



## Bargaining Support **Negotiators' Toolkit** **Hours and leave**

**Long working hours and few holidays are bad for work-life balance, health, productivity and safety. A recent investigation by the TUC has found that overwork can force workers into unhealthy lifestyles as they attempt to reconcile long working hours and family responsibilities.**

**That means getting a good leave and hours agreement is a crucial step for UNISON members. In this module we will take you through the process of getting that agreement step-by-step, helping you to get the best deal possible.**

**This module will give you:**

- **An understanding of the laws relating to working hours and annual leave**
- **The tools to do a survey to find out what members want**
- **A model agreement to use as a basis for a new agreement**
- **A full guide on negotiating on this issue.**

*The statutory  
minimum  
annual leave  
recently  
increased*

### **Getting the information you need.**

The first step to negotiating a good working hours and leave agreement is finding out what the law says. For example, on 1st October 2007 the statutory holiday entitlement increased to 4.8 weeks. It will increase further to 5.6 weeks from 1 April 2009, pro-rata for those working part-time.

In this pack you will find the UNISON factsheet that will give you all the essential information on workers rights on hours and leave.

### **Finding out what your members want.**

The next step is to find out what issues are most important to your branch members. Is a few extra days holiday what they want, or would a shorter working day be their priority? A good way of doing this is to send a survey round to branch members to collect their views. This is also a great opportunity to get people involved in the work of the union. You might even consider setting up a working group of members to oversee negotiations.

In your pack is a draft survey form which you should develop as you see fit. You will know better than anyone the kind of issues which your members need to be asked about.

*Finding out  
what members  
want is a good  
way of getting  
them involved*



## Bargaining Support **Negotiators' Toolkit** **Hours and leave continued...**

*Look at what other  
branches in your  
sector are doing.  
Have they got more  
generous leave?*

**Going beyond the minimum** . Finding out what leave and working hours arrangements exist with other employers can help you negotiate your own agreement. For example, if you are working in an NHS Trust, finding out if other Trusts have more generous leave provision than your own can be very useful. Details of other branches agreements can be found on the Bargaining Information System. To find out about how to get hold of details of these agreements get in touch at Bargaining Support Group is: 1, Mabledon Place, London, WC1H 9AJ, or e-mail [bsg@unison.co.uk](mailto:bsg@unison.co.uk)

**A model hours and leave agreement.** Using the information you've accessed from the Bargaining Information System and your survey of branch members, try drawing up a draft hours and leave agreement which suits your needs. As a starting point, you can use our model agreement. You will know better than anyone else what is or is not a realistic agreement to put before employers, but this model agreement is a good place to start. You can find the model agreement in your pack.

*Use the model  
agreement as a  
starting point  
for your own*

*The full  
guidance covers  
all the tricky  
details on hours  
and leave*

**Full guidance on Hours and Leave.** The full process of surveying members, drawing up an agreement and negotiating with employers can throw up numerous opportunities and problems. For example, when workers asked to sign an opt-out from the working time directive, you need to be clear about what their rights are. To help you deal with these issues we have written full guidance on hours and leave which covers a whole range of issues. The guidance is included in this pack.

**Workers on call or on standby.** Workers who do "on-call" shifts or where they are allowed to sleep-in at their workplace can face some particularly complicated issues regarding their working time. UNISON has prepared some factsheets to advise you on these issues, which can be found in this pack. You can also contact UNISONdirect at 0845 355 0845 or 1 Mabledon Place, London, WC1H 9AJ, or e-mail [bsg@unison.co.uk](mailto:bsg@unison.co.uk)

*Workers on-  
call or sleeping  
in at work  
need to be clear  
on their rights*

*Get your  
agreement  
on BIS*

**Fill out the BIS Questionnaire and send us your agreements.** A crucial further step once you have reached an agreement with employers is letting UNISON know about it. By sharing information your branch can help the union to spread best practice, identify obstructive employers and monitor the implementation of employment rights. Fill out the Bargaining Information System (BIS) questionnaire included in this pack, and return it along with your agreement, to Bargaining Support at the address above. This information will then be entered on to the system to help provide a more detailed picture of conditions in the workplace.