



Changing Times News

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The Changing Times E-bulletin is the TUC's online news service on work/life balance issues. It is written by the [Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion](#) and edited by the TUC. Comments should be sent to [Nicola Smith](#). If you have stories that you would like us to include in this bulletin please email [Nicola](#) directly. To subscribe or unsubscribe from this bulletin please visit the [TUC website](#).

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Legislation and regulation

Equality Bill progress

The Equality Bill continues its [progress through Parliament](#), and will shortly reach the end of committee stage, which has involved detailed parliamentary scrutiny of the Bill. The committee has heard evidence from a wide range of organisations including the [TUC](#).

The TUC welcomed the Equality Bill and noted its support for the overall approach taken to consolidating the existing discrimination laws and to levelling up and improving protection in some areas. Concerns were also raised with the drafting of some of the specific provisions. The TUC noted its disappointment that bolder steps have not been taken to ensure equal pay for equal work between men and women.

The TUC has been supporting the development of the role of union equality representatives in the workplace. Unlike other union representatives, including union learning reps and safety reps, equality reps have no right to paid time off to do their duties and to be trained. The TUC will therefore be seeking an amendment to the Bill to put union equality representatives on the same statutory footing as other union representatives. The TUC believe that this would make an important contribution to helping employers get things right in the workplace and avoid costly litigation.

Paternity leave proposals face delays

Plans to allow fathers to benefit from up to six months' additional paternity leave if the mother returns to work before the end of her maternity

leave entitlement period have been scrapped for now, according to a report in the [Daily Telegraph](#). Previous announcements suggested that the changes might come into force in October 2009 and apply to fathers of babies due from April 2010.

According to a spokesperson for the then Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, a possible date for the changes has not been confirmed. But the official stated that: "It is only right that in the current economic climate we look afresh at the costs and terms of the new regulations with the caveat of regulatory burden."

The TUC has voiced strong opposition to the potential delay in implementing these proposals. In March at the TUC Women's conference, TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber said: "Some say that businesses cannot afford family-friendly policies. But we've heard this argument before and it's always proven to be false. The right to request can't be that costly if nearly nine in ten employers claim to operate flexible working practices. Family-friendly legislation enables women to continue their careers after having kids. Our economy needs their skills more than ever to get through the recession.

If the Government is serious about closing the pay gap and ending child poverty it must end these U-turn rumours and re-commit to extending family-friendly legislation in April 2010."

European Parliament failure to improve maternity protection

Strong opposition by conservative and liberal groups in the European Parliament meant a vote on proposals of the European Commission to improve the protection of pregnant workers and young mothers in Europe did not take place in May as planned. The issue was referred back to the responsible committee in the Parliament. [The European Trade Union Confederation](#) (ETUC) has reported its strong disappointment with this outcome.

The report on the Commission proposals,

prepared by socialist MEP Edite Estrela, included provisions designed to improve the health and safety protection for pregnant workers, as well as to improve the conditions of maternity leave.

The ETUC has criticised the conservatives in the Parliament as unwilling to take action in favour of women workers' rights and reconciliation of work and family life.

BIS consultation on implementation of Pregnant Workers Directive

The new Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) has been undertaking a consultation into the impact in the UK of the European Commission's proposals for a revised Pregnant Workers Directive. The main proposals for the Directive are: to extend minimum maternity leave from 14 to 18 weeks (UK provision is already in excess of this period); to extend compulsory maternity leave from two weeks to six weeks after birth; and to provide women with an entitlement to full pay during maternity leave (which a minimum level of pay that is at least equal to sick pay).

Further details are available on the [BIS website](#).

Bill to eradicate minimum wage removed

During May the Employment Opportunities Bill, forwarded by Conservative MP Christopher Chope, which includes legislation to do away with the minimum wage, was withdrawn from the legislation list, according to [Wage Concern](#). The Bill is due to appear back in front of the House on the 16th October, which is the last date for Private Members' Bills to be read during the Parliamentary Session. The order of bills to be read on that day hasn't been set yet, but it may be that the Bill will be relatively low on the list. On the submission of his Private Member's Bill Christopher Chope told the Commons that employers and employees should be allowed to 'freely negotiate' their own level of remuneration during a tough economic climate.

