

Every hour counts

Kay Hender shares members' concerns from this year's working hours survey and outlines how the union is calling for members to receive compensation for every hour worked.

The current state of FDA members' working lives can be succinctly summarised in one individual's response to our recent survey: "Buckaroo working pattern - keep loading it on till we flip...".

Of the 1,106 members across more than 50 employers who responded to our working hours survey, 59% state that they work more than six hours above their contracted number every week, while one in four members are working more than 11 additional hours each week. Alarming, one in ten work at least 15 extra hours every week, meaning that 10% of members are working the equivalent of more than a seven-day week, week in, week out..

As General Secretary Dave Penman told FDA conference delegates: "Many of the comments and testimonies from members paint a picture of damaged family relationships". More than 60% of members feel that working excess hours affects their general wellbeing, with one stating "the weekend is no longer mine, I wake up on a Saturday or Sunday and continue with the work".

Another felt that "it's effectively working for free/taking a pay cut. The public sector is dependent on it, it's entrenched and wouldn't run properly without the practice."

A total of 78% of respondents believe that long hours working is a problem in their department, and a significant 70% say their employer keeps no record of the additional hours worked by its staff. One response laid the blame on a culture of "do whatever it takes to get the work done".

Less than 2% believe that action taken by their departments has had a significant effect in reducing long hours working, and almost three-quarters don't believe that sufficient steps have been

Social life Home later Pressure Can't pursue interests

Excess hours Harder **Unable to switch off** Colds

Always catching up **Tiredness** Partner

Long hours **Tired** Stress Run down Family Work

Life Balance **Sleep** Working day Evening

Urgent **Activities** No time to exercise



taken to address this issue. One member said that although "the department has a number of policies in place, the reality of applying those policies is very different... therefore my additional hours are not recorded and not 'returned'".

And members cannot even rely on leave for a break. More than half said they couldn't take all their annual leave last year, with over 65% citing workload pressures as the reason.

The survey results paints a bleak picture of an ingrained long hours culture, run on ever-decreasing resources despite expectations to deliver ever-increasing demands. As our Buckaroo analogist implied, something has to give. And as Penman concluded at the annual conference, "if the Government will not match the resources it provides to the commitments it makes, then it should be the Government, not FDA members, who have to pay the price for that failure."

FDA campaign: Compensation for every hour worked

Launched by the General Secretary Dave Penman in his speech to this year's conference, the FDA is calling on the Government to compensate every member in every department for every hour worked.

FDA National Officers - who have breakdowns of the working hours survey results by each of their branches, sections and areas - have begun the task of ensuring that compensation for every hour worked is part of each departmental pay claim. This will not be an easy win and traditionally the culture in many parts of the civil service has been that senior managers are simply expected to manage increasing workloads. Members will be updated on progress.

Additionally, a number of branch and section committees are looking to start specific campaigns within their own area.

All delegates at this year's conference received A3 posters for our compensation for all hours worked campaign, incorporating anonymous comments from members on their working hours. If you'd like a poster for your workplace, please email info@fda.org.uk with your name, the amount you would like and your address and we'll do the rest.