

Hannah Blythyn AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Partneriaeth Gymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Partnership



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair, Senedd Petitions Committee
Petitions@senedd.wales

26 October 2023

Dear Jack,

In my response to the Petitions Committee report published on 24 January and titled “From Five to Four”, I explained I would establish a social partnership working group on the 4-day week. I am writing to provide you with an update on progress.

In April 2023, I established a Working Group under the auspices of the Workforce Partnership Council (WPC) to consider issues relating to a four-day week. The Working Group is a social partnership response to calls for a pilot of the 4-day week in devolved public services and is a vehicle through which the practical, people, and service delivery implications can be explored.

The remit of the Working Group is to:

- Consider the strength of the underpinning rationale and evidence base for a four-day working week pilot in the devolved public sector.
- Define its understanding of a four-day working week.
- Evaluate the opportunities, risks and barriers to a four-day working week pilot, including potential unintended consequences and impact on service delivery, productivity, work intensity and resourcing.
- Assess whether a four-day working week is best advanced through negotiations at a local level (individual employer and workforce negotiations) rather than through a national pilot.
- Make recommendations on the feasibility, suitability and acceptability of a four-day working week pilot in a devolved public service or services in Wales.

The Working Group has representatives from the Welsh Government, Unison, GMB, PCS, Powys, Flintshire and the Vale of Glamorgan councils, Natural Resources Wales, Hywel

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Dda University Health Board and Velindre NHS Trust. It has met four times on 26 April, 26 May, 6 July and 28 September.

At its April meeting, the Working Group refined its terms of reference and discussed a range of topics related to the four-day week. It agreed to develop a shared definition of a four-day working week and identify workstreams to frame and steer the group's approach.

At its May meeting, it considered different models and approaches and agreed its own bespoke definition as follows:

"A four-day working week means no loss of pay or benefits, combined with a 20% reduction to normal contracted hours, while maintaining current levels of service delivery."

The Working Group also agreed a work programme shaped by four broad workstreams:

- Implications for workers
- Implications for employers and service delivery
- Fairness, equity and optics
- Pilot design and evaluation framework.

At its July meeting, the Working Group discussed the formation of sub-groups to take forward each workstream. The sub-groups on implications for workers, implications for employers and service delivery, and on fairness, equity and optics met for the first time in September. They have committed to meeting monthly. The subgroup on pilot development and evaluation is deferred pending inputs from other subgroups and further considerations from the working group.

At its most recent meeting in September, the Working Group received an update from each of the sub-groups and took stock of progress. The Working Group agreed this is a complex piece of work, with many interdependencies and the potential for some unintended consequences. It has concluded more time will be needed to complete its work. The Working Group and its sub-groups will continue to meet over the autumn and into the first quarter of 2024. I am grateful to all of our social partners who are engaged in this work.

At this stage, all options remain open, including the potential development of a national pilot; organisations choosing to take forward their own individual pilots; or action short of a pilot, such as producing Workforce Partnership Council advice and guidance.

I will keep you informed as this work develops.

Yours sincerely



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