

NEW ENTRANTS – OUR VIEW



"MIKE OUR REP IS VERY HELPFUL AND I'M GLAD I JOINED THE CWU."

Suman Chanumolu, Preston



"I WORKED AT AMAZON BEFORE AND IT'S A LOT NICER HERE. THE UNION IS A GOOD THING."

Jacqui Revel, Portsmouth

OFCOM AND THE USO

Ofcom is currently undertaking a Review into UK postal services. In January, it published its own initial report and asked for contributions to its consultation from others in the industry. Both Royal Mail and the CWU have entered submissions to this process.

Your Voice spoke with DGSP Martin Walsh as he was preparing for several days of discussions with the company on this and other associated issues.

YV: Several communications went out last week, a detailed briefing to reps and a broadcast in which yourself and our general secretary Dave Ward spoke to and answered questions from members on all of this. Do you think there's scope for agreement with the business on a joint way forward in terms of our approach to this Ofcom Review?



YV: If we do reach an agreement with the business on this, what areas might that cover?

Martin: It will need to address areas such as Quality of Service, resourcing in order to improve and proper training and investment in training for new entrants – and the issue of terms and conditions as mentioned on the front. While continuing to recognise our unique social role and the need to maintain service levels for the public who rely on it.

We need to maintain the position of avoiding any compulsory redundancies, alongside a renewed joint commitment to growth and opportunities to create new and innovative duty attendance patterns. Improved attendance patterns can improve people's working lives and also get us in the best position to make the most of growth opportunities.

We're in talks with the business on these proposals and if we can reach agreement, there may be trials of these new attendance patterns potentially during the summer.

The big growth areas in the business are afternoon parcel deliveries and Sunday parcel

deliveries – PM Parcels and Sunday Parcels – and new attendance patterns can ensure these growth areas are fully resourced. This can also take some of the pressure off our new entrants, who are currently having to work all of these shifts, as well as reducing agency dependency.

So, the big challenge for us is, if we can get this right, we could achieve new and innovative duty patterns for all and real growth in this crucial part of the market.

YV: Are you looking forward to Annual Conference later this month?

Martin: Yes I am. It'll be our first Annual Conference since 2022 - before the national dispute - and also it'll be my first since being elected as DGSP. On a sad note, it'll be the first Annual Conference without Jane Loftus in the big chair, as she sadly passed away last year.

There will be a special session of Conference on the subject of the USO Review and associated issues, which hopefully will have moved forward by then, as well as the other matters we'll be debating and discussing.

And of course a hugely important subject at Conference will be our own organisation and getting ourselves into shape for the future.

Thank you again to all of you, our members, for your continuing efforts in such difficult and challenging circumstances. With your continuing support, and the efforts of your reps at all levels, there has been some gradual progress on a range of issues and it's our hope that we can continue this gradual turnaround over the coming period.



YOUR VOICE IN THE WORKPLACE



FOR CWU MEMBERS WORKING IN RM GROUP AND THE WIDER P&L SECTOR...

ISSUE THREE, APRIL 2024



OUR NEW ENTRANTS DESERVE A FAIR DEAL

Royal Mail's unilateral decision to impose worse terms and conditions for new starters in Delivery from the beginning of 2023 was opposed by the CWU from Day One and the union is stepping up efforts to address and resolve this unfair approach to recruitment...

Working longer hours than their established colleague for less pay, often on duty every weekend, usually on afternoon and evening shifts, and often with insufficient notice of scheduled rest days have been the experience of those employed by the business over the past year or so.

Your Voice spoke with Martin Walsh, CWU deputy general secretary postal, about the problem and what the union is doing to help our new colleagues.

YV: What's the CWU's position on the treatment of new starters by the company since the beginning of 2023?

Martin: We've always been completely against this unfair treatment of new employees. It was imposed completely unilaterally by the business in the midst of the national dispute. This union never agreed to it and we've consistently pushed the company very hard on this ever since it came in.

