



# 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](#).

## • CHANGING TIMES SURVEY

- We are looking for your views on this newsletter. What is good and bad about Changing Times and how do you use the information that we provide? What more could the TUC do on work-life balance issues? We need your views to help us take decisions about our future work in this area. *You can respond to the survey click [here](#).*

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## Legislation and Regulation

### **Australian report on right to request flexibility**

A report looking into employers' readiness to implement the 'right to request flexibility' standards in Australia (starting on 1 January 2010) has found a 'perceived low level of knowledge about how to comply'. Over 500 respondents from the newsletter databases of Aequus Partners and CCH Australia completed an online survey in August 2009. Over 80 per cent of respondents rated employees' and managers' knowledge of the right as either non-existent or low. This suggests that the majority of employees do not know how to make a request under the right, and the majority of managers do not know how and when to respond. Around three in four respondents expect that the right will generate more requests from eligible employees (ie those with children under school age, or children under 18 who have a disability) and 71 per cent expect that there will be an increase in access to flexible work practices by eligible employees.

In relation to current practice, the report concludes that there is considerable room for improvement in relation to the implementation of flexible work practices in the majority of those Australian organisations surveyed.

### **Consultation on draft regulations for additional paternity leave and pay**

The Government has launched a consultation on draft regulations to increase paternity leave and sustain pay for fathers during leave periods. The consultation, which closes for responses on 20

November 2009, will give employers and parents the chance to comment on the draft regulations before they are laid before Parliament, and will inform how the scheme is implemented when the policy is introduced.

The policy will give fathers with children born on or after April 2011 the opportunity to take additional paternity leave once the mother has returned to work. This provision will be available to be taken up, should fathers wish to, after 20 weeks (5 months) provided that the mother has returned to work.

**National minimum wage increase to benefit nearly one million workers**

The TUC has welcomed the national minimum wage increase from £5.73 to £5.80 per hour. It reports that two thirds of those set to benefit from the increase are women and that this should help to narrow the gender pay gap.

This is the tenth increase in the national minimum wage since it was introduced in April 1998. Over the past 10 years, the national minimum wage has increased by 61 per cent. This is in addition to the previous announcement that it will now be illegal for employers to use tips given to workers in cafes, restaurants, bars and hotels to make up their wages in order to meet national minimum wage requirements.

**CBI reaction to Gordon Brown’s minimum wage pledge**

The CBI has commented on Prime Minister Gordon Brown’s commitment to raise the minimum wage every year, for the next five years. John Cridland, CBI Deputy Director General, said:

“The Low Pay Commission was set up as an independent body to advise the government on the level of the minimum wage. There is a danger of undermining its standing if politicians make promises about what will happen to the minimum wage in future.

“Ministers would not make promises about interest rates when they are set by an independent committee at the Bank of England, so it is troubling when they appear to treat the minimum wage in a different way.”

A TUC spokesperson said: “It is very important that the Low Pay Commission continues to be to give independent advice to the Government. However, it is unthinkable that the Commission would recommend a freeze next year, so the Prime Minister’s commitment has not really reduced their range of options at all.

Last year, in the depths of the recession, the LPC recommended a very modest increase of 1.2 per cent. By October next year the UK will be in a period of mild recovery, with positive economic growth and inflation nudging towards 3 per cent. The Commission has to ensure that its increases at least keep pace with inflation, pay settlements and earnings growth, otherwise the position of low paid workers will get worse.

**Government sets out plans to introduce new rights for agency workers**

A consultation on draft regulations to implement the EU Agency Workers Directive has been published by the Minister of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, Pat McFadden. The draft regulations set out new plans to give agency workers the same pay, holidays and basic conditions as permanent staff once they have been in a given job for 12 weeks.

**TUC response**

Commenting on the consultation document, TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber said:

“The Government is right to introduce new rights for agency workers, but it is extremely disappointing that temps will have to wait so long for these rights to come into effect. Agency workers are even more in need of protection during a recession. Vulnerable workers are always the first to suffer when times are hard.

