

---

From The Times

May 16, 2007

# Home help at the office

## Parents are getting good advice at seminars held in the workplace

Beatrix Clark

---

When Gillian Nissim, a 35-year-old mother of two, returned to her job in internal communications after the birth of her first son, her employer could not offer her any flexibility, so she began looking into ways of working that accommodated family life. "I soon realised," she says, "that there was a huge potential in connecting employers who need skilled professionals on a part-time, home-based or temporary basis with mums who need flexibility in their jobs so that they can spend maximum time with their children."

In April last year, Gillian set up [www.workingmums.co.uk](http://www.workingmums.co.uk) — a database of jobs, employers and business opportunities that offers alternatives to traditional 9-5, Monday-Fri-day roles. Working from her home in North London, with help from a fellow mum, Julie Harwood, who also works from home, Gillian now has almost 5,000 mums and 600 employers registered on the website. "It's not just about job opportunities," she says. "By sharing news, information, advice and experiences we're building a community of working mums across the country. Dads, carers and other flexible job-seekers are also welcome."

Vanda St Rose, a part-time administrative assistant for a small skincare company, found her job through the website. "As an IT consultant I used to work long hours and travel abroad, neither of which I was prepared to do once I had a child. Soon after my daughter started school I heard about WorkingMums and within a week of inputting my details I came across this position. The hours, 10am to 2pm, are perfect. I never expected to find office work offering this much flexibility," she says.

A former television producer, Zoe Sinclair, 31, also realised that her work life would have to change when she started a family. During her first pregnancy, she found that there was little support in the workplace for parents or parents-to-be. She began organising talks about parenting with experts such as Miriam Stoppard and Penelope Leach, and in 2003 decided to take her seminars into the workplace. This proved a success, both with employers wanting to adopt a more family-friendly approach and with employees juggling work and families.

"The events are attended by employees of all levels. Many people have two jobs, one at work and one at home, and appreciate the support, as well as the chance to meet members of the organisation they wouldn't normally meet," says Zoe, whose company, Parents Matter, gives seminars at companies such as Deutsche Bank, Reuters, McDonald's and the law firm Olswang.

Jackie Winn, a PA at Reuters with a daughter aged 2, has been to six of the seminars. "I'd sit at my desk and feel I was the only person who was struggling. These events make me realise that many other people are dealing with similar issues. I particularly enjoyed one about understanding young children's behaviour," says Jackie.

Gemma Dempsey, a secretary at Olswang with an 18-month-old son, recalls: "We recently had an excellent seminar about first aid. It's good to know that my employer understands my needs as a parent outside work."

[Contact our advertising team](#) for advertising and sponsorship in Times Online, The Times and The Sunday Times.

© Copyright 2007 Times Newspapers Ltd

This service is provided on Times Newspapers' [standard Terms and Conditions](#). Please read our [Privacy Policy](#). To inquire about a licence to reproduce material from Times Online, The Times or The Sunday Times, click [here](#). This website is published by a member of the News International Group. News International Limited, 1 Virginia St, London E98 1XY, is the holding company for the News International group and is registered in England No 81701. VAT number GB 243 8054 69.