Dave Prentis, General Secretary of Unison, said: "I am delighted that Christopher Chope and his Tory cabal have failed in their attempt to turn

the clock back to the days of poverty pay, where workers are exploited by unscrupulous bosses".

John Hannett, General Secretary of USDAW, said: "The minimum wage provides income protection and security for millions of workers. It stops unscrupulous employers from driving down wages across the board....I urge anyone who cares about the protection of our workforce to log on to <http://www.wageconcern.com> and sign the petition to save our minimum wage."

Government announces review of Working Time Directive's effect on junior doctor training

[A review](#) into the quality of training for junior doctors in view of the implementation of the European Working Time Directive is being carried out by the Department of Health. The review will consider the concerns raised by some professionals that the introduction of a 48-hour working week may have a detrimental effect on junior doctors' training, particularly on the training they receive while at work.

The Health Secretary has asked Medical Education England, the independent advisory board on medical training, to commission the post-graduate Medical Education and Training Board, the independent regulator of standards of training, to work with stakeholders to identify areas where changes to training might be necessary as a consequence of reduced working hours.

Research finds support for legislation on remote working

[A poll carried out in the Guardian](#) asked readers whether the Government should force employers to increase remote working arrangements, to which 75 per cent agree and 25 per cent disagree. The poll was carried out in connection with National Work from Home Day which took place on 15 May. The day was intended to promote better work/life balance and help employers understand that working from home could improve productivity rather than reduce it.

[Research from BT Business](#), also released in

connection with this national day, found that over half of employers questioned were working from home more often since the financial crisis began. The need to save money was the main reason for the majority (88 per cent) of respondents to conduct their working day from the comfort of their living room, bedroom or garden shed.

Nearly two-thirds (60 per cent) report they are financially better off because they have the flexibility to work from home while almost half of respondents believe they save a significant £10-£20 per day on travel by working from home, with many confirming additional savings from not having to buy lunch and refreshments.

FAMILIES AND CARERS

Best employers for working families revealed

[Working Families](#), a work/life balance charity, has launched a list of the best family-friendly employers from the past three decades.

Winners have shown leadership in one or more of the following areas: flexible working, childcare provision, maternity and/or paternity policy and help with eldercare responsibilities.

The employers (listed alphabetically, not ranked), which have been selected from a final shortlist by the panel of expert judges, are:

- Accenture (UK)
- Addleshaw Goddard LLP
- American Express UK
- B&Q
- Britannia Building Society
- BT
- Centrica
- Ford Motor Company
- Halcrow
- Hertfordshire County Council

- Jaguar Land Rover
- KPMG
- Lloyds TSB Bank
- Metropolitan Police Service
- Ministry of Justice
- National Health Service, represented by Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust
- National Grid
- Nationwide Building Society

In the small and medium enterprise sector were Eden McCallum, Happy, Loop Customer Management and Wragge & Co.

Parenting-based management training introduced

A large catering company, Aramak, is offering a [coaching course](#) for managers designed to help them compare and contrast parenting with management styles, according to Personnel Today. Participants will learn how to boost the confidence and performance of staff in the workplace and family at home. Trainees will also compare their parenting and management styles and share best – and worst – practice case studies.

The scheme will be offered to Aramak’s senior and middle management employees, about 200 staff in all. HR Director of Aramak, Robbie Wheeler said:

“In the past we’ve been provided a lot of training for our female staff like those returning from maternity leave, so we wanted to address the balance.”

“Many employees in our business look after children, their own or otherwise, and this training is practical on many levels. We think this will result in improved productivity and engagement, a better work/life balance, and we

also think it will cut down on absence rates.”

Working parents unaware of benefits they could claim

Almost half of all first-time parents are anxious about their finances, yet most have not heard of Child Benefit, or any other benefits they are entitled to claim, according to [a survey](#) by the union USDAW.

