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& Speech Pathology

# Interpersonal and Organisational Development Research Group

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## **Evaluating Organisational Family-friendly Audits**

*Carolyn Kagan and Suzan Lewis*



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## Introduction

The UK Government has issued a number of policy statements or frameworks which encourage greater participation in paid work (and decreased reliance on state benefits), diversity in the workplace, and better links between work, family and communities. These include the New Contract for Welfare (DSS, 1998), the National Childcare Strategy (DfEE, 1999); the Carer's Strategy (DfEE/DSS, 1999) The 'New Deals' for Lone Parents, Over 50's, Disabled People, and Communities programmes, and the work of the Social Exclusion Unit. The Government weaves throughout its policy statements the proposition that inequality and social exclusion have been increasing despite rising spending on social security. The thrust of its policy framework is to prevent poverty and encourage people of working age to work where they are capable of doing so, because 'paid work is the surest route out of poverty' (DSS, 1998. p.3).

One implication of the Government's approach is that individuals are failing in their social responsibilities by not gaining employment. The Social Exclusion Unit has summarised, for example, what will be needed to tackle the problems of the poorest neighbourhoods. The goals they identify require

"a strong and long term commitment from Government.... the engagement of business in providing jobs and services ... (and) a willingness on the part of people living in poor neighbourhoods to take up new opportunities." (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998, p. 79)

Yet we know that there are some very real, structural obstacles that make it difficult for some people to work. Organisational theorists as well as practitioners know it is necessary to take account of the interactions between the world of work and the world of workers' personal lives (Friedlander, 1994), and yet there often appears to be a schism in thinking about these interconnections. As we have pointed out, previously, nowhere is this schism more apparent than in the lives of working parents of disabled children (Kagan et al., 1997; 1998).

Working parents caring for disabled children live at the intersection of employment, family and welfare policies. Our work, collecting the accounts of working parents of disabled children has highlighted the importance of understanding these points of intersection from the perspectives of family members, employers and work colleagues, and community based welfare organizations (Kagan, et al., 1998; 1999; Lewis et al., 1998). It is only when there is flexibility in all three arenas, as well as in the areas of overlapping interests that parents can manage to sustain their income, whilst at the same time utilising their skills, qualifications and experience, and gain satisfaction from work. It is only when there is flexibility in all three arenas, as well as in the areas of overlapping interests that employers can retain skilled, experienced and committed employees. It is only when there is flexibility in all three arenas, as well as in the areas of overlapping interests that community based welfare organisations can target their resources in appropriate ways, supporting and sustaining the caring capabilities of families and friends.

In 1997, we outlined a number of reasons why employers should be concerned about the employment of parents of disabled children. These included:

- the business case for effective management of diversity ;
- the business costs of failing to retain experienced and loyal staff (Winter, 1987);

- transformation of the nature of work and work processes (Casey, 1996; Erikson and Vallas, 1990);
- the business case for socially responsible, and ethical organisational practice (Reder, 1995);
- interest in quality enhancement and continuous improvement, including all organisational systems that affect employees (Friedlander, 1994; Senge, 1990);
- the business case for adopting and sustaining a positive corporate image (Alvesson and Berg, 1992);
- the business case for effective welfare-to-work schemes.

Whilst each of these systems has a distinct area of interest, we can see that they coincide when we look at the experiences of working parents of disabled children.

In 1997 we reported on the development of an audit tool for use with employing organisations, in order to identify area in which their policies and/or practices might change to be better able to meet the needs of working parents of disabled children (Kagan et al., 1997; Lewis et al., 1998).

This paper will describe the evaluation of the audits which were piloted in three different kinds of organisation. It will draw on the findings of the implementation projects for discussion of the development of the work-family-community field.

### **Piloting the audits**

The audit frameworks were piloted in three quite different kinds of organisations. The organisations piloting the audits are:

- (i) a large, national retail grocery chain with an interest in developing effective family friendly employment policies. The company has a large female workforce working a variety of types of shift;
- (ii) a manual department within a local authority. The Local Authority has a platform of equal opportunity work policies, but these are implemented inconsistently within departments. This department has a predominantly male workforce, working, in the main, standard daytime shifts;
- (iii) a small social care charity which has developed family friendly employment policies and practices in consultation with all employees, who are both male and female.

Initial discussions were held with the piloting organizations and the audits were to be tested in different ways within each organisation. The process of piloting audit in each organisation was as follows:

- (i) the retail firm introduced the audits at the level of each store manager. He or she was to devise a strategy for piloting the audit within each store, in ways that involved all grades of staff. Store representatives were to meet on a regional basis and devise a staff training strategy in relation to the issues that arose out of store discussions.
- (ii) the local authority direct works department issued the audit in the form of a questionnaire to all employees from the personnel department. Results were

collated and a report sent to the Human Resource committee of the authority, who was to make any decision about further action.

(iii) The charity held discussions of the audit in the context of staff job consultations and career development meetings. A corporate response to the audit was to build on discussions at these meetings.

All three organizations reported back to the research project team via interview or written notes<sup>i</sup>.

## **Results**

### **Case Study 1: A Large, National Retail Firm**

The large retail firm has a long record of flexible employment patterns, a commitment to local employment, and an interest in innovations with the aim of enhancing diversity in the workforce.

#### **Auditing methods and structure of the audit tool**

The personnel officer from Regional Headquarters of the organisation thought it would be best for individual store managers to decide how best to introduce explorations of the interests of working parents of disabled children. In this way, the use of the audit tool would become part of each manager's personal development. Furthermore, introducing the audits in this way would enable the different practices and cultures of different stores to be taken into account, thus maximising the possibility that the issues would be taken seriously.

There was widespread interest in the issues contained in the audit tool. Store managers varied in their approaches, some incorporating the audit into local staff development and training sessions; others conducted focus groups of different categories of staff; and others surveyed current policy and practices. When store representatives met at a Regional level to share experiences, a number of important points emerged.

#### **Organisational Structure and Culture**

It was clear that the most useful way to create change around the issues raised by the audit, was via existing channels. There was little point trying to introduce organisational change around the needs of individual employees' needs. Each store had been encouraged to produce an action plan detailing how the issues raised by the audit should be taken forwards and resolved locally, and this was found to be useful. The sharing of information about different local practices was also appreciated and thought to be an important spur to innovation.

The role of the line managers, in recognising the needs of employees and in responding flexibly to their requirements was found to be central. However, this was only so in the context of local and Regional frameworks which supported them in exercising good judgement. Line managers, too, were

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<sup>i</sup> Grateful acknowledgement is made to Patricia Heaton for collecting accounts of the implementation projects, and for project leaders for piloting the audits

important gatekeepers to staff training and were, therefore in a position to involve staff or not in the audit process.

