



Pregnancy at work under spotlight

A series of pregnancy discrimination 'horror' stories has prompted the first ever investigation into the way pregnant women are treated at work.

- 1 - The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) said it would be launching a 17-month inquiry, because it was receiving more complaints about the subject than any other issue.

Each year, many women are sacked, or threatened with dismissal by employers just because they get pregnant.

- 5 - According to an EOC survey, one in five people know a pregnant woman who has experienced problems at work.

'Appalling' treatment

- 10 - Jenny Watson, deputy chair of the commission, said: "We hear of quite appalling cases of women who have been demoted, disciplined or even sacked simply for having a baby...we urgently need to find out why." A third of workers in the 25 to 34 age group know someone who has experienced some form of discrimination because they are pregnant.

The continuing problems faced by some women are in stark contrast to awareness of the issues, the commission said.

- 15 - According to a survey conducted by the EOC, three-quarters of workers are aware of pregnant women's basic rights.

Ordeal

Harriet Davies-Taheri, a solicitor, won her sex discrimination case earlier this year after being sacked because she was pregnant.

She was awarded £30,000 compensation by an employment tribunal.

- 20 - Ms Davies-Taheri fully supported the commission's announcement.

"I wouldn't want any other woman to have to go through what I went through," she said.

Patricia Hewitt, Secretary for State for Trade & Industry and Minister for Women, also welcomed the research.

- 25 - "Employers who discriminate against pregnant women are breaking the law and could be liable to pay compensation," Ms Hewitt said.

"They are being foolish and harming their own businesses by excluding talented women from the workforce."

Need further information about your rights?

- 30 - The Equal Opportunities Commission has published a new guide on pregnancy and maternity rights at work, which will be available from its website (see link on right) from 1 September.

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