALITIES IN THE UK, Professor Tracey Warren, University of Nottingham

The starting point for Tracey Warren's analysis is that the 2008-9 recession and subsequent on-going economic crisis has resulted in a decline in the proportion of workers in the UK reporting very long working hours. Countless work life debates and policy initiatives to combat work life imbalance focus upon long working weeks and on those who report working 'too long'. Tracey Warren argues that working 'too few' hours is a fundamental and growing problem that has been over-looked as a work life issue. Studies show that an economic-based fear of 'too few' hours features in accounts from working class employees and that work-time underemployment can have serious ramifications for economic in/security. Yet the economic domain has been disregarded in many work life studies and in policies that have been developed under the work life umbrella. Drawing upon large-scale survey data, her paper shows the extent to which economic hardship within the UK is classed, and

expanding. It calls for the routine inclusion of the economic within work life studies and work life policy debates, and argues that financial security should be fundamental to any understanding of what a 'balanced work life' might look like.

2. RECENT REFORMS IN WORK/LIFE BALANCE POLICIES IN FRANCE: THE AMBIVALENT IMPACT ON PARENTS IN PRECARIOUS WORK ARRANGEMENTS, Dr Jeanne Fagnani, CNRS, Paris

Jeanne Fagnani explained that since the nineties, and in particular since the onset of the economic crisis, significant organizational changes have marched hand in hand with an increase in precarious and low-paid employment with irregular and/or unforeseeable working time schedules (short-term contracts, temporary agency work and involuntary part-time jobs). Such work schedules make it difficult to combine a job with family responsibilities. This applies particularly for parents living in lower class neighbourhoods who frequently face enormous difficulties in managing their everyday life when they have to manage precarious work arrangements and long commuting-times. Thus, the economic crisis has not only contributed to more segmentation in the labour market but has also resulted in widening social inequalities in WLB.

Although France, along with the Nordic countries, leads the European Union in public childcare provision and benefits aimed at reducing child care costs for families, these services are more suited to the needs of middle-class parents enjoying 'standard' working hours and a stable job. In socio-economically disadvantaged areas, parents therefore develop diverse strategies to cope with everyday life, depending on income-level, family status, place of residence, employment status, commuting time and availability and costs of childcare.

In her presentation, Jeanne analyses the various reforms which stakeholders involved in family policies (mainly the National Family Allowance Fund, CNAF) have made to childcare and parental leave policies to address the issue of work/life balance for parents in precarious work arrangements, particularly for families in socio-economically disadvantaged areas. For instance, in the last decade there has been an increase in the number of publicly subsidized childcare services and *crèches* operating more than 10 hours a day and 7 days a week to enable parents to meet the demands placed on them by employers calling for more 'flexible' hours (mostly in personal services, retail sector, hotels, restaurants, health and caring sectors). Her analysis shows the ambivalent outcomes of these reforms for parents with precarious work arrangements, and in her conclusions she pointed out some of the dilemmas and tensions policy makers currently have to deal with in regard to WLB policies.

3. IN TIMES OF RECESSION: WOMEN AND MEN AT WORK AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE THROUGHOUT THE LIFE COURSE IN EUROPE: COMMENTS AND SOME FINDINGS FROM EUROPEAN WORK AND CONDITIONS SURVEY ANALYSIS, Greet Vermeylen, EuroFound

Greet Vermeylen (EuroFound), the discussant for the first session, notes that Eurofound's regular surveys, including the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), show that several types of work schedules improve work-life balance – including schedules which give workers some discretion or autonomy to arrange their schedule (e.g. flexitime), schedules which have regular predictable hours, voluntarily chosen part-time work, short full-time work hours. However, organisational case studies are needed to examine how working-time practices are changing, and the reasons for these changes.

at the company level. There are marked differences between workplaces. For example, larger companies typically provide a wider range of formal policies whereas SMEs have more informal arrangements.

Elder care is a growing focus of concern in European policy debates about work-life balance. It is possible to explore this to some degree in the EWCS by differentiating between 'unpaid care for children' and 'unpaid care for others', although the proportion of workers in the survey with elder care responsibilities is low overall (the rate increases markedly for workers aged 50 years and over).

The next EWCS will contain additional, more refined questions about WLB, including the impact on individuals' energy for their private life.

4. LONG HOURS OF WORK AS A STRATEGY FOR CARE DODGING, Professor Mustafa Ozbilgin (Brunel University), Alexandra Beauregard (LSE) and Maria Balta (Brunel University).

Mustafa Ozbilgin's presentation started with the observation that the culture of long hours work persists in senior managerial posts across industries and countries, even though the evidence suggests there is not a positive relationship between long work hours and productivity levels. The negative consequences of the norm of long hours work on individuals with caring responsibilities have been relatively well studied. What is less studied is how the culture of long hours work can be a strategic construct deployed in domestic negotiations about care arrangements. He presented the findings from research which involved qualitative interviews with entrepreneurs. The findings illustrates how the norm of long hours work can be used as a rationale for abdicating care responsibilities, with often different outcomes for women and men. The analysis showed two women, as the traditional carers, and some men who give care are disadvantaged by the long hours work culture, new family formations also allow them to use these long work hour norms to develop different of work practice and domestic negotiation.

