

Workplace Representatives: A Review of Their Facilities and Facility Time

**Response to the Department for Trade and Industry's
consultation document, March 2007**

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I. General comments

This Association wishes to register the following specific points in response to certain questions raised by the above DTI consultation document.

Questions 2a & 3a

While recognising those trends described in chapter 2 and 3 of the document, we would also seek to draw attention to two factors:

- a) the increasing pace of change to local roles and organisational structures heralded by current public sector reform plans (eg local authorities to become strategic commissioners and not necessarily direct providers of many key local services including a wide range of children's services, and parallel government moves to incentivise greater voluntary and community sector involvement in local public service delivery)
- b) the noteworthy growth of the professional/managerial component of the national workforce.

These factors point to a future situation where a higher number of qualified and relatively computer literate local union and other workplace representatives have to respond to major changes to staffing levels, roles, training and qualifications, and to the nature and number of different employers entering the field. While staff ownership of such change is important, these factors point to significantly higher representational workloads for generally capable but already hard-working and often overstretched local representatives. The government should, therefore, openly and positively encourage employers and local representatives to take full and genuine advantage of statutory entitlements to time off work to undertake representative duties. A culture of devoting time and effort to staff engagement and consultation needs to be developed, including where professional and managerial staffs are involved, and central government support can hasten its emergence as a key element of modern social partnership approaches to workplace change.

Question 4b

Hard experience in the education and training sector over recent years tends to underline the value of training which increasingly incorporates online elements but still retains important face-to-face components in order to enhance overall impact. TUC training is well regarded and recent forms of government support for TUC and individual union provision are welcome and appreciated.

Question 6a

The point made above in response to questions 2a and 3a should duly be reflected within management **training**, by organisations in all sectors of the UK economy, to further encourage adequate take-up of time-off facilities by local representatives.

Additional information

To read the Department for Trade and Industry's consultation document, *Workplace Representatives: A Review of Their Facilities and Facility Time*, go to www.dti.gov.uk/files/file36336.pdf

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