Flexi-time for all carers

FLEXIBLE working is coming of age. From next month, carers of adults will have the legal right to request it from their employers in an extension of the right first granted four years ago to 3.6m parents with young children.

Flexible working is considered by many as "career suicide" - it is claimed that this is why men don't queue up to ask for it - but there is a strong lobby for the right to request flexibility to be extended to all of Britain's 29m workers.

Last month, Beverley Hughes, the Minister for Children, said that everyone ought to have the chance to balance their work and personal life and that all jobs should be advertised as part-time, job-share or flexi-time.

So what is the current thinking of employers and employees? How many workers believe flexible working will change their lives for the better and how many managers still worry that the staff member "working from home" is actually lying on the sofa, watching daytime TV and eating chocolate?

Sharon Mullen, 35, director of the human-resources recruitment company Strategi, is among those who support the trend. When Mullen and Strategi co-founder Jo Sellwood started out in 2001, they joined a small band of enlightened companies already offering flexible working, well ahead of legislation.

"We allow people to adapt their work to their lifestyle. I think we create a very adult environment and we get a fantastic return in terms of loyalty and commitment. We know our flexibility has helped us recruit and retain people."

According to the Department of Trade and Industry, there has been a rush of people eager for the kind of flexibility that Mullen has built into work. One in five parents with children under six who are entitled to ask for flexible working have requested it, and while there are no exact figures on how many requests have been granted or rejected, some estimate granting rates as high as 80%.

The Federation of Small Businesses is however exasperated about the extension of a measure many firms already resent. With parents and carers now entitled to ask for flexible working, it asks whether there will be anyone left to actually do the work.

One analyst disagrees: "people associate working from home with being more trusted". He adds that those who spend even an afternoon working from home are much more likely to say they find work stimulating and that they feel they can make a difference in their organisation.

Adapted and abridged from The Sunday Times, March 11, 2007 (416 words)

TRAVAIL A FAIRE PARLE CANDIDAT:

1. COMPREHENSION DE L'ECRIT (8 points)

Rédigez en **français** le compte rendu du texte.

Nombre de mots: 140 (+ ou -10 %). Indiquez le nombre de mots utilisés.

2. EXPRESSION ECRITE (6 points)

Rédigez vos réponses en **anglais** en 140 mots en indiquant le nombre de mots utilisés.

Personally, as an employee, would you ask for flexible working? Why? Why not?

What wouldbe your point of view as an employer?

3. LETTRE COMMERCIALE (6 points)

Rédigez un courrier en **anglais** en respectant les formules et présentation d'usage.

Vous êtes Peter Flanigan, directeur des ventes dans l'entreprise Search &C Co. Située 75 Cranberry Road, Beaconsfield, Bucks HP63MY.

Votre assistante Cindy Crippset qui habite 13 Garden Close, Beaconsfield, Bucks HP6RT, vous a demandé, lors de votre dernier entretien, d'avoir des horaires flexibles suite à la naissance de son troisième enfant.

Vous lui écrivez pour l'informer que:

- Suite à votre entretien, vous comprenez sa demande de temps aménagé, suite à la naissance de son troisième enfant.
- Vous regrettez que sa demande ait été rejetée, car elle ne peut y prétendre ayant travaillé moins de 36 semaines pour votre entreprise.
- Elle a toutefois le droit de faire appel de cette décision. Pour ce faire, elle doit contacter le service du personnel et convenir d'une réunion avec Mrs Paters, la conseillère du personnel.
- L'entreprise souhaite en effet promouvoir la flexibilité du temps de travail et de ce fait un compromis pourrait être accordé sur une base personnelle. Elle peut se faire accompagner par un collègue si elle le souhaite.
- Vous espérez qu'une solution sera trouvée rapidement car vous êtes très satisfait de son travail.