5. AUSTERITY MEASURES AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOLLOWING PREGNANCY RELATED DISCRIMINATION, Professor Grace James, University of Reading

Grace James noted that Jo Swinson (Minister for Employment Relations, Department of Business, Innovation and Skills) has described pregnancy-related discrimination as 'both appalling and illegal' and is concerned that 'no employer should be able to get away with this kind of behaviour'. Yet, as a recent report by Maternity Action reveals, many employers do get away with it. In her paper Grace discussed the extent of the problem, the gap between those who experience this type of unlawful treatment and those who invoke law as a consequence and revealed how the "problem" and the "gap" have been exacerbated by austerity measures and recent reforms that create more barriers to accessing justice for this cohort. In the conclusion she placed her analysis within its wider context of work/care-giving conflicts and suggests that it may be time to consider alternative approaches to relieving workplace tensions of this kind.

6. WORKING FAMILIES ORGANISATION – OUR WORK AND RESEARCH WITH EMPLOYERS, Jonathan Swan, Working Families

In the final paper of the day, Jonathan Swann, introduced the work of *Working Families*, which is the UK's leading work-life balance campaign organisation. Its vision is a society where everyone has real choices about how they balance their working and caring responsibilities. It supports and gives a voice to working parents and carers, whilst also helping employers create workplaces which encourage work-life balance for everyone. Informed by its supporters, Helpline callers and award winners, and original research, Working Families makes the case to government and employers for social policy and workplace change that will benefit families, employers and communities. Working Families encourages employers to grasp the real business benefits that work-life balance policies can bring. Through benchmarking, employer awards and research and consultancy with employers large and small, it has the experience and knowledge to help employers organise work in new ways. See: www.workingfamilies.org.uk

In his presentation, Jonathan gave several examples of Working Families' activities.

- The Waving *not* drowning project provides advice, a network and a newsletter for the parents of disabled children, as well as regular forums where parents can express their views to policy-makers.
- The Low Income Families Helpline provides free legal advice and on-going support and coaching in negotiating appropriate leave and flexible working. Regularly updated factsheets for parents and an extensive employers' case studies database are freely available on the Working Families website.
- The Working Families advice service deals with around 3000 queries per year from parents and carers who are encountering problems or facing discrimination as a result of their wish to work in a 'family-friendly' way.
- Annual employer work-life benchmarking.

In his presentation Jonathan gave an overview of the main issues and common outcomes raised in the advice service, and the changes observed over the last 12 months with a focus on how these factors have been affected by austerity. He also presented the main findings from Working Families' annual employer work-life benchmarking of large organisations, which examines their work-life strategy and motivation, policy and practice. One of the main themes is the disconnection between policy and practice - why do the espoused organisational values around work-life not translate into practice and culture, particularly for some employee groups?

The main points of discussion stimulated by the presentations:

Class inequalities in work-life imbalance and financial insecurity

The feminisation of this work-life 'imbalance' process is important to note. The dimensions include the decline in women's employment and deteriorating working conditions in the public sector, the expansion of zero-hours contracts in retail and services, concentrated in jobs done mainly by women, and that women have borne the brunt of welfare state cuts through a three-fold squeeze –

deteriorating employment conditions, reduced welfare entitlements plus the emotional labour and domestic work of supporting family life when living standards are falling and financial insecurity is increasing. There is also the intersection of gender and class.

Loss of pay translates into reduced living standards and financial insecurity. It may also mean reduced status in the workplace.

How can we get a better understanding (and measurement) of work-life in/balance and financial insecurity?

Many surveys now contain questions which measure work-life balance; but they are often asked in restrictive ways and without explicit discussion of financial security/insecurity. Questions about work-time preferences are more limited. Qualitative data is needed to gain a deeper understanding. For example, Jill Pascal used vignettes in her research to show how people talked about time pressures and masculinity. Middle class men talked about their importance in the work place but this didn't feature in the accounts of working class men as much. With working-class couples, the idea of the male breadwinner model was still very prevalent.

Different forms of precarious contracts – the example of the comparison of the UK and France

In the UK, there has been an increase in zero hours contracts. In France there are no zero-hour contracts but there has always been pronounced labour market segmentation between people who work in protected sectors where it is very costly for an employer to fire an employee (e.g. in large companies) and people who work in non-protected sectors, where it is common for short-term contracts (fixed-term contracts, agency work) to be used. Trade unions are very weak in France.

France's working-time reduction and working-time flexibility reinforces inequalities

Flexible working has increased, largely to meet employers' needs. Thus the reduction in working time has for many workers been accompanied by increased exposure to atypical work hours such as at weekends/evenings. This has reinforced the divide between protected and unprotected workplaces.

