



THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY  
AN tÚDARÁS COMHIONANNAIS

# Equality News

Summer 2011



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The contributions to Equality News are welcome and appreciated. The opinions of the contributors do not necessarily reflect the position of the Equality Authority. We welcome your feedback on any article in Equality News.

## 1. Successful Tenancy Age Discrimination case for 73 year old 'returned emigrant' welcomed by Equality Authority.

The Equality Authority welcomes the successful outcome of an Equal Status Act case on the provision of housing for an older man published today. The Equality Authority represented the claimant Mr Mc Greal who was a tenant of Cluid Housing, Tuam, who successfully proved he was discriminated on the grounds of his age when they terminated his tenancy. The Equality Officer awarded the maximum compensation allowed for under the Equal Status Acts of 6349 euros 'in recognition of the seriousness of the subject matter of the complaint'.

Mr Mc Greal (74) had raised concerns about fire safety, security and resident committee accounts during his time in St Jarleth's from 2004 to 2009 and the subsequent discourse ended with the Cluid seeking to evict Mr Mc Greal.

'The Equality Authority welcomes this important decision on the age ground, which is the culmination of six years of interaction between the two parties. It is important in that it deals with the difficulties that can be experienced by older people who need to access housing and shelter' said Renee Dempsey, Chief Executive Officer. It is a timely reminder of the challenges that can face the generation Mr Mc Greal comes from, who spent a long period of his life in London, and then returned to Tuam as part of the "Safe Home" scheme'.

"A crucial consideration was the testimony of expert witness Dr Padraic Kenna (NUIG) who 'had never in his entire career seen an elderly tenant, over 70 years of age, being pursued for ejection without any investigative procedure whatsoever or without any normal cause'. Dr Kenna also noted that "The impact of an eviction on a man of the complainant's age would be extremely severe in comparison with a younger person", agreed Ms Dempsey.

'We note the Equality Tribunal properly considered the imbalance of power between landlord and tenant in this matter, and affirmed the concern of the Equality Authority at the absence of 'some sort of investigative procedure, which gives the tenant the opportunity to defend his position'. We also welcome the consideration by the Equality Officer of a witness statement to the effect that 'a younger man like himself would not have been so badly treated by the respondent', concluded Ms Dempsey.

The Equality Officer found that the respondent did discriminate against the complainant on the grounds of age, in terms of their decision to issue him with a notice to quit and in terms on their ongoing treatment of him in this matter. She further ordered that Cluid 'conduct a review of its policies and procedures to ensure that they are in compliance with the Equal Status Acts 2000-2008'.

The full text of the decision is available on [www.equalitytribunal.ie](http://www.equalitytribunal.ie) ref: DEC-S2011-004. file ref: ES/2009/0090 and ES/2010/0032

## 2. Equality Authority welcomes Gender Recognition Report and CSO Equality Survey Results

### CSO Survey on Equality

This nationally representative survey examines the reported experience of discrimination of people of the age of 18 years and over. It finds that 12% of people felt they had experienced discrimination in the previous two years. This was the same rate of discrimination as in the last such survey carried out in 2004.

The survey found that in the fourth quarter of 2010:-

- 12 % of those aged 18 years or over - some 400,000 people in the population - felt they had experienced discrimination in the 2 year period prior to the survey.
- 6% of adults (18+) had experienced work related discrimination and 7% had experienced discrimination in accessing services ( some people had experienced both)
- The highest rates of discrimination were reported by people from non-White ethnic backgrounds (29%) unemployed people (22%) non-Irish nationals (20%) and people who were not Catholic (18%).
- Looking across the nine grounds of the equality legislation - race and age were the most widely reported grounds for discrimination - with Race/Skin Colour/Ethnic Group/Nationality cited by 22% of those experiencing discrimination and age cited by 19%

Commenting on the CSO findings Renée Dempsey, CEO of the Equality Authority, said that "Discrimination remains an enormous challenge to Irish society. We need to strengthen our commitment to equality in Ireland as a key element of our strategy for economic recovery."

