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**MONEY BOX LIVE**

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**LEWIS:** Hello. The number of people working part-time is growing, now more than 6.5 million - some through choice to fit in with family commitments or health, but official figures show there's a record one and a third million people who work part-time because they can't find a full-time job. Others of course have a collection of part-time jobs and more people over pension age are working, many of those in part-time jobs to boost their pension. Part-time workers should have the rights of full-timers, but they don't always seem to. In particular rules about benefits and tax credits change as hours of work change; and the tax credit rules on part-time work are becoming stricter in April for couples, many of whom could lose their working tax credit completely. Tax can also be a problem. Two or more jobs increases the chance of your tax code being wrong and the wrong amount of tax being deducted. There are also worries about part-timers and the new pension scheme which all workers will have to join and is being phased in from October. Some part-timers will miss out. Whatever your question about part-time work, you can call Money Box Live now: 03700 100 444. With me today to answer your questions are four guests to cover all these points. Malcolm McLean is a consultant with Barnett Waddingham, pensions consultants and actuaries; Sarah Veale is Head of Equality and Employment Rights at the TUC; John Whiting is Tax Policy Director at the Chartered Institute of Taxation and also the man in charge of simplifying the UK's tax system. Good luck with that, John. And Will Hadwen is here from Working Families as our benefits expert. Our first question is from Mary in Stafford. Mary, your question?

**MARY:** Hello. My daughter's a teacher. She's been working full-time for 10 years and recently had a baby. She's just returned to work where she'll be part-time for a while and wishes to change her contract to work three or four days a week because her daughter has a disability. What rights does she have to request this? Is it up to the school to allow this change of contract or has she any right to demand this?

**LEWIS:** Right, well I think that's one for Sarah Veale.

**VEALE:** She certainly has a right ... She hasn't got a right to demand. She's got a right to request, and she certainly fulfils the criteria for making that request. The problem is though that the employer has a right to refuse if they have good business or organisational reasons for doing so and so she'd have to put up quite a good case and I think probably try to persuade the school that she in working part-time or working fewer hours wouldn't do any harm to schedules, rotas and so on. The more you can help the employer in a sense, the more likely they are not to use a business reason to object. But it is only a right to request; you don't actually have a statutory right to work fewer hours if you want to.

**MARY:** Right.

**LEWIS:** Will Hadwen?

**MARY:** *(over)* I think she would be very willing obviously to help as much as she could, but it was just you know could she request this.

**HADWEN:** She can request it. And another point would be she can offer as many different patterns of work as possible, so that she's showing the employers she can be flexible. It can sometimes be indirect sex discrimination to refuse somebody part-time work, but that's probably not going to be necessary, but if she does have problems she could try giving my colleagues at Working Families a ring.

**VEALE:** Or talking to the union if she's in one.

**LEWIS:** Indeed. It is a difficult question though. It's one of these strange things where you have the right to request it, but you don't actually have the right to demand it, as you said Sarah. Does that help, Mary?

**MARY:** That's lovely, thank you very much indeed.

**LEWIS:** Alright, well good luck to your daughter with that.

**MARY:** Thank you.

**LEWIS:** And while we're talking about part-time work, this is a related point and I'm sure quite common for women going back to work after having a baby. This is a lady who wants to remain anonymous. She says she works for a bank. She returned to work after a year maternity leave and she's returned part-time and she's now, she says, at risk of redundancy. And she says by coming back part-time her redundancy package will be much less. She'll get less money. Is that right, Sarah Veale?

**VEALE:** Well actually the first important point to make is they shouldn't be singling her out for redundancy *because* she's working part-time. That would be illegal. But assuming that isn't the case, unfortunately redundancy pay relates to the amount you're being paid. So it's a bit of an old trick, I'm afraid. Some employers will do that. They'll reduce hours unilaterally and then when the person goes they cost less to make redundant.

**LEWIS:** Yes, we've had a couple of other emails about it too, I must say, but it seems particularly harsh when you go back after having a baby ...

**VEALE:** Absolutely.

**LEWIS:** ...when you might expect and everyone would think it perfectly reasonable to work less, and then suddenly you realise you've given up thousands of pounds of redundancy.

