



Changing Times News

Number 108 Sept 2009

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](#).

In this issue:

- **LEGISLATION AND REGULATION**
- Two amendments introduced to Equality Bill
- New rights for families announced by Government
- Northern Ireland Executive proposes greater rights to training at work
- Rest break legislation important for workers' health and safety
- **FAMILIES AND CARERS**
- New DCFS Guidance on Employing Children
- Parents of disabled children face problems in finding summer childcare
- Unemployment among single mother families in the US
- **WORKPLACE ISSUES**
- Impact of taxes and benefits during recession: Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Some improvements in employment rights awareness
- New workplace rights advice line for vulnerable workers launched by Government
- Millions unaware of flexible working rights for carers
- Apprentice minimum wages: submissions to the Low Pay Commission
- One tenth of average earnings met by Jobseekers Allowance
- Average real pay increases fall in EU member states in 2008
- One third of Europeans fear losing their job during recession
- London Midland - Sunday working
- Unions take action against precarious employment
- **EQUALITY AND DISCRIMINATION**
- Admitting to mental health problems could make it hard to find work
- Work-life balance is the most popular equality issue for workers
- Equality and Human Rights commission launches 09-10 business plan
- Consultation on gender pay reporting
- Welsh minister wants to hear views on equality duties
- Finance sector gender pay gap: women earn around 80 per cent less than men in bonuses
- New report on gender wage gap released by the Institute for Women's Policy Research
- Australian alliance seeks action on gender pay gap: women workers still short

changed

- **New Zealand: Pay Equity Challenge Coalition launched**
- **Women under-represented in highest level positions**
- **Everyone thinks they live in 'middle Britain'**
- **HEALTHY WORKPLACES**
- **Boorman review of health of NHS workforce - interim report released**
- **Mental health employment boost**
- **New release from European Commission on work-related health problems**
- **Unite calls time on long hours culture of pub managers**
- **Australian workers call for stronger health and safety laws**
- **DCSF: teacher' workloads diary survey 2009**
- **Staff who are sick on holiday can 'reallocate' annual leave**

for combined race and sex discrimination.

The Equality Bill will now go to the 'report stage' in the House of Commons, when all MPs will be given the opportunity to debate and propose further amendments to the bill.

The Bill should come into force by Autumn 2010, depending on its progress through Parliament. Autumn 2010 is the earliest the earliest estimated start date following Royal assent.

New rights for families announced by Government

The Government is proposing to change the ways in which parents are able to use maternity and paternity leave, the [Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has announced](#).

The Government will consult shortly on new regulations that will allow mothers to transfer the last six months of their maternity leave to the father, with three months paid (as per existing rules on maternity pay). This new provision will be available during the second six months of the child's life and would be an option if the mother has maternity leave outstanding.

In Government state that in order to give employers time to adjust, the scheme will be introduced for parents of children due on or after 3 April 2011. Estimated take-up of additional paternity leave is less than six per cent and it is calculated that take up will affect 0.7 per cent of, or one in every 137, small businesses.

LEGISLATION AND REGULATION

Two amendments introduced to Equality Bill

[Two new amendments](#) to the Equality Bill were introduced on the day that the bill successfully underwent scrutiny by committee MPs in the House of Commons. The first ensures that treating a woman unfairly at work, in shops and in public services because of pregnancy or maternity is unlawful and cannot be justified, while the second inserts a 'dual discrimination' clause to protect people who face discrimination because of two 'protected characteristics'. This would mean, for example, that a black woman who is discriminated against because her employer has a particular stereotyped attitude towards black women – as opposed to black men or white women – could bring a single claim

Northern Ireland Executive proposes greater rights to training at work

The [Northern Ireland Executive](#) has launched a public consultation on plans to grant workers the right to ask their employer for time away from normal duties to train, along with extending the right to request flexible working to cover wider groups. The UK Government has already pledged to introduce the right to training across Great Britain. Responses to the consultation must be submitted by 23 October 2009.