“A recent TUC poll revealed abuse and bad treatment for a significant proportion of agency workers. It showed that many rogue employers are using the lack of employment rights and insecurity of agency workers to treat temps badly – to pay them less, to give them less holiday pay, to get out of paying them redundancy or maternity pay, and to neglect their training and development.

“Agency workers must have the right to genuine equal treatment on pay, including basic pay, bonuses, and redundancy pay, and to equal treatment on holiday pay and the ability to take time off, and working time.

“The Government must treat the introduction of the new regulations as a priority, to ensure that agency workers are protected and that the exploitation of temps by rogue agencies ends as soon as possible.

“The new laws must provide real protection for the UK’s hundreds of thousands of agency workers, and any loopholes which would allow unscrupulous employers to avoid the law and to undercut reputable firms must be closed. This includes measures to prevent the use of bogus self-employment arrangements to avoid new rights for agency workers.”

#### **Unite’s response**

Tony Woodley, joint general secretary of Unite, said: “This is a scandal. For too long, agency status has been used to undercut wages and casualise workplaces. There is not a workplace in the land that has escaped the rot of temporary work and two-tier wages. This divides not just workplaces, but towns and communities and it must end.

“Delaying the implementation of the equal treatment law until 2011 prolongs the mistreatment of nearly a million workers around the country. This government said it would act to end insecurity at work and we expect it to make good on that commitment, not next year, nor the year after, but today.

“Working people were promised that they would be protected now, and we will not accept any moves to dilute, delay or kick this into the long grass.”

## **Families and Carers**

### **Extended leave periods considered by Labour**

Labour is to consider giving workers the right to accumulate paid leave lasting up to a year, according to new proposals contained in the

party’s pre-election manifesto, the Choice for Britain.

The report states:

“[The party is] considering how employees might take extended leave periods, including proposals such as the Dutch leave model where they are able to accumulate paid leave which can then be taken in extended periods from a few months to a year or more.”

### **Carers face barriers to sustained employment and career advancement**

Caring poses a significant barrier to sustaining employment, and has an impact on career advancement opportunities and job mobility. The DWP has published qualitative research into the impact of caring and the effectiveness of services available to carers. The report finds that long term caring is most likely to have an adverse impact on carers physically, mentally and in terms of their health, and early retirement or long term sickness are the most common routes out of formal employment for carers.

The effectiveness of the existing services available to carers was also assessed. The report finds that:

- The DWP and Jobcentre Plus are not generally thought of as being sources of support for carers.
- Support given to carers in the workplace is inconsistent.
- Carers obtain a number of services from a range of different providers.
- Informal flexibility in the workplace is extremely valuable to carers.
- The provisions available to carers are considered to be fragmented.

### **Many single parents struggle during the recession**

Single parents are continuing to move into work but some are struggling to afford essentials like food and fuel, as working hours are reduced and child maintenance payments are cut when non-resident parents lose their jobs, reports Gingerbread.

The research finds that the increase in the employment rate of single parents between 2008 and 2009 is limited to those with older children, who have been those first affected by recent welfare reforms. The reforms require many single parents to transfer from Income Support to Jobseeker's Allowance and to seek work actively. Gingerbread suggests that these figures indicate many single parents with older children are trying hard to find jobs because of recent welfare reform.

**Carers UK calls for extra time off for carers**

Carers UK is calling for carers to be allowed extra time off work when they are unable to cope, with backing from the Daily Mirror. One in five people looking after someone finds it impossible to balance a job and caring, according to the charity. Carers UK argues that carer's leave should be made law, giving a right to discretionary planned time off to cope with responsibilities. The organisation also believes carers ought to have 'extra breathing space' instead of feeling they have to quit. The policy has been adopted by Centrica, the parent company of British Gas.

Since 2007, carers have had the right to emergency or dependants leave in times of crisis. Carer's leave would allow time for planned events such as hospital visits.

