

No. 389/24

11<sup>th</sup> December 2024

**TO: All T&FS Branches**

Dear Colleagues

## **Your Voice in the Workplace – December 2024**

Please find attached the December Workplace Bulletin. It rounds up our first year of producing a monthly workplace orientated communication.

As per normal we will be sending out a limited print run (approx. 10 per cent of branch membership) of this Edition, which should reach you by the end of the 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.

<https://www.cwu.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/08216-your-voice-BTG-issue-10-Dec-2up.pdf>

Yours sincerely,

**Karen Rose**  
Deputy General Secretary (T&FS)

**Chris Webb**  
Head of Communications





Doncaster workers joining the CWU

Our stall quickly becomes very busy as we get to lunchtime, with members coming over to speak with their branch reps and groups of new starters asking about the CWU and what it can do for them. But Mark, Paul and Georgia take the rush in their stride, Mark giving an overview of the CWU and the role it plays, while Georgia and Paul answer some more specific enquiries and assist people with their application forms.

Describing what the union is all about to a group of new starters, Paul says: "It's like an army – the more soldiers we get, the more battles we can win" and Mark tells Your Voice that "we have good relations with the management and our members say this is a nice building to work in. As we're heading into the next round of pay negotiations, it's important to point out that the stronger our membership and organisation, the better our chances of achieving a good deal."

## EQUALITY, RESPECT AND DIGNITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Representatives of the union's T&FS branches met at CWU HQ in Wimbledon last month to hear a detailed presentation on equality at work...

**A**ndrew Mercer, CWU T&FS chair, told Your Voice: "The catalyst for this was a survey and report by our Great Western Branch, which interviewed women members and asked them for feedback in terms of how they feel they are treated by the company. Our thanks in particular to CWU Openreach South West regional co-ordinator Paul Clarke, who has put in a great deal of work on this."

The survey arose, Paul explained, from an individual case involving a woman engineer who had experienced physical difficulties in carrying out her duties and had reported being treated unfairly, causing her significant personal distress. The union had taken up her case and made representations to senior management on her behalf and had decided to undertake a survey of a sample of female engineers in the branch concerned – Great Western Branch.

"There were robust criteria applied, with all 40 participants being asked the same set of 11 questions and being granted anonymity in their responses," said Paul, adding that "19 completed questionnaires were returned."

In response to the question: 'How do you feel about the whole training process as a female engineer?' the majority, 53 per cent answered: 'Positive', with 23% judging it as 'good' and 24% replying: 'Negative'. A narrower majority of respondents (53% to 47%) judged their treatment by management, as a female engineer, to be 'positive', although there was a higher 'positive' majority (59% to 41%) when asked the same question with regard to their fellow engineers.

But when the questions became more specific, there was significantly more negativity reported, with 82% answering 'No' when asked if they had 'any reasonable adjustments put in place for health or personal circumstances' and 63% saying they did not think the company 'deals with Female issues properly and fairly'.



And a majority (59%) answered: 'Yes' to the question: 'Have you ever felt threatened at work' while 75% of those who said they had reported such feelings answered 'No' to the further question as to whether they felt their complaint had been dealt with properly.

Commenting on the survey and the meeting of T&FS branch representatives to hear it and discuss the next steps, Andrew Mercer said: "The raw figures and also some of the anonymous quotes which were also incorporated into the report were hard to hear and gave us all serious food for thought and led to a serious and thought-provoking discussion at our briefing."

"Once again our thanks to Paul for his efforts and we'll be working out a robust plan of action to address these issues going forward."

**SCAN ME! JOIN THE UNION**



Adam Royston

Georgia says: "Speaking to workers around the same age as me, we want all the same things every worker wants – better pay, security etc – and when we explain what the union's all about and the good deal the union achieved last time, they're mostly keen to join and get involved. It's been a good day today."

Among the newly recruited members we speak with are Cristina Johnson, Samie-Jo Williams and Olanoyin Onadipe, who tell us they have been here for three weeks, and Sebahat Zerze, who is busy filling in her application form.

We also talk with Adam Royston at a work-desk. Adam is a CWU member who has been here just over six months. He explains that his job involves talking customers through the issues they are having and says: "The best part of my job is getting something fixed for a customer."