Rest break legislation important for workers'

health and safety

[The New Zealand Council of Trade Unions](#) (CTU) has expressed disappointment and concern at the New Zealand Government’s plans to amend the recently passed rest and meal break legislation. “Many workers have benefitted from this law which National voted for at the time because of the unarguable need for it,” said CTU President, Helen Kelly.

“To now exclude sole charge workers, for example, would see many people returning to the very unsatisfactory situation of working long hours without any break. While we understand the issues around regional airports, we do believe the parties could work this matter out in a sensible way within the new law and should be supported to do so rather than deny large groups of workers what many considered was already a standard work right.”

FAMILIES AND CARERS

New DCSF Guidance on Employing Children

The Department for Children, Schools and Families has produced [a guide on employing children](#), covering everything from the types of work children can (and cannot) do, through to the number of hours they can be required to work, to specific health and safety requirements. Recommendations regarding the hours children can work include:

- A child may not be employed before 7.00 am or after 7.00 pm.
- A child may not be employed before the end of the school day on any day on which the child has to go to school. But this rule can be, and frequently is, relaxed by bylaws to permit one hour’s employment in the morning before school starts. It is important to check with the local authority where the employment is to take place what its bylaws say about employment on school days.

- A child may not be employed for more than two hours on a day on which he or she has to go to school, or on a Sunday.
- A child under 15 may not be employed for more than five hours on any day from Monday to Saturday on which he or she does not have to go to school.
- A child aged 15 or over may not be employed for more than eight hours on a weekday on which he or she does not have to go to school.
- A child may not be employed for more than 12 hours in any week if that week includes a day on which the child has to go to school.
- A child under 15 may not be employed for more than 25 hours in any week where that week does not include a day on which the child has to go to school.
- A child aged 15 or over may not be employed for more than 35 hours in any week where that week does not include a day on which the child has to go to school.

The TUC continues to work with DCSF to explore ways in which the enforcement of children’s rights at work can be improved.

Parents of disabled children face problems in finding summer childcare

Only a third of parents of disabled children were satisfied with the summer holiday care that was available for their children, [according to a survey by Working Families](#). The research looked into whether parents were happy with the care that was available for their children during the summer and the effect on parents’ ability to work. Members of the charity’s UK-wide Waving not Drowning network were contacted for the research.

Parents face a postcode lottery when looking for

childcare and many find nothing that meets the needs of their children. Over half of respondents who had access to information about summer childcare said it was not helpful to them.

The problems are resulting in a serious impact on these parents' ability to work. A quarter of the parents took unpaid leave to cover weeks where there was no childcare available. Of those surveyed, 39 per cent felt their responsibilities prevented them progressing in their careers or limited their ability to change jobs.

Unemployment among single mother families in the US

Women who maintain families without a spouse present are almost twice as likely as married men to be unemployed in the US, according to [a new study from the Institute for Women's Policy Research](#) (citing data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics for August 2009).

In the US, one in every eight women (12.2 percent) who are the sole breadwinners in their families is unemployed compared with one in every 16 married men.

Seasonally unadjusted data show that unemployment for the US labour force as a whole has increased by only one percentage point since April 2009. In contrast unemployment grew substantially more for women who maintain families (2.2 percentage points). The report highlights increases in unemployment in the summer months for both single women who maintain families and married women. The report's authors explain that these increases are not surprising, since many women have children (and have a disproportionate share of the care of them) and most children are out of school then. Mothers may be unable to find jobs compatible with their children's needs and child care availability (to be counted as unemployed, people must be without a job and looking for work).

WORKPLACE ISSUES

Impact of taxes and benefits during recession: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has [published a study](#) comparing the impact of taxes and benefits in 1979, 1997 and 2008.

