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17th July 2024

TO: All T&FS Branches

Dear Colleagues

Your Voice in the Workplace – July 2024

Please find attached the July Workplace Bulletin.

We will be sending you out a limited print run (approx. 10 per cent of branch membership) of this Edition, which should reach you by the end of this week for distribution to your reps to take into workplaces.

You also have the link to print immediate copies and/or to print off more copies.

It is crucial that branches are distributing the monthly bulletin in every workplace. The purpose is to ensure members are receiving written content from the union directly into their workplaces, so your role in that process is integral.

Thank you for your support and please contact us with your feedback on the Bulletin.

<https://www.cwu.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/08131-your-voice-BTG-issue-7-July-2up.pdf>

Yours sincerely,

Karen Rose
Deputy General Secretary (T&FS)

Chris Webb
Head of Communications



YOUR VOICE IN THE WORKPLACE



FOR CWU MEMBERS WORKING IN BT GROUP AND THE WIDER TT&FS SECTOR...

ISSUE SEVEN, JULY 2024



FRESH START FOR THE UK – FRESH START FOR OUR UNION

Your general secretary Dave Ward on how we make the New Deal for Workers a reality...

As I said at the *Organising & Recruitment* event recently, it's a fantastic feeling to see the Tories kicked out of power and to welcome the new Labour Government under Keir Starmer.

There are reservations among some members, or even some scepticism, but I think our new Prime Minister Keir and his team have started immediately with some important key decisions.

Our new Labour Government's got a lot of tough problems to solve. Problems caused, let's never forget, by 14 years of rule by the Conservative Party. A party of the wealthy and powerful governing in the interests of the wealthy and powerful.

Of course, there will be challenges for Labour in power and it won't be easy, but we, the CWU, will be using all of our powers to apply pressure in the right way. We'll be using all of our influence and, most importantly, our ideas, to help make sure Labour's New Deal package is implemented in full.

People are talking about the need to hold the Labour Government to account – and of course we will – but we need to also hold ourselves to account. To ask ourselves: "What can we do? How can we help to make a difference?" I will be making sure this is a debate within the TUC as well. This moment isn't about relying on politicians to deliver change. Trade unions must step up and deliver it in every workplace too.

And this was the key theme of the successful *Organising & Recruitment* event that many of your branch reps came to last week, which launched what will be a major new national project to strengthen the CWU and expand our work.

And every member can help:

RECRUITMENT: Every time you meet a new colleague in your workplace or in your work team, ask them if they've joined yet. Speak to them about the benefits of CWU membership and, if you have a copy of this Bulletin with you, ask them to use the 'SCAN ME & JOIN' QR code on the page.

The bigger the membership, the bigger the CWU can win at work.

ORGANISING: Support your local rep. Offer to help. And, why not find out about becoming a CWU rep yourself? Contact your local branch, who will be able to advise and assist."



INSIDE:
SUPPORTING OUR MEMBERS IN CONSUMER/EE



BACK:
CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED IN OPENREACH AND
READ THE LATEST FROM YOUR DGS KAREN ROSE

SCAN ME! JOIN THE UNION



CONSUMER/EE FRONTLINE FEEDBACK



Abdul Shaikh (on right) with colleagues

FLEXIBLE WORKING SMART SYSTEMS HYBRID VIEWS

Your Voice spoke with CWU national officer Stephen Albon recently about the top issues the union is currently prioritising on behalf of members in this part of BT Group...

We concluded a successful pay deal last year and the next round of wage negotiations commence later this year," he begins, "so the focus right now is on members' working conditions, specifically around shift patterns, attendance and flexibility.

"At national level, industrial relations have been reasonably positive overall and our workplace reps are working hard to build on this at local level – as well as seeking to increase recruitment and also encourage new reps to come forward."

For some frontline feedback on these issues, *Your Voice* visited two of the company's larger worksites – Snow Hill in Birmingham and Glasgow's Alexander Bain House – to meet and speak with reps and members.

At Snow Hill – a relatively new, city-centre premises, which has its own tram stop right outside its front door – we meet up with CWU Midland No1 Branch representative Manpreet Benning who explains that, although she works in another part of the building, she is currently the union's 'Single Point of Contact' for members in Consumer/EE here.

"Although I'm not a Consumer/EE worker myself – I'm in BT Business – I do advise and/or represent members right across the building," she says, adding: "I'm part of helping with the union's recruitment drives and generally communicating the CWU message."

Sitting in the break area adjacent to the Consumer/EE customer contact office, Manpreet speaks with the duty manager and they tell us that "around 260 people" are employed here in these roles, with several hundred working on other floors for BT Business and on desk-based Openreach duties.