**Child bearing and female participation in the labour market**

The Institute for the Study of Labour has published a study which evaluates the effect of a 2003 reform in Spanish income tax on the likelihood of having a child and the employment of mothers with small children. The reform introduced a tax credit for working mothers with children under the age of three, while also increasing child deductions for all households with children. The study found that the combined reforms significantly increased both fertility (by almost five percent) and the employment rate of mothers with children under three (by two percent). These effects were more pronounced among less-educated women.

**Research on the effect of the timing and spacing of births on the level of labour market participation of married women**

A study looking at fertility decisions of married women has found that timing and spacing of births are important factors in their participation in the labour market. The research, published by the Institute for the Study of Labour, finds that delaying the first birth leads to higher levels of labour market involvement before the birth of the first child and reduces the negative effect of the first child on the level of labour market involvement. Having the second birth after a longer interval reduces the effect of the second child on participation but increases its effect on the probability of working full time, as more women, having returned to work, respond to the second birth by moving from full time to part time work.

**Quarter of fathers going part-time according to new survey**

One in four fathers has started to work part-time since having children to spend more time with their family, a survey has shown.

Around 26 per cent of fathers said they had switched to a part-time job, while 24 per cent said they had taken up flexible working, according to the Children's Mutual, a Children's Trust Fund company. A further 14 per cent of fathers said they had stopped working outside of the home altogether after having children.

The survey also found that two-thirds of stay-at-home fathers said they were happy with their role, but 53 per cent admitted they faced challenges and prejudice as a result of their decision.

**Employment and wage patterns for British lone mothers entering low-skilled work**

A report has been released which investigates lone mothers who have children under five and analyses their employment patterns. The article uses data which tracked 560 lone mothers from 1991 to 2001. The report identified three groups: women broadly in stable work, those who remain at home and those who have followed pathways between the two.

The article explores the most important factor leading to the different work patterns, concluding with a discussion about the different wage progression pathways this group of women have taken. It also attempts to identify the main contributors to faster wage progression.

The full article can be found in Volume 43 of the Social Policy and Administration Journal.

### **Centre for Policy Studies releases report on women and working**

The Centre for Policy Studies has produced a report which claims that government policies fail to deliver what women want. The report argues that the government should favour family-friendly policies and that given the choice that only 12 per cent of women actually want to work full time; 31 per cent would rather not work at all. Also, only 1 per cent of mothers and 2 per cent of fathers felt the mother should stay at home if the father worked and there were small children in the family.

[Critics](#) of the report highlighted that the You Gov survey commissioned for the pamphlet found that only 30 per cent of mothers would prefer not to work at all. The survey did find that without any financial need to work, only 12 per cent of mothers would take a full-time job - but then only 20 per cent of all respondents said they would work full-time if they didn't have to. Arguably the view that mothers "place a low priority on their career and prefer a part-time job that allows them to spend more time with their family" is not therefore proved by the survey result, which simply proves that everyone would like more time away from work.

### **Maternity Action: information sheet on women's right to breastfeed at work**

Maternity Action has produced an information sheet outlining women's options for continuing breastfeeding on their return to work, their legal rights and how to negotiate with their employer. It includes contact details for organisations which can provide further assistance.

The information sheet provides help for women contemplating the return to work and those already negotiating with their employer.

## Workplace Issues

### **PCS and Unison join forces**

Civil service union, PCS and Unison united and signed a new memorandum of understanding setting out how they can both work together to address the challenge of change in UK public services. [Unison](#) hopes that the memorandum will help both unions boost membership and organisation across the public sector.

Mark Serwotka, PCS general secretary, said: "With the challenges that workers in the public services face today, it is only right that two of the largest public sector unions work together to protect their members' interests."

