

## BPIF & Unite - Bringing Partnership Alive In The Workplace

On 16 December 2005 the then Employment Minister Gerry Sutcliffe MP launched a New National Partnership Agreement and Joint Code of Practice for the UK printing industry. The Partnership deal was the result of over fifteen months of discussions between the British Printing Industries Federation (BPIF) – the employers’ association representing employers in the printing industry in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the Graphical, Paper and Media Sector of Unite (formerly GPMU) - the trade union representing employees in the printing, paper and media industries throughout the UK.

The BPIF/GPMU national agreements had, over the years, not only addressed issues relating to pay and benefits, but had also put in place provisions covering areas crucial to sustaining the competitive position of the industry and to improving the working conditions of employees. However by 2003, there were increasing signs the national bargaining framework was in need of a major overhaul if it was to address the challenges the industry would face in coming years. In particular it needed to address issues relating to skills development and the work-life balance of people working in the industry, as well as enabling companies to respond to increasing competition arising from the development of new media and the sourcing of print overseas.

The parties agreed that the new partnership document needed to address the following:

- Increasing dialogue and co-operation between employers, employees and employee representatives
- Building an effective partnership between the BPIF and Unite GPM Sector that recognises and seeks to address their mutual and separate interests
- Improving productivity and profitability
- Reducing excessive overtime working
- Ensuring fairness of treatment in the workplace
- Protecting the health and welfare of employees
- Assisting employees to adapt to changes

affecting their employment

- Enabling representatives to represent their members effectively and to acquire the skills they need to work in partnership with employers
- Providing a means for resolving disputes and differences
- Implementing workplace legislation and good employment practice
- Enabling effective recruitment and development of people
- Simplifying and modernising the National Agreement

They also agreed that the new partnership document had to offer the potential to deliver real benefits to employers and employees in the industry, by ensuring that issues of concern to both employers and employees were addressed through dialogue and co-operation. The resulting partnership agreement and joint code of practice seeks to address issues that are important to employers and employees alike, and to address these collaboratively rather than confrontationally.

The following were identified as areas of common interest to employers and employees alike and are listed as such in the text of the new Agreement:

- achieving significant improvements in company profitability both now and in the future
- providing companies with the flexibility they need to respond to fluctuations in customer demand
- providing employees with a safe, secure and satisfying working environment
- ensuring that employees’ contributions to the company are properly recognised
- providing employees with information on, and consulting them about, decisions that impact upon them.
- providing employees with the training and retraining necessary for them to perform their jobs efficiently and safely and to cope with





# NEWS IN BRIEF

## Draft code of practice on discipline and grievance issued by Acas

Acas has issued a revised code of practice on discipline and grievance for public consultation. The new code will ultimately aim to encourage businesses and individuals to resolve disputes internally, saving money and time.

The code has been revised to take into account the changes being made to workplace dispute resolution by the Employment Bill, currently before Parliament, particularly the removal of the statutory dismissal and discipline procedures.

Minister for Employment Relations, Pat McFadden, said: "The new code is a key element in the Government's plans to streamline and simplify the dispute resolution system to the benefit of employers and employees.

"It will complement the removal of statutory measures by establishing flexible, principles-based guidance to help resolve disputes early."

Commenting on the launch of the draft code John Taylor, Acas Chief Executive said: "The revised Acas code on discipline and grievance is one of the first steps to simplify the dispute resolution process set out by the Michael Gibbons review."

The revised code is considerably shorter than the existing code and provides basic practical guidance to employers, employees and their representatives and sets out principles for handling disciplinary and grievance situations in the workplace.

The decision to shorten the code was influenced by the fact that many

responses to the Government consultation on the review of dispute resolution undertaken by Michael Gibbons called for a shorter more principles based code.

The Government plans to introduce the changes in workplace dispute resolution in April 2009 and Acas anticipate the revised code will come into effect on the same date. The draft code and guidance on how to contribute to the consultation can be found at:

<http://www.acas.org.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=880&p=0>

Comments on the content and structure of the revised code should be sent via post, e-mail or fax by **25 July 2008** to:

George Boyce  
Acas  
D & G code revision  
Brandon House  
180 Borough High Street  
London SE1 1LW

Fax no: 020 7210 3664  
E-mail: [dandgcode@acas.org.uk](mailto:dandgcode@acas.org.uk)

## Company made age gap an issue between managers, says Tribunal

A 51-year old employee won his claim for age discrimination and unfair dismissal after an employment tribunal accepted that his employers would have followed a different procedure if he had been younger. The employer apparently concluded that the employee did not like being managed by two young women, and dismissed him as a result.

In *Hussain v Live Nation (Venues) UK Limited* and others, Live Nation alleged that Mr Hussain was dismissed

for conduct - notably his difficulties in being managed by two women younger than himself. The tribunal found that Mr Hussain had no such difficulties and the fact that Live Nation had made the age gap an issue helped to raise the inference that his dismissal was on the grounds of age.

## Promoting opportunities for older workers

With Europe experiencing dramatic demographic change, companies and policy makers are increasing having to revise their attitudes towards older people - in particular older workers. In order to minimise the shrinking of the European workforce, and protect social security systems, employment opportunities for older workers must be improved. However, to do this requires a rethinking of assumptions and company, national and EU level.

To contribute to this project, Eurofound (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions) has launched an information campaign entitled "Working longer, living better - Europe's coming of age". Accompanying the campaign is an information pack that brings decision-makers up to date with the latest findings from research, and with recommendations and examples of best practice in tackling the challenges and exploring the opportunities associated with active ageing. The information pack will be distributed at a range of events dealing with the issue of ageing, and is also available on the Eurofound website at [www.eurofound.europa.eu/resourcepacks/activeageing.htm](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/resourcepacks/activeageing.htm)

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A job description is available by emailing [sarah.dawson@ipa-involve.com](mailto:sarah.dawson@ipa-involve.com).

To apply please send your CV to [Lorraine.Modeste@ipa-involve.com](mailto:Lorraine.Modeste@ipa-involve.com). Deadline for applications is **19 May 2008**. Interviews will be held on 3 June 2008.

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### Involvement & Participation Association

42 Colebrooke Row, London N1 8AF

Tel: 020 7354 8040 Fax: 020 7354 8041

E-mail: [involve@ipa-involve.com](mailto:involve@ipa-involve.com) Website: [www.ipa-involve.com](http://www.ipa-involve.com)

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