The survey also examined people's awareness of their rights under equality legislation. It found that:-

- Just 30% had a good understanding of their rights under equality legislation - though this was up from 28% in 2004
- People in employment - at 36% - were more likely to have a good understanding of their rights than other adults
- However younger people, people with disabilities, non-Irish nationals, people from non-White ethnic backgrounds and people with less than Leaving Certificate level education were all considerably less likely to understand their rights than others.
- People with a greater awareness of their rights were more likely to take action when they experienced discrimination.

Renée Dempsey highlighted the low levels of awareness to their rights of vulnerable groups: "It remains the case that those most at risk of discrimination are least likely to know their rights. This survey shows that knowing your rights makes a real difference and addressing this issue remains a particular challenge to the Equality Authority arising from this survey"

## **Report on Gender Recognition Advisory Group**

"The Equality Authority also welcomes the publication of the Report of the Gender Recognition Advisory Group by Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton TD today. The publication of this important Report, which proposes legislative recognition and provides proper legal status for transgendered people, is a very progressive step forward" added Ms Dempsey.

The Equality Authority made a written submission to the Reporting Group and also made an oral presentation supporting gender recognition. The Report outlines many progressive initiatives which will greatly improve the quality of life for transgendered people in Ireland.

"The Equality Authority welcomes the commitment by the Minister to progress legislation within a year, and her 'open door' commitment to hear views on the final content of such long awaited legislative change. While acknowledging the potential Constitutional dilemma that guided some of the proposals, the Equality Authority is concerned about the proposals that may necessitate the compulsory termination of a valid marriage or civil partnership. These issues are important and complex and warrant further discussion and thought to prevent any interference in the human rights of people involved in this process" added Ms Dempsey.

"The Equality Authority is also open to legislative changes which will ensure protections for people who begin the proposed two year process of gender change, that their transitional circumstances and status will be fully protected from discriminatory treatment or harassment under Irish equality legislation" concluded Ms Dempsey.

The full text of the Equality Authority's submission to the Gender Recognition Advisory Group is available on [www.equality.ie](http://www.equality.ie). Link: <http://www.equality.ie/index.asp?locID=267&docID=943>

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## **3. Appointment to Head of Legal Services**

Brian Merriman has been appointed Head of Legal Services at the Equality Authority. The appointment is in addition to his responsibilities as Head of Communications.

## 4. Equality Authority Welcomes 'ground breaking' decision awarding 35,000 euros to a Transsexual Worker

The Equality Authority welcomed a ground breaking decision by the Equality Tribunal for a transsexual worker, represented by the Equality Authority, in a gender and disability case. Louise Hannon was awarded in excess of 35,000 euros for the discrimination endured. "Transsexual people are born into a society which is not structured to cater for their own identity. The journey undertaken by transsexual people to recognise their own identity, as being different from their assigned identity, involves a process and decision making that is both courageous and beyond the capacity of many to fully appreciate" said Chairperson Angela Kerins.

"With the diagnostic progress made in recent decades to recognise this disorder, it is fair and essential that society assists transsexual people to make this journey by removing as many obstacles for discrimination as possible. I am pleased the Employment Equality Acts have proven to be robust in the defence of transsexual rights in the workplace. The Equality Authority has already made a submission to the transgender recognition group and looks forward to further legislative progress for this important minority, still invisible in many aspects of Irish life, with the publication of their Report" concluded Ms Kerins.

The complainant was diagnosed with Gender Identity disorder and is a male to female transsexual. The complainant had been employed by the respondent as a Business Development Manager from January 2007 having previously worked with the company in a self employed capacity for approximately five years. Ms Hannon claimed that since she had informed her employer of her true identity and her need to live in this identity her work conditions were made so intolerable that she was ultimately constructively dismissed as a result of her transition from male to female.

The Equality Officer stated that transsexualism is a recognised medical condition which is treated by a combination of hormone therapy, surgery (in some cases) and "real life experience". The Equality Officer went on to state that to gain "real life experience the person must be able to live their life continuously in the other sex without the need to revert to the birth sex". This applied to the work place and that there is an obligation on employers to accommodate such "real life experience" she added.