### **Job security and flexible working**

A key concern arising from staff themselves, in relation to the availability of flexible working patterns was that of job (in)security, although it was noted that perceived job security throughout the chain had increased recently. It was suggested that this was largely due to participative methods of exploring diversity issues as well as the positive organisational culture that followed from this.

### **Key Features:**

Local implementation and decision making; co-operation of line managers; introduction in the context of training and development for Store managers, line managers and all staff; bottom-up participative approach; methodologies to fit different local circumstances; preparation of action plans; sharing of information Regionally.

### **Case Study 2: A Direct Works Department of a Metropolitan Local Authority**

The Personnel Department supported the implementation of the audit tool under the auspices of Equal Opportunity work.

#### **Auditing methods and structure of the audit tool**

A questionnaire to the mostly male employees in the Direct Works Department of a Local Authority was planned. Soon after agreeing to implement the audit tool, the Local Authority embarked upon a re-organisation. This meant the tool could not be implemented in its entirety.

Without the re-organisation, the personnel officer was confident the audit could have been used to good effect. However, even though the whole audit process was not followed, the Department had used part of the audit tool to fit in with some work on childcare that had already been identified as a priority for this nearly all male Department. This work was considered the responsibility of the personnel Officer, with a brief for equal opportunities issues. Whilst it is essential to identify who has the responsibility for implementing any information or change programme, there may be difficulties if the work is not owned more widely.

As a result of the work on childcare, a policy and procedures document was prepared and subsidies, which were essentially interest-free loans were introduced for parents with urgent childcare needs. Some procedures were introduced.

The focus on child care issues meant that little attention was paid to the full range of issues addressed by the audit. Had the audit been fully implemented, the intention was to have managed it at the Departmental level. It was envisaged that a consultation group would have been formed from a



number of interested parties and would feed back to the Departmental management team. Thereafter, any ideas for change would have been taken up by the Equal Opportunities team.

Although the Department only looked at the issue of childcare, a number of relevant points were raised which have wider relevance. For example, the question of what kinds of childcare needs should be included in any response to the needs of workers is not an easy one to define. It varies over time and depends to a large part on employees existing care support.

Whilst a questionnaire is able to collect a lot of information relatively quickly, it has the disadvantage of relative little personal investment from those who complete it. More participative methods are now thought to be more appropriate, especially when one of the goals is to achieve organisational change. Participative and collaborative methods of exploring issues and suggesting change in policy and practice become more important as the issues under consideration are more widespread. This is certainly so for issues of diversity in employment.

### **Organisational Structure and Culture**

The issue of flexible working hours was a particularly difficult one in the Direct Works department, partly because of the nature of the work undertaken, but largely because of custom and practice and rigid Union views, which were themselves built on working practices which maintained low levels of basic pay (and therefore the maintenance of overtime as an essential working practice).

There is a particular irony within a Local Authority, as not only is it a large employer, it is also a provider of services which may make other workers' lives more or less difficult. A further difficulty is the attitudes and views of colleagues who frown upon those who take advantage of flexible working.

### **Inclusion in Equal Opportunity Developments**

The responsible Personnel Officer fully supported the idea of an audit tool as a means of focusing discussion and interest. The Personnel Department, certainly is determined to keep Equal Opportunities issues on the agenda on a regular basis. For example, they are asking Departments to re-visit the Commission for Racial Equality quality standard checklist on an annual basis. It is likely that future consideration of the issues raised in the audit tool will be explored within this general thrust towards equal opportunity at work policy and practices.

### **Key Features:**

Organisational change can disrupt the process; consideration of issues can usefully coincide with other change practices; sections of the audit tool can be used separately; participative methods will encourage ownership of change, rather than top down methods; custom and practice may militate against change; worker attitudes and organisational culture are important barriers; creative and innovative practices can enhance diversity.

### **Case Study 3: A Medium-size Social Care Charity**

The charity was a small to medium sized one with 28 employees. The Deputy Director (Jack) is the father of a disabled child and he had previously applauded the flexible employment policies embodied in the employment manual of the organisation. He knew about the work that had given rise to the audits, and had intended to introduce the audits during job consultations. In the end he did not: he looked through the audit and anticipated what the answers to the questions might be for the Charity. The reasons he did this were due to internal and external forces. Internally, a review of the employment contracts and handbook was underway, and this coincided with the audit pilot. In addition, external pressures, due to staff absences, meant time was short.

#### **Auditing methods and structure of the audit tool**

When asked about the structure of the audit tool, Jack thought that its questionnaire format might restrict its use value, whilst recognising it made it easy to complete. He did, however, think that the issues warranted in-depth scrutiny. In his workplace, he considered the flexibility already available meant that the audit was approached relatively superficially.

When pushed some more on the most effective way to audit an organisation like his, Jack considered that a member of management who was also the parent of a disabled child (like himself) would be well placed to complete the audit on behalf of the company. He did acknowledge that different people might respond differently, and that a wider range of workers should participate in completing the audit. Jack discussed the role that external auditors might play, and concluded that there may be some value in an external scrutiny.

When Jack had looked at the audit tool, he had assumed he was reading only about the employment of parents of disabled children, when, in fact, the audit was written more generally for those with caring responsibilities. Greater clarity in the introduction might have helped.

#### **Organisational Structure and Culture**

Jack's charity is a relatively 'flat' organisation wherein Managers know their employees well. Being a social care charity, Jack thinks the nature of the work means that workers are willing to disclose personal information about their caring responsibilities - they do not need to conceal them.

Through discussion, although Jack had not mentioned this from his reading of the audit, it became clear that an audit of the Charity might reveal some problems amongst the workforce with regards to flexibility and the interpretations and expectations of some practices. In particular he discussed the danger that carers' leave is misused. In the past, he considered that some employees have exploited the organisation's flexibility. However, it is not only the carers' leave that gets exploited. According to Jack, sick leave is now being also mis-used. If this trend continues, Jack foresees a tightening of work flexibility for working parents of disabled children, rather than a loosening. He urges caution, therefore in the introduction of too much flexibility.