Urban segregation and work-life balance

There is a law in France which stipulates that every town should have a minimum of 20% of social housing. This is concentrated in some areas and Social housing provision is increasing but it is concentrated in poorer areas, and is less available in affluent areas where a social mix is needed the most. The government is not able to control prices so the room for manoeuvre is very narrow. Urban segregation has been reinforced in the last decade.

Migrant women in France

Most migrant workers are French citizens so they can easily find jobs but they usually have very atypical work hours e.g. jobs in hotels, service workers etc. The strategy of these people is to organise their work hours so that they don't overlap with their partner in order to ensure there is always one parent available for childcare (i.e. shift parenting).

Child minding remains female-dominated

For example, in France, there are 350,000 women working as licensed child minders and only 1% of childminders are men. Women can easily enter male dominated sectors, but men cannot easily enter female-dominated sectors. Most families are reluctant to have a man to look after their children – so it's almost impossible for a man to work in the childcare sector: there are too many hurdles.

To what extent are national differences in working-time policies and practices due to different regional/national gender ideologies? How does the structural and discursive co-constitute these differences? How do they coalesce and work together?

Gender ideologies vary nationally and change over time. They can inform social action which can drive changes in policies and practices. Ideologies and attitudes are also shaped by policy frameworks e.g. if childcare services are limited or poor quality this can reinforce social attitudes that it is better for young children to be looked after full-time by their mother.

Care, gender, care dodging and 'choice' in domestic negotiations

Julia Brannen's research argues that different types of fatherhood have evolved. Amongst all classes there is an intensification of fatherhood – most men are more 'proud' about being involved in childcare.

Sue Himmelweit noted that in her study of mothers and young children, women explained how what they were doing was their 'only choice'. The standard to which they compared themselves to was a full-time mother. In Mustafa Ozbilgin and colleagues' study, fathers are doing the same thing but in the opposite direction – they still have no choice.

Some studies suggest that senior executives state that they would like to reduce their hours and spend more time caring for their children but that at other points in the interview admit they do not find care work as interesting/rewarding/stimulating as their jobs (e.g. hinted at in Hochschild's 'Time Bind').

In Mustafa's study the interview data reveals that these couples had active and dynamic negotiations about care responsibilities. There were a lot of external incidences described and families renegotiated – but their roles still came up as being their 'only choice'. Two frames appear dominant in the discussion of the interviews: i) choice and ii) pressure (home and work). Although they did not seem to articulate how and where the pressure is coming from.

There is a need to move from individualised situations to a social model.

There is often an illusion about choice in work-family policy debates.

We might have family friendly policies but women and men are not asking for time off because it will potentially damage their careers. Having more informal flexibility may be better?

The role of trade unions in addressing pregnancy discrimination

This issues needs to be examined and addressed from a Europe wide lens. Trade unions could take a more proactive role in tackling pregnancy discrimination, including devising policies to promote anti-discriminatory practice, and in mediation.

This raises issues about TU membership trends – which are falling in many sectors - and what to do in non-unionised workplaces.

Summary of key points from breakout sessions

1. Key WLB issues for men and women with jobs which are low paid or precarious and the kinds of policies that employers and the government might implement to improve matters:

- Low pay. The minimum wage should be increased – this may provide more choice (i.e. in terms of child care) for those on low wages.
- Contractual rights (e.g. zero hours contracts) should be strengthened to improve precarious jobs.
- Ensure all women are entitled to maternity leave by removing the minimum qualifying period of employment.
- More extensive and effective advice and information in relation to employment and benefits rights should be provided to all employees. (Although another problem may be the confidence to ask and assert these rights.)
- Support for working grandparents who may provide childcare to grandchildren should be provided.
- The availability, affordability, flexibility and quality of childcare. In particular, there is limited childcare for those working unsociable hours e.g. nurses, shift workers. There are no 24 hour childcare facilities available and there is little support for eldercare. Facilities remain expensive.
- There is an expectation for those working in care sector organisations to atypical hours but there is very little support for these workers (e.g. childcare). This has a disproportionate gender impact given most employees working atypical hours in the care sector are female.
- There should be training for line managers to deal with people on multiple contract types.
- Paternity leave is low paid so many employees cannot afford to take this up.
- ‘Shared parenting’ is dictated/affected by employer’s policies. This perpetuates the gendered division of labour. There is a need for male role models (e.g. Tony Blair taking paternity leave) in order to promote paternity leave and encourage men to take this up.

2. Reforms that are needed to eradicate pregnancy discrimination:

- Discussion of pregnancy/maternity issues is usually centred on professional/highly skilled groups – this should be addressed.

