



Nobody minds helping out when the pressure is on. We've all willingly worked through our lunch breaks or stayed on late to make sure that essential work is done, customers served and situations dealt with.

But when the working lunch becomes the norm...that's not acceptable.

The Union believes that workloads should be manageable and workplaces should be properly resourced so that – other than in exceptional circumstances – there should be no need for you to work over your lunch break, or to take work home, or to come in early or stay late...

This is why we have been campaigning for Dignity at Work and why we are so pleased to have signed a new Joint Agreement with HBOS on Colleague Dignity at Work.

A positive work environment

In the new Colleague Dignity at Work Agreement, the Company states that it is committed to creating a positive work environment. This will only be possible if colleagues:

- Don't feel overwhelmed with work and
- Don't feel as if the workplace is under resourced!

We know from calls to Headquarters and from the Motions which turn up again and again at the Union's Conference that staffing – or the lack of it – is a problem which just doesn't seem to go away. It is also a problem which has a huge range of repercussions.

How does it affect you?

Morale – if you feel you are simply a cog in the machine, expected to work all hours, day in, day out, with your efforts unappreciated, it's bound to have an adverse effect on your morale. And that, in turn can affect your productivity and your health!

Health – grabbing a sandwich while you are working is fine – now and then. But, as our continental colleagues realise, having a decent break from your desk at lunchtime is good for you. Grabbing a sandwich or worse a chocolate bar and a fizzy drink is not the healthy eating message which we are being sent by the likes of Jamie Oliver!

Also, sitting at a desk all day – or standing at a Welcome desk all day – is bad for your body. We all need to take a break, get some fresh air and move around. Repetitive Strain Injury and back pain are just two of the problems which arise when people spend too long desk and computer bound.

Over 4 MILLION people in the UK every year suffer from injury or ill health as a direct result of work – we don't want YOU to become one of them.

Stress – if you are under pressure to work all day, every day, skipping breaks and giving up all thoughts of a sensible work/life balance it would be surprising if you weren't affected by stress! As well as causing health problems this can lead to problems with family life too.



Bullying and Harassment – you might not want to work extra hours, but we know that sometimes it is hard to say ‘NO’. You must NOT be put under the type of pressure to work extra hours that makes you feel you can’t refuse.

As spelled out in the Dignity at Work Agreement, it is never acceptable to put pressure on colleagues so that they feel humiliated or the focus of ridicule. Naming and shaming is NOT acceptable!

What about Targets?

It is, of course, perfectly acceptable for the Company to have sales campaigns and productivity targets. The way they go about achieving these targets, however, must not be at the expense of Dignity at Work.

Rewarding and recognising good performance and celebrating success is fine, as is managing individual performance in line with agreed procedures.

What is not acceptable is imposing unrealistic targets and putting unacceptable pressure on colleagues to achieve them and holding them up to ridicule if they don’t.

The new Dignity at Work Agreement emphasises that every colleague has the right to be treated with dignity and respect at work at all times.

This means that expecting you to skip lunch – again and again and again is unacceptable.

So, what can you do?

If your lunch break has become a dim and distant memory, you need to speak out.

You should:

- Raise the issue with your line manager and
- Speak to your Union rep

The Union can raise the general issues of workloads and resourcing in joint discussions with the Company. We can also offer advice and support on an individual basis.

Working extra hours should be an *exception* to the norm. If the exception has *become* the norm in YOUR workplace, it’s time to change!

Further Information

Make sure you read the new Joint Agreement on Colleague Dignity at Work (B 282), available on the Union’s website, which is also kept up to date with the latest news and policies regarding Dignity at Work. Go to www.accord-myunion.org

Overtime and resourcing issues will, we are sure, be debated at the next Union Conference which will be held in Glasgow on 22nd- 24th March 2006.

To have YOUR say, make sure you are involved in drawing up the Motions from your workplace. You could also consider standing as a Conference Delegate. Information about Conference, Motions and Delegates will be issued with Union MAIL which is uploaded onto the website at the beginning of each month.

For more general information, the Labour Research Department produces a series of booklets covering issues including stress, bullying and harassment. A list of these booklets is available on the website. You can order copies, free of charge, from Union Headquarters. Call 0118 934 1808 or email info@accordhq.org