#### **Job structure**

Jack asserted that greater flexibility was possible for some jobs in the organisation than for others.. It was interesting to note that he did not consider

the re-structuring of the jobs to be a possibility. He did however, recognise how important the flexible provisions that enable him to carry on working were:

### **Key Features:**

The developmental capacity of the audit process can be limited by (well meaning) gatekeepers; organisational culture is necessary to understand when implementing audit tools; paternalistic attitudes of management may limit the value of the audit; mechanisms should be found for overcoming a tendency for management to audit the organisation on behalf of the employees; audit mechanisms can reveal the need to decrease policies and practice encouraging diversity, rather than increase them.

### **Discussion**

The audit tools were conceived as a tool to assist organisations in developing organisational policies, practices and strategies for change to accommodate the needs of working parents of disabled children. It quickly became clear, from the pilot implementations, that a more broad focus on working carers, in the context of both equal opportunities and the management of diversity in the workforce is more useful than the narrow focus on working parents of disabled children. The pilot implementations highlighted a number of issues, linked to the management of organizational change. These included:

the importance of an individual 'change agent' who is willing to work towards change and who has appropriate support within the organisation;

the greater the participation, the more likely change will be to occur;

creative use of a questionnaire-format audit leads to processes that take account of local customs and practices;

building the audit process onto or into existing policy and practice priorities increases the likelihood of change;

incorporating the audit process into some other development process (training, staff development etc.) can either help the issues being taken up or conceal them;

irrespective of the policies and practices, worker attitudes can make it difficult for family friendly working to permeate the organisation;

paternalistic managerial attitudes may obstruct the introduction of methods of participative consultation;

some jobs and practices will have to be reviewed to enable them to be 'family friendly';

it is difficult to explore the organisational aspects of family friendly work without looking too at the services supports and community-work-family interface.

We have taken account of many of the lessons learnt from the implementation pilots, and have developed a third draft audit framework<sup>ii</sup> (see appendix 1). A parallel audit is being prepared for community based support services for families.

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<sup>ii</sup> Grateful acknowledgement is made to Iain McLean for his revisions of the audit tool

As we have seen, the development of inclusive, 'family friendly' policies and practices presents most organisations with a strategic change challenge. Carnell (1995:6) has argued that three necessary conditions need to be in place for effective strategic change:

1. Awareness: stakeholders understand and believe in the vision, the strategy and the implementation plans;
2. Capability: stakeholders involved believe they can develop the necessary skills and can therefore both cope with and take advantage of these changes;
3. Inclusion: stakeholders involved feel that they value the new jobs, opportunities etc., and choose to behave in the new ways (new attitudes, skills and ways of working) achieving strategic change can best be described as a 'learning loop' comprising organisational vision, understanding of stakeholders and the organisation's capability.

These three conditions, combined, form a 'learning loop', as shown in Figure 1, which underpins the achievement of change. This 'learning loop' provides a useful framework for exploring the results of the pilot audits.

#### **Figure 1 about here**

Each pilot project introduced the audit alongside a current issue of priority to the organisation, and of which employees were familiar. These included equal opportunity practice, the management of diversity and family friendly work practices. The extent to which stakeholders fully understood and accepted these corporate visions was unclear. Nevertheless, building on familiar discourses within the organisations would make the assimilation of change more likely.

There was a mixed picture about the capability of stakeholders to cope with and take advantages on likely changes arising from the audits. It seemed that in one way or another, each pilot revealed a degree of cynicism ('it's OK but I won't benefit') or mistrust ('people will or do take advantage') about potential change. Organisational cultures, linked to the structures of jobs, meant that moving to a position of mutual trust and acceptance may be difficult.

The picture in relation to 'inclusion' too, was mixed. The evidence so far indicated that full implementation of the issues contained in the audits would be perceived as applying to some, but not others. The cultures of suspicion by colleagues (in the store and LA) and by the Manager (in the Charity) would indicate that in order to achieve inclusive 'family friendly' workplaces, substantial change in worker attitudes and in the structures of jobs will be required.

#### **The capacity of organisations to change**

As we have pointed out elsewhere, even when management is supportive, hostile co-workers can make it difficult for employees to take up opportunities for flexibility (Kagan et al, 1998; Lewis et al, 1999). Our previous observations, and the experience of piloting the audiences, convinces us that more must be done to build the capacities of organisations to accommodate family-friendly working. And yet, any such capacity building, is not confined solely to organisations. The very nature of the work-family interface, requires that the capacity of workers in the workplace and in the family is increased. Intra-organisational capacity, alone, will not be

sufficient. We would argue that extra-organisational capacity building may be required, alongside capacity building in families and in support services..

### **Extra-organisational capacity building**

The issues raised in the audit tool are primarily focused on the strategies that employers can adopt within the workplace to support family carers in employment, and we know quite a bit about these already. However, we know little about employers' potential roles outside the workplace in supporting carers who wish to find work. More needs to be known therefore about how employers committed to both family friendly employment practices and corporate social responsibility can support informal carers in accessing and sustaining appropriate levels of employment.

### **Capacity building in families and support services**

It is now widely recognised that work and family systems are interdependent but the work-family literature has paid less attention to the relationships between work, family and the community. Our research with employed parents of disabled children has brought into focus the reciprocal relationships between service provision in the community, family dynamics and work. Even when carers have flexible employers, inflexibility of service providers in the community, gaps in service provision or lack of access to information about available supports often create unnecessary difficulties in managing multiple commitments. (Kagan et al, 1998;). Equally, lack of accommodation or facilitation by other family members, based on limited skills, attitudes, thoughtlessness or clear role differentials in the home, can make it difficult for all family carers who wish to work to do so. It is therefore essential to consider the capacity of service providers in the community, and other family members as well as employers, in the support of family carers who wish to work. We have begun to develop an audit tool for service providers, and to work on a process for exploring the difficulties within families, as ways of beginning to address some of these issues.

### **Capacity building in the community and the growth of social capital**

Work-family discussions that include caring responsibilities of working family carers, all point to the important role of informal, friendship and familial support networks. Indeed, Many of the support systems in the community rely on volunteers, who are often themselves family carers. Family carers often carry out work in the community, on a voluntary or low paid basis to compensate for lack of services (Kagan et al, 1998). Many other family carers engage in, and wish to continue to undertake a wide range of local, voluntary community activities. This can fulfil a need for active citizenship among those who wish to give something back to the community and not just be passive users of services. The literature on work and family or other multiple commitments has tended to overlook these voluntary roles. Any discussion of how to support family carers in accessing and sustaining paid work must address the question of who will provide unpaid work in the community if one of the traditional sources of voluntary labour is in the workforce. Little is known about how multiple stakeholders in local communities, including employers, family carers, service providers, advocacy groups, and others might all combine to ensure that such services are sustained.