**VEALE:** But I would watch the discrimination point though because it would be sex discrimination.

**HADWEN:** Yes because it could be related to the maternity leave.

**VEALE:** Exactly.

**LEWIS:** Right, so that's an important thing to raise perhaps with the employer - why are you making me redundant at this time?

**VEALE:** Yes, yeah.

**LEWIS:** Malcolm?

**McLEAN:** I just wanted to make a point about somebody who's in a final salary pension scheme who chooses to change from full-time to part-time work, for example in the run-up to retirement.

**LEWIS:** That will affect of course the teacher we spoke to earlier.

**McLEAN:** Exactly, yes. They can still have their annual salary as a whole time equivalent except for the purposes of calculating the pension. It'll only count for example half a year's work if they're only working half a year for the purposes of adding up the number of years, but their final salary can be in fact the whole time equivalent, so 12 months.

**LEWIS:** Right, so if you've worked 20 years and you worked 2 years at half-time, that counts as not 22 but 21 years?

**McLEAN:** 21, yes.

**LEWIS:** That's a fraction of your full-time equivalent pay.

**MCLEAN:** Exactly. The calculation is done on what would be your earnings in that final year.

**LEWIS:** Well that's an interesting point. Certainly I didn't know that. That's a very interesting point. Thank you. I'm sure it'll actually help people who are in that position. Well thanks very much for that call and that email, and we're now moving onto Pauline who's in Rugby. Pauline, your question?

**PAULINE:** Hello, my point actually relates to the point that's just been raised. I worked for the NHS part-time when my daughter was young and then finished working whole time and I then went into another industry. I've just recently asked for a pension forecast and I find that although I worked for the NHS for 7 years, my pension is based on only 4 years because of the part-time work being work pro-rata. But had I worked whole time first and then gone onto part-time work, I wouldn't have been so disadvantaged. It's only because I started off on part-time and then went to whole time that I'm actually going to receive less of a pension.

**LEWIS:** Is that right, Malcolm?

**MCLEAN:** I don't think ... It shouldn't make any difference. The half time counts as half a year and, therefore, two half years add up to one year, so it establishes the example Paul gave before - a number of years entitlement. But the actual salary will be the whole time equivalent - the final salary, the full amount - so it shouldn't make any difference whether it was at the beginning or the end as far as I'm aware.

**PAULINE:** Well it does if you actually work it out because the example given in the NHS pension scheme book says that if you say work half time for the last few years, your pension is based on a whole time equivalent salary, so in effect they double what your actual salary was with respect to the pension they pay you.

**MCLEAN:** Yes.

**PAULINE:** So you don't actually experience the disadvantage of the pro-rate amount with respect to the number of years service.

**McLEAN:** Right.

**PAULINE:** If you do the calculation, if you start off full-time and then go to part-time you are less disadvantaged than if you start off part-time and then go to whole time.

**McLEAN:** Well there may be something in the rules that says that. I didn't know that, if that is the position. As far as I am concerned, the rule would just apply whenever the part-time work applied.

**LEWIS:** I think, because this is a bit complicated Pauline without seeing the documents and without understanding the rules of your particular scheme, but it may well be worthwhile ...

**PAULINE:** *(over)* It's the NHS pension scheme, so it will affect an awful lot of workers.

**VEALE:** Were you in a union? I mean a lot of people who work in the NHS are in a union and they do have very good pensions advisers who know all these schemes inside out and back to front. So if you were in a union, I would make the most of that.

**LEWIS:** I think you should go and get ... I was going to say you should go and either talk to human resources, or if you're in a union go to the union and try and get it sorted out because it does sound a bit odd to us. But if it's that way, then it is that way and there's not much we can do about it, but it's certainly worth checking that your understanding is correct of that. But thanks for the call. Malcolm?

**McLEAN:** I was just going to say this is one of the idiosyncrasies of pensions. Just because you're in the public sector, it doesn't mean to say that two public sector

occupations will have exactly the same rules .They do vary quite a bit, so it is worth checking it out to find out. If, as you say, what they've done is incorrect, then they should put it right.

