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Border Force strikers "considered suicide", says PCS

Other workers have lost access to children due to enforced roster changes

Border Force officials at Heathrow Airport have considered suicide in the wake of enforced roster changes, while others have lost access to their children, workers have told Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union

More than 650 PCS members working in terminals 2, 3, 4 and 5 tomorrow (September 4) begin a 19-day day overtime ban in their long-running dispute against the new rosters. Today (September 3) is the last of four strike days.

In response to an employee wellbeing survey, members have reported major adverse impacts to their family life, physical and mental wellbeing and feeling suicidal because of the changes.

PCS general secretary Fran Heathcote said: "These extreme and shocking survey results prove, beyond doubt, the new rosters are not fit for purpose.

"We're of course providing support to our members but the truth is we shouldn't need to.

"Border Force managers should do the decent thing and withdraw the rosters so staff workers can get back their work life balance and, in some cases, their children."

More than 250 staff responded to the survey, unequivocally condemning the changes, with several members reporting that not only were they finding it difficult to maintain a work life balance, but that several had lost access to the children completely.

One member said: "Due to the imposed new roster I was forced to give up my parental custody. It was made very clear that if I did not accept the new roster I would be forced out to find a new job which would have cost me my home, parental custody and this has affected my mental health.

"I have been told on a number of occasions that if I don't like it then I should quit and find another job. Managers within my command have tried to help, but they are not allowed to make decisions anymore. I have had suicidal thoughts thought all of this. My mental health is on a downward spiral."

Another said: "There is no time for family; we finish midnight for three four days I don't see my children at all. When I go home they are asleep and in the morning when I wake up they've gone to school or university."

Other members told their union they had been hit financially as they had to reduce their hours to make the new roster fit around their lives.

One confided: "I had no choice but to reduce my hours to part time. This is not going to be the solution to my issues to manage work and family life. Now, the concern is the financial stress; part time hours were not in my plans at the moment."

ends