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

ISSUE TEN, DECEMBER 2024



## CHANGE AND RENEWAL HEADING INTO 2025

As 2024 draws to a close, and the New Year looms large, this is a time of change and renewal for CWU's Telecoms & Financial Services (TFS) Constituency, writes your deputy general secretary Karen Rose...

**L**ast week your newly elected TFS Executive took up post, alongside a new line-up of national officers who will represent all your interests in the 28-plus TFS sector employers, where the CWU is recognised for collective bargaining purposes.

Newcomers to the streamlined officer team include a new national officer for the tech sector, John Chadfield, while the former 'acting' positions of Fiona Curtis and Ken Woolley are now substantive. Tracey Fussey and Stephen Albon remain in post.

Meanwhile, the TFS Executive welcomes eight new members – Anton Begley, Jonathan Bellshaw, Graham Colk, Bradley Corrigan, Sara Miah, Hannah Sadler, Mel Wilson and young worker representative Hollie Gregg. I congratulate them all on their election.

New beginnings sadly also mean goodbyes, and amongst the staunch comrades bidding farewell are longstanding Executive members Dave Tee, Dave Stuart and Nick Darbyshire.

Another huge gap will be left behind by the well-deserved retirement of national officer Allan Eldred.

For some years the longest-serving TFS national officer, Allan's active involvement in the life of the union spans a remarkable 54 years – beginning with his snap appointment as the POEU's Overseas Telegraph Branch Interim Apprentice Rep in November 1970, just weeks after joining Post Office Telecommunications.

Given our Constituency's new focus on the shorter working week – which Allan has driven from the outset – I can't help but smile that his debut to TU activism, aged just 16, stemmed directly from his dismay on hearing of the then POEU leadership's decision not to progress a Conference motion on just that issue at his first-ever branch meeting.

In Allan's words: "I put my hand up and said: Look, if new technology doesn't serve communities or the people putting it in and maintaining it, what is the point in having it?"

"The branch secretary stood up and said the only thing wrong with that contribution was that he didn't make it – and before I left the room I was on the branch committee!"

Of course, the union did eventually achieve a shorter working week and now is the right time to give the issue renewed focus.

Over the decades Allan served two stints as branch secretary of what ultimately became Capital Branch before being elected to the CWU's NEC and Telecoms Executive in 2004 – serving continuously until 2013 when he became a national officer.

Since then, he's skilfully navigated a tumultuous time for members in BT Business, Rivus and Ericsson, to name just three of his areas of responsibility, with his trademark doggedness, good humour and empathy.

Appropriately, one of Allan's last actions as a National Officer last week was to front a CWU Live broadcast at which the shorter working week issue took centre stage.

At a time of change, our determination to fight for our members' best interests, wherever they work, remains constant – and you'll be hearing more about our new shorter working week campaign in the New Year. In the meantime, very best wishes for the festive season.



**INSIDE:**  
FOCUS ON CONSUMER/EE



**SCAN ME & JOIN THE UNION**

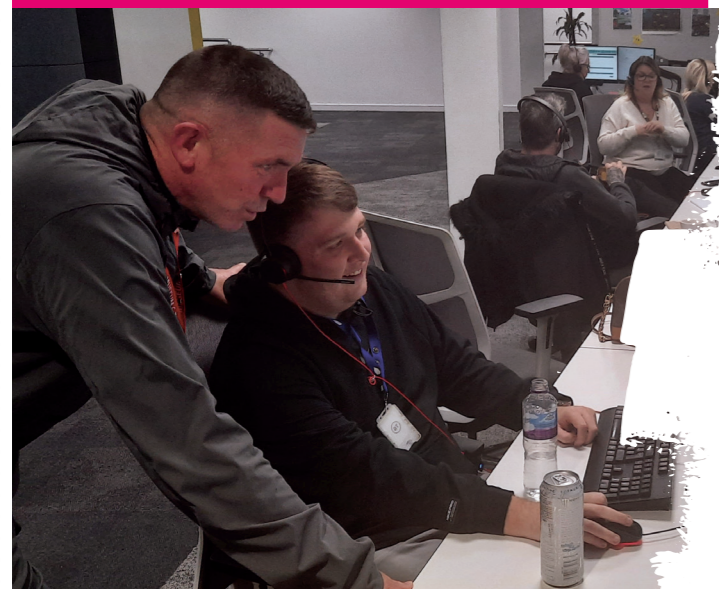




## FOCUS ON CONSUMER/EE

# BUILDING AND WINNING FOR MEMBERS

*With the next round of national pay negotiations set to start soon, CWU national officer Stephen Albon spoke with Your Voice about the union's key aims for BT Consumer/EE members...*