- Tribunal fees for women claiming for pregnancy discrimination are blocking access to justice – they should be abolished.
- The number of voluntary advice agencies is decreasing so advice for employees who encounter pregnancy discrimination is being diluted, and where the government is providing a replacement service they tend to be generic services which are referral agencies. This needs to be addressed.
- Awareness of pregnancy discrimination should be raised –public discourse should be changed from blame on employees/employers to identifying creative solutions.
- Ensure SME's know they can claim statutory maternity pay from government.
- Training for line managers may be necessary to facilitate understanding of discrimination including the use of case studies to help understanding.
- There should be more support for SME's when staff are pregnant & go on maternity leave, from Government & through networks e.g. through the Federation of Small Business for example.
- Funding Bodies, who offer short term contracts (e.g. for researchers at university) provide little or no support and do not take on any of the financial burden associated with pregnancy. It is down to the institution (university) to pay for maternity leave & backfill the post. Greater financial support from funding bodies is needed.
- When a pregnant woman cannot continue in her role and there are no suitable alternative jobs, the Government should bear the cost of paying her salary until her maternity begins. Currently, the employee is only protected when she is off work for a pregnancy-related illness in the 4 weeks before the baby is due. In such cases, maternity leave and Statutory Maternity Pay will start automatically regardless of what has been previously agreed.
- A broader solution is for SME's to establish a pool of labour for them to draw on to help cover maternity leave.
- Naming and shaming of repeat offending organizations where cases have been through the legal process and upheld.

3. What kind of workplace policies and innovations might be useful to challenge the 'long hours culture' where it exists?

- A combination of changing work patterns (e.g. flexible work, job redesign), and interventions aimed at changing workplace culture and individual behaviour.
- A collectivist approach is needed in order to change workplace culture and individual behaviour. This may involve: consultation with staff and managers to identify the reasons for working long hours, generating solutions to tackle the underlying issues, training to improve time management and delegation, commitment for change from the very top of the organization including visibly changing top management behaviour as well as other managers leading by example and 'go home on time' days to raise awareness.

4. Other issues

- The concept of 'work-life balance': should this be changed to 'life-work balance': one that prioritizes opportunities for self-realization outside of work? Despite its imperfections, work-life balance serves some useful purposes. It seems to be widely understood and has been productively taken up by the Trades Union Congress in ways that resonate with many employees' experiences and requirements.
- The value of caring needs to be elevated. This will require cultural and structural changes and we should consider how research can be channelled into campaigns supporting this project. This would also involve encouraging men to take more responsibility for caring in personal life and challenging gender stereotypes and anxieties about men in caring professions. Whilst we should encourage more females to enter into male dominated industry, management and science and technology, just as much if not more needs to be done to encourage more males to become professional carers.
- The responsibility for decisions around flexibility of working hours and time-off should not be individualized i.e. left to the discretion of individual (middle) managers who themselves need organizational support in the form of robust and fair policies to guide decision-making and negotiation. These policies would need to be integral to the operation of organizations and be jointly agreed by them employers and employees/trade unions. This would involve collective agreement/ownership of the process whereby knowledge of work-life balance arrangements are properly disseminated and part of organizational consciousness.
- There is a need to address non-normative and non-heteronormative life courses. The work-life balance needs to be engaged with a whole range of needs relating to cultural/ethnic diversity as well as needs of non-married/single individual and LGB&T people regardless of relational status/circumstances
- More needs to be done to incentivise fathers to take up flexible working in order to encourage them to take more responsibility for childcare (and housework). Father involvement in childcare has increased in the UK but fathers are still not as involved compared to fathers in other countries (e.g. Sweden). The 'organisation' of childcare, which is separate from physical care and play, is still mainly done by women.
- There is a social pressure about what parenting should be (i.e. mainly taken on by the woman; 'gendered moral rationalities') – there needs to be a public debate about childcare and who should take responsibility.

Conclusions

Recommendations for research

Research on work-life in/balance and work preferences needs to be developed in the following directions:

- To consider financial/insecurity issues for this influences men and women's work schedules, how these schedules are experienced, and whether or not it is economically feasible to reduce work hours, or to aspire to shorter working hours.

- To foreground class inequalities rather than focusing on averages; to explore other axis of inequalities e.g. the particular situation of migrants
- Qualitative research, including case studies of organizational and urban neighbourhoods, to deepen the understanding of trends, patterns and processes which are revealed by surveys
- Analysis of new forms of precarious contracts and irregular work schedules, such as zero hour contracts in the UK
- The working conditions of the social care workforce (childcare, eldercare services)
- Men's under-representation in care work (paid and unpaid) – what are the drivers' of change to reduce this gender segregation?
- International comparisons of policy frameworks: the extent to which these are correlated with different working-time practices and gender differences; and the relationship between the prevailing national gender role ideologies/social attitudes and work-life balance policy frameworks
- Discourses and narratives around 'choice' to take on care – or to care dodge – in different settings (different job types, firm type, national settings)
- The role of trade unions and other social actors in supporting the design and implementation of WLB policies in organisations; including tackling pregnancy discrimination