The Equality Officer found that the plan formulated by the company to allow the transition from male to female was clearly a unilateral approach which had not been fully explored with the complainant. The Equality Officer was satisfied that requesting Ms Hannon to switch between a male/female identity whenever the respondent felt the need for it constituted direct discrimination on the gender and disability grounds. The Equality Officer was not satisfied that the company had a genuine business need for the complainant to work from home. She found that had Ms Hannon remained in her male identity she would not have been requested to work from home. She concluded that the request to work from home was discriminatory on both the gender and disability grounds.

The Equality Officer found that the Respondent had little if any understanding that the gender transition process was a form of treatment relevant to the complainant's condition. She was satisfied that an employer has a duty to obtain enough knowledge about an employee's disclosed disability to ensure that their actions do not discriminate against a person whose disability may require the person to behave or act in a certain way. While the Equality Officer found the complainant did not require reasonable accommodation per se, she did require a workplace that recognised her right to dress and be identified as a female. The Equality Officer pointed out that the difficulties concerning the complainants gender lay entirely with the respondent and that it was apparent that the company presumed that there would be negative consequences because of the complainant's female identity.

The Equality Officer found that the complainant had suffered discriminatory treatment on the grounds of gender and disability. The Equality Officer found that Ms Hannon received no relevant support from the company and was isolated in her home from late April 2007. She found that the respondent's approach amounted to discriminatory dismissal on the gender and disability grounds. The issue of victimisation was raised in relation to ex-gratia payments but this was not upheld. The Equality Officer awarded redress in the sum of €35,422.71. She also ordered the company to pay the complainant interest at the courts rate on the award.

## Background:

### **Louise Hannon v First Direct Logistics Ltd. Decision No. DEC-E2011-066 Ground: Gender and Disability**

When Ms Hannon initially revealed her true identity to the company in October 2006 she intended to resign her position to work in an open environment but was persuaded to remain on. In December 2006 the complainant sought to clarify when she could begin to change over to her female identity at work and was asked to wait a couple of months to allow a new staff member to settle in.

Ms Hannon had an appointment to change her name by deed poll on 5th March 2007 and arrived in the office the following day in her true gender using her female identity. She requested that her email be changed over to her new name. Ms Hannon was told that she must complete her sales over the phone in her male identity and that the Operations Manager would meet any clients personally should the need arise and that she may have to work using her male identity until Christmas 2007. Later that month the Operations Manager approached Ms Hannon and expressed concerns about her productivity. The complainant claims she was asked to revert to her male identity for another three month period. The Director of the company subsequently agreed that she could return to the office dressed as a woman but asked that she change into her male identity when seeing clients. Ms Hannon found this request very difficult to comply with and she dealt with clients over the phone instead although she did meet with client companies in her male identity on two occasions. The complainant also claims that she was asked not to use the female toilets.

In April 2007 the Complainant was asked if she would move to the new office where she could work in her female identity but was asked if she could work from home until such time as the office was set up. The complainant agreed as she understood this to be a brief interim period of one month.

The complainant found it very difficult to work from home as her leads dried up when she was out of the office environment. However, despite requests the complainant was not allowed to return to the office and was informed that a new person had started and there was no room for her. On 19th July 2007 the Director contacted her to inform her that he was not happy with her work and that she needed to produce new clients in the next weeks if she wanted to keep her job. Ms Hannon subsequently met with the Director and requested that she be allowed to return to the office but her request was refused on the basis that her presence caused a bad atmosphere. The complainant decided that she had no alternative but to leave her employment at the end of July 2007.

In response to Ms Hannon's complaint First Direct Logistics Ltd claimed that they had provided the necessary supports to her to enable her pursue her gender transition.



The respondent argued that they had met with the complainant and formulated a plan to deal with the transition. The plan included:

- At an agreed time the respondents staff would be informed of the complainants gender identity disorder
- The complainant would continue to contact current clients as her male identity and generate new clients in her new identity.
- The complainant would continue to fulfil her transport duties whilst she remained with her male name.
- At an agreed time the complainant would stop wearing male clothing.