It's on our agenda all the time.

As well as being totally unfair on the people themselves and not treating them the right way, it's also not helping the overall operation or our QoS/USO compliance because such a high proportion of new entrants are leaving again within a short time. In our submission to the Ofcom USO Review, for example, we highlighted that this so-called 'attrition rate' is at a shockingly high 85 per cent on an annualised basis – something we describe, in the same document, as a "false economy" on the part of the company.

SCAN & JOIN CWU FOR FAIRNESS AT ROYAL MAIL



Keisha Gibbs with Barry Bowes on a visit to Preston Central Delivery Office (see article inside)

YV: Has there been any progress in improving things for new postal workers?

Martin: As a result of the CWU taking this issue up with the business at every opportunity, and the sheer hard work of reps at units all around the country, we got a set of Supporting New Starters joint commitments agreed last month. This at least established some specific minimum standards – in accordance with existing national agreements – that have to apply everywhere.

These cover basic induction training, proper time allotted to workplace coaches, introductions to the CWU rep and weekly check-ins with new starters.

If any of this is not happening, it needs to be reported to branches and area representatives.

YV: What's your message to new Royal Mail Delivery workers at this time?

Martin: I'd say welcome to Royal Mail and best of luck in your career – and please join the CWU. The Supporting New Starters joint statement was a step in the right direction, but it was only a step – a minimum. What we need as a matter of policy is to move back towards full parity, with

employees on equal rights. We've got a strong proposition on this at our Annual Conference later this month and we'll keep on pushing this.

The more new starters who join up to the CWU, the stronger our bargaining position will be in talks with the company.

There are CWU representatives (reps) in the vast majority of delivery units who are all working as hard as they can to help you, so speak to your CWU unit rep about joining or simply scan the QR code on this page.

M R J W

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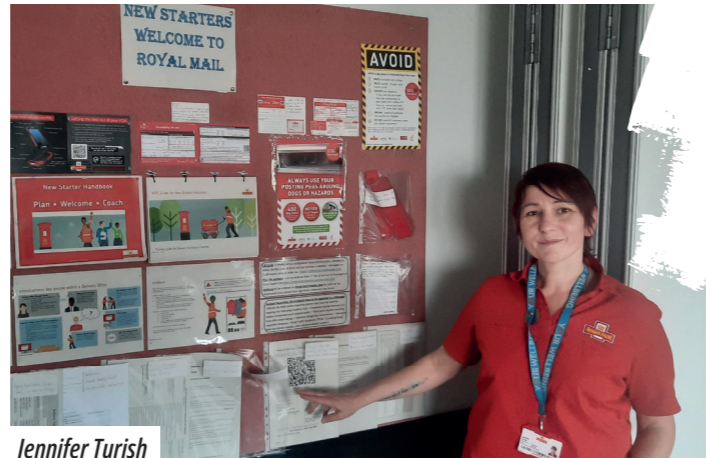
YOUR UNION, YOUR VOICE

Let us know what you think of this Edition, what do you think of the subjects covered?
Comments to: Publications editor, kstewart@cwu.org

NEW ENTRANTS IN DELIVERY



Dave Smith speaking with a new Delivery worker at Portsmouth



Jennifer Turkish

FIGHTING FOR FAIRNESS

Your Voice visited two units across the country to meet some new entrants and their reps...

Almost all of the post-2023 contract workers at Portsmouth Delivery Office are on PM Parcels/Sunday Parcels routes, with 34 of the total 220 staff in post here coming under this category, serving the PO 1-6 post code areas on various attendance patterns.

And the first person many of them meet is Jennifer Turkish the lead workplace coach here who shows them an introductory video and advises them on their duties and helps them to settle in.

"I've been a workplace coach for about 10 years," she tells us. "There are three other coaches in my team here and what we do is spend a day with the new recruits showing them the video, explaining all about working for Royal Mail and the processes they go through, answering their questions and ordering their uniform."