The study found:

- Benefits for children were eroded between 1979 and 1997 but have become more generous since 1999. This increase is aimed at low-income families, can discourage working longer hours and does not hold its value over time, according to the report.
- Average-earning families have experienced very little difference in taxes and benefits over time between 1979, 1997 and 2008. Gains from lower direct taxes were taken back by higher indirect taxes and less generous benefits, particularly state pensions.
- Higher-earning families benefitted more in 1997 and 2008 compared with 1979 and had the best overall outcomes in 1997 because of lower taxation.

The study found that low-income families had fared worse overall, as when indirect taxation is considered recent gains in benefits are minimal.

It concluded that the 1979 system provided levels of provision for low and middle incomes that were not only generous at the time, but designed to last a lifetime. 1997 favoured the highest incomes most and the poorest least. While by 2008 much of 1997's worst effects on the poor family lifetime had been redressed this was only for people who work continually and are never sick or unemployed.

Low earners most likely to lose out during recession

Low earners are the most at risk during the recession, [a low earners audit](#), published by the Resolution Foundation, has found. In comparison with benefit claimants and high earners, low earners are in a more vulnerable position, according to 'Squeezed: the low earners

audit'. The report finds that low earners face diminished employment prospects because they are so heavily reliant on an increasingly unstable financial market. Industries like retail and catering, where low wage employment is characteristic have significantly suffered over the last few years, and redundancies in low-earning industries, like manufacturing, have been widespread. Low earners are held back by a lack of qualifications and transferable skills.

Some improvements in employment rights awareness

Three-quarters of people feel that they are well informed about employment rights, says [research carried out by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills](#). The survey, 'Fair treatment at work', found that people were 13 per cent more knowledgeable about their rights and responsibilities in the workplace than during the previous 2005 survey, and that the majority of people feel able to find information and guidance on employment issues if required (85 per cent). Groups at greater risk of mistreatment at work were less likely to be well informed, and the survey concluded that "lower levels of awareness are most evident amongst those who might be thought to have the greatest need to be well informed about their rights – including people who actually experience problems, the lower paid, the non-unionised and those on non-permanent contracts."

The Government is currently in the middle of a three-year campaign to raise awareness of workplace rights, with the next phase of the campaign due to be announced by the end of September.

New workplace rights advice line for vulnerable workers launched by government

Vulnerable workers will be able to seek advice about their workplace rights, and report abuses of those rights, through a [new helpline](#) launched by Business Minister, Pat McFadden. The new pay and work rights helpline provides a unified point of contact for both employers and workers. The helpline number is 0800 917 2368. The textphone number is 0800 121 4042.

Information is also available on [Direct Gov](#) and [Business Link](#).

The helpline has been developed in co-operation with employers, trade unions and the different enforcement agencies across government. The employment rights in question are:

- national minimum wage
- agricultural minimum wage
- working time (48-hour average working week)
- employment agency standards
- gangmaster licensing.

Commenting on the launch of the helpline, [TUC General Secretary, Brendan Barber](#) said: "This vital new helpline was a key recommendation of the TUC's Commission on Vulnerable Employment final report last year.

"It will ensure workers at risk of mistreatment by their employers not only have a phone number that they can call to find out about their rights to the minimum wage, excessive working hours and agency standards, but they can also ask for help in enforcing these rights.

"The helpline should also enable increased co-ordination between the national enforcement agencies, ensuring more effective enforcement of the law, another recommendation of the TUC's Commission."

Millions unaware of flexible working rights for carers

The government has committed to increasing its efforts to raise awareness of flexible working rights for carers, as results of a [new government survey](#) are published that show awareness of these rights is low.

Millions of people are unaware that caring for a spouse or relative gives you the right to ask your employer to work flexibly, the new statistics show.

The majority (82 per cent) of adults are not aware that carers are legally entitled to ask their employer for flexible working arrangements, according to the new research. More than a third (35 per cent) of people surveyed had caring responsibilities that could make them eligible to ask.

People also have very different views about what makes someone a carer:

- just 13 per cent thought it was doing certain things like popping to the shops to help out
- 43 per cent thought it was helping out with tasks for a couple of hours a day
- 30 per cent thought that it was helping out for most of the day such as washing and cooking meals.