To coincide with its 'Supporting Parent and Carers Spotlight Day', which took place on 3 June, USDAW published early findings of a survey into how working parents are coping with the impact of the recession. The survey found that working parents were almost twice as likely to be concerned about money as those without children or caring responsibilities.

John Hannett, USDAW General Secretary, said: “2009 is proving to be a difficult time for many of our members, not least for working parents. Our survey has confirmed that almost one in two working parents is worried about money. And yet 75 per cent of our members who are parents and 60 per cent of members who are carers tell us that they aren’t confident that they are claiming everything they’re entitled to. And they’re right – most are unaware of the benefits that are out there and that are meant to help parents with the additional costs that inevitably come with starting a family.”

Workplace issues

One in nine part-time workers cannot find full-time jobs according to TUC

One in nine (11.2 per cent) people working part-time are only doing so because they cannot find full-time jobs, according to a [TUC analysis](#) of official statistics.

The TUC has found that the number of involuntary part-time workers has increased sharply over the past two years to 829,000, the highest figure since May 1994. The growth of involuntary part-time work reflects the lengths that people are going to in order to stay in work, says the TUC.

The lack of full-time work is demonstrated in Jobcentres across the UK, with government statistics showing that over one in four (27 per cent) vacancies is for less than 16 hours a week. The majority of involuntary part-time workers is female (451,000 women compared with 378,000 men) reflecting the fact that around 80 per cent of the UK’s part-time workforce are women. However, one in five (21.2 per cent) men working part-time are doing so because he cannot secure full-time unemployment, compared with fewer than one in ten (9.6 per cent) part-time women.

Work sharing: a good strategy to preserve jobs during recession, says ILO

Work sharing could be an effective response to the global jobs crisis, according to a new [ILO policy brief](#) prepared for discussion at the International Labour Conference in Geneva from 3-19 June 2009.

In an online interview with ILO, working time expert Jon Messenger said: “Work sharing is a relevant response to the global jobs crisis because it is a measure designed to share the burdens of a difficult economic situation – not only among workers, but between workers, employers and governments as well.”

He added: “Research by the German Institute for Employment Research on the Kurzarbeit scheme – currently the largest work sharing programme in the world – indicates that during 2002-03 two-thirds (67.1 per cent) of all companies participating in the scheme maintained the same level of employment in their establishment, and seven per cent actually increased employment by hiring new employees. Further, work sharing programmes tend to be highly countercyclical, expanding during economic downturns and then declining as the economy improves.”

Employers opt for short-time working to avoid redundancies

Various EU governments and companies are looking for alternatives to redundancies, choosing short-time working, paid or unpaid sabbaticals and ‘pay for jobs’ clauses in restructuring agreements, according to a new

report from [Eurofound](#).

Many EU governments have short-time compensation programmes in place whereby employers can apply for temporary state assistance to top up the wages of those working reduced hours. Generally, these programmes are conditional and achieved through negotiated agreements between the social partners, subject to specific market conditions and declines in sales levels. Such measures are mainly found in the UK and Ireland according to the report, since company-level initiatives involving both wage and time flexibility are more likely in countries where there are no collective frameworks of agreed working time flexibility.

In the UK TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber has pledged to urge the Westminster government to follow Cardiff's lead and introduce a fund for business forced to move to short-time working, similar to the Assembly's successful Pro-Act scheme.

Addressing delegates at the Wales Annual TUC conference in May, Brendan Barber said: "Here in Wales, you're showing that devolution can really deliver, with the ProAct short-time working and training scheme providing up to £4,000 of support per worker to struggling firms."

BT reduces numbers working from home

BT has called for 200 of its work-from-home staff to come back to the office, [according to Personnel Today](#). The decision was made to help ensure that BT could 'better monitor' workers as it seeks to improve the division's performance and generate maximum profit from it. A BT spokesperson explained that the decision affected only a small number of staff who were working at the 'front line of customer services' and would be in a better position to help the group's multinational clients if they were at terminals in the office. He added that this did not affect their general approach to flexible working.