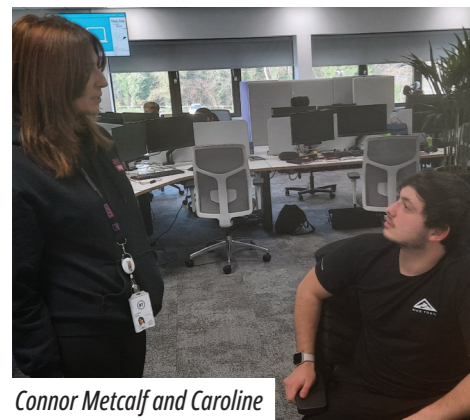
**I**n our most recent survey, members' Number One issue is pay, as always, and this time is largely fuelled by increases in cost of living" he begins.

"Members are looking closely at these costs – particularly in terms of those key household expenses - rent or mortgages, utility bills, fuel, transport, and the weekly shop. It's massively important that we do everything we can to ensure our members' pay keeps up with the cost of living.

"Another highlight is the position of the company – there's no doubt we're dealing with a business which is doing well in today's UK communications market. Our members know it is their hard work and dedication that plays such a crucial part in this and it's perfectly reasonable that they ask for their fair share of that success."

While these key principles could be said to apply in every pay negotiation, there are particular issues that Stephen highlights on behalf of the Consumer/EE members whom he specifically represents at national level.

"In addition, the survey also highlights issues that EE Consumer National Team will be looking to get into meaningful negotiations on with Consumer/EE management around systems, flexible working, smart working, commission and data integrity issues," Stephen continues.



Connor Metcalf and Caroline



New Warrington members with Lisa and Caroline

"It's fair to say that several of these issues arise from, or are connected to, the merger of Consumer and EE and the coming together of longstanding BT Group employees with the existing EE workforce – so perhaps harmonisation describes much of this agenda.

"Data integrity is a major project related to the migration and merging of Consumer and EE accounts, while gradings and flex arrangements – as well as shifts and duty patterns – can differ widely from site to site. Of course, much of this list of challenges is inevitable in any merger process and I'm certainly not saying it can all be resolved overnight – or perhaps not even in this negotiating round – but we do hope we can make meaningful and tangible progress in these areas.

"What is going to be important is the close involvement of our reps and members and also to continue building and strengthen our own organisation to give us the strongest possible chance of success."

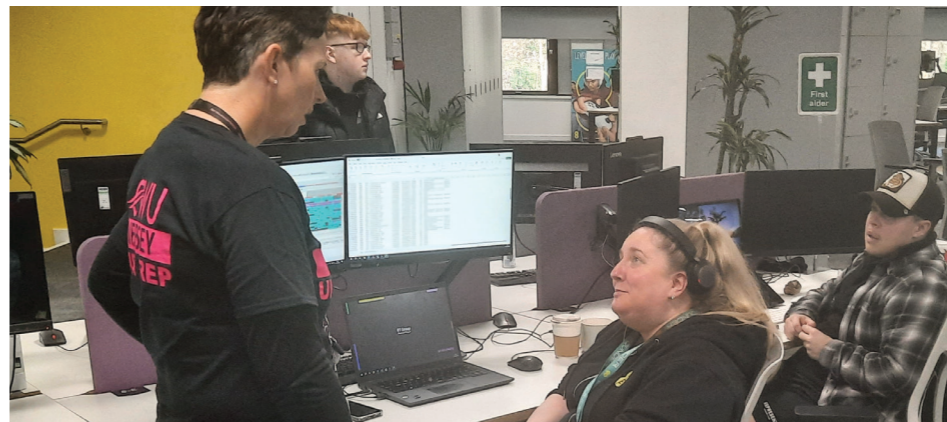
Your Voice was invited to visit two large Consumer/EE sites – Warrington in Cheshire and Doncaster in Yorkshire – to meet reps and members and hear their feedback.

### WARRINGTON: 'FOCUS ON THE BASICS, PAY, SECURITY, FLEX, WHAT WORKERS WANT'

Caroline Gillies, CWU Mersey Branch secretary tells us that she was CWU lead site rep here for 10 years until being elected as branch secretary a month ago and introduces her on-site successor Lisa Leech. They explain that the Warrington centre employs around 500 workers who carry out various sales and service roles looking after residential customers.