Apprentice minimum wages: submissions to the Low Pay Commission

In its submission to the Low Pay Commission [UNISON](#) has called for an end to what it views as exploitation of apprentices, by giving them the national minimum wage in line with current age rates.

The public sector union recently welcomed the announcement by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, for the Low Pay Commission to consider a minimum wage for apprentices, and called for it to become a reality. The submission to the commission argues that the apprentice rates must match existing age rates. Currently, apprentices under the age of 19 and older workers in their first year of apprenticeship are exempt from the minimum wage.

The union also voiced concerns that apprentices often carry out a full-time job for significantly less money than regular staff. Keith Sonnet, UNISON’s Deputy General Secretary, said:

“UNISON has campaigned long and hard for apprentices to be covered by the national

minimum wage. During this recession young people desperately need opportunities, but we must ensure that these are genuine opportunities, not an excuse for exploitation. There is no place for schemes that force apprentices to carry out full-time jobs for very little pay.”

The [CBI argues](#) that a new minimum wage for apprenticeships should be set at a cautious level and recommends that the current weekly minimum rate of £95, which was set by the Learning and Skills Council, should remain. Current minimum weekly rates for apprenticeships in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are £55, £50 and £40 respectively.

One tenth of average earnings met by Jobseeker’s Allowance

The value of out of work benefits has decreased steadily compared with earnings and is now lower than in previous recessions, according to [research carried out by the TUC](#). Those who lose their jobs and claim Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) will receive one tenth on average of what they earned while in work, compared with 17 per cent in the 1980s recession and 14 per cent in the early 1990s.

TUC General Secretary, Brendan Barber, said: “Losing your job is always a massive blow. But successive governments have failed to increase unemployment benefits in line with earnings. The result is that people losing their jobs today face a bigger loss in their income than in previous recessions.

“Of course the real challenge is to get people back into work again and the government is doing much, both through stimulating the economy and through initiatives like the Future Jobs Fund.

“But many people are going to spend a long time on benefits, and £64.30 a week is not enough to get through the week. Increasing JSA by as little as £10 a week would make a real difference to millions of families.”

Average real pay increases fall in EU member states in 2008

[According to the Eurofound's European Industrial Relations Observatory](#), the average real wage increase for European workers fell from 3.7 per cent in 2007 to 1.3 per cent. The annual report of pay developments has revealed that the real increase in pay rates has decreased dramatically and the nominal rate only dropping a little. The report found that pay increase in the EU as a whole fell from 7.0 per cent in 2007 to 6.6 per cent in 2008.

One third of Europeans fear losing their job during recession

One in three Europeans worry that they may lose their job as a result of the economic crisis, and almost one in two are afraid that their children may suffer a job loss, according to a [European Commission public opinion survey](#). People living in the nations that have experienced the highest number of redundancies are most concerned about further losses, whereas in countries that have implemented 'flexicurity' approaches to the crisis (such as Sweden and Denmark), citizens have a more positive outlook. A third of Europeans are aware of the European Social Fund, and almost three quarters believe that the EU has had a positive impact in creating new employment opportunities and staving off unemployment.

London Midland – Sunday working

Train drivers at London Midland are to introduce an arrangement for double Sunday pay reinstated, according to the train drivers' union, [ASLEF](#).

London Midland had introduced enhanced rates of pay for Sundays, but did not define the period of time for which this would continue. The enhanced rates were withdrawn at the end of August, reverting from double time to time and two thirds. Only a few drivers and other staff opted for voluntary overtime, resulting in the disruption to services. London Midland has advised ASLEF of its intention to reintroduce the terms for weekend working.

Unions take action against precarious employment

Metalworker unions around the world are preparing to take action against [the rise of precarious employment](#) from 3 to 10 October 2009, in conjunction with the ITUC's World Day for Decent Work on 7 October 2009, other global union federations and the European Metalworkers' Federation.