The respondent claimed that Ms Hannon's productivity reduced dramatically in early 2007. The company submitted that despite their efforts to accommodate the complainant she was depressed and unhappy and failed to make phone calls to generate new business. The company claimed that in April 2007 it decided that no further sales work would take place in its old premises and that this function would be moved to a dedicated premises upon their completion. The respondent accepted that it had asked the complainant to work from home which she had agreed to do and it had increased her wages as a gesture of good will. The respondent accepted that the complainant was the only employee asked to work from home but that this was because she was the only employee working in this area. The respondent claimed that the complainant's productivity continued to deteriorate and that she subsequently secured alternative employment at the end of July 2007.

The Equality Officer stated that it was well established in law that the gender ground protects transgender persons from sex discrimination and she made reference to the European Court of Justice approach in *P v S and Cornwall County Council* (Case C-13/9). The Equality Officer also noted that it was accepted by the parties that the complainant who had been diagnosed with gender identity disorder had a disability and that the company was on notice of this fact.



## 5. Tackling Discrimination

by Louise Hannon



When I was kindly asked to write this article, I had fairly much in my mind what the content was going to be immediately. However, something happened yesterday which made me rethink it slightly.

The first thing I need to say is that the help and kindness of those working within the Equality Authority was a great strength to me, during the period from taking the case initially and the final conclusion. Having to revisit the stress of events on the days of the Equality Tribunal was not an easy thing to have to do... Bringing it all back for the benefit of the Equality Officer made me briefly wish I had never taken the case, but once I knew it was finished I was really fine.

I suppose we all would feel much like that but my anger at having been let down by the company, and the people I had trusted to treat me fairly, and who had always done so up to the point of my transition, was mainly what kept me going through the three to four years that the whole process took. I had got on very well with the two directors of the company, but that all changed once I walked into the office fully as Louise Hannon. I really felt let down and when the manager stated the rules under which I would have to work as a *fait accompli*, it felt that all I had explained to the company and the discussions I had gone through with them had been for nothing.

I suppose what drove me on to go public with the case decision also was the hope that employers would start to take seriously the situation of their transgendered employees, and to have a less cavalier attitude to their transition procedures. The same statement should also apply to the treatment of other minority groups. Putting in place a protocol is a necessary piece of work that any small to medium size companies in Ireland could seriously look at with a view to copper fastening a sound inclusion policy and so protect themselves from similar cases being taken. The multinationals have a very good track record in this regard towards their LGBT employees especially, and their bottom line results have shown great strength because of it.

I also felt by going public, that it would also encourage others who have suffered discrimination in the work place or anywhere else that there is an existing legal mechanism in place to bring successful cases to a conclusion. Only by people doing this and normalising those on the margins will our society move to a more inclusive and integrated structure. We have to look at the financial cost to society today of policing, and protecting those on the social margins. With the rising social welfare budget in particular being a major headache for the exchequer it has to make sense that these same people who are seen by many as a targets for attack and unemployment are encouraged to live productive fulfilling lives contributing to society. These people, whether coloured or transgendered or travellers etc., deserve education and the chance to better themselves and ultimately to live as they wish without interference from anyone.

However, I was reminded very quickly of the distance we have to go a few days ago. I was just booked by a gay couple to do the photography for their civil partnership. Later that day after paying their deposit I got a text to say that the parents of one of the gay men had a difficulty with me doing the work. They had no difficulty with my photographic ability but the fact that I'm a transgendered woman was the issue.

This brought it home forcibly to me that we can have all the legislation in place in the world to promote equality and protect against discrimination, but in the end it's the attitude of people that needs to change and it needs to be lead by the people at the top; our politicians. Many of our politicians unfortunately still have no idea what a good equality and human rights infrastructure would mean for Irish society either in terms of the financial benefit to the country as a whole or to the right of it's citizens to basic human dignity.

## 6. Eighth Say No To Ageism Week

### Seminar on older people's access to health and travel insurance.

The eighth annual Say No To Ageism Week was launched in the Bedford Hall, Dublin Castle on 30<sup>th</sup> May by Anne Sophie Parent of the EU's AGE platform. The event jointly organised by the Equality Authority and the Health Service Executive is funded under the EU PROGRESS Initiative and takes place nationwide from May 30<sup>th</sup> to June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2011. "It is important each year to reflect on our attitudes to ageism in Irish society and this year's campaign invites every person to say "I Say No To Ageism" said Angela Kerins, Chairperson of the Equality Authority.