Part-time teacher treated less favourably than full-time

The Employment Appeal Tribunal has held that the claimant's part-time status does not have to be the sole reason for the less favourable treatment in order for him or her to succeed in a claim under the Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000, [reports XpertHR](#).

The case on which this judgement is based regards a part-time teacher who felt she was treated less favourably than her named comparator in the case, a full-time teacher, as she was not paid for preparation time whereas the full-time teacher was. Although in this case the claim was lost, the Tribunal went on to say that the individual's part-time status does not have to be the sole reason for the less favourable treatment under the Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000. While part-time work must be the effective and predominant cause of the less favourable treatment, it need not be the only cause.

RMT suspends industrial action following a breakthrough on compulsory Sunday working

During May [RMT strike action](#) by conductors on London Midland was suspended. Following negotiations, it was agreed that the long-standing agreement on voluntary Sunday working would be extended to all conductor staff on London Midland and would be honoured by the company. The settlement on Sunday working will be trialled until August 30th, and RMT are seeking agreement that the voluntary Sunday working arrangements will remain in force beyond this period.

Bob Crow, RMT General Secretary, said: "We are pleased to be able to announce this important breakthrough on the key issues of voluntary Sunday working and talks on harmonisation and I want to pay tribute to our members who have stood firm throughout this dispute."

Four police forces ignore recommendations of a 'well-being at work' census

The [Police Federation](#) has named and shamed forces that have ignored recommendations to improve the lives of senior officers. Inspectors

and Chief Inspectors are being let down by some chief officers as attention is not being given to addressing their well-being at work, according to the Federation.

The findings of a ‘Well-Being at Work’ census, published in May 2008 by the Inspectors’ Central Committee, provided clear indication that improvements needed to be made to the working lives of officers tasked with managing frontline policing. The Federation’s recommendations were ignored by four forces – Metropolitan, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire and Thames Valley.

Paul Ginger, Chairman of the Inspectors’ Central Committee, said: “Chief Inspectors and Inspectors have a strong commitment to their profession, the demands of the role and the extensive hours they have to work. However, over a period of time, such strong levels of commitment are unlikely to be sustainable, if excessive workloads and lack of work/life balance prevail.”

“A year ago we made it clear that, in order to maintain resilience in the long-term, it is essential that Chief Inspectors and Inspectors see improvements in their working life and have the full support and commitment from all forces throughout England and Wales to implement the recommendations that do make a difference, as the majority of forces have already demonstrated.”

Carers meet MPs to demonstrate need for better support

Working carers have met with MPs to show that they need better support. The meeting, organised by the union [USDAW](#), took place at the House of Commons on Carers Day, 9 June. The union submitted an early day motion, tabled by Michael Foster, Labour MP for Hastings and Rye, thanking carers for their invaluable contribution to society and calling on the Government to provide them with more financial help.

Poonit Deepala, a carer and USDAW member, said: “It is emotionally and physically draining

having to work whilst looking after two ill parents. Working all week and then caring all weekend leaves me no time to myself. But I need to work to have enough money to live. If the limit on earnings was increased for the Carers’ Allowance, the extra money would make a real difference to my finances.”

John Hannett, USDAW General Secretary, added:

“Currently Carers’ Allowance only pays £53.10 a week for a minimum of 35 hours’ caring, equivalent to just £1.52 per hour. Many USDAW members combine their caring responsibilities with work, which can be physically exhausting as well as limiting how much they can earn. We urge the Government to bring forward the pledge in the National Strategy for Carers that, by 2018, ‘carers will be supported so that they are not forced into financial hardship by their caring role’. A lot has been done but there is much still to do.”

Film construction crews to keep paid bank holidays

Construction crews working on film sets have successfully fought to keep their paid bank holidays, on top of statutory holidays, according to the media and entertainment union, [BECTU](#). Film producers had attempted to include bank holidays in construction crews’ statutory leave entitlement, although previously, bank holidays were taken in addition to annual leave.

Assistant General Secretary of BECTU, Martin Spence, said: “When you cut through the complexity of legal changes and statutory entitlements, at root this was a straightforward issue: members saw a long-standing right being taken away, and they weren’t having it. They stood firm and this is a great result.”

