

23 September 2024

The case for a four-day week taken to Labour Party conference

PCS joined with the Four-Day Week Campaign at a Labour Party conference fringe meeting to discuss the case for a four-day working week with no loss of pay.

PCS general secretary, Fran Heathcote, praised the work that PCS members in the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) group have done to engage their employer on the four-day working week.

Fran explained the work that these “dedicated public servants” have been doing, saying: “They have surveyed members, held face-to-face meetings across the country, and presented their research to management.

“From that research, we believe that the benefits include a happier, healthier workforce with lower staff turnover, improved productivity and lower sick leave.

“Many of our members with caring responsibilities would also benefit from the shortening of the working week.

“This would be a win-win for workers and the employer.”

Fran was joined on the panel by Joe Ryle, director of the [4-Day Week Campaign](#), India Burgess from the Autonomy Institute, and Peter Dowd MP.

Joe said that the campaign aimed to normalise the four-day working week and pointed out that attitudes towards it, particularly among the young, were becoming more positive.

He welcomed the part PCS is playing in the campaign, saying, “It was trade unions that won us the weekend 100 years ago, so now we need unions involved in winning the four-day working week.”

India explained the work that The Autonomy Institute has been doing and stressed the huge benefits that trials in the four-day working week were finding, including in the Scottish Government.

The longer-term benefits of the largest trial carried out so far, found that 89% of companies that took part still had it in place and over half made it permanent 18 months after the trial started.

Among the many benefits she listed was the positive impact on gender equality. She said that it “enables more women in the labour market to be on a more equal footing with men.” She also said that the four-day working week could meet the challenges faced by AI and automation, as an alternative to mass unemployment by “reducing hours instead of laying people off.”

Peter Dowd MP spoke about the resistance of the former Conservative government to his Private Members’ Bill as being typical of their reaction to progressive changes for workers in the past. He said that the new government shouldn’t stand in the way of public sector employers who want to trial the four-day week.

Fran finished her contribution by urging government to: “Engage with your workforce, listen to workers coming forward with plans to boost productivity, improve employee wellbeing and staff retention.”

PCS will continue to work with the 4-Day Week Campaign to make the case for a trial in the UK civil service.

[Email your local MP to get them to support the campaign.](#)