Recommendations and implications for policy

- The WLB choices open to the low paid would be improved by an increase in the minimum wage rate and improvements in contractual rights (e.g. protection against zero hours contracts, removal of minimum qualifying periods for employment protection, including for maternity leave).
- More effective advice and information in relation to employment and benefit rights is needed for all workers, and for employers, including targeted services for SMEs.
- Tribunal fees for women claiming for pregnancy discrimination are blocking access to justice – they should be abolished.
- When a pregnant woman cannot continue in her role and there are no suitable alternative jobs, the Government should bear the cost of paying her salary until her maternity begins.
- Childcare services remain under-developed and expensive in the UK compared to other countries, such as France. Good quality and affordable childcare is a fundamental platform for improving WLB.
- Work-family policy provision for children needs to be developed beyond a focus on pre-school children to address the needs of older school-age children; and to recognise the contribution made by grandparents
- Policies to enable workers to combine employment with eldercare responsibilities remain limited, notwithstanding the RTR legislation
- Line managers play a pivotal role in enabling or blocking the widespread take-up of WLB options at the workplace. Training and sensible incentives are necessary to equip line managers to support this take-up.

- If fathers are to become more involved then it is important to make it more affordable for men to take care-related leave by raising the financial support they receive when they take paternity leave or parental leave.
- Information campaigns, and examples set by role models, are important for supporting attitudinal shifts concerning what is appropriate and feasible, for example in relation to getting fathers more directly involved in looking after their children, using parental leave and so forth.
- In order to tackle the 'long hours culture' a combination of measures is needed – innovations in work patterns and working time options (e.g. flexible work, job redesign), and interventions aimed at changing workplace culture and individual behaviour through social dialogue at the workplace. The latter might include: consultation with staff and managers to identify the reasons for working long hours and generate solutions to tackle the underlying issues; training to improve time management and delegation, demonstrable commitment for change from the very top of the organization including visibly changing top management behaviour and managers at all organizational levels leading by example and awareness raising activities such as 'go home on time' days.

Appendix – notes from breakout sessions

Table 1: What reforms are needed to eradicate pregnancy-related discrimination?

Although legislation has been in force for many years, and legally there is zero tolerance of pregnancy discrimination, it is increasing.

Issues/Problems identified

- Class – discussion of pregnancy/maternity issues are usually centred on professional/highly skilled groups.
- One burden which is often raised is the cost of staff re-training – this assumes trained staff are required. This argument is also used as a justification for trying to retain talented/trained women in the work place but is not applicable to low skilled jobs like cleaning, where very little skill is required to do the work to the required standard.
- SME's – costs of maternity leave and the impact on small business – there is a need to ensure talented women return to work rather than be seen as a burden on business. This is hard to demonstrate if there is a large surplus of staff.
- SME's – in interviewing & recruitment practices, there is a tendency to not employ women of childbearing age. Businesses often find it difficult to balance the needs of business with the rights of staff.
- SME's have complained that women often choose to work in larger organisations because they provide more support.
- SME's can have and are reported to have more flexibility in working patterns which tend to be more informal and reactive to the needs of staff. However, many SME's aren't identifying these practices as flexible working, which indicates flexible working needs to be better explained to SME's.
- Funding Bodies, who offer short term contracts (e.g. for researchers) insist on workers being treated fairly but provide no support to put such practices in place, and they do not take on any of the financial burden associated with pregnancy. It is up to the institution (university) to pay for maternity leave & backfill the post – it is a big issue as financial support is needed.

Tackling Discrimination

- Tribunal fees are blocking access to justice.
- The Government are enablers – employers implement. But the problems which were resolved through Employment Tribunals are no longer happening– the lower paid workers are now disenfranchised.
- The Government have provided legislation banning discrimination but they have also take away that protection – by introducing tribunal fees & making it more difficult for employees to assert their rights.

- Voluntary advice agencies are decreasing so advice for individuals is being diluted and where the government is providing a replacement service they tend to be generic services which are referral agencies.

Suggestions for Reform

- Ensure awareness of discrimination is raised. Public discourse should be changed from blame on employees/employers to identifying creative solutions.

Small, Medium Employers

- Ensure SME's know they can claim statutory maternity pay from government.
- There should be more support for SME's when staff are pregnant & go on maternity leave, from Government & through networks e.g. through the Federation of Small Business for example;
- When a pregnant woman cannot continue in her role and there are no suitable alternative jobs, the Government should bear the cost of paying her salary until her maternity begins.
- A broader solution is for SME's to establish a pool of labour for them to draw on to help cover maternity leave.
- The 2005 EOC report into pregnancy/maternity included recommendations for Government funding for SME's. It would be interesting to look into what was suggested.

Access to Justice

- Stop discrimination in the first instance – so there is no requirement to use formal processes in order to resolve problems.
- The EHRC's current project into pregnancy/maternity will look at the problems and will address them – toolkits will be developed to address issues.
- Abolish Tribunal fees.