[IG Metall has also made demands](#) of the German government to ensure a return to secure employment practices and an end to the misuse of agency labour.

The [European Metalworkers' Federation](#) will launch a second common demand on precarious employment at its collective bargaining conference in November 2009.

EQUALITY AND DISCRIMINATION

Admitting to mental health problems could make it hard to find work

Over 90 per cent of people think that admitting to mental health difficulties could have negative consequences for career maintenance and progression, [according to a study commissioned for the anti-stigma campaign, 'Time to Change'](#). More than half of those surveyed would not employ somebody if depression was discussed at an interview.

The study also revealed that bank workers are the most likely to discriminate against someone with a mental illness. Respondents said that they would be worried about the unreliability of the mentally ill candidate, as well as worried about taking the blame for employing them.

Work-life balance is the most popular equality issue for workers

According to the [TUC's 2009 Equality Audit](#), information on work-life balance is the most requested equality issue. The audit found that 65 per cent of unions were asked about issues surrounding work-life balance, 65 per cent of unions were asked for advice on general equalities issues, and 63 per cent were approached about issues concerning women's pay and equality.

The Equality Audit found that, of the 43 unions that responded, most were providing guidance on a range of equalities issues, including issues surrounding women’s pay and employment, disability, age, religion and migrant workers. Just over half (51 per cent) negotiated agreements for working parents and carers with employers, 44 per cent of unions made agreements with employers surrounding issues of work-life balance and 37 per cent negotiated agreements on policies issues surrounding age.

TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber said: “Achieving fairness and equality in the workplace is a core issue for unions. Today’s report shows that the best way to pursue this is through successful negotiation and collective bargaining.

“Unions have always led the way in calling more friendly family working rights. But unions have an even more important role in delivering a better work-life balance for workers up and down the country.

“It is great that unions are negotiating on such a wide range of issues, which affect all workers. Next year the Equality Bill will come into effect, and unions, judging by the results of our Equality Audit, are well placed to ensure that these new rights make a real difference to people’s lives.”

Equality and Human Rights commission launches 2009-10 business plan

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has launched its [2009-10 business plan](#). Some of the main commitments, developed following consultation with key stakeholders, include:

- supporting the smooth passage of the Equality Bill
- developing Equality Bill guidance
- developing a set of metrics for gender pay reporting
- pursuing a minimum of 100 strategic legal cases across the commission’s mandate

- producing a shadow report of the UN Convention for Elimination of Racial Discrimination and supporting the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People
- carrying out compliance and enforcement actions under the public sector duties in respect of race, gender and disability, building on over 330 actions initiated by the commission in 2008-09
- publishing the results of inquiries, including their inquiry into gender discrimination in financial services
- developing the commission’s work on homophobic and disability related hate crime
- reporting on hostility towards particular race and faith groups and how they vary between different populations
- conducting an inquiry into the role of faith and belief in our society
- launching a new strategic funding programme focusing on projects that directly serve individuals and communities across the commission’s mandate.

It also presents plans to hold more theme-driven conferences with the hope of engaging better with stakeholders.

The achievements of the commission since its formulation in Autumn 2007 have included the ‘Working Better’ initiative, which looked at how the modern workplace meets the needs of different groups of employees (for example lone parents).

Consultation on gender pay reporting

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has published [‘Proposals for promoting greater](#)

[transparency in the private sector: a consultation on improving gender equality in the workplace](#)'.

The consultation is aimed at employers of 250 or more in the private and voluntary sectors, as well as representative bodies and trade unions organising in these sectors. The commission would also like to hear from organisations working towards gender equality, individual women working in the private and voluntary sectors, and other stakeholders with an interest in gender pay reporting.

The consultation runs until Wednesday 28 October 2009.