Jennifer explains that the support is ongoing during the new recruits' settling-in period and that she, or other coaches, are available to help with advice if new entrants are struggling with the job, or while out on delivery.

Unit rep Mark Drennan, area delivery rep Dave Smith and branch secretary Paul Mountain say that the workplace coach system works well at this unit and that – although there are other ongoing issues – the induction and training of new starters is something that helps people make a sure start.

"Although the training and induction side of things here is better than most, we do still have too many new starters leaving – and the reasons are the shifts, the duty days and the uncertainty over rest days, as well as the pay and hours inequalities," says Dave.

"We're working on this though, we're constantly looking at overall duty patterns, trying to find ways to improve things. The management structure – with the different managers of the various parcel delivery teams can make things confusing and to be honest, there's already a right mish-mash of attendance patterns."

Mark says that since the March joint statement, his facility time situation has improved. "We have a resource meeting once a week, every Thursday, and I get up to an hour a day rep's release, which is better.

"With the different managers, our new people have Sundays in their contracts, a mix of floating or fixed days off and often don't know their rest days a week in advance and there are 32 and 30 hour contracts as well as full time – it can be confusing." Paul says that he and Dave are regularly visiting the various other units across the Portsmouth & District Branch area as well and that they are gradually recruiting new entrants into the union. "It's a lot better since we got the March joint statement, but what we really need is some solid progress on their various grievances," he says, adding that the branch has submitted a motion to Annual Conference on the need to achieve contractual parity for new entrants.

Walking around the delivery office floor, Ben Powell is one of the earlier arrivals for his PM Parcels shift and Dave and Mark spend some time talking with him about the union. Ben says that he is on an 11am to 7pm duty and delivers around the Southsea area.

"I want to stay here, but I'm really hoping things can improve – we need levelling up it's really important," he says to us after speaking with

the reps, and adds: "I'll join the union when I get my pay. I think the union can help us." Ben also comments that Jennifer the lead workplace coach has "been very helpful."

Shane Bowring and Bev Shurmer are on 1pm to 7pm shifts and their answers vary when asked about their rest days and shift patterns, while Jacqui Revel – on a 1.30pm to 8.30pm duty – tells us that her previous job was working for the Amazon company and that "this is a lot nicer by comparison," before adding: "The union is a good thing."

And Gary Milton joins the union after speaking with the reps and talks about how he was a self-employed handyman before his business unfortunately went bust. "I'm on a six-hour day and I'm on letter deliveries here," he says.

In conversation with the three reps, they talk about plans to hold a meeting of all the new starters altogether to explain what they are trying to achieve. Dave says that he has meetings with area management coming up and that, if he can show real progress on attendance patterns and duties, then this will show what the union can do to help them.

"We'll say to them that the more that join the CWU, the stronger case we can make in talks with the business. It means we can say, and management will know, that we're speaking on their behalf. And what would be even better in the future is if one or two of these new members volunteer to be reps on these shifts.

"It's really wrong what the company did with bringing in these new terms and conditions. We've got to change it and the only way to do that is with a strong union."

Preston Central Delivery Office serves PR1, PR2, and part of PR4 post code areas and has 174 staff in post, according to unit rep Mike Furbur, with 12 of them working on the post-2023 contracts. In terms of the local attrition rate, he says that "on average, if we recruit 10 people over a period of a few weeks we're lucky if we keep more than half."

Explaining some of the reasons, Mike says: "The new recruits are promised a rota but are often dismayed to find they get bounced around from one walk to another, never knowing their day off.

"Despite resource meetings where I'm assured everyone will know their day off the week before, members continually tell me they only find out the same week or the Saturday before. The Easter Bank Holiday, for example, I had two floaters inform me that when they asked which day off they were having, the reply was 'yesterday' meaning the Bank Holiday Monday."