We are, therefore, suggesting that a shift in emphasis from one of organisational change and development, to one which emphasises a much wider capacity building agenda in work-family-community complex.

### **A multiple systems perspective on community, work and family**

We have rehearsed the need to look at the work-family interface, and to extend this to explore the work-family-community service interface. Our experiences with the limitations of intra-organisational change potential, has highlighted the importance of moving towards an approach which explores and intervenes and the level of capacity building. Figure 2 illustrates the routes whereby capacity in the home, at work and in the community (including strong social capital) leads to social inclusion and social cohesion. Similarly, the routes whereby lack of capacity in the home, at work or in the community (including weak social capital) leads to social exclusion and lack of social cohesion.

#### **Figure 2 about here**

There are a number of advantages to thinking in terms of capacity building or capacity promotion (Jeffries and Carne, 1999). 'Capacity building' is a concept that, whilst clearly open to alternative definitions and ways of being understood, is widely used throughout the world in the field of community development and social change. It broadly refers to a process by which people are empowered with education and skills to enhance their quality of life and to develop a sense of commitment and shared vision within their communities. If we merge our work-family-community thinking with that of community development, we will retain an emphasis on the complexity of the task and on the importance of working for change in participative ways, in partnership with others who have allied interests. It is clear, too, that the major vehicle for change will be via people in families, work groups and community organisations. This encourages us to think and work in a multi-disciplinary way and to fracture the discipline boundaries that so often bedevil organisational change and development work.

Figure 3 outlines some of the tasks that are required in capacity building and promotion, as well as forging working partnerships, both of which contribute to the social transformation from social exclusion to social cohesion. We hope to be using our revised audit tools as aids to capacity promotion with families of carers who want to sustain or begin paid and/or voluntary work, community support services and employing organisations.

#### **Figure 3 about here**

### **Conclusion**

In this paper we have moved from a discussion of the needs of working parents of disabled children to those of working family carers. We have moved from an interest in organisational change and development to social transformation of a number of interlinked social institutions, in particular work, family and community. We have argued that a lack of capacity in work, family or community systems perpetuates social exclusion. It is, therefore, necessary to build and promote capacity in work, family and community systems via the people that live and work in them. In so doing, we have broadened the understanding of community to include citizenship and social capital as well as the provision of community support services. Along with Miller (1998) we would argue that the change agenda needs to go beyond that of individual

exclusion and/or inclusion, to one of a more integrated state of social cohesion, requiring an integrated systems analysis. The implications of this are profound:

“no single group, sector or organisation holds the key (to promoting social cohesion). If exclusion is to be tackled, all the stakeholders must recognise and play their part” (Miller, 1998:10).

And of course, that means all of us.

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*APPENDIX 1 Organizational Audit: Draft 3*





# **ORGANISATIONAL AUDIT FRAMEWORK**

**DRAFT 3: NOT FOR USE**

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## THE NATURE OF THE WORKFORCE

**Q 1**  
**What do you know about your employees' work and family commitments?**

Some employees will be working below their potential. The organisation is also likely to be missing out on a pool of talent who are excluded from the workplace because of difficulties reconciling work and caring.

*"In fact you were going to apply for a job last year and you decided against it because ... you would have had to tell them that you have a disabled child and you would have to have time off ... so she said it's just not worth it."*

Father - talking to the mother about why she did not apply for a better job.

Our research shows that these difficulties can be overcome if both workers and organisations are flexible.

Issue
<p><b>1</b> How many of your employees are parents of children at home?</p>
<p><b>2</b> How many of your employees have responsibility for a:</p> <p>child with a disability/special needs _____</p> <p>spouse/relative who needs care _____</p> <p>or have a disability themselves? _____</p>
<p><b>3</b> What are their particular needs in terms of combining these responsibilities with working?</p>
<p><b>4</b> Are all the skills and potential of all your employees being used?</p>
<p><b>5</b> Are all the skills and potential of employees who are carers, or have a disability, being used?</p>
<p><b>6</b> What would improve things?</p>

Awareness		Solution	
How easy is it for employees to disclose the fact that they have school-age children?	What would it take to make it easier for employees to disclose this?	What are the channels through which employees might disclose this?	Do employees use these channels, and if not, why not?
How easy is it for employees to disclose the fact that they care for someone, or have a disability?	What would it take to make it easier for employees to disclose this?	What are the channels through which employees might disclose this?	Do employees use these channels, and if not, why not?
How easy is it for employees with such responsibilities to discuss their work/family requirements at work?	What would it take for employees to be able to discuss their work/family requirements at work?	What mechanisms are there for employees to let you know about any changes in their work/family situation?	Do employees use these mechanisms, and if not, why not?
How do you identify and assess the skills and potential of your employees?	Who would do this?		How and when would that be evaluated?
What would it take to ensure that employees with such responsibilities are fulfilling their potential?	What do you do to ensure these skills are being utilised?	Who would do this?	How and when would that be evaluated?
What do your employees, who are carers, etc, think would improve things?	What would it take to find out what these employees think would help?	What mechanisms are there to encourage employees to come up with ideas so that their work might be more effective?	Do employees use these mechanisms, and if not, why not?



## ORGANISATIONAL POLICIES

**Q 2**

**What do you know about your company's work/family policies and their implementation?**

Some organisations have flexible work/family policies, and policies to accommodate employees with, for example, particular health needs. But, some employees are either unaware of these or feel unable to make use of them. Men in particular are often reluctant to ask for time off, but where there are formal policies and a culture which sees the use of these as everyone's right, then men are encouraged to make use of them.

*"I've taken compassionate leave when T (son) had the operation to have his foot off. I was given compassionate leave then. They were very sympathetic towards me."*

Interviewer, "Did you feel it was OK to ask for leave?"

*"Oh, yes, absolutely, yes."*

Flexible policies can themselves have disadvantages if they are not adaptable enough to meet changing needs.

Some employers need to ensure that where flexible work policies exist they do not disadvantage those who use them when it comes to accessing training and career development opportunities.

Some organisations do not appear to have any work/family policies.

*"I get very frustrated at times because I feel I ought to move on in my career, but I can't go anywhere parttime"*

A highly qualified mother cannot progress as she needs to work part time.

Our research shows that information and communication are the keys to implementing effective work/family policies. If these are inadequate, inconsistent implementation is exercised through discretionary organisational practices.