Equality and discrimination

TUC fears recession is having unfair impact on disabled workers

Concerns that the recession is having a disproportionately large impact on disabled workers have been discussed at the annual [TUC Disability Conference](#) in London.

Previous recessions have shown that disabled workers can face discrimination and unfair selection for redundancy, says the TUC. With fewer chances of securing alternative work, the union organisation believes it is vital to keep disabled workers in employment during the economic downturn.

Speaking at the conference, TUC Deputy General Secretary, Frances O’Grady said: “As in previous recessions it will be disabled workers who will be disproportionately affected: by funding pressures on key services, with the public finances now deep in the red; by discrimination during redundancy selection, based perhaps on absence records; and by an even greater reluctance on the part of employers to meet their obligations towards disabled staff.”

Lloyds bank faces discrimination claim from single mum

A senior Lloyd’s banker is seeking £70,000 in compensation, claiming that her manager discriminated against her because she was a single mother, according to [Personnel Today](#). Alison Weekes alleged that her boss at Lloyds TSB told her she was not “truly committed” to her job compared with her single male colleagues. She has also claimed that her manager told her there was no such thing as a work/life balance.

The banker claimed unfair dismissal from her position as an audit manager after she had complained about the comments. Her claims for compensation are for sex and racial discrimination, victimisation, and injury to feelings.

In legal papers submitted to the tribunal, Weekes said she made it clear in her job interview that she had no previous experience of audit work, and was assured she would receive proper training. However, she said she received no support or training from her managers, and was told that she wouldn’t be able to put in the same hours that her single colleagues did because of her childcare responsibilities.

Lloyds has denied all Weekes’s allegations,

asserting that she was rightly dismissed for poor performance at the end of her probationary period. The legal papers also said: “The claimant was provided with training and support to assist her in learning her new role as an auditor in the same way as other new joiners.”

New Zealand Government abolishes Pay and Employment Equity Unit

[The New Zealand Council of Trade Unions](#) has criticised the decision by the National Party Government to abolish the Department of Labour’s Pay and Employment Equity Unit. The Council argued that the decision showed a disregard for the thousands of women workers whose work is undervalued simply because they are women. It added that the decision destroys hopes that the unfairness in women’s pay will be rectified soon.

CTU President Helen Kelly said: “This unit has been absolutely core to assisting government departments, as the largest employers of women in the country, to identify discriminatory employment practices and take steps to eliminate them. These steps have been as simple as making starting rates of pay transparent and allowing flexible hours of work. Without the unit it is likely all these initiatives will stop.”

Flexible labour not so beneficial for migrant workers

Migrant workers filling agency, seasonal and temporary jobs in the UK remain vulnerable to low pay, long hours, poor health and safety conditions, and workplace discrimination according to a report by the [Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility](#) (ECCR).

ECCR’s report, ‘Vulnerable Migrant Workers: The Responsibility of Business’ reveals the vulnerability of migrant workers in areas of the domestic economy where low-skilled flexible labour is concentrated: care, cleaning, construction, hospitality and catering, food production, manufacturing and retail. The report compares the policies and practices of nine food production, manufacturing and supermarket companies towards migrant workers, particularly in their supply chains. Companies in the survey include: Associated

British Foods, Kerry Group, Morrison's, Northern Foods, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Unilever.

Weaknesses in the rights enforcement system mean that abuses may go undetected and unaddressed, the report also finds. Paul Whitehouse, Chair of the Gangmasters Licensing Authority commented: "This report highlights how vulnerable migrant workers are and recognises that better enforcement of existing laws is required."

Research finds UK behind rest of Europe on short-time working subsidies

[Union-funded research](#) into government subsidies for short-time working has shown that while the UK government has consistently opposed their introduction elsewhere these schemes have been expanded in their scope and the level of support they provide has been increased. Germany, France, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands all operate such schemes with the amount received by workers on short time ranging from 60 per cent to 100 per cent of their previous net pay.