The customer-contact operation runs from 8am daily, closing at 9pm during the week and 8pm at weekends. There are both full and part-

time roles, with staff working a variety of different shifts. Most are on four-week rotations that include two Saturdays and five working-from-home-option days, per rotation.

Opinions are mixed on hybrid working, with several of those we spoke to wanting more such opportunities while others tell us they prefer being in the office.



Harminder with Manpreet

Consumer/EE workers Sabina Sacranie and Abdul Shaikh, for example, have opposite views on this, with Sabina saying: "I do have that option, but I don't like it," while Abdul tells us: "I'd like to have more working from home days."

Both of them recently volunteered to take on CWU representative roles and have undertaken the union's initial training courses.

Sabina talks about how she transferred here from the company's Leicester site in 2022 and has "worked in different parts of the company" over a long period, adding: "So I know about what the company does and I want to be a rep so I can help my colleagues."

Abdul has been here "since last November" and tells us that he has "seen the good impact of a union here, compared to previous jobs I've had in retail where there was no union.

"What I like about the union is the togetherness and sticking up for each other," he says, adding that he wants to encourage more of his colleagues to be part of building up CWU membership further among the workforce.

Abdul's rotation includes two weeks of 8.30am to 4.30pm shifts, a week working 9am to 5.30pm and another – with fewer days – of 9.30am to 7.30pm, while Sabina is on an 18-hour week and works three five-hour shifts – starting at 10.30am Monday to Wednesday – plus a three-hour shift on alternate Thursdays and Saturdays.

As we speak with several of the members in the department, it seems from the various conversations that most of the four-week rotations follow a similar pattern to Abdul's, with two weeks the same, another week with a small variation and one week working late into the evening.



Kim O'Hara

On home-working, we encounter more differing opinions among the workforce. Kim O'Hara and Harminder Padda both would like to have more home-working opportunities, while Aaron Johal says "I don't want to work from home" and David Jacobs's concern is wanting to work fewer Saturdays.

Those who express a view about 'flexi-time' are all positive about it, saying that it provides extra options for workers, particularly in 'family-friendly' terms.

Manpreet tells us that she is glad that two volunteers have come forward from among the Consumer/EE workforce to take on the workplace rep roles in this specific part of the building.

"It's great that we've now got Abdul and Sabina. It's good for the union and for our members. The branch will continue to give them both maximum support in their roles," she says.



Tammy Smith



Shannon with Usmaan Aslam



'IT'S GREAT TO SEE NEW REPS COMING FORWARD AND SUPPORTING AND ADVISING OUR HARD-WORKING MEMBERS.'
STEPHEN ALBON

Up in Glasgow, we meet CWU Scotland No1 Branch rep Shannon Connor at Alexander Bain House by the city's riverside. Shannon transferred over to BT Business from Consumer a couple of years ago, but, like Manpreet in Birmingham, she represents/advises Consumer/EE members here.

She explains that there are four CWU reps in the building who look after the members across the different Lines of Business – as at Birmingham, there are several hundred working for BT Business and Openreach on other floors. Also, like the Snow Hill site, Alexander Bain House is a modern 21st century building and much preferred by those who previously worked at the company's far older Dial House premises.

Shift patterns here are also worked on a four-week rotation basis, but are about to change, with, we are told, notices having recently been sent out to staff asking them to submit their preferences.

"There's no guarantee that members will get the shift pattern options they ask for, but management have said they'll make every effort to meet reasonable requests if practicable," says Shannon. "And we're currently dealing individually with those facing uncertainty with existing protected Sunday shifts or other agreed flexible working arrangements and how these new patterns affect them."

The first members we encounter here are Murray Hendry and Tammy Smith, who have worked here for seven months and a year and a half respectively. Murray works on broadband sales and retentions, while Tammy's job focuses on household sales and retentions.

Giving us their views on the CWU, Murray says: "I think the union does a great job for the workers. I had a colleague, a friend, who had some difficult issues here and the union helped him get it resolved fairly." Tammy's opinion is: "It's good being in the union – I like to know that they're

here," and, she adds: "I'd like to get more info from the CWU, especially on what you guys can help us with."

On working arrangements, Murray says: "We have the opportunity to work from home, but I prefer to be in the office. Although it is good to have the option," while Tammy says: "I like the hours options."

Their shifts are (or were, when we spoke) on a similar four-week rotation to their Birmingham colleagues, Tammy's consists of two weeks the same, one slightly changed and another week of working late, while Murray works a week of 8am to 5pm, another with the same start time and half-hour later finish, then a week of 9am to 6.30pm and 11.30am until 9pm for the following week.