**7** Do you have policies offering any of the following? (Y/N)

Flexitime: Core hours \_\_\_\_\_

Flexitime: Total flexibility \_\_\_\_\_

Flexible holiday/leave arrangements \_\_\_\_\_

Different or flexible venues,

eg, working from home \_\_\_\_\_

Job share \_\_\_\_\_

Shift swapping \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency leave (at no notice) \_\_\_\_\_

Additional leave (for family needs) \_\_\_\_\_

Access to a telephone at all times \_\_\_\_\_

Any others not listed here,

please specify \_\_\_\_\_

### Issue

**10** If you do have them, do all employees know about these policies?

**11** If you do not have them, what would it take to implement these policies?

**12** What would it take to ensure that everyone who needs to take up these policies can do so?

**13** Do work/family policies meet the needs of employees with care responsibilities/disabilities?

**14** To what extent are the needs of such employees considered in the development and evaluation of all employment policies?

**8** Who can make use of these policies?

**Please tick appropriate sections in the table below**

**9** In the last year, how many staff in each of these categories has made use of these policies?

**Please put the number of male and females using a policy in the relevant section**

POLICY	STAFF GROUP														
	Senior manager			Middle manager			Supervisor			Office staff			Manual staff		
	✓	M	F	✓	M	F	✓	M	F	✓	M	F	✓	M	F
A Flexitime															
B Flexible holidays															
C Flexible venues															
D Job share															
E Shift swapping															
F Emergency leave															
G Family leave															
H 'Phone access															
J Other															

Awareness		Solution	
Whose responsibility is it to know whether all employees are aware of these policies?	What mechanisms are there for disseminating, to all employees, information on these policies?	What would it take to ensure that all employees know about these policies?	
What mechanisms are there for initiating and implementing policies for employees who are carers/have disabilities?	Who would do this?	How and when would this be evaluated?	
Who is responsible for making sure that any one who needs them can make use of these policies?	Who does this person report their results to?	What is done with those results?	
Who is responsible for discovering what the needs of employees, who are parents of disabled children, are? (In terms of employment policies?)	What would it take to ensure that the needs of these employees are being met?	What steps have you taken to ensure that the family friendly policies that you have are relevant to these employees?	
What mechanisms are there for including the needs of these employees when developing, revising or evaluating employment policies?	What would it take to consider the needs of these employees in the development and evaluation of all policies?	Who would do this?	

## ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICES

**Q3**

**What do you know about the informal practices in your company and the impact this has on employees with disabilities/disabled children?**

Discretionary practices can determine how easy it is for parents to combine work with their caring commitments. Practices can block the intentions of formal policies.

*"It causes problems, you see, if they ring her [mother] at work. It upsets her employer."*

*"You better not do that [ask for messages to be relayed to the mother], because if they did that they wouldn't employ you."*

This was a highly qualified mother, employed in the public sector with well intentioned employment policies, but little actual support given by her manager. She is now off work on long term sick leave and doubts she will work again, the father is also suffering depression.

They can make it possible for some parents to combine work and caring, but it makes the parents feel they are receiving favours, and if they are not formalised, there will be uneven access across the organisation.

Informal practices can make it possible for some parents to combine work and caring, but it makes the parents feel they are receiving favours, and if they are not formalised, there will be uneven access across the organisation.

*"Yeah, yeah, they pay me. They are pretty good ... It's the foreman at work lets me go, you see. We are a small department, there's only five of us and the others cover while you are away, you see."*

A father whose foreman and colleagues sometimes support his need for an occasional hour off at short notice.

*Yeah, but they might not pay him for it. It depends on what mood his foreman's in as to whether he makes him clock off and clock on again ... or whether they just cover for him."*

(His wife's perception of the same situation.)

### Issue

How flexible is the organisation in terms of where and when work is carried out?

Is the workplace accommodating for domestic crises?

Is work structured around local context, eg, school holidays?

To what extent are the needs of parents of disabled children considered when monitoring all employment practices?

**Notes**

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<b>Awareness</b>	<b>Solution</b>
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<p>How many employees do their work at different times or venues from the rest of their colleagues?</p>	<p>What would it take to increase flexibility concerning where and when work is undertaken?</p>	<p>What are the mechanisms by which employees can negotiate a variation in working hours or venue?</p>
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<p>What channels are there to rapidly arrange for time off or to reorganise your hours or workplace?</p>	<p>What would it take to make the workplace more accommodating of domestic crises?</p>	<p>Can this be done at short notice?</p>
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<p>Do you know what the hours (hrs) and holidays are at the local schools?</p>	<p>Do any of the children of your employees attend schools with different hours or holidays?</p>	<p>Do any of the children of your employees attend schools with different hours or holidays?</p>	<p>Do you know how many employees would be interested in reorganising their working hrs/day to fit in with school hrs and terms?</p>	<p>What would it take to find out who was interested in such reorganising?</p>
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<p>To what extent are the needs of parents of disabled children considered when monitoring all employment practices?</p>	<p>What would it take to consider the needs of employees who are the parents of disabled children in the monitoring of all practices?</p>	<p>Do you know what the needs of working parents of disabled children are in relation to combining the responsibilities of working and caring?</p>
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**ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICES continued**

**Q 4**

**What do you know about the informal practices in your company and the impact this has on employees with disabilities/disabled children?**

Notwithstanding this, our research highlights examples of enabling organisational practices. These practices reflect organisational culture which here directly influenced the employees level of commitment to the organisation.

A school meals supervisor did all the stock control and other paper work while on extended sick leave caring for her terminally ill child. She received full pay for 6 months and then half for a further 6 months. This was well *beyond* what her formal conditions of service allowed, but benefited both the employee (it gave her something else to think about) and her employers (they only had to employ someone to do the cooking).

*"So I did it all at home ... Yeah, yeah, I was still doing all the work I should have done whilst I was there, except the cooking."*

A father whose colleagues and employers support the need for additional leave.

*"It would be a problem in the sense that ... it would mean we would be one short on that particular appliance, but generally speaking they would waive the rules on that."*

Issue
What mechanisms are there for obtaining feedback on the effects of organisational practices on the parents of disabled children?
What would it take to monitor the effects of organisational practices on this group?
Do the structure of jobs allow flexibility on a day to day basis?
What would it take to structure all jobs to allow flexibility on a day to day basis?
How much flexibility is there, to build on basic entitlements, to meet specific needs in a public way?
What would it take to be flexible in this way?
What do you do to encourage good practice?