**LEWIS:** Okay, thanks very much. And we were talking about redundancy a few minutes ago and I should have brought John Whiting in, just for you John to clarify the rules about what redundancy payments are taxable and what payments when you leave a job are not taxable.

**WHITING:** Well of course the nub of it, Paul, is redundancy. Let's put the stress on redundancy pay. The pay for losing your job, statutory, or your employer's redundancy - that is taxable, but you're getting the first £30,000 tax free. So fairly well-known and what it does mean, of course, is most statutory redundancy payments are going to end up being tax free. If on the other hand you're getting something extra for well garden leave, finishing the job, if there's a contractual extra amount, payments in lieu of notice, all these sort of terms, they tend to be taxed in full. And it can arouse quite a lot of confusion, particularly when people start talking about leaving their jobs. There's offers going round and they start thinking oh well first £30,000 is tax free, because naturally if it's tax free that's worth a lot more to say the obvious thing.

**LEWIS:** Yes, but that you have to make sure exactly what it's for and you have to make sure you were made redundant.

**WHITING:** Exactly.

**LEWIS:** And Will Hadwen, also I'll bring you in on this if I could. To get benefits, you have to be made redundant; you can't just give up your job. It has to be clear you've actually been dismissed in a sense. Is that right?

**HADWEN:** Well it depends what benefit you're going to claim, but certainly if you're going to claim jobseeker's allowance - then yes if you leave voluntarily you may be sanctioned. It's also worth saying that the rules on disregarding payments at

the end of a job are very similar to the tax rules that John just mentioned.

**LEWIS:** Right, okay.

**VEALE:** There is a misunderstanding about redundancy often. People think they've been made redundant. It's the job that gets made redundant and that's quite important actually in terms of your status.

**WHITING:** Indeed.

**LEWIS:** And can't be filled afterwards behind you.

**VEALE:** Exactly, exactly.

**LEWIS:** Okay, thanks very much for clarifying that. Joan now in Northern Ireland. Joan, your question?

**JOAN:** Hello Paul, good afternoon. I'm in receipt of a pension and I work part-time. Recently a friend told me she's got notification to say her pension was going up, her national pension, and I was expecting to get a letter advising me of the same thing. Instead I got a letter telling me that my tax code had changed. I made inquiries about this and found I was going to be paying more, so it seems I'm not getting an increase in pension but I'm going to be paying more tax. I've tried to call them and I've hung on for ages and haven't got any response at all.

**LEWIS:** Well certainly that last comment is a very familiar one, Joan.

**WHITING:** It is, isn't it?

**JOAN:** I know. (*laughs*)

**LEWIS:** John Whiting, what's going on here?

**WHITING:** I think what is happening - and I'm afraid, Joan, it can get a common situation - I mean the starting point is anybody with two or more jobs or pensions starts running into confusions with the tax code because your tax code, your tax free allowance has to be allocated across the one or more pensions, part time jobs, and the system can break down. And what the Revenue sometimes do when there is somebody like yourself who is working part-time, so you potentially get a tax code to set against your part-time earnings but you've also got a pension, and they start making assumptions about your pension. And it's interesting you say that somebody you know is getting an increase in their pension. So it sounds as if the Revenue have added two and two and got five because they've assumed that you are going to get the same increase as your friend, therefore you're going to get more pension, therefore your tax code is effectively going to go down because they deduct the pension they think you're going to get from your standard tax free allowance. Your tax code goes down. Therefore the amount of tax you pay on your part-time earnings will go up.

**LEWIS:** Joan, can I ask you if these pensions you get ... One of them is the state pension, is it, or is it a pension from a job?

**JOAN:** I'm actually talking about the state pension. But the other pension that I have - and that's the one they referred to - is £85 a month from ... You know it's just a private pension.

**LEWIS:** Well that may well not go up, but your state pension should be going up by 5.2%. The whole of it should go up. Malcolm, that's right, isn't it?