### **GMB calls on Superdrug, 'Stop cuts to overtime pay and sick pay for workers'**

GMB has called for Superdrug management at its distribution depot in Dunstable to stop what it describes as the company's 'confrontational approach' to its employees. According to GMB, Superdrug has given 90 days statutory notice to the employees that it intends to cut overtime premium payments by between £1.22 and £1.54 per hour and entitlements to sick pay when employees are off on certified sickness. The company managers are engaging in one to one 'consultation' with employees and have made clear that any employee who does not accept the new terms and conditions will be deemed to have left the employment of the company.

Paul Meddes, GMB Organiser said, "Superdrug managers are hell bent on a confrontational approach to their workers at the Dunstable depot. There has been no discussion or talks with the union or the workers on why Superdrug needs to cut back the terms and conditions of their employees. Instead the company has issued new terms and have given 90 days statutory notice to bring in the new terms."

GMB is calling on the company to "pull back from the path of confrontation" and get into discussions to explain to the workers and their union the problems they face in this depot.

**Barnet College lecturers protest over new pay and conditions**

Staff at Barnet College have voted to ‘work to rule’ in protest against new contracts. From Thursday 22 October UCU members will stop working unpaid overtime and stick only to their contract hours, after the college told lecturers to expect longer working hours in return for a derisory one-off payment, reports UCU.

Staff who refuse to accept the new contract will not be awarded a 1.5 per cent cost of living rise and the union today accused the college of trying to get teaching on the cheap. College staff have still not received a national 3.5 per cent pay rise from 2008-09, according to the Union.

Under the new contracts, staff will see maximum weekly teaching hours increased, annual leave cut by two weeks and the redundancy notice period lowered from four to three months. There will also be a wage cap on new lecturers and less guaranteed work for part-time lecturers.

**World day for decent work**

The World day for decent work took place in October. The International Trade Union Confederation, leading the organisation of the day, argued that decent work must be at the centre of government action to bring back economic growth.

**Holding more than one job may lead to job transition**

The Institute for the Study of Labour has published a study of UK employees holding down more than one job. The study, based on the British Household Panel Survey, investigates the reasons why people hold down more than one job and investigates the relationship between multiple-job holding and job mobility. The evidence indicates that dual job-holding may help job transition, as it may act as a stepping-stone towards new primary jobs, particularly self-employment.

**North Wales firms lag behind the UK when it comes to flexible working**

Companies in North Wales have been attacked by a flexible working specialist as lagging behind

the rest of the UK when it comes to flexible working, reports the Daily Post.

The expert in question, Peter Knowles, business development director with BT Workstyle and a flexible work adviser, is supporting the Welsh Assembly Government’s Inside Welsh Industry initiative. Managed by the Wales Quality Centre, the initiative brings businesses together from all sectors to share their skills, knowledge and experience firsthand at a series of seminars and aims to help companies beat the recession.

**Global unions supporting Thai workers**

International trade union federations have lent their support to the Thai labour movement’s campaign to protect precarious workers and their demands for the ratification of fundamental International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions numbers 87 and 98, on Freedom of Association and the Right to Organise and the Right to Collective Bargaining.

Thousands of workers gathered outside the United Nations Building to attend a large open air seminar on ILO Conventions 87 and 98 in front of the UN Building (where the ILO office is also located).

**Global unions say no to more rights for ‘private labour offices’ in Turkey**

[Global Unions](#) have met with Turkey’s Minister for Labour, and lent their support to President Abdullah Gül’s veto of a bill giving ‘private labour offices’ broad rights to place temporary workers in enterprises. Unions warned of the dangers that precarious employment poses for society. The meeting took place four days before World Bank and International Monetary Fund officials met with the Turkish Government.

Representatives of the International Trade Union Confederation, the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine, and General Workers’ Unions, the International Textile, Garment, and Leather Workers’ Federation, and the International Metalworkers’ Federation reported to the Labour Minister that contract and agency labour and precarious forms of employment have been exploding around the world, bringing two categories of workers: one with good secure jobs and the other faced with short-term jobs,

low wages, no social protection and a loss of rights.