**Notes**

<b>Awareness</b>		<b>Solution</b>
What are the mechanisms for finding out what working parents of disabled children in your employment need?	Are these mechanisms used, do they work?	
Who has responsibility for monitoring the impact of organisational practices on parents of disabled children, and how could they do this?	What are the mechanisms for generating this information to inform future planning and implementation of organisational policy and practices?	
Why are jobs structured the way they are? (Hrs, venue, responsibilities)	Are these structures to do with tradition rather than getting tasks done?	Who decides how jobs are structured and if they are changed?
Could jobs be restructured so that core tasks or responsibilities are covered by more than one employee?	If not, why not?	Is there any way around those difficulties?
Is there sufficient flexibility for people to offload some of their responsibilities or tasks?	Do you look beyond the presenting problem, in a supportive, sensitive way to the underlying cause of the difficulty?	Do you consider a range of ways help may be possible? (Time off, leave, change of workplace, varying hrs/day, help with transport .)
How could you find out what flexibility would help your employees and improve you efficiency?	Who would find this out?	Who could act on that information, and how?
Are there any mechanisms by which the organisation can share any examples of good practice?	Are these mechanisms used, do they work?	How do you know that?

\* Offering transport to an appointment may mean the employees would need to take less time off.

## ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

**Q 5**

**What do you know about the beliefs of your employees, managers and staff, on flexible working policies and practices and how this effects their implementation?**

Beliefs and values, manifested in organisational practices and assumptions influence employees' feelings of entitlement to the information and flexibility they need to be able to be effective in their jobs in the context of their other commitments.

*"If you want the job and you're enjoying it, you do the hours. I used to work a full night sometimes, when I was in computing, but that's before I had any commitments."*

A mother who does a less demanding/skilled job because she feels she cannot commit herself to long hours, often at short notice, as she did in her former job.

Are people who work reduced hours or flexibly, valued equally to other workers by managers and colleagues?

Please tick	Characteristics you value in employees	Characteristics employees value in colleagues
Good interpersonal skills		
Availability		
Reliability		
Flexibility		
Works long hours to show commitment		
Efficiency		
Other (specify)		

Are there rigid views about where and when work should be done?

What are the managers' beliefs/views on where and when work should be done? **Please tick**

Where	✓	When	✓
Anywhere	.	Any time	.
At office/shop/site	.	During standard work hours	.
		Within (extended) time limits	.
By negotiation with manager	.	By negotiation with manager	.
By negotiation with team/colleagues	.	By negotiation with team/colleagues	.

What would it take to ensure these assumptions are constantly revealed and examined?

What mechanisms are there for monitoring these beliefs and their impact on employment practices?

**Notes**

Do people feel comfortable asking for help when they need it?	How many employees have asked for help/disclosed a need for help in the last year?																			
Who asked for help, and who did they ask? <b>Please put number of male and female employees into each box</b>																				
<b>SOURCE OF HELP</b> <b>(who they asked)</b>	<b>STAFF GROUP</b>																			
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr> <th style="padding: 2px;">Senior manager</th> <th colspan="2" style="padding: 2px;">Middle manager</th> <th colspan="2" style="padding: 2px;">Super-visor</th> <th colspan="2" style="padding: 2px;">Office staff</th> <th colspan="2" style="padding: 2px;">Manual staff</th> </tr> <tr> <th style="padding: 2px;">M</th> <th style="padding: 2px;">F</th> <th style="padding: 2px;">M</th> <th style="padding: 2px;">F</th> <th style="padding: 2px;">M</th> <th style="padding: 2px;">F</th> <th style="padding: 2px;">M</th> <th style="padding: 2px;">F</th> <th style="padding: 2px;">M</th> <th style="padding: 2px;">F</th> </tr> </table>	Senior manager	Middle manager		Super-visor		Office staff		Manual staff		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Senior manager	Middle manager		Super-visor		Office staff		Manual staff													
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F											
Personnel dept																				
Senior manager																				
Middle/line manager																				
Supervisor																				

Organisational culture can influence the operation of particular policies and practices.

*"When they actually told us that C was dying, and I told my supervisor, and it got around ... I felt like a leper when I went to work because nobody spoke to me. You know they just ignored us."*

The father of a terminally ill child who's experience of disclosing his situation at work was less than ideal. The response to his revealing of his need for time off eventually led, with a 'sick note' from his GP, to his being given 3 months leave on statutory minimum sick pay. This was not enough to pay his mortgage and he returned to work.



**ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE continued**

Our research shows that cultural flexibility and openness to new, more flexible ways of working make it possible for parents to fulfil their potential at work.

*"I was due back at 3 months [maternity leave] and she didn't have the operation until she was three and a half months and I talked to everyone at work, and my manager talked to higher authority and they basically said I could take as much time as I needed, and then I said if necessary I could take unpaid leave, but they said, no, just take the time you need."*

A mother who was able to negotiate her time off and continues to work full time, occasionally varying her hrs/days of work to fit in with her child's needs.

Organisational policies, practices and cultures, in part, reflect the broader external context.

Issue
What would it take for parents of disabled children to feel able to ask for help when they need it?
How legitimate is it for men as well as women to ask for help to manage work and caring?
What would it take to legitimise men as well as women asking for the help they need?
Are work and family assumed to be separate and unconnected?
What would it take for links between work and family to be recognised throughout the organisation?

<b>Awareness</b>		<b>Solution</b>
Are men as comfortable as women in asking for help?	What are the mechanisms or channels for requesting or getting help?	When are these systems reviewed?
Do all individual managers or supervisors accept the legitimacy of men as well as women asking for help?	How is conformity across managers and supervisors monitored?	What happens to the results of monitoring?
What mechanisms are there for ensuring that all managers/supervisors accept this as legitimate?	Is there any resistance to these mechanisms?	How is that resistance negotiated?
Is it expected that family responsibilities should be taken into account at work?		

**EXTERNAL CONTENT**

**Q 6**

**What do you know about what services are available in your (company) area to employees who are parents of disabled children?**

Economic conditions, employment policies and practices, along with social policies, influence options open to parents for combining work and caring, and reaching their potential. Uncertainty and change cause parents to retreat into safe, but restricting work and family strategies, leading to difficulties in income maintenance.

*"David works, full stop. That's his priority, is putting food on the table, and I see to the family. It's the only way we can do it, which is why I only work at weekends."*

This is a highly qualified and experienced nurse who now does casual work 'on the nursing bank'.

Furthermore, our research shows that support from the community cannot be assumed and highlights the need for, and examples of, proactive organisational initiatives to ensure the necessary services.

*"We decided that we weren't leaving this area because the services for Elaine were quite good and the other places in employment for him [husband] ... didn't actually provide many services at all."*

Family where father was made redundant but who chose not to move to an area where he had been offered a job because the services there were not as good.