**McLEAN:** Absolutely, 5.2%.

**JOAN:** But would that happen without them notifying me?

**McLEAN:** The way it should work actually, your pension should go up by 5.2%. But then if they're deducting tax and the tax is increased, you may not actually realise that you've had an increase because you're paying more tax and therefore your net income's gone down if that makes sense.

**JOAN:** Yes, it sounds like a double whammy though, doesn't it?

**WHITING:** Well I'm afraid, dare I say it Paul, but as you know, with my other hat on, as simplification we've just published a big report yesterday highlighting the problems the system causes to people like yourself, Joan. We need to get more coordinated. The interim solution, I'm afraid, is that a lot of people like you need to fill in some sort of tax return or get a tax reconciliation done to make sure the tax bill is right at the end of the tax year because all too often it isn't.

**LEWIS:** And it's always worth ringing the number of the tax office and find out what's going on.

**WHITING:** Absolutely.

**LEWIS:** But Joan, just to assure you the state pension is going up, all of it, by the same 5.2%. So it should be going up. The fact you haven't been notified shouldn't stop it going up, but if it doesn't go up in the week of ... it's the second week of April I think it's going up ...

**WHITING:** Yes.

**LEWIS:** ... then make sure you contact the DWP about that. But it should be going up and, yes, there will be some tax due on it.

**WHITING:** *(over)* I'm sure Joan realises it, but many people don't, the state pension is taxable. It may seem like a statement of the obvious, but an awful lot of people don't appreciate that even though PAYE does not operate on the state pension.

**LEWIS:** And that's why they have to take a bit more tax off you ...

**WHITING:** Exactly.

**LEWIS:** Joan, you're confused. A lot of people are confused, but I hope we've clarified it a bit for you.

**JOAN:** Yes you have.

**LEWIS:** And just make sure you check everything because ...

**JOAN:** If they could get another telephone line in or another ... *(laughter)*

**WHITING:** *(over)* We've recommended that as well, Joan.

**VEALE:** *(over)* Yes, hear hear.

**LEWIS:** Try unusual times of the day. That might help. That's all I can suggest.

**HADWEN:** Okay, thanks for your help. Bye.

**LEWIS:** Thank you for your call, Joan. Thank you very much indeed. Rachel is now on the line. She's in Ipswich. Rachel, your question?

**RACHEL:** Hi, good afternoon. I'm currently on maternity leave and obviously have been receiving statutory maternity benefit or maternity pay, and I'll be going back to work in September. I'm wondering how when I go back hopefully part-time that'll affect my national insurance contributions and ultimately my pension, but also how much national insurance goes when you are being paid with statutory maternity benefits.

**LEWIS:** Will Hadwen?

**HADWEN:** Okay, well statutory maternity pay like retirement pension is taxable. It's also NI-able, so you will have deductions made from that. When you are part-time, one of the things that you need to look for is whether you're going to be earning at

least £107 a week. That's the new lower earnings limit from April.

**RACHEL:** Right.

**HADWEN:** As long as you earn at least that, even if you don't actually pay national insurance, national insurance will be notionally paid for you. You wouldn't pay national insurance until you got up to £146, which is the primary threshold.

**RACHEL:** Right, which I will probably earn more than that.

**LEWIS:** So as long as you're paying that, then your state pension is protected?

**HADWEN:** *(over)* Then you'll be fine. Yes, it will be contributing to the state pension.

**RACHEL:** And is that a full payment then? You would get that as if you were working full time?

**HADWEN:** Yes.

**RACHEL:** Right, okay.

**HADWEN:** As far as the contributory benefits are concerned, yes.

**RACHEL:** Right and the same when you're on maternity leave. If you were working full time, it would be a contributory full time payment?

**HADWEN:** Well that depends on the level of your statutory maternity pay.

**RACHEL:** Right, okay.

**HADWEN:** But if you got the flat rate most recently, £128.73 a week ...

**RACHEL:** That's right, yes.

**HADWEN:** ... then that is enough for there to have been at least a notional contribution for each week you were getting that.

