



A Toolkit for Gender Equality in Practice - Initiative

Bristol City Council

Supporting work-life balance: "The time of our lives"

Summary of the initiative

The TUC, the Employers' Organisation for Local Government, Bristol City Council and council trade unions, GMB, TGWU and UNISON, worked together on a European Union-sponsored project "The time of our lives", a project that delivered 'win-win' results for staff and managers in a range of services. The project was set up because the city council was under pressure to deliver better services, improve flexibility, and satisfy employees' WLB aspirations.

Key to success was the commitment from the start of the council's political leadership and management to solutions that reflected the views of staff and trade unions.

The project aimed to:

- Explore the potential for innovative working patterns that would improve both the quality of council services and employees' ability to balance their paid work with the rest of their lives;
- Develop models of partnership between trade unions and employers to enable them jointly to identify better ways to organise work and time;
- Develop a positive model of flexibility which offers a 'win-win' situation for employees, employers and customers;
- Share experiences of different ways of reconciling work, personal responsibilities and aspirations and access to council services;
- Widely disseminate lessons learnt.

Surveys and focus groups of staff showed that both men and women were interested in trying out different work patterns. Three findings are particularly interesting: a higher proportion of women than men wanted opportunities for education and training, men were more likely than women to say they wanted more family time, the most common reason for wanting change was the desire to work more effectively in an "uninterrupted, focused way".

Besides, UNISON suggested a pilot flexible working project at the library service, where staff members were demoralised because of recent cuts in the staffing budget. A customer survey had indicated a demand for Sunday opening but staff felt it would be a further incursion on their time. Staff members were surveyed to see who would like to work on a Sunday. It was made clear that participation would be voluntary, that no one would be compelled to continue to work on a Sunday if they volunteered, and that individuals would benefit, through the usual additional Sunday payments. Additional staff members were recruited to work on Sundays alongside volunteers from existing staff, many of who were part-time workers who wanted to increase their hours.

Priorities

Supporting work-life balance





Sector(s)

Public administration

Type

Enterprise initiative

Country

United Kingdom

Model of social partnership

Bipartite

Launch date

N/A

Number of employees

>250

References

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace-issues/welfare-and-benefits/tuc-conference-time-our-lives>

This initiative was submitted by:

TUC- ETUC

Website

<http://www.bristol.gov.uk/>