Employees' needs and the services available change over time, and it is important to monitor these changes.

**Issue**

What is known within the organisation about local community services and provisions for working parents of disabled children (eg, child care, after school clubs, holiday periods, etc)?

What would it take to find out about available services for employees locally?

How do employees find out about available local services?

What would it take to assist working parents of disabled children to gain information about local services?

What initiatives have been taken by the organisation to advocate for better local services, develop provision in partnership with external agencies, or provide material support to innovative local initiatives?

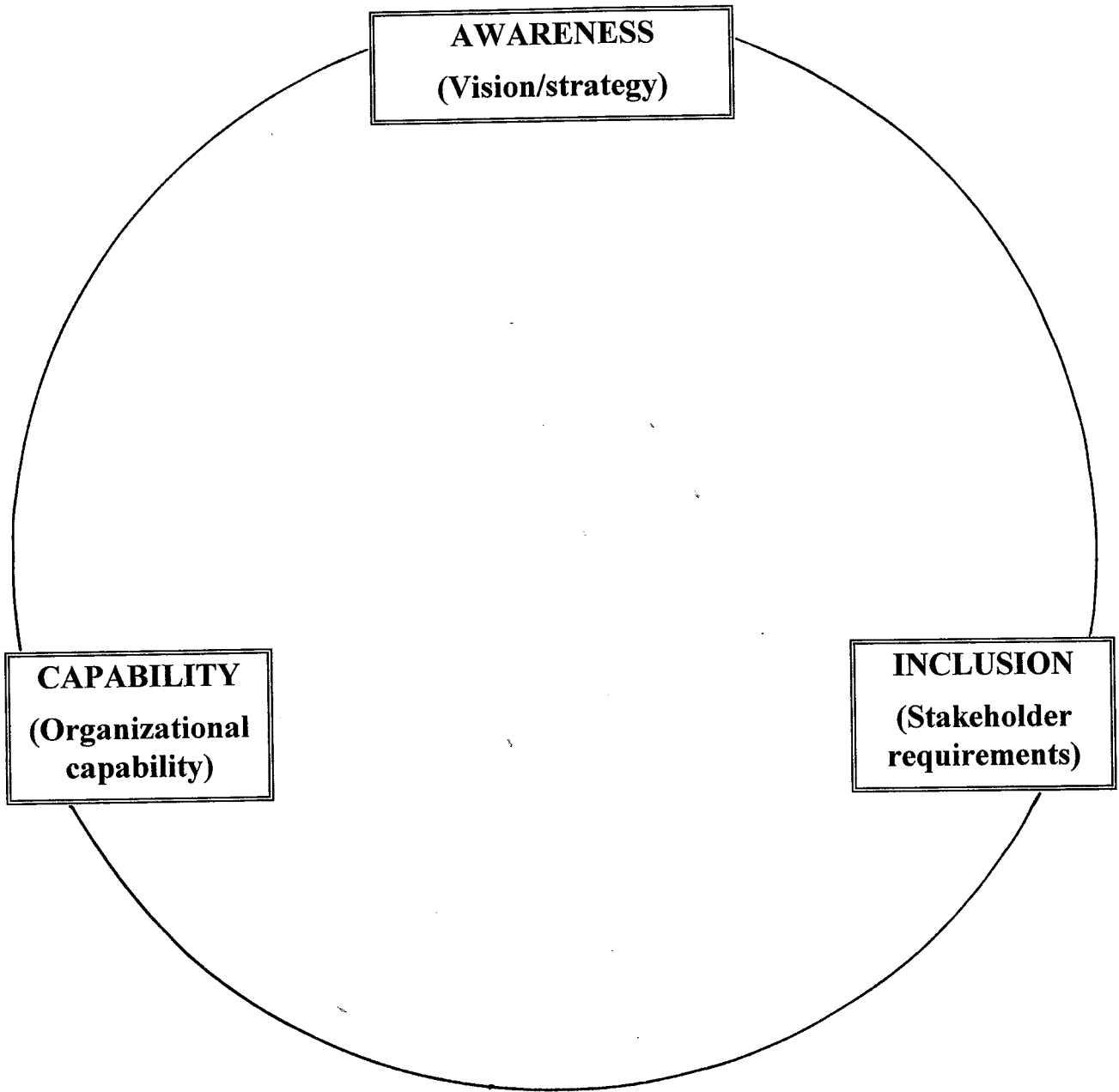
What would it take for the organisation to become more proactive in stimulating the development of adequate local services for its employees caring for disabled children?

<b>Notes</b>
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<b>Awareness</b>	<b>Solution</b>	
Does your company/group/department/store have any information on the availability of local services for working parents of disabled children?		
Are any of these services available <b>locally</b> for disabled children?  <b>Please tick</b>	After school care    _____  Before school care    _____  Holiday playschemes    _____	Nursery places    _____  Competent childminding    _____
How many of your employees would use or already use these types of services?	How might you find this out?	
How could you make this information available to parents of disabled children in your employment (eg, information retrieval service, childcare co-ordinator, etc)?		
	How successful were they?	