**RACHEL:** Okay, so in effect I won't have missed out?

**HADWEN:** There's no gap. Did you have any unpaid maternity leave or ...

**RACHEL:** No.

**LEWIS:** You only need 30 years out of working life to get a full pension anyway, don't you?

**HADWEN:** *(over)* Yes and also you have a baby, I assume ...

**RACHEL:** Yes.

**HADWEN:** ... and so you're getting child benefit for a baby under 12, so you'll also be getting parent credit.

**LEWIS:** Malcolm?

**MCLEAN:** Can I just reinforce that point?

**RACHEL:** *(over)* Okay, thank you.

**MCLEAN:** Sorry ... reinforce that point because a lot of people don't know this. As Will has said, it's possible to get a credit towards your national insurance pension

without actually paying national insurance contributions. If you earn at least £107 a week or an average of that over a year, even though you're not in the bracket for paying national insurance contributions, you are actually building up an entitlement to a state pension and also at the moment the state second pension. You're treated effectively if you earn £107 a week, which is £5 ... £564 a year, you're treated as though you're earning £14,000 and you'll get £1.70 on top of your state pension as a state second pension. It's a complicated area, but I think the point I'm trying to make here is that if your earnings are close to that figure, it might be just worthwhile working a little bit longer to get a little bit more pay to bring yourself into the bracket and therefore get these benefits as a result of it.

**LEWIS:** £107 a week, that's good advice. And John Whiting, can I just ask you. Rachel is in the position where she's been on maternity leave, she's back to work. Are there tax implications? Are they likely to get her tax wrong in that circumstance?

**WHITING:** Well it's always possible, but in principle PAYE should sort out because it sounds like, Rachel, you've just got the one job. You're not doing two ...

**RACHEL:** That's right, yes.

**WHITING:** So you go back. It might take PAYE a month or two to catch up, but by the end of the year PAYE should be operating properly and give you your full personal allowance. Although of course if you go back towards the end of the tax year, it's something to check that you have had your full tax free pay for the year because sometimes that's where it can go out of sync.

**RACHEL:** Right, okay.

**WHITING:** I've just got one ...

**LEWIS:** Yes, John.

**WHITING:** As we've been talking national insurance, something as it were down the other end of the spectrum to what Will and Malcolm have mentioned, it's just worth pointing out people who've got two or more jobs, therefore paying national insurance on two or more jobs, you can end up of course paying too much national insurance, so there are sometimes things to watch out for to claim a bit back. I'll just flag it up and say that because it's an involved subject on its own.

**LEWIS:** Yes, you need to be earning a reasonable amount, but yes that can happen. The other end though of course is we've had an email from Sally who has four different jobs, part-time, and she doesn't earn enough on any of them to pay either tax or national insurance. So is that right, Will - she could actually not pay any national insurance and not be getting these credits because she's earning too little each job? You don't sort of add them all up?

**WHITING:** You don't add them all up. It's a liability that applies to the employment. Of course what we don't know ... She's paying national insurance, but we don't know if she's between the lower earnings limit, the £107.

**LEWIS:** No, if she's earning that in any one job, she'll be alright.

**HADWEN:** Then she'll be okay.

**LEWIS:** But if she's earning say, I don't know, £80 in four jobs, she's not paying national insurance.

**HADWEN:** She might be in a situation where she's getting a credit for some other reason, for example as a parent, but we don't know that.

**MCLEAN:** It is a absolute mystery to me why we aggregate earnings together for tax purposes, but don't do so for national insurance. It doesn't make any sense whatsoever.

**VEALE:** Absolutely.

**LEWIS:** I suspect it's a mystery to everybody, Malcolm, but they're not going to change it.

**WHITING:** Watch this space. It's part of the review of national insurance and PAYE.

**LEWIS:** It's all hanging on John Whiting.

**MCLEAN:** Well done, John.

**LEWIS:** Right, let's do a couple of emails now. This is from someone who actually signs themselves 'anonymous'. They are studying ... I say they - I don't know if it's a he or she - studying at university in their first year, but setting up as a self-employed freelancer. Also has a paid work placement for this summer and next summer. Would I still be able to claim tax back from my work placement and what effect does being self-employed have on my repayments for the student loan. Well I guess while you're still studying it doesn't, but it will do later. John, the tax issue first.