Table 2

1. What are the key WLB issues for men and women with jobs which are low paid or precarious? What kind of policies might employers and the government implement to improve matters?

- Increase the minimum wage (and pay generally) which may provide some more choice in terms of child care etc.
- Strengthen contractual rights to improve precarious jobs
- Ensure women get maternity leave by e.g. remove the minimum qualifying period of employment.

- Provide more extensive and effective advice and information provision in relation both to employment and benefits rights (However, another problem may be confidence to ask and assert these rights.)
- Consider support for working grandparents who may provide childcare to grandchildren

2. What reforms are needed to eradicate pregnancy related discrimination?

- Increase pregnant employees' awareness of their rights and employers' awareness of legal obligations on pregnancy discrimination in order to prevent discrimination, and also increase pregnant employee's awareness of and access to the legal process where discrimination has taken place.
- Training for line managers may be necessary to facilitate understanding of discrimination including the use of case studies to help understanding.
- Naming and shaming of repeat offending organizations where cases have been through the legal process and upheld.

3. What kind of workplace policies and innovations might be useful to challenge the 'long hours culture' where it exists?

- A combination of changing work patterns (e.g. flexible work, job redesign), and interventions aimed at changing workplace culture and individual behaviour.
- In terms of the latter – a collectivist approach is needed. This may involve: consultation with staff and managers to identify the reasons for working long hours and generate solutions and solutions should tackle the underlying issues, training to improve time management and delegation, commitment for change from the very top of the organization including visibly changing top management behaviour as well as other managers leading by example and 'go home on time' days to raise awareness.

Table 3

1. What are the key WLB issues for men and women with jobs which are low paid or precarious? What kind of policies might employers and the government implement to improve matters?

- Hours of childcare are needed for unsocialable hours e.g. nurses, shift workers – there needs to be a continuity of care. There is no 24 hour childcare facilities available and there is little support for eldercare.
- In the former communist states, the model of childcare was different – quality of childcare, location of childcare and out of school childcare in holidays etc ????
- Work-life balance for those without children – flexible working
- Precarious workers – zero hours – quality of life
- 'Dodging childcare' – the expectation of mothering has changed

- Guilt of mothers
- Constant shifts in gendered roles – ‘perceived choice for parents’
- Affordability or paternity leave can be an issue
- ‘Shared parenting’ is dictated/affected by employer’s policies. This perpetuates the gendered division of labour. Need for role models e.g. Tony Blair’s paternity leave – it is important to take annual leave.

2. What reforms are needed to eradicate pregnancy related discrimination?

- Discretionary use of workplace policy
- Indirect discretion – ‘well meaning’ but unsupportive manager – ‘kind’ – but actually reduces opportunities.
- Limited experience and assumption about ‘returners’
- The business case: ‘ideal worker’ – unhelpful. Assumptions about women of child-bearing age

3. Challenging the long hours culture

- Right to request flexible work and encourage men to take it – show employers that it’s not a problem!
- Increase awareness – through training for line managers.
- Life trajectories – role models.
- Workplace cultures can be very influential.
- Management setting a tone
- Global labour market pressures for 24 hour workplace
- Flexibility – managing issues locally
- Deadlines imposed – being able to manage your own time
- Are long hours imposed by employers or by self? Families – individual control is not always a matter of strategy. WTR (?) – little ‘choice’
- Workers indispensable – Government should be more sensitive about career development and training and education

4. Other issues?

- Eldercare is an important issue. In Spain – it is a major issue. Legislation – ‘sandwich generation’ (?) – no or little provision.

Table 4: What are the key WLB issues for men and women with jobs which are low paid or precarious?

The answer to many of these questions are related to socio-economic structure and culture.

- Can the solutions be different according to different countries?

- Many manual and non-manual workers don't have the choice ... though it may be important to challenge this particular frame.
 - Do long hours mean increased productivity?
 - Sweden (experiment)
 - Test productivity of workers working 6 and 8 hours.
 - They will test the implications for WLB as well as work productivity
 - Work on the hours and the mentality
 - WLB measures are not really costly
 - They require organisation
 - Defining boundaries between different domains
- The new normal → long hours → what happens when an individual pushes back -role of critical actors
- Organisational culture
 - Tension between control and trust
 - Long working hours linked to assumptions about performance
- Research carried out in Seville: a company called to enquire why workers do not take advantage of WLB measures
 - Workers were aware of measures but did not take advantage of them because the line manager was an obstacle.
 - Line manager a key actors
 - Defined by gender
 - Care dodging
 - Toxic models of femininity and masculinity - intensive mothering and hegemonic masculinity
- Need more meaningful and detailed impact assessment for different groups of workers
 - Shift workers
 - Changing shift that is down to employer discretion
 - Shifts are a real problem in terms of WLB
 - On call work
 - Not just zero hours.
 - Very complicated to reconcile work and family life if you need to organise your private life
 - Knowledge workers
 - Impact of e-mail on wellbeing and WLB, mental health etc.
- Economic rationalities
- Pregnancy discrimination
 - Difference between rights and then all the hurdles
 - Austerity and crisis do they justify retrenching equality rights?
 - Distinction between pregnancy protection and parental leave
 - Impact on low skilled workers
 - Gender impact assessment
 - Attached to the value placed on pregnancy, motherhood etc.