"'Say No to Ageism Week' will further build on the work the HSE, the Equality Authority and the Department of Health and Children have done over the last number of years to create awareness about how older people can be discriminated against and highlight again the positive contribution that older people can make to society. This in turn will hopefully make us all aware of our attitudes to older people and how we behave towards them, ranging from everyday interaction to the way services are delivered to them. By examining our own attitudes towards older people, we can modify behaviour where required, which will result in respect and dignity for our older citizens. The week will also draw attention to the obstacles older people face when trying to access insurance services and products, particularly the issue of cost around travel and health insurance" said Paschal Moynihan, Specialist, HSE, Older Person Services.

"We are not only reminding ourselves of the negative stereotyping that surrounds ageism in society, but reaching out into sectors that provide services to older people such as health, transport and insurance. If these sectors work well then the quality of life of our older people is greatly enhanced. This week of activities is focussed on acknowledging and combating our own attitudes to ageism and leads in appropriately to World Elder Abuse Day on June 15th supported by the HSE" continued Angela Kerins.



"Insurance is a key sector. It is complicated and protected by actuarial judgements which often categorise an individual, rather than assess the potential risk of a person who reaches their 65th birthday. I welcome that the partners, in conjunction with our guests from academia, regulatory bodies and the EU, will discuss access to and the provision of health and travel insurance in the seminar that follows today's launch. Anne Sophie Parent's input on the work being done in Europe will be particularly relevant" she added.

"This year marks the eighth anniversary of Say No to Ageism Week, collaboration between the Equality Authority, the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Department of Health and Children. This year the HSE wants to remind the public again that older people have the same rights as everybody else in society. Say No to Ageism posters and leaflets are also available nationwide and HSE staff are being asked to wear special pin badges to celebrate the week" continued Paschal Moynihan. "It is also an opportunity for the HSE to raise awareness about the issue of elder abuse ahead of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on 15th June next on which day the HSE will publish its 2010 annual report on elder abuse services in Ireland" concluded Mr Moynihan.

"We hold public awareness and action-based initiatives at this time of year to stimulate and inform debate in order to draw attention to ageism in our society. There are real pressures on older people which this campaign can not address, but we can ensure that ageism does not prevent older people from accessing the goods and services they need to live a full and independent life in our society" concluded Angela Kerins.

Say No To Ageism Week has the support of the public transport sector including Luas/Veolia, Iarnród Éireann, Bus Éireann, Dublin Bus and Pobail and by older people's organisations. Posters and booklets are available to download from [www.equality.ie](http://www.equality.ie)



## 7. Press Statement by the Equality Authority to the Irish Independent

Two articles appeared in the Irish Independent on Thursday June 2nd claiming to readers that the Equality Authority had written to the GAA 'informing them that the arrangement (with the GPA) contravenes gender legislation'. This easily verifiable fact is not true. The Equality Authority has not written to the GAA on any such matter. Your correspondent subsequently found the Equality Authority 'guilty' of reaching 'a new landmark in common sense bashing' by allegedly querying the GAA over its player-welfare arrangements with the GPA. As we have not written to the GAA on this matter, the extensive article 'bashing' the EA is also presented on a deeply flawed and unfair basis. It also clearly misses the point.

Your paper admonishes us for an absence of 'best practice'. Best practice in journalism requires the establishment and verification of the facts and the right to reply. As none were offered before this rush to print, we trust this response clarifies the matter for your readers. We believe the GAA family is important and needs to be inclusive. The thrust of both your articles obviously does not concur with this ambition.

The facts of the matter are: A member of the media put in a Freedom of Information request to the Equality Authority seeking correspondence between the Equality Authority and the GAA since January 2011. As a State body covered by the FOI Act we were required to comply with that lawful request. We informed the GAA that we had received such a request. Once the request was made, the matter is out of our hands as we are committed to complying with the responsibilities set out under this legislation, relied upon by so many members of the media in their own work. The Irish Independent did not make any effort to contact the Equality Authority on this matter before going to press where the entire matter could have been clarified.