**WHITING:** Well I mean if you have some self-employment, if you're starting up as a freelancer there's a certain amount of notification to the Revenue to do, and obviously if you end up with (for the sake of argument) you've earned £5,000 over the year with your self-employment and you've got £5,000 of part-time earnings, put them together, £10,000, you're obviously in the tax net. Hopefully what you can sort out is that you're not paying on your part-time earnings and you can pay your self-employment tax bill through a self-assessment, but you know you do have to aggregate the two together to get to your likely tax bill.

**LEWIS:** But it could be that this person did pay too much tax on their work placement ...

**WHITING:** It could well be.

**LEWIS:** ... and can claim some back. And also you mention notification and this is something people don't realise, isn't it - that however little you earn as a self-employed person, you have to tell the Revenue?

**WHITING:** You are supposed to tell the Revenue and it is often missed, and you know the trite reason is that that's the only way they get to know you're doing it. An employment, part-time or whatever, then the system works and tells the Revenue. Self-employment, it's down to you to notify. But you know it's just a piece of mechanics that you're supposed to do and get registered as it were.

**LEWIS:** And you can do it on the website if you find the page.

**WHITING:** Of course.

**LEWIS:** Well thank you very much for that email. Anonymous, I hope you know that we're talking to you. And then Keith says his daughter who's 25 works 16 hours a week. She's a single parent. Will she lose working tax credit after April 2012 because, Will Hadwen, there has been this talk of people having to work 24 hours, but it doesn't apply to her, I think?

**HADWEN:** No, it does not apply to single parents. There's been a lot of misunderstanding about this. We've had lots of calls about this. It applies to couples with children who will need to work 24 hours a week from April. One of them will still need to work at least 16 hours and the other 8 hours can either be worked by the same person or by the other member of the couple.

**LEWIS:** And that's going to mean people who don't manage to achieve that - and it can be difficult - will actually lose that benefit from the first week of April?

**HADWEN:** They will lose it and they have all been sent letters saying that they will

lose it. Whether all the right people have received the right letters, we don't know. Our employer survey at Working Families suggests that they're going to struggle to get those hours because employers simply do not have them to offer.

**LEWIS:** And it's quite a lot of money they're losing.

**HADWEN:** And it's quite a lot of money they're losing, yes.

**LEWIS:** Thousands a year in some cases.

**HADWEN:** Yes, it could be £70 a week.

**LEWIS:** Yeah, £70 a week. Right, so that's clarified that. I hope that helps you and your daughter, Keith, feel a bit more sanguine. She doesn't have to work 24 hours a week because she's a single parent. Sixteen is enough. The next caller is Sarah and she's in Cheltenham. Sarah, your question?

**SARAH:** Oh hello. I've recently started a new part-time job and I've been contracted to work for only 16 hours a week. However I have never actually worked 16 hours. It's been more ... well at the most 11 and mainly 6. Even though my contract does say 16 hours, I'm not rota'd. So I was just wondering about my legal rights - you know what would I get paid for holidays and can they just say I'm in breach of contract?

**VEALE:** Does the contract actually say up to 16 hours?

**SARAH:** Yes, it does.

**VEALE:** Ah well you see they're exercising their option to give you less than 16 hours, so they're not breaking the law in that sense. People don't realise this either. We're getting lots of these today, aren't we, but people often don't realise you can be contracted on a zero hours contract where you're not actually guaranteed any work at all but you take what you're given on a sometimes day to day basis, which makes it

all terribly difficult to calculate all sorts of things like tax and national insurance liability.

**LEWIS:** Indeed. And Sarah's asking what she should get paid for holidays and I must say we have had an email from Clifford who says he's actually on two separate zero hours contracts with different employers. I must say I hadn't heard of them till this afternoon. He is an employee therefore, but what rights does he have to holiday pay? And, Sarah, I think you've got the same question?

**SARAH:** Yes and I'm not on a zero. There are other people who are employed on a zero hour contract and we know they don't get holiday pay, but I'm just wondering can they just sack you?