Training is another key issue, the rep continues, saying: "It's not the workplace coaches' fault, it's that they're not given the release time from their own duties. A manager told me that one new entrant was put with another experienced OPG for three days before being placed into a park and loop situation. This is still not long enough and park and looping is not really training, despite management's comments to the contrary. We've had people who were trained on DPRs, but then the DPRs were collapsed-back and they got sent out on normal deliveries.

Mike continues: "It's difficult sometimes not to feel jaded, always trying to get managers to action these issues, to get people onto better hours, reduce their Sundays etc."

His efforts are certainly appreciated though, which became clear when we spoke with some of the new recruits in the late afternoon as they returned from their deliveries.

Suman Chanumolu said: "Mike is very helpful and I'm glad I joined the union," adding that he has been in the job for just over a month and previously worked in a DIY retail company's warehouse. "My last job was at B&Q and I'd say there's more daily pressure here, although I do like the job," he said and went on to explain that he has one Sunday off out of six and gets one week's notice of his rest days.

Local branch secretary Barry Bowes (North Lancs & Cumbria) is also here and as well as talking with several new Royal Mail staff, he also talks with an agency worker. Afterwards, Barry tells YV that this worker told him he had initially started working in Delivery via an agency and had then



Barry Bowes speaking with a new entrant at Preston

been taken on directly by Royal Mail, had then left and had recently returned to Delivery, again as an agency worker. Barry added that he had made some surprising comparisons between working the job via an agency and being employed direct by Royal Mail on the new contract.

Joseph Anthony also started here last month, having recently moved to Preston as he has family up here. "I like it here and I've joined the union," he says, adding that his last job was as a delivery driver for pizza company Dominos and has not been a union member before, while Keisha Gibbs was one of the last people here to have been employed on the pre-2023 contract and says that she feels her newer colleagues are not being treated fairly.

"It seems like they're being thrown in at the deep end with not enough training – like sink or swim," she says. "Mike and Barry and the union do a good job trying to help people, but at the moment it's not fair on the new people in my opinion."

Mike says that this issue of the treatment of new entrants is something that should not be allowed to continue. "Equal opportunities and fairness all round are the principle points of the union's ethos and levelling up needs to be the top priority for this union," he says. "We need to get on top of this."

For Barry as well, this issue is of utmost importance. "I was one of those who argued that we had to accept the deal last year to end our dispute. Not because it was a good deal, but because the alternative was the complete collapse of the company – which would be catastrophic.

"Martin our DGSP is working really hard to get things back on track nationally and Mike and other unit reps are all doing their best as well and I think we're slowly but surely starting to turn things round. But of all the bad things from last year, this new contract situation for new employees is by far the worst. "We've got to change it completely."

Just a couple of days after our visit to Preston, Barry was suddenly taken ill and rushed to Blackpool Hospital. But thankfully he was able to return home again a few days later and assured us that he is "on the mend" but under orders to rest up and recuperate for a few weeks. Best wishes to you Barry!

NEW ENTRANTS – OUR VIEW



"I'LL JOIN THE UNION WHEN I GET PAID MY WAGES. I'M HOPING WE CAN GET LEVELLED UP."

Ben Powell, Portsmouth



"I LIKE IT HERE AND I'VE JOINED THE UNION."

Joseph Anthony, Preston



"It's good to hear direct from some of our new entrants and also the hard work being done by reps out there to help and support them and welcome them into the CWU. As a union at all levels, we're doing everything we can to resolve this issue and it's a priority for us all. In the meantime, it's good to hear that the interim action points from the March Joint Statement – Supporting New Entrants – sound like they're being adhered to at one of the

units in this article – although very concerning that that doesn't seem to be the case at the other one, despite the best efforts of the rep and the union locally. We'll be looking into this urgently. If your unit is not in compliance with the March Joint Statement, please flag this up. Finally, it's good to hear Barry Bowes is on the mend and very warmest wishes to him." Mark Baulch, CWU Outdoor Secretary