Full-time staff work between 36 and 37.5 hours per week on rotating shift patterns, they say, and the majority of the workforce is relatively young, although there is a significant core of longer-serving workers who transferred over to the newer building just over three years ago.

"This is way better than where we were before," says Lisa, "the heating works and it's a much brighter layout. In terms of staff morale, I'd say it's fairly positive and, on the whole, we have good relations with the management. One big thing here is the variation of different contracts," says Caroline. "We've got to harmonise – but it's got to be harmonising up, not down. And there are issues reported to us on flex, which members often say is not flexible enough."



Georgia helping new recruits

As for working from home (WFH) arrangements, she continues: "This works well in some departments but varies in others. It can sometimes depend on the availability of laptops, particularly for new starters, who typically wouldn't have the option to work from home during their first six months. However, the business has announced plans to transition from desktops to laptops in the future, which should help address these limitations for them who want that WFH flexibility."

On the subject of recruitment, Lisa says: "We do month-on-month recruitment activities and we're meeting new starters later today in their induction – I've learnt from Caroline how to do the CWU presentations now and I was nervous at first, but I stick with the basics, pay bargaining, the individual representation, protecting job security and trying to help with things like flex – the things all workers want."

Caroline adds: "Lisa's doing really well on these sessions – last week she recruited the whole group. We do talk about the pay deal we got last time and that we're going in for pay again now."

We meet several members at the site, the first one we speak with is David Coll on his break, who tells us that he's been with the company five years and works on broadband sales. "Caroline and Lisa are ace!" he comments, saying that he has found the CWU "always helpful" when he has needed them.

Leanne Woodall, with 28 years' service, says: "I enjoy working here and I prefer being at this site – it's warm and it's got windows, which we didn't have before! Also, for me, it's a bit closer to home." But she adds: "The systems need to improve." By contrast, Connor Metcalf has been here just two

years and, for him, the issue he wants to see resolved is grading. "The union is definitely value for money and they've resolved an issue for me. What I want to see is the grading system sorted out, as I've moved to different tasks and I think the grade should improve."

Rachel Briers is the 'Concierge' at this site. This is a role focussed on staff wellbeing and morale. Rachel also co-ordinates charity activity here as well, helping to raise money and awareness of various good causes – with an emphasis on local charities.

"We're supporting the Warrington Youth Zone for example," says Rachel, explaining that this is a purpose-built facility for the town's young people from the ages of seven to 19 – and up to 25 for those with additional needs. Other activities she is involved with include co-ordinating Christmas Market Day in the office and a regular 'wellbeing walk' in the locality.

We speak with several other members of staff around the busy office floor and there's a general approval of the site and its facilities, as well as appreciation of the work Caroline and Lisa and the union do on their behalf. Among the specific points raised by people are flex, systems, commission and of course pay.

Before we leave, we're allowed to pop into Lisa's session introducing the CWU to this month's induction group and take a photo of her and Caroline with the new CWU recruits.

### DONCASTER: 'LIKE AN ARMY, THE MORE SOLDIERS WE'VE GOT THE MORE BATTLES WE CAN WIN'

Over in Doncaster, the Consumer/EE site has its Christmas Market open today and the CWU team – Mark Pastorelli, Paul Slodczyk and Georgia Symonds – have their CWU stall set up with various 'merch' on offer, as well as membership application forms.

They have chosen a good day for it, with several induction classes taking place on site and new employees stopping by as they walk through the 'market' on their breaks. Mark is secretary of Lincolnshire & South Yorks Branch, while Paul is branch organiser and Georgia serves as branch young worker officer and they explain that this site employs around 300 Consumer/EE staff.

"They work in sales and connections," says Mark. "And there's also a Plusnet section here



Paul, Georgia and Mark at Doncaster

too, while we also have CBRE and Openreach desk workers here in Doncaster as well."

Pauline Scott is the first person who comes over to talk. She's running another stall nearby and tells us that she used to work for BT but has now retired. "I was always a union member and everyone should join the union," she says. Karina Petrulionyte, who has worked on sales here for "just over a year," agrees with Pauline, saying that the union has been helpful to her.



Cristina Johnson



Samie-Jo Williams