Table 5

- Underemployment is part of work-life balance
 - Link to employers changing contracts
 - Individualisation of working conditions – harder for working classes
 - Class and confidence to take action and sources of support.

- Gender imbalance. Care sector organisations with little support/policies. There is an expectation of atypical hours working. Travel between workplaces.
- Rhetoric versus reality: depends on context factors. There is a lack of awareness by individuals of their rights. Needs publicising – who and how to raise awareness? Innovative routes?
- Legislative changes and procedures (fee increase). Disproportionately disadvantage women.
- Are sector differences identified in research? Changing sectors – public becoming more like private sector organisations. Approaches to policy – chasing awards.
- Budget cuts in recession – training for line managers to deal with people on multiple contract types.
- How to challenge the long hours culture?
 - Care sector/services (retail)
 - WTR – breaks etc
 - Links to stress/ ill-health – business case
- Work-life balance is conflated with health and well-being – seen as a personal responsibility.
- How to join up the work of different organisations? Can this be done or will it water down the messages?
- Long hours – link to H & S leg (more enshrined?)
- Agenda – gender equality; H& S; wellbeing of the child; social sustainability; business case (productivity)
- Right to request flexible working – not based just on business feasibility but take in need of employee and even the children

Table 6

1. The group debated whether we should talk about the life-work balance: one that prioritizes opportunities for self-realization outside of work. However, despite its imperfections, work-life balance serves some useful purposes. It seems to be widely understood and has been productively taken up by the TUC in ways that resonate with many employees' experiences and requirements.
2. The value of caring needs to be elevated. This will require cultural and structural changes and we should consider how research can be channelled into campaigns supporting this project. This would also involve encouraging men to take more responsibility for caring in personal life and challenging gender stereotypes and anxieties

about men in caring professions. Whilst we should encourage more females to enter into male dominated industry, management and science and technology, just as much if not more needs to be done to encourage more males to become professional carers.

3. The nature of employment contracts especially in times of recession and austerity militates against the bargaining position of many employees. There needs to be a strengthening of employment rights and emphasis on preventing employee-employer conflict and avoiding litigation (but legal process need to remain in place as the real last resort).
4. The responsibility for decisions around flexibility of working hours and time-off etc should not be individualized i.e. left to the discretion of individual (middle) managers who themselves need organizational support in the form of robust and fair policies to guide decision-making and negotiation. These policies would need to be integral to the operation of organizations and be jointly agreed by them employers and employees/trade unions. This would involve collective agreement/ownership of the process whereby knowledge of work-life balance arrangements are properly disseminated and part of organizational consciousness.
5. Good practice at home and abroad could be extended to sectors where work-life balance arrangements are very tenuous if barely existent. For instance, in Poland, the state and *some* employers co-fund childcare. There could be a tripartite funding arrangement between employees, employers and Government.

There is a need to address non-normative and non-heteronormative life courses. The work-life balance needs to be engaged with a whole range of needs relating to cultural/ethnic diversity as well as needs of non-married/single individual and LGB&T people regardless of relational status/circumstances. It would also be instructive to think about what we can learn from queer individuals pursuing non-chrononormative lives and interests – outside of ‘normal’ working hours/temporalities.

Table 7: Other issues and policy ideas

- More needs to be done to incentivise fathers to take up flexible working in order to encourage them to take more responsibility for childcare (and housework). Flexible working continues to be mainly taken up by women – particularly in the form of part-time work, which reduces women’s earnings and hinders progression in the labour market given part-time jobs are more concentrated than full-time jobs into lower skilled, lower paid sectors of the labour market.
- It is important to address the gender pay gap. Women tend to earn less than men, which perpetuates the financial logic for them to reduce work hours or exit the labour market.
- We need to address the availability, affordability, flexibility and quality of childcare. Childcare needs to be subsidised. Moreover, more needs to be done to address the low pay and low qualification levels of childcare workers in the UK, which leads to high

turnover and impacts on the quality of childcare provision. The same applies to eldercare.