**Action needed to prevent underemployment of the workforce**

A chronic problem of underemployment in the Australian economy is putting greater pressure on household incomes and pushing more families towards the poverty line, according to the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU).

The ACTU is concerned that the impact of underemployment has been overlooked amid signs that the jobless rate may not hit official forecasts. As part of Anti-Poverty Week, unions are seeking to raise awareness of the plight of the underemployed.

In August, 884,600 Australian workers were seeking more hours, 7.8 per cent of the workforce. Combined with the 660,000 workless, the labour force underutilisation rate is 13.5 per cent, according to ACTU.

**HM Revenue and Customs aims to help low income workers**

HM Revenue and Customs has set up an online calculator to help people find out what tax benefits they are entitled to. The government reports that many people are not claiming employment support benefits, such as Working Tax Credit. Many of those who fail to claim are:

- in the 50 plus group
- do not have dependent children
- have experienced a fall in income.

**Temporary workers first to lose jobs in recession, says ILO report**

A report issued by the International Labour Office has found that workers employed by temporary employment agencies have been among the first to lose their jobs as a result of the financial and economic crisis.

The report – ‘Private employment agencies, temporary agency workers and their contribution to the labour market’ – points to a direct correlation between economic growth and the state of the employment agency industry, with the strong performance and expansion that

are seen during the boom years mirrored by the weakness and contraction of the industry today.

**Annual review of working conditions in the EU 2008–09**

A report has been published by Eurofound which reviews working conditions in the EU. This sixth annual review of working conditions in the EU outlines relevant legislative and policy developments during the period 2008–09 in the context of labour market mobility and demographic change. It also explores a range of issues and challenges related to working life and the workplace including flexible working practices in Europe.

**Equality and discrimination**

**Fathers struggle to balance work and family**

Many British fathers are working long hours, struggling to balance work and family, and fear that requesting flexible working will damage their careers, a report from the Equality and Human Rights Commission has found.

British men want to take a more active role in caring for their children, but four in 10 fathers say they spend too little time with their children, according to the report.

Forty-five per cent of men fail to take two weeks’ paternity leave after the birth of their child with the most common reason provided being because they can’t afford to. Two in five men fear that asking for flexible working arrangements would result in their commitment to their job being questioned and would negatively affect their chances of a promotion, according to the Commission.

One approach to balancing work and family commitments outlined in the report is to expand paternity and parental leave schemes. The Commission has previously outlined a series of fully costed policies that would help to meet the needs of businesses and modern families as part of its Working Better Initiative.

It included fathers having:

- two weeks’ paternity leave at the birth of their child at 90 per cent pay

- four months of dedicated ‘parental leave’ with at least eight weeks of leave at 90 per cent pay
- another four months’ parental leave - that can be taken by either mother or father – eight weeks of which is taken at 90 per cent pay.

**Raising state pension age to 70 would put older people in ‘workless limbo’, says TUC**

Responding to the Institute of Directors’ report on retirement which calls for the state pension age to be raised to 70, TUC General Secretary, Brendan Barber, said:

“The better off you are, the longer you live and the more years you get to claim a state pension. A big rise in the state pension age would mean the less well-off lose a much bigger proportion of their pension than longer-living affluent pensioners, who are much less dependent on the state pension in any case.

“With employers fighting hard to keep a retirement age of 65, such a proposal would condemn many older people to a limbo where they are too old to work and too young for a state pension.

“Taking from the poor to give to the rich is no way to reform the pensions system.

“The Institute of Directors report fails to address the platinum-plated pensions enjoyed by FTSE 100 directors, which pay out nearly £250,000 a year and are commonly available at 60.”

**Less stress in the workplace experienced by the over 60s**

Research undertaken for TAEN, The Age and Employment Network, Age Concern and Help the Aged shows that fewer workers report high levels of stress once they reach their 60s. This could be because they have left stressful posts, they have recently retired, or have moved into senior posts where they have more control over their working lives. The report shows that stress levels peak at 50 to 55 years, and that this can lead many people to take up opportunities for early retirement. Older workers are therefore considered in the report as being the ‘healthy survivors of the workplace’.