Welsh minister wants to hear views on equality duties

Dr Brian Gibbons, Minister for Social Justice and Local Government in Wales, has launched a [‘listening exercise’ on equality](#), calling for key stakeholders in the public and third sectors to voice their opinions on how the Welsh Assembly Government can make sure that public bodies promote equality through services and staff employment. After contemplating responses, the minister will draw up detailed proposals and publish them for consultation in early 2010.

Finance sector gender pay gap: women earn around 80 per cent less than men in bonuses

Women in some of the country’s leading finance companies receive around 80 per cent less than men in bonuses, according to the Equality and Human Rights Commission’s [finance sector inquiry](#). The inquiry found that:

- Women employees earn an average of £2,875 in annual performance-related pay compared with an average of £14,554 for men – a gender pay gap of 80 per cent.
- Annual basic pay differs by 39 per cent between women and men. However, the gap in pay between the genders rises to 47 per cent for annual total earnings when performance related pay, bonuses and overtime are included.

- A minority of respondents report making some effort to address the pay gap.
- Less than one in four respondents report undertaken an equal pay audit.

According to the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the finance sector has one of the highest overall gender pay gaps in the UK economy. Full-time women employees earn 55 per cent less annual gross salary than men. This compares with a pay gap of 28 per cent for the economy generally.

New report on gender wage gap released by IWPR

[The Institute for Women’s Policy Research](#) has released a report which assesses the gender wage gap in 2008 in the US. According to the report, the ratio of women’s to men’s median annual earnings in 2008 was 77.1 for full-time, year-round workers, down from 77.8 in 2007 (this means the gender wage gap is now 22.9 percent). This year-to-year change is not statistically significant.

The annual earnings figure reflects gender differences in both hourly wages and the number of hours worked each year by full-time workers. If part-time and part-year workers were included, the ratio would be much lower, as women are more likely than men to work reduced schedules in order to manage childcare and other care-giving work.

Progress in closing the gender earnings gap has slowed considerably since 1990, according to the report. While the gender earnings ratio for annual earnings increased by 11.4 percentage points from 1980 to 1990, it only grew by 5.5 percentage points over the next 18 years.

Australian alliance seeks action on gender pay gap: women workers still short-changed

Launching an alliance of 135 organisations to mark Equal Pay Day on 1 September, [Australian Council of Trade Unions](#) President, Sharan Burrow, remarked that it was “unacceptable that working women are still being short-changed in

their pay packets. “Many Australians believe women won equal pay in the 1970s – but they are wrong. It’s almost 40 years since Australian women were officially granted equal pay for equal work. Yet women still earn 17 per cent less than men or \$1 million less over a lifetime.

“For the first time a broad coalition of organisations will campaign to close the pay gap between men and women.”

New Zealand: Pay Equity Challenge Coalition launched

The [Pay Equity Challenge Coalition](#) has been officially launched on the steps of Parliament in New Zealand on the eve of Suffrage Day. Campaigners were dressed in the fashions worn by Kate Sheppard (the most prominent member of New Zealand's women's suffrage movement) when New Zealand women became the first in the world to win the right to vote. The coalition is asking why, 116 years later, despite equality at the ballot box, women still are not paid the same as men for doing work of equal value.

The coalition held a ‘Pay Equi tea’ at which they shared a cake, missing a symbolic 12 per cent slice, representing the continuing gap between women’s and men’s pay. “Although the Ministers are unable to attend today’s tea party, Pay Equity Challenge Coalition members will watch with interest how the government plans to ensure women get a full share of the cake in the future,” said coalition spokeswoman, Angela McLeod, President of New Zealand Federation of Business and Professional Women.

Women under-represented in highest level positions

Women occupy just 34 of the 970 executive director positions at companies in the FTSE 350 index, according to [a survey commissioned by the Observer](#). There is only an 8.8 per cent representation of women at boardroom level,

taking into account executive and non-executive positions. The survey finds that 90 per cent of firms have an equality policy, but only three per cent of these have a female chief executive. A total of 132 of the companies surveyed did not have a single woman at board level.

