

No. 445/2022

Ref: DB/FC/LS

Date: 10 November 2022

## TO ALL BRANCHES WITH OPENREACH MEMBERS

**In Strictest Confidence and Embargoed until 2.00 p.m.  
on Thursday 10 November 2022**

Dear Colleague,

### **OPENREACH Ltd and Openreach Northern Ireland – L&D Changes to the Apprenticeship Programme**

The Openreach National Team (NT) has recently met with the company to discuss the current Apprenticeship Programme and what the future model will look like.

The current apprenticeship programme covers Fibre Jointing, Fibre Cabling and SD Copper. The current apprenticeship model follows the new apprenticeship standard which was developed by Openreach and other telecom companies and introduced in August 2021. The new standard is a 12 to 15-month programme which requires facilitation and learning interventions (10 workshops) which are delivered through the assessors. In parallel, the apprentices need to complete functional skills which is English and Maths Level 1 and Level 2.

Following the successful completion of all workshops and functional skills, individuals will reach their End Point Assessment (EPA). This is where they need to demonstrate their learning through a 3-part assessment covering knowledge, skills and behaviours. In the current model, each apprentice assessor manages 30 to 40 recruits through the process.

In total the Apprentice team is supported by a team of 71 people - a combination of 61 team members and 10 managers. The Team Member population has a mixture of C3's and B2's depending on their role.

Going forward, Openreach will bring any telecoms engineer, both field and desk recruits, in as 'Trainees' rather than 'Apprentices'. This will also affect Openreach Northern Ireland who have previously always followed an Apprenticeship model.

The company's rationale is that declining volumes are significantly reducing the need for apprenticeship delivery resource. In 2020/2021 apprentices were at a peak with 4000 coming through. This number has been reducing year on year ever since and the company have forecasted the volumes for 2023/2024 to be potentially less than 200. Currently Openreach still have c3000 apprentices, which will continue to be fully supported through their journey. The programme will be wound down gradually over the next 12 months and the training will continue to be delivered by the L&D training team.

Openreach's main recruitment going forward will be into Civils, Poling and FTTP Provision, which currently are not brought in through an Apprenticeship. Commitments given to us by the company are;

- Trainees will still go through the same training and be expected to meet the same standards of learning and workmanship
- Internal accreditation as opposed to Level 2 apprenticeship (NVQ), which takes 12 months
- Accreditation is industry recognised and will still allow people to move and progress their career
- They will internally support with Maths and English learning for those who want this development, as opposed to everyone needing to complete it
- No change to pay or T&C's – they join on TMNEA (trainee) and move to TMNE2 on completion of their traineeship

With the 61 Team Members (TM's), this includes 12 TM's who are secondees and will be going back to their roles at the end of March as per their existing agreements. As the Apprenticeship programme runs through to completion, Openreach propose to redeploy the apprenticeship team into alternative roles or provide the option of Flexible Voluntary Paid Leaver.

The company have indicated that individuals will have priority candidate status and will receive pay and pension protection (PPP). Openreach have already identified a number of options which may be of interest for different people, depending on the grade, skills and location; this includes trainer, planner and designer roles in the wider L&D function, as well as field roles. The CWU Openreach National Team has clarified with the company for those who are C3 and B2, if they find an alternative role within a 'mixed graded role', i.e. FBC which has a mixture of C3's and TMNE3 they will remain at C3 with no PPP.

An Expression of Interest (EOI) will be offered to our members. The EOI will include the option of moving to an alternative role within the business or considering a voluntary paid leaver package with a latest leaving date of 31 July 2023. There will be the option to extend to the latest 31 October 2023 by exception, depending on the people remaining on programme. At any point should an individual who has opted for VPL secure another permanent role internally they will have the opportunity to withdraw their voluntary paid leaver application, rescinding their leaver payment. They also have the ability to bring their leaving date forward, and still receive their leaver payment, should their personal circumstances change or they secure a role externally. This is based on sufficient notice being given (minimum 4 working weeks excluding annual leave notice period).

Any enquiries regarding this LTB should be sent to Davie Bowman's office in the first instance.

Yours sincerely,

**Fiona Curtis on behalf of  
DAVIE BOWMAN**  
Assistant Secretary