**Equality Commission’s transgender report**

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has launched a review of evidence capturing the experiences and challenges faced by transgender people. The ‘Trans research review’ underlines discriminatory behaviour and bullying in the workplace and rejection by family and friends.

The review will look specifically into:

- working with key stakeholders across sectors to tackle discriminatory behaviour towards transgender people
- producing guidance to enable public bodies to review transgender policies so that they are meeting statutory duties to eliminate it.

**‘Decent work for all’ – a priority for European Socialists and Democrats**

Half the world’s population today receives no social protection at all, while one in every two people around the world works in casual employment, Solange Hélin Ville from Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament has argued.

“More than ever, promoting decent work in line with the ILO’s international rules remains a top priority,” said Kader Arif, socialist and democrat group trade spokesperson in the European Parliament, to mark the World Day for Decent Work on 7 October.

“Europe must play its part. We will campaign for legally binding social standards to be included in future free trade agreements with third countries,” emphasised the French MEP.

**‘Women for Boards’ database**

MVM Consulting has created ‘Women for Boards’, a database of high-quality, high-potential women who are ready to take on their first non-executive role.

Women for Boards was developed through an ‘extensive process of research and recommendations’. The database includes women with ‘exceptional experience’ and backgrounds in business and in other areas such as charity, government, and the law, and will

continue to be updated as new candidates are identified.

Candidates shortlisted for a non-executive role will be offered the opportunity to be mentored by a highly experienced, female non-executive director to help them contribute effectively and become a valued board member.

Mentors include:

- Helen Alexander – president of the CBI and non-executive director of Rolls-Royce Group and Centrica
- Anna Ford – non-executive director of Sainsbury
- DeAnne Julius – chair of Chatham House and non-executive Director of BP.

**Women’s job security, pay and conditions likely to worsen in Australia**

A new push is needed to achieve gender equality in the workforce with evidence that on most measures, Australian women have gone backwards over the past decade, says the ACTU.

ACTU President, Sharan Burrow, said there was a risk that the gender disadvantage would worsen because of the global financial crisis, delivering the keynote address to the First World Women’s Conference, Decent Work, Decent Life for Women, hosted by the International Trade Union Confederation in Brussels.

ACTU argues that there has been a steady rise in precarious work for women in recent years, leaving many women in short-term jobs with low pay and little protection from exploitation, and lacking social security and pension entitlements. Australia ranks a lowly 41 in the global index of women’s workforce participation.

**Government Equalities Office releases annual report**

The Government Equalities Office has released its annual report (2008-09 volume 1).

It includes, among other things:

- information on how the organisation is organised
- a performance report on departmental

strategic objective and public service agreement

- details on progress towards the Government Equalities Office’s five main aims.

**Improving outcomes for older workers**

The Institute for the Study of Labour has published a study looking at the experience of the labour market by older workers. It discusses the effect of labour market institutions on the employability of those workers and shows that employment protection helps older people, provided it is uniform across workers and not specifically higher for them. It also provides some evidence on the impact of labour market institutions on older workers by comparing their outcome in the United States and France. It discusses how the welfare state can be reformed in order to improve outcomes for older workers.

**Healthy workplaces**

**John Denham announces projects to protect migrants from exploitation in the workplace**

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, John Denham, has announced action to stop migrants being forced to work in dangerous conditions for low wages.

A fund of £3m will be invested over two years in projects that aim to enforce workplace rights, such as working in safer conditions and tackling illegal working practice like poor wages. The fund will also ensure that employers meet their obligations to all employees.

The funding comes from the £70m Migration Impacts Fund. It will be used in communities which experience the impact of migration most strongly.

**Guidance on flexible working launched by the EHRC**

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has launched flexible working guidance aimed at improving employee productivity, lowering business costs and meeting the needs of modern families in October.