Everyone thinks they live in ‘middle Britain’

When asked to guess how close their pay is to average earnings, both rich and poor think they are closer to the average than they actually are, and underestimate just how big the difference between rich and poor is in Britain today, according to [a TUC survey](#).

The more than 2,000 respondents underestimated their position on average by 16 percentage points. People believed that they earned slightly below median earnings, guessing that they came at 47 per cent on the income scale on average (thus earning more than 47 per cent of the population but less than the remaining 53 per cent).

But the average wage reported by people who took the test was £27,500, which puts them at 63 per cent on the income scale (63 per cent of the population earn less than this amount.) Those earning over £35,000 made the biggest errors. These earnings put them in the top 20 per cent of earners (ie above 80 per cent on the income scale), but on average they guessed that they were 26 percentage points lower than they actually were.

Those earning significantly below median earnings of £20,000 thought they came higher in the income scale. Those earning under £10,000 a year (which puts them in the bottom 20 per cent of earners) thought that they came 13 percentage points higher on the income scale than they actually did.

TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber said: “It is depressing but perhaps not that surprising to learn that the rich think that they are poorer than they actually are. But we also find that people on really low wages don’t appreciate just how badly off they are compared to other people. Everyone seems to think they live in middle Britain, and that our country is more

equal than it actually is.

“If people knew the truth about just how unfairly distributed income and wealth is in Britain, then they would be angry.”

The TUC’s ‘[Life in the Middle](#)’ pamphlet showed that, since 1979, the income of median earners has gone up by 60 per cent, while much bigger increases for the better-off have pushed up average earnings by 78 per cent. While median income fell behind far more under the Conservatives, as society rapidly became more unequal, the gap has continued to grow – if slowly – under Labour.

HEALTHY WORKPLACES

Boorman review of health of NHS workforce – interim report released

The Boorman Review has now published its [interim report](#), setting out emerging findings and initial recommendations on NHS staff health and well-being.

The interim report sets out the business case for change and makes recommendations for improvement in provision. Its findings are based on evidence gathered from across the NHS and its stakeholders.

[UNISON](#) condemned the findings of the review, which it views as an attack on NHS staff. The union welcomes the call for a more co-ordinated, nationwide, response by the NHS to the occupational health of its staff. However, it argues that the NHS is a unique workplace, and comparing sickness absence in the NHS to outside is “like comparing apples and oranges”.

Mental health employment boost

[Minister of State for Employment and Welfare Reform, Jim Knight](#), has announced people with mental health problems are to receive extra help in managing their conditions in order to help them stay in employment. Government pilots, run in conjunction with the charity, Mind, have had a 90 per cent success rate in helping people

with mental health issues stay in their jobs. The Government is now looking to extend the support nationally through a range of providers. Other measures announced include:

- the first national strategy for mental health and employment, due to be published in the autumn
- a new network of mental health experts across Jobcentre Plus working with colleagues in the health system and better co-ordinate support
- doubling the Access to Work fund from £69m to £138m over the next five years.

New release from European Commission on work-related health problems

Almost nine per cent of workers in the EU have experienced work-related health problems, [according to the European Commission](#). Results from the European Union Labour Force Survey 2007 ad hoc module on accidents at work, work-related health problems and exposure to risk factors show that almost seven million workers had an accident at work and around 20 million people experienced a work-related health problem in the 12 months preceding the interview. The statistical data refer to workers aged 15 to 64 years in the EU-27.

Unite calls time on long hours culture of pub managers

[Unite](#) is calling ‘time’ on the excessive hours culture in the UK’s 9,000 managed pubs. Pub managers who are working up to 70 hours a week have been forced to retire early because of ill-health, according to the union.

Unite, has launched the ‘pub industry manifesto’ to limit the working week of managers to a maximum 48 hour week in line with the European Working Time Directive, and receive a minimum of 25 days annual holiday (in addition to bank holidays).

Jennie Formby, Unite national officer for the hospitality sector, said: “Working excessive

hours is the norm in the industry, and pub managers now have the dubious honour of working longer hours than any other group of employees in the UK.”