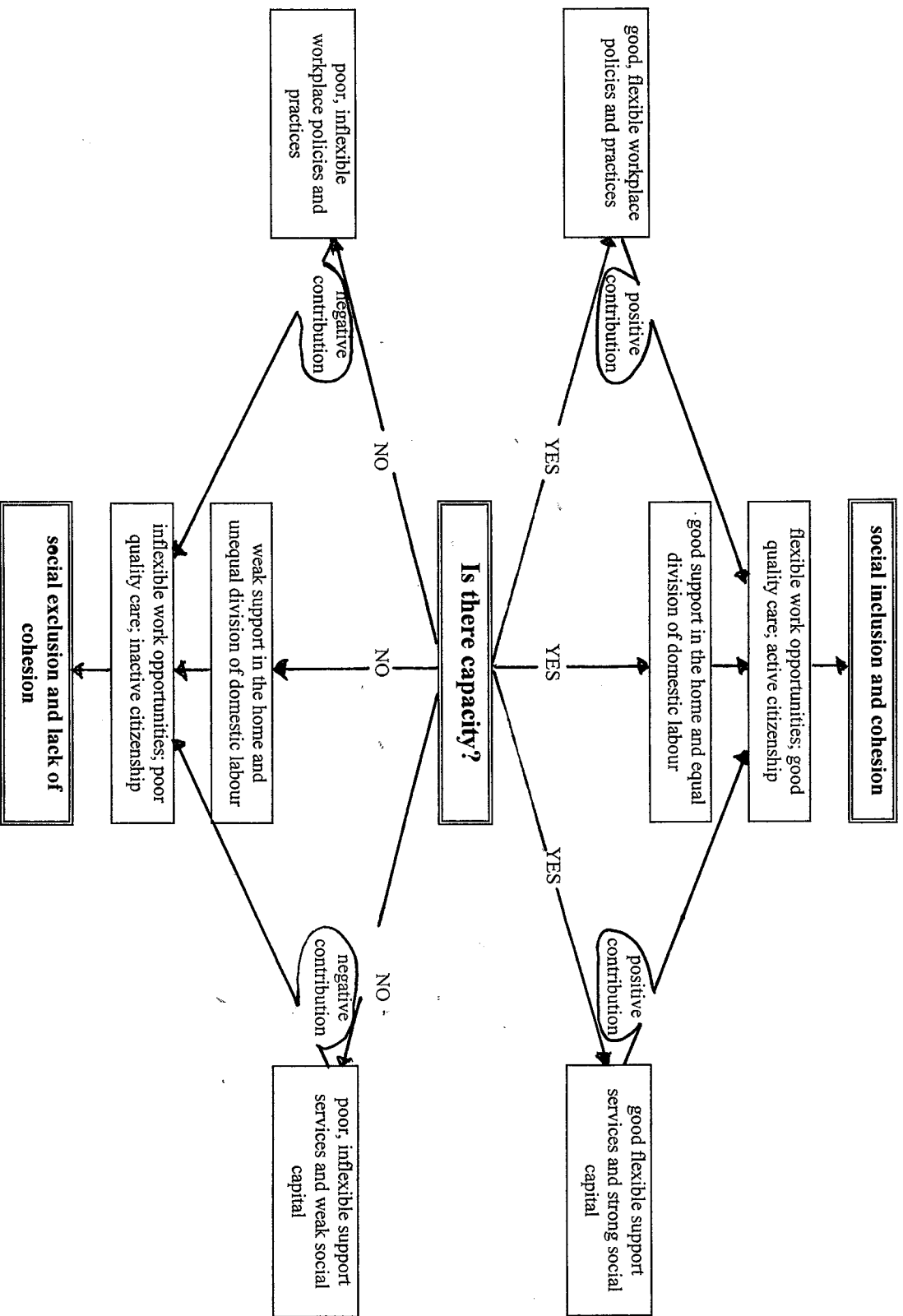
## GLOSSARY

Figure 1: The 'learning loop' ( after Carnall, 1995:6 )

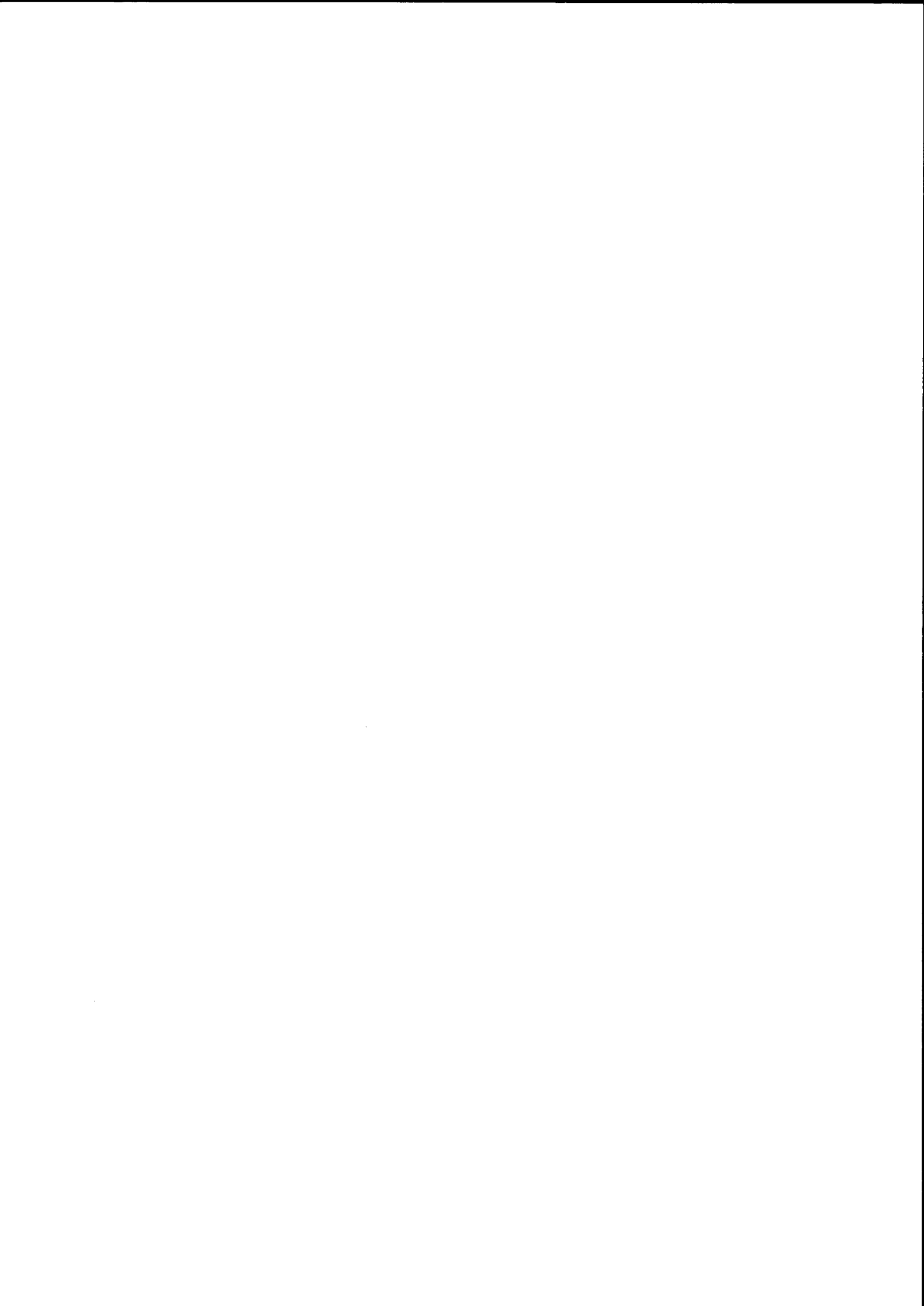




**Figure 2: Capacity building at work, in the family and in the community**







**Figure 3: The process of capacity building and the forming of strategic partnerships for the development of social cohesion**