‘Working Better: The managers’ guide to flexible working’ was launched by Commission Chair,

Trevor Phillips, at the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce’s annual general meeting.

It includes a step by step process for managers of small and large companies to implement flexible working practices and features examples from companies that have implemented flexible working policies, including BT, Sainsbury’s, National Grid and IBM.

According to the Commission, the guidance has been developed as a direct response to feedback from businesses engaged in the Commission’s Working Better project – an initiative that has been developing new ways for employers to work to meet the needs of business and modern families.

**Employers urged to be flexible on helping workers to manage health conditions**

The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) has urged employers to take a flexible approach to work to help their employees manage health conditions they may have.

IOSH argues that many workers are ‘excluded’ from the workplace when health problems arise, even though they may still be capable of work.

Nattasha Freeman, the president of IOSH, said:

“Many of us suffer from health problems which can impact on our ability to do our work. Too often, employers are too quick to send someone with a health problem off to their sick bed without considering any alternatives.

“Take someone with pain in their back or shoulder. This may prevent them from doing work that involves regular lifting, but it doesn’t mean there’s no work they can do within the organisation. Employers need to be encouraged to think about other tasks their employees can do while they recover from their health problem.”

**Fear that recession will have adverse impact on work health and safety**

Findings by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work show that people are worried the current economic crisis could have a detrimental

effect on improvements made in the area of safety and health at work. Many of those involved in the research also said that health and safety is an important consideration when choosing a new job.

The findings show that:

- The recession has put severe pressure on European workers.
- Concerns about salary and job security are most important.
- People feel better informed about potential risks in the workplace.

**Workplace bullying experienced by one in three young women**

A study carried out by Unison and Company magazine reports findings that one in three young women claims to have experienced bullying at her place of work.

The study surveyed 685 young women, and found that 33 per cent of this group reported being bullied at work in the past six months, Personnel Today reports.

The study found that the most common perpetrators of the bullying were older women, who were in more senior positions. The most common bullying behaviours were excessive work monitoring and criticism, isolation, exclusion and intimidation, unrealistic targets, public humiliation and insulting jokes.

**Acas urges UK businesses to anticipate and manage mental health in the downturn**

Acas is encouraging UK businesses and managers to prepare for the longer term effects of the recession and implement policies and procedures to help cope with mental health issues in the workplace.

Having published a paper that looks at outcomes of tackling workplace stress during the economic downturn, Acas advises businesses and managers to investigate how they can anticipate and identify mental health problems in the workplace and the steps that should be taken to respond to them.

**Self-employed truck driver proposal ‘licence to kill’, says MEP**

The Committee of Employment and Social Affairs in the European Parliament has rejected a proposal to protect self-employed truck drivers from long hours of work.

Socialist and democrat European MPs wanted self-employed drivers to be protected under EU law.

Vice-President of the socialist and democrat group in charge of social affairs, British Labour MEP Stephen Hughes said: “This committee today has issued a licence to kill. Excluding self-employed drivers from EU law on working time would lead to more deaths and injuries on European roads.

“We will keep up the pressure on this committee to make sure that all drivers across Europe are treated fairly and equally.”

**Unite the union’s guide to shift and night work**

The union Unite has issued guidance on how union reps can organise shift and night work to best protect health.

Unite says: “A world increasingly working around the clock raises an issue which is of increasing concern for Unite – the health and safety implications for members who work shifts and at night.”

**Research published flexible work arrangements in New Zealand**

A survey of 710 employees in New Zealand found direct links between how usable flexible work schedules were perceived to be and three aspects of work-life balance: work interference with personal life, personal life interference with work, and work/personal life enhancement.

Employees using flexi-time schedules experienced higher levels of work-life balance than employees working traditional fixed hours. The report also found that the positive relationship between flexibility and work-life balance did not hold true for employees who used job-sharing or telecommuting arrangements.

For more information see Community, Work and Family, Vol 12 (3), pp 327 – 338.