Australian workers call for stronger health and safety laws

An estimated 15,000 workers, and families of people who have died or been injured at work, have taken part in a series of nationwide events in Australia to call on state, federal and territory governments today to bring in stronger workplace health and safety protections. The national meetings and rallies are in response to government proposals to bring in one set of new standardised national workplace health and safety laws, called ‘occupational health service harmonisation’.

[Australian Council of Trade Unions Secretary Jeff Lawrence](#) said that Australian workers deserved the best possible health and safety laws. “With an estimated 7,000 Australians dying each year as a result of workplace injuries or diseases it is essential the government’s proposed changes to workplace health and safety do not undermine standards or put more Australian workers and their families at risk.”

[A national poll](#) surveying 1,013 people, released by ACTU on the same day as the protests, shows:

- 78 per cent of people believe employers should do more to protect health and safety, even if it means more cost or red tape
- 80 per cent of people wanted more to be done to reduce workplace illness and injury
- 81 per cent want to be able to call in a union to help with occupational health service issues at their workplace
- 87 per cent want to see either the same or better occupational health service protections for workers

- 73 per cent said OHS representatives in workplaces should be elected or chosen by their colleagues, not by management.

DCSF: teachers’ workloads diary survey 2009

[The teachers’ workload diary survey](#) has been released by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. The survey provides data on the hours and working patterns of teachers in maintained primary, secondary and special schools in England and Wales.

Findings include:

- Most categories of teacher in 2009 continue to report working over 50 hours per week (the exceptions are secondary heads of faculty or department, and special school classroom teachers).
- Working hours reported by primary heads in 2009 are still lower than in the year 2000 but have been increasing since 2005. The working hours reported by primary deputy heads have decreased since 2000, although this was not statistically significant.
- The number of hours worked by primary classroom teachers is lower than in the year 2000 but has not decreased significantly since 2003.
- Head teachers in primary schools are more likely to think they are expected to do things that are not part of their job ‘most or all of the time’ compared with other types of teacher. In particular, teachers do not think administration and clerical work should be part of their jobs, and they would like to spend less time doing them.
- Primary head teachers are most likely to feel unable to do things which should be part of their job ‘all or most of the time’.

Commenting on the survey, Martin Johnson, Deputy General Secretary of the [Association of Teachers and Lecturers](#), said: “There are no surprises in this survey. We are making progress reducing teachers’ workloads, but, as the Schools Minister said, there is a lot more work to do.

“Government policy needs to be joined-up. A lot of the unnecessary work is due to government accountability policies which encourage schools to create mountains of paperwork as evidence of everything they do.”

Also commenting on the results, Chris Keates, [General Secretary of the teachers’ union, NASUWT](#), said: “The teachers’ workload diary survey provides an important barometer of trends in working hours and the drivers of excessive workload.

“The evidence from the diary survey confirms that there remains a culture of long working hours in schools. The working hours of the majority of teachers and headteachers exceeds the 48-hour limit set by the European Working Time Directive and would have been far higher had the National Agreement never been signed.”

Staff who are sick on holiday can ‘reallocate’ annual leave

Employees who are sick during scheduled annual leave should be allowed to reallocate their holidays, the European Court of Justice has ruled.

The decision, a new interpretation of the working time directive, follows the court’s ruling on the ‘Stringer’ case earlier this year, that holiday continues to accrue during sick leave. The case found that a worker could carry leave forward, even into the next year, if he or she is “unable to take leave through no fault of his own”, but left open the question of what would happen if sickness coincided with scheduled leave. The court has now ruled that employees should have the right to ask for statutory leave to be reallocated in these circumstances, even into the next holiday year.

A TUC spokesperson said, “it is quite right that

workers should not lose their holiday entitlements because they fall sick. Indeed, the majority of enterprises already operate the system prescribed by this judgment, so the new rules are unlikely to cause any significant problems for employers.”