The Equality Authority's view is that the GAA family is diverse and important to Irish society. The President, Christy Cooney, took the most welcome initiative of establishing an Inclusion and Integration Committee and the Equality Authority was very pleased to accept an invitation to join this proactive, diverse and dynamic group. In the course of this committee's deliberations, the membership of the committee decided to write to the President and invite him to discuss a number of matters including how the GAA communicates its work on diversity and the remit of the GPA scheme. The letter was signed by the GAA's own committee's chairperson Proinsias O Concubhair. The Equality Authority representative who sits on this broadly based committee contributed to the discussion pointing out that there was a potential risk of the GPA scheme contravening gender legislation.

The Committee agreed following a 'frank discussion' that this matter should be brought to the attention of headquarters and invited the President to a meeting to further that discussion. The EA as an active participant in this important committee, offered its best advice in pointing out that gender based supports may also contravene the equality legislation. The committee decided to



convey this view to the President by way of a letter signed by the Committee's Chairperson. This was a very sensible approach. The Chairperson copied that letter to all members to show that he had indeed complied with the views of the Committee. That letter was also included to comply with the FOI request.

The Equality Authority is of the view that the GPA support scheme is an excellent initiative. It is a response by the Association to seek to maintain the sporting talent, under threat by unemployment and emigration, in the country, for the benefit of the Association and its high standards of skill and sport. This is to be welcomed. We believe that there was potential to extend this scheme to include all sports people in the GAA family, who are equally threatened by unemployment and emigration and not just players of one gender.

We, in harmony with national and EU sporting and women strategies, are committed to inclusive participation in sport. We believe the GAA also shares that ambition. There is potential here for the GAA to embrace 'best practice' and to extend the range of beneficiaries for this welcome support beyond its male players, to all who participate in the GAA family of games.

The fundamental assertions of your articles are untrue. We welcome the opportunity to work with the GAA in progressing its inclusiveness policies in a meaningful way. We also welcome any opportunity of maximising the potential of this scheme to support the many young women in the GAA family who are 'breaking the mould' in encouraging high standard female participation in sport at a local and county level. Their loss to the GAA family through emigration or unemployment would be equally unwelcome for the continued development of these national sports. If potential exists to remedy that loss, then we recommend that it should be embraced.

Over a decade ago, we fought cases which resulted in women accessing Boxing as a sport. Today one of our greatest sports stars is Katie Taylor. The comments expressed by your correspondent, that trying to extend the potential of a support scheme for male players to all athletes who participate in the GAA family of sporting achievement, is in some way 'a new landmark in common sense bashing' is a view we would argue that is not widely shared. We stand accused of 'lecturing' them and of their being a 'bizarre nature of the accusations'. We have made no accusation. Including women in sport is not bizarre in anyway.

The GAA and ourselves enjoy an open and respectful dialogue. We have already provided training to three of its Provincial Councils and are happy to continue to do so. Nonetheless the Equality Authority has a responsibility under its mandate to prevent and combat discrimination, and to seek redress for those excluded unfairly. The Equality Authority takes its public service mandate seriously. We are happy to work in cooperation with all who work for 'inclusion and integration' and that includes the GAA.

## 8. HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme and Equality Authority publish pregnancy at work research

On Monday 27<sup>th</sup> June, the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme (CPP) and the Equality Authority released 'Pregnancy at Work: A National Survey' - a major new research report which presents the findings of Ireland's first nationally representative survey of women's experiences at work during and after pregnancy. The majority of mothers with young children and women of childbearing age are now in the workforce and their experience at work during and after pregnancy have become increasingly relevant over time.

The survey sample of 2,300 women was randomly selected from the Department of Social Protection's universal child benefit register and comprised of women whose youngest child was born between July 2007 and June 2009. The research report was prepared by Dr Helen Russell, Dr Dorothy Watson and Dr Joanne Banks of the ESRI.

Areas surveyed include treatment by employers during pregnancy, health and safety, crisis pregnancy, maternity leave, parental leave and return to work. For the very first time, this survey provides compelling evidence that work-related reasons are a contributory factor in crisis pregnancy experience.