In France, for example, unions at both Renault and PSA Peugeot Citroën have been able to persuade their employers to increase the amount paid to those working short-time to 100 per cent of their net salary during shut downs. The deal is not supported by all unions; CGT has refused to sign the agreements, arguing in the case of Peugeot Citroën that the training was poor.

Healthy workplaces

London Living Wage increased to £7.60 per hour

London mayor Boris Johnson has increased the London Living Wage by 15p to £7.60 per hour. The rise represents an increase of 2 per cent on last year's figure, and an overall increase of 13.4 per cent since the London Living Wage was introduced in 2005 at £6.70 per hour. At least 29 organisations across London, including the Greater London Authority (GLA) group and private sector employers such as Barclays Bank,

have implemented the wage since its launch in 2005. This increase will continue to apply to all GLA group staff and to all new contracts for staff working on GLA sites, such as caterers, security guards and cleaners.

Megan Dobney, Regional Secretary for the [Southern and Eastern TUC](#), said: "The robust methodology that determines its annual uprating remind us that food and fuel inflation for lower-paid workers run much higher than some inflation indicators show. The TUC very much welcomes this increase in the London Living Wage."

Flexible working identified as most likely to explain positive work/life balance

[A research paper](#) has identified time flexibility as the most likely factor to account for a positive work-life balance. The study, 'A multivariate analysis of work/life balance outcomes from a large-scale telework programme', demonstrated that controlling working hours was the most important ability for sampled teleworkers to achieve positive work/life balance. Gender or having dependent children was not found to be significant. The research was published in the journal 'New Technology, Work and Employment'.

New sickness absence research published

Sickness absence currently accounts for 3.6 per cent of working time in the UK, representing 8.1 days per employee per year, according to IRS benchmarking research published [on XpertHR](#). The research, based on 379 sets of statistics from a broad sample of private and public sector employers, provides a breakdown of absence rates by sector, region and occupation.

Virtual meetings promoted by flexible working campaigners

Flexible working campaigners encouraged companies across the UK to take part in meetings over the internet or down telephone lines as part of national [Work Wise](#) week.

Phil Flaxton, Chief Executive of Work Wise UK, said: "In these straitened times, holding virtual

meetings represents a great opportunity to cut costs and boost productivity. If every business aimed for just ten additional virtual meetings a year, they could save a staggering £14 billion collectively.”

This was the fourth year that Work Wise Week has been run by Work Wise UK, an initiative supported by organisations including the TUC, CBI and British Chambers of Commerce, which promotes smarter working practices, such as flexible, remote and mobile working, and working from home. It aims to give half the working population, some 14 million people, the opportunity to work smarter by 2011.

Job-share site for civil servants launched

The government has launched a new jobs site to help civil service employees find job-share partners. The site aims to encourage flexible working among men at HM Treasury. Speaking at the launch, Cabinet Secretary Sir Gus O’Donnell said: “As one in five of the civil service work part-time, [the job-share notice board] is a brilliant scheme that allows the civil service to retain the best talent.”

[FDA](#) National Officer with responsibility for equalities Ro Marsh said: “The FDA is delighted that Jonathan Lepper had the personal commitment to get this civil service-wide initiative off the ground. We are particularly pleased at the level of support for the project and hope that the notice board is found to be useful and effective.”

On the site, potential job-sharers enter their details (name, grade, experience etc.) find possible matches, meet up and, if they can agree terms, apply for jobs either in one of their home departments or in response to cross-Whitehall adverts.

Flexible working in the science sector in the spotlight

The Science for Careers group, launched by the then Department for Innovation University and Skills as part of a project to help change jobseekers’ perceptions of the sector, has set out

to look at flexible working as a way of increasing diversity. Diana Garnham, chair of the new group and chief executive of the Science Council, [told Personnel Today](#) that the group will look at how to raise the profile of scientists and introduce more flexible working opportunities.

Garnham added: “The science community needs to reflect the diversity in the wider society. It’s definitely not doing that at the moment. We don’t have enough women at the top and we don’t have the ethnic balance right. Flexible working has to be looked at, but it’s difficult in science as people have to run labs.”