- Child poverty in the UK (and in Europe) needs to be addressed. In the UK, the fiscal consolidation measures implemented by the Coalition government have increased the incidence of child poverty (according to the IFS).
- Father involvement in childcare – although this has increased in the UK, fathers are not as involved in childcare compared to fathers in other countries (e.g. Sweden). Furthermore, men continue to do the more ‘interesting’ childcare tasks e.g. playing – rather than the mundane activities that mothers do. Fathers do childcare tasks that give them ‘social credit’ (i.e. so they can be seen/recognised as involved by wider society). Also the organisation of care, which is separate from physical care, is still mainly done by women. Diane Perrons argues that women do far more ‘organisational care’ than men.
- However, often women set standards of childcare/housework that men will never reach or they ‘gatekeep’ tasks (i.e. are reluctant to relinquish control).
- It is important to think about the life cycle of ‘work-life balance’ – as individual lives progress, they have to engage in different ways of working and this varies at different stages of their lives (e.g. at university, in the workplace....)
- There is a need to have more of a social approach to childcare. The current approach for childcare provision is based around a nuclear family model – based on two parents bringing up their children. We need more community based childcare – that doesn’t just involve long hours in a crèche.
- More working-class women have links to extended childcare whereas more middle-class women don’t – they are more likely to move away from where they grew up
- There is a social pressure about what parenting should be (i.e. mainly taken on by the woman; ‘gendered moral rationalities’) – there needs to be a public debate about childcare and who should take responsibility.
- The concept of ‘work-life balance’ is problematic. This should be referred to as ‘life-work balance’ because ‘life’ should be the dominant issue with work fitting around this. However, this would require a change in attitudes. The meaning of the concept also varies by class. It may be more useful to talk about ‘quality of life’ but the concept of ‘work-life balance’ is so embedded in our culture, this would be difficult to change.

List of resources available on the display table:

Eurofound (2012) *Trends in Job Quality in Europe*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef1228.htm>

Eurofound (2012): *Fifth European Working Conditions Survey – Overview Report*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef1182.htm>

Eurofound (2012): *Third European Quality of Life Survey – Quality of Life in Europe: Impacts of the crisis*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef1264.htm>

Eurofound (2012): *Working time and work-life balance in a life course perspective*, Eurofound, Dublin: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef1273.htm>

Eurofound (2013): *Quality of employment conditions and employment relations in Europe*, Eurofound, Dublin: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef1367.htm>

Eurofound (2013): *Women, men and working conditions in Europe*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef1349.htm>

Eurofound (2013): *Third European Company Survey: First Findings*, Eurofound, Dublin: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef1386.htm>

Eurofound (2013): *Third European Quality of Life Survey – Quality of society and public services*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg: <http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCUQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.eurofound.europa.eu%2Fpubdocs%2F2013%2F61%2Fen%2F1%2FEF1361EN.pdf&ei=7qjgU7q3HM7H7AbJu4HICg&usg=AFQjCNEMBuae2teTT8LucVnemtNIOskOMw>

Eurofound (2013): *Third European Quality of Life Survey – Quality of Life in Europe: Trends 2003-2012*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg:

Eurofound (2013): *Quality of Employment Conditions and Employment Relations in Europe*, Eurofound: Dublin: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef1367.htm>

Eurofound (2013): *Third European Quality of Life Survey – Quality of Life in Europe: Social Inequalities*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef1362.htm>

Fagan, C., Norman, H. (2012): *Trends and social divisions in maternal employment patterns following maternity leave in the UK*, International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy Vol. 32 No. 9/10, pp. 544-560: <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?issn=0144-333X&volume=32&issue=9&articleid=17052996&show=abstract>

Fagan, C. and Norman, H. (2013) 'Men and gender equality: tackling gender equality in family roles and in social care jobs' in F. Bettio, J. Plantenga and M. Smith (Eds) *Gender and the European Labour Market*, Routledge: Oxon, UK
<http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415664332/>

Fagan, C. Lyolette, M. Smith, A. Saldana-Tejeda (2012) 'The influence of working time arrangements on work-life integration or 'balance': a review of the international evidence',

International Labour Office: Geneva:

http://www.ilo.org/travail/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_187306/lang--en/index.htm

Fagan, C., Norman, H., Smith, M., and González Menéndez, M. (2014): In search of good quality part-time employment: an international review, International Labour Office: Geneva:

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Lewis, S., Stumbiz, B., Miles, L., Rouse, J. (2014): *Maternity Protection in SMEs: An International Review – Executive Summary*. Full review to be published by the International Labour Organisation in 2014: <http://www.ilo.org/global/lang--en/index.htm>

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Norman, H., Elliot, M., Fagan, C. (2013): *Which fathers are the most involved in taking care of their toddlers in the UK? An investigation of the predictors of paternal involvement*, Community, Work & Family, 17:2, 163-180: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13668803.2013.862361>

Book flyers:

Gambaro, L., Stewart, K., Waldfogel, J. (2014): *An Equal Start? Providing quality early education and care for disadvantaged children*, Policy Press: Bristol: <http://www.policypress.co.uk/display.asp?ISB=9781447310518&>

Hobson, B. (ed): *Worklife Balance: The agency and capabilities gap*, Oxford University Press: Oxford: <http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/product/9780199681136.do>

Perrons, D., Fagan, C., McDowell, L., Ray, K., Ward, K. (2006): *Gender Divisions and Working time in the New Economy*, Edward Elgar: Cheltenham: http://www.e-elgar.co.uk/bookentry_main.lasso?id=3591