The survey's findings show that:

- 33% of women stated that their pregnancy was a crisis pregnancy
- The economic down-turn is having a clear impact on reports of crisis pregnancy as almost 50% of the women who experienced a crisis pregnancy stated that financial concerns contributed to the crisis
- 27% of working women who experienced a crisis pregnancy stated that workplace factors such as 'work plans' or 'work commitments' or 'concern about the reaction from employers or co-workers' to the pregnancy had contributed to the crisis
- There is a strong link between experiences of unfair treatment at work and crisis pregnancy: Women who experienced more than one form of unfair treatment were at an increased risk of experiencing a crisis pregnancy.

On the positive side, the availability of flexible working practices was associated with a reduced likelihood of crisis pregnancy for women in employment. Mothers who experienced lower levels of work-family conflict during pregnancy were less likely to report a crisis pregnancy.

The survey also provides the first nationally representative data on the extent to which women experience unfair treatment at work due to pregnancy in Ireland. Regarding women in employment:

- Up to 30% reported experiencing unfair treatment even though 71%, reported that they had a supportive employer in the context of their pregnancy



- 5% of women employed during pregnancy reported that they were dismissed, made redundant or treated so badly that they had to leave their job.
- Unfair treatment was more commonly reported by younger women, women expecting their second child, women working in the retail and wholesale sector, women working in organisations with few flexible work arrangements and in workplaces that didn't have a formal equality policy. Unfair treatment was less common among women working for small organizations and in workplaces that had a formal equality policy
- The most common form of unfair treatment was being assigned unsuitable work or workloads (12%).
- Unfavourable treatment was also experienced by some women returning to work after childbirth. Almost one quarter felt that their opportunities for promotion had decreased on returning to work while over one fifth of women felt that their opportunities for training had decreased.

The survey also investigates uptake of maternity and parental leave and finds evidence that strongly points to inequalities among women: Women with higher earnings potential, better levels of education and an employed partner are more likely to avail of the extended period of unpaid maternity leave and to receive top-up payments from the employer while on maternity leave. On the other hand among women with lower earnings potential, not only are they less likely to receive employer-provided top-up payments, but financial pressures result in a lower take-up of unpaid leave and an earlier return to work.

Dr Stephanie O'Keeffe, Acting Director of the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme said "In order to successfully fulfill government policy to reduce crisis pregnancy we must also recognise that when unplanned pregnancies happen, broader areas like employment policy, workplace culture and financial stability impact on how women react to the news of being pregnant and how they cope. Effective intersectoral approaches across diverse policy domains from employment, to welfare, to health are required to successfully reduce crisis pregnancy and to support the needs of pregnant employees, new parents and employers."

Welcoming the publication of the studies, Renee Dempsey, CEO of the Equality Authority said "All of these findings demonstrate the need to ensure that women are aware of their rights regarding pregnancy at work, and that they are supported in vindicating those rights. It is also essential that employers, the majority of whom are supportive, accept and embrace their responsibilities in this regard. The report also highlights the need to develop public policy to promote the better reconciliation of work and family life and it provides essential evidence to inform such policy development."

One of the report's authors, Dr Helen Russell said "The majority of Irish women are now employed during pregnancy therefore pregnancy at work is an increasingly pertinent issue for women, employers and the state. Although employment during pregnancy was a positive experience for most women, the study provides evidence that a significant minority face a range of unfavourable treatment. This includes inappropriate workloads, loss of salary or bonuses, denial of promotion through to dismissal. Such experiences can have significant financial, emotional and health costs for the women involved."

Another of the report's authors, Dr Dorothy Watson added "The study also highlights the way in which inequalities among women can be exacerbated around the time of childbirth. Women with higher educational and occupational positions, and who had the support of a working partner, clearly had more choices around taking unpaid as well as paid maternity leave. These same women were more likely to receive a top-up payment from the employer during maternity leave. On the other hand, women with lower levels of education and those in insecure employment were more likely to experience pressures to return to work sooner or to opt out of the labour market altogether after the birth of their child."