Customer adviser Usmaan Aslam has been with the company for 10 years and says that "the union does a good job here for us." Like Murray, he is not a fan of home-working, remarking: "I used to do it, but I don't like it," although he does like the flexibility of his working hours and explains his shift rotation.

Nearby, we meet Ratuka Ninuo who is on a similar shift pattern and says that the flexi-time option is "a good thing, but I haven't done

it myself." He also prefers being here with colleagues, commenting: "I like being in the office, not working from home" and Kate Daly – a worker with seven years' service – tells us how much "nicer" Alexander Bain House is in comparison with the previous Dial House building.

As regards the union, Kate says: "For any issues I've had, or advice needed, the CWU have been very helpful."

Shannon says: "It's good to hear appreciation from members for the efforts our branch reps make. We do our best to keep in close and regular contact with everyone, but we're also trying hard to encourage more new reps to come through as well."



Shannon talking with Ratuko Ninuo



WORK TOGETHER WIN TOGETHER

Acting national officer Fiona Curtis's Openreach update...

For me, one of the saddest comments from engineers in last month's article about *Customer Delivery Rate (CDR)* was the member who felt that individualised metrics made people not want to help each other anymore," Fiona tells *Your Voice*.

"When I started work as an engineer out in the field, the help and support of my colleagues was so often crucial to getting the job done and then when I became more experienced, I was able to help others in the same way.

"If individual work measurement systems are forcing field engineers into an individualised working culture, then surely that's got to be a huge argument for shifting to a team-based metric," she continues.

"The Openreach National Team (ORNT) are continuing to push hard with Service Delivery UK Operations management to shift CDR to a teambased method and we're launching a campaign on the same principle for Network Delivery members with regard to the company's unagreed rollout of what we believe is a mutation of the My Potential work measurement system."

From the ORNT to CWU Openreach regional co-ordinators and onto branches and members, campaign communications are being circulated and soon members will be asked to register their support for the union's stance, as the first step towards a unified national campaign for a collective rather than individual approach.

"We win together when we work together, and that applies to our campaigning as well as to our day-to-day operations," Fiona says.



ATTENDANCE UPDATE...

A new preference exercise is now under way for SD FTTP members currently on a non-seasonal attendance pattern and those who responded to the 2023 preference exercise, were not given their first preference and had their number of workdays changed.

Branches have been briefed in detail on this, so for more information on what to do if you fall under these categories, please contact your branch.

It has been further agreed that, once the preference submissions have completed, Openreach SAMs and CWU regional co-ordinators will jointly review the selections and agree outcomes. If agreement cannot be reached, this will be flagged up to national level and will be taken up formally.

Once this process has concluded, there will be a 'roster-smoothing' exercise and at that time, the number of Saturdays SD FTTP members work will be addressed. It is the CWU's intention to bring in a 'Saturday modeler' similar to that introduced in Service Delivery UK and our initial modelling on this suggests this would reduce the overall number of Saturdays worked.

WE NEED YOUR VOICE AND INVOLVEMENT

Your DGS Karen Rose on the need to strengthen our workplace organisation...

The CWU has embarked on a union-wide campaign to ensure we have an active membership across our workplaces. The world of work is set to change drastically, with the introduction of AI and automated management decisions as companies streamline the way they approach business operations and look to reduce their bottom line.



The challenges for workers that the so-called 'fourth industrial revolution' will throw up require a membership able to mobilise and contest the changes coming. Not only do we need as many members as possible – the bigger our membership the greater our strength - but with members working together we can create an industrially strong union that can ensure businesses make decisions that work for employees and not just profits.

We know that when Openreach recently wanted to introduce inward-facing dashcams our vociferous objection didn't just galvanise existing members but brought new ones in because everyone wanted to be part of the collective that was going to fight this intrusive surveillance.

People wanted to be part of the union because they could see the danger and wanted to be part of the fightback. That showed the power of grassroots activism!

If you're already a member and are keen to get involved, we want to hear from you. Simply get in touch with your workplace rep or your local branch. It doesn't have to take up a huge amount of your time, and your involvement can be as simple as chatting to colleagues.

Please talk amongst your colleagues, explaining the power of the collective – and never hesitate to encourage others to get more involved.

If you meet a new colleague at your workplace, please ask them to scan the QR code on this page to join the CWU.

With everybody pulling together we can ensure through strength in numbers that we can tackle the challenges ahead.

You are the union and you can make a difference.

SCAN ME! JOIN THE UNION



BTPS TRUSTEE VACANCIES

There are two vacancies for Member Nominated Directors (MNDs) of the BT Pension Scheme (BTPS).

Applications for the vacancies must be submitted by 10am on Friday 26 July – and full details of what the role entails and how BTPS members can self-nominate themselves for consideration can be viewed in LTB 159/24.