

16 February 2024

Defra four-day week campaign continues

PCS members working for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) are continuing to campaign for a four-day week in workplaces across England.

In a recent letter to the department's permanent secretary, Tamara Finkelstein, PCS members said how a four-day week would drastically improve their life and productivity at work.

One member told us how they would become "more productive during work", develop a "better home/life balance", and benefit from "improved physical health and wellbeing".

A second member said that a four-day week would help alleviate the conditions of her chronic fatigue syndrome, boost morale and help her care for her disabled mother.

Another member added: 'I do not want the generations of workers that come after me suffering the same fatigue stress and ill health that I have had to endure for the past 43 years.'

Clear benefits

Late in January, Defra reps presented evidence of the benefits of cutting working hours to colleagues in London, Newcastle, York, Bristol, Worcester and Weybridge. Before Christmas, members had called for Defra managers to implement a pilot scheme.

A wide-ranging 2022 trial showed:

- a 59% reduction in staff leaving
- a 34% increase in revenue
- 71% reported reduced level of burnout
- a 33% reduction in sickness.

PCS is calling on managers and policy makers to recognise these benefits and call for a proper trial to see how a four-day week could improve support for the UK's farmers, nature and food, as well as our members.

A public sector trial in the Scottish Government is about to begin. According to the 4 Day Week Campaign, that is why it is "important that we see an equivalent trial get off the ground in England too".