The full report - Pregnancy at Work: A National Survey - is available from the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme, Equality Authority's and ESRI's websites at [www.crisispregnancy.ie](http://www.crisispregnancy.ie), [www.equality.ie](http://www.equality.ie), [www.esri.ie](http://www.esri.ie)

## 9. Events Diary

### 'European and national commitments to reducing poverty and exclusion'

**European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland is hosting a series of workshops on the Europe 2020 Strategy**

**LIMERICK:** 5th September  
St Munchins Family Resource Centre, Clonconnane Road, Ballynanty

**DUBLIN:** 6th September  
European Parliament Office, Molesworth St., Dublin 2

**SLIGO:** 9th September  
Northside Community Development Partnership, Forthill

These three regional workshops will give people from marginalised communities, their organisations and others the opportunity: **(1)** to understand the commitments that have been made as part of Europe 2020; **(2)** to look at the reality for people and their communities and; **(3)** to discuss what needs to be done to achieve these commitments

Following the workshops EAPN Ireland will produce a report which will be disseminated widely and submitted to relevant Ministers and Departments and the information will be used as part of its ongoing work.

#### ***For more information contact:***

<b>Organisation:</b>	<b>European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland Ltd.</b>
<b>Address:</b>	First Floor, Strand House, 22 Great Strand Street, Dublin 1.
<b>Tel:</b>	01 8745737
<b>Fax:</b>	01 8781289
<b>Email:</b>	enquiries@eapn.ie

## 'Ageing Globally – Ageing Locally: Planning for all our futures'

**The Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland (CARDI) is hosting a two day international conference**

Pension reform, later retirement, longer but often unhealthier lives, changing family structures, new models of welfare and care: across the world today, governments, businesses and civic society are searching for policies and answers in these areas to get to grips with one of the most profound social transformations in history – population ageing.

**A major international conference, "Ageing Globally – Ageing Locally", taking place 2 & 3 November 2011 at Croke Park Dublin, hosted by the Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland (CARDI) will address key issues arising from this global phenomenon.**

Featuring a host of international experts as well as leading researchers and professionals from the ageing sector in the island of Ireland, this event will explore a number of issues including how different countries address challenges and opportunities of population ageing, why global ageing matters to Ireland and how policy makers, business and service providers can best plan for changing demographics.

### *For more information contact:*

**Organisation:** Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland  
**Address:** Forestview, Purdy's Lane, Belfast BT8 7ZX  
**Tel:** +44 (0) 28 9069 0066  
**Email:** [conference@cardi.ie](mailto:conference@cardi.ie)  
**Website:** [www.cardi.ie](http://www.cardi.ie)

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## Annual Research Conference and the launch of the NCSE 'Inclusive Education Framework' – Date for Diary

**The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is hosting its Annual Research Conference**

Wednesday November 16 2011, The Hogan Suite, Croke Park Conference Centre, Dublin

For the moment, just put this date in your diary. Further detail and booking forms will issue in September.

The conference will feature presentations on new research from the NCSE on a range of topics, including the prevalence of special educational needs and access to the curriculum among young children with special needs in mainstream classes.

The event will also feature the launch of the NCSE 'Inclusive Education Framework', a practical tool to assist schools with the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs; an input on the development of NCSE policy advice to the Minister on special education matters; and a conference address from a guest speaker.

### *For more information contact:*

**Organisation:** National Council for Special Education (NCSE)  
**Email:** [researchseminar@ncse.ie](mailto:researchseminar@ncse.ie)

## 10. New Ways to Make your Organisation Equality Friendly

### Equality Benefits Tool

The Equality Benefits Tool provides a set of easy-to-use tools to help your organisation to make the most of equality for your employees, customers or services users.

- **Your Service Users and You: Realising the Benefits in the Public Sector** is designed for public sector organisations. It shows how to embed equality in services, how to review services and how to plan for equality in services.
- **Your Customers and You: Realising the Benefits in the Private Sector** is designed for private sector companies. It shows how to assess your company's performance on equality for customers and how to develop equality action plans.
- **Employment** is designed for public and private sector organisations. It provides tools for embedding equality in employment policies and procedures.

The **Equality Benefits Tool** is for you. Feel free to adapt its templates and tools for your organisation.

Start today. The sooner that you take action on equality, the sooner that you will gain the benefits for your organisation, your customers and employees.

Equality - it makes sense for you.

**This project has been funded by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS (2007-2013).**



**Download the Equality Benefits Tool at <http://www.equality.ie/index.asp?locID=348&docID=-1>**