**HADWEN:** *(over)* They would get holiday pay, Sarah, because you accrue holiday as you're going along. And so depending on the hours you work you are accruing holiday at that rate, at 5.6 weeks a year minimum under the working time regulations.

**VEALE:** But the trouble is they'll often say that's wrapped up into the pay you get per hour and the holiday therefore effectively becomes unpaid, which is really unfair.

**LEWIS:** Because this is all so complicated - and I know Sarah you'll say join a union but of course a lot of people ...

**VEALE:** I don't have to if you say it for me.

**LEWIS:** ... there aren't always unions in these organisations - but how on earth do you sort this out with an employer that's saying one thing when you believe and Money Box Live is telling you something slightly different?

**VEALE:** Well you can. I mean there are advice agencies. Citizens Advice are good on these sorts of issues. There are one or two free law centres left, which will give you advice, and the various government departments still just about run advice lines

that you can see on the website. So there is help there. But you're quite right, I mean it's a minefield, very difficult. You do need to get professional advice often and so, you're quite right, people should join unions.

**LEWIS:** And Sarah in Cheltenham rather than Sarah Veale in the studio, Sarah in Cheltenham your question is what holiday pay will you get? Can we answer that? Is it the average of what she's earned over the ...

**SARAH:** Yes because it varies so much. And she actually employed me saying I would be working 16 hours a week and she's never actually turned round and said you're not. You just look at the rota and you're there for 3 hours.

**LEWIS:** Is there a contract issue here, Sarah Veale - that your contract says up to 16, but when you were taken on your employer said you will be working 16?

**VEALE:** I think it's going to be what you're actually working rather than what you're mythically working.

**HADWEN:** Because your contract isn't just what's written down. It's also what happens in practice.

**VEALE:** Exactly, exactly, yeah.

**LEWIS:** But you certainly should get some holiday pay. And if you don't feel it's enough, I guess go to CAB or talk to the employer first.

**VEALE:** Absolutely. Tot it up. Keep a record of every single hour that you work and what you're paid. That would be my advice.

**SARAH:** Lovely, thank you.

**LEWIS:** Yes, so this is your evening job now, Sarah, is keeping a track of what you

do.

**SARAH:** It'll keep me busy because I'm not working much.

**LEWIS:** Thank you very much for your call, Sarah.

**SARAH:** Thank you.

**LEWIS:** It's a very interesting point indeed. And we've just got time, I think, to squeeze in Tim who's near Buxton. Tim, your question?

**TIM:** Hello, yes. I'm a retained fire fighter - in other words I'm a part-time fire fighter given 120 hours cover a week. Since 2006 I've been paying into the fire fighters' pension fund. The only question I've got is I'm not going to reach the actual pensionable age (which I believe is 60) currently with the scheme, so as such I'm in a position where I either leave the fire service as a retained fire fighter or try to take on a desk role with them, which I don't think is possible anyway. My question is as I would leave early, it means that my pension will not become payable until 65 and since it's a small amount is it actually worth me paying into the fire fighters' pension scheme or should I look for alternatives?

**LEWIS:** Okay, Malcolm McLean, we've got about twenty, thirty seconds.

**McLEAN:** Yeah, the short answer is it's usually worth paying into a pension scheme because it affects the amount that you're going to get. But the only circumstance where you can draw the pension in advance of the normal pension age is on an early retirement basis and they'll cut it down, so I'm afraid it is as simple as that.

**LEWIS:** Probably worth paying in, Tim. We have to stop there, I'm afraid, but again fire fighters have strong unions. I would talk to them in this circumstance. This is all we have time for. My thanks to Malcolm McLean from Barnett Waddingham; Sarah Veale from the TUC; John Whiting from the Chartered Institute of Taxation; Will

Hadwen from Working Families, and thanks to you for all your calls and emails. Very, very interesting stuff coming in. More about part-time working on our website, [bbc.co.uk/moneybox](http://bbc.co.uk/moneybox). You can listen again to the programme and in a couple of days read a transcript. I'm back on Saturday at noon with Money Box and I'm here to take more of your calls on Money Box Live next Wednesday afternoon. Subject: saving for children.