

BT Home Counties Circular

Take Care Out There!

With lockdown easing members may be out and about more and hopefully where appropriate and possibly enjoying some leave.

While the Government has withdrawn 'work from home' guidelines from 1 August, the detail of when and if any return to offices and workplaces takes place is for employers, employees and their trade unions.

Prospect and the CWU continue to work with BT to make sure that a number of buildings are officially COVID secure with full safety measures in place.

Beyond specific operational roles, where people may have been on site during lockdown,

there is no expectation yet of a more general return to workplaces. This may well continue to be the case in the autumn.

There are some people who for a variety of well understood reasons may be better off working in an office environment, and balancing the risks involved such as safe travel to a location.

Detailed agreed processes with Prospect are in place that must be followed however before any individual is authorised to return to a building.

There are always glitches and issues in any process and given the gravity of the matter being dealt with it is important that members get in touch if there are concerns so that Prospect can pursue these with BT.

Better Workplace & Location Strategy

BT's Better Workplace strategy to move to 30 locations is continuing. Plans to move some people into new buildings in Birmingham and Manchester and exit Aberdeen (all very late in 2020) are in hand. Many have worked from home without major issues since March and reasonably have asked why this arrangement can't continue.

Prospect is actively pursuing this point with BT, particularly in cases where BT are arguing individuals may be redundant due to a proposed location change.

Changing & Challenging times require collective strength

There are a number of our colleagues in BT Technology going through significant organisational design (OD) changes right NOW, which is BT code for restructuring. This is a stressful time for those involved and we hope that members are calling for support from local case handlers or the Prospect helpdesk.

For those people who are not members, please remember it's too late to buy insurance when your house is already on fire, so to get full support when you need it, ensure you join Prospect now!

Prospect BAME Network

This network is for Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) workers, and brings together members from across Prospect.

Equality is at the core of what we do as a union – but we know more work is needed.

Many organisations and individuals are now starting to consider or reconsider how their structures and practices can be changed to recognise and address the in-built racism that Black, Asian and minority ethnic people deal with.

union movement but also in the workplaces where we organise and represent workers.

The BAME network is a network for members to share experiences, build relationships with allies and have access to information and resources about all the different forms of racism people experience in the workplace.

By signing up you will receive information, updates and invites to events taking place that specifically relate to equality and race.

Join Prospect's BAME Network.
Sign up now

This is the case both in the trade

Get involved with Prospect!

Ndala Mukanda, a Prospect rep in BT, explains how he became a rep, and what it's been like for him as a young worker.

My name is Ndala, I'm 27, I work for BT and I'm a member of Prospect. I joined Prospect when I first started working for BT as a graduate about four years ago – they had a stall during induction and had reduced membership fees for an entire two years for graduate joiners. I'm a sucker for a good discount, maybe it was the chocolates and free pens!

My general outlook on unions at the time was: "they're ok but not really that cool... I don't really need them right now but it's only costing me the same as a pint or two for a month's membership... erm sure why not?"

After only being at the company a few months, I started to hear about some of my fellow grads not being given opportunities, feeling disillusioned and really just having a crappy time at work. I used to organise the weekly socials for our graduate intake outside of work, but through that I got to know people, and hear them out, and actually there's a lot of stuff we moan about when it comes to work – what do we do about it though?

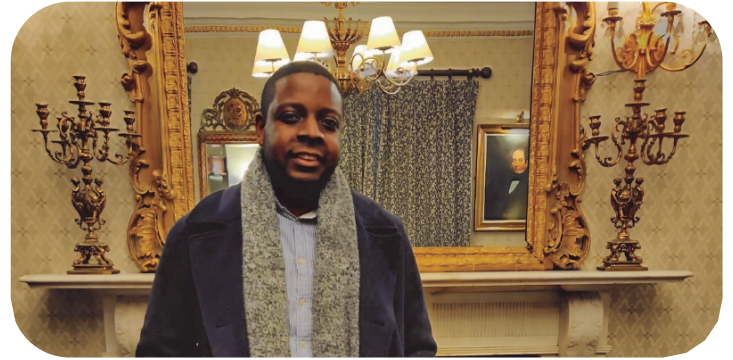
So I thought I'll take everyone's complaints to the union they'll sort it out right I think...

Anyway, months later, I happen upon one of our union stalls in the canteen over lunch. Naturally I thought to myself, "I've been meaning to speak to them lot," so I walked on over, told them about all the complaints I had collated.

As I spoke, they shook their heads in agreement and subsequently asked if I was a member and to come to the branch meetings to raise these points.

The branch is made up of the union members in your work place typically in your office building or region. They make up the base component of the entire union structure really – but just a good bunch of people some of whom have been around for ages.

So I attended, and before I knew it I was actually inadvertently representing my colleagues... Not far off from being a rep and that's all it took!



After being a regular branch meeting attendee it was just a matter of time before my branch chairperson said to me "You may as well go on the reps' course".

Prospect ran the course online due to COVID-19. They split it into three separate one-hour segments throughout the day, which meant I could still attend my other work meetings that day. Our virtual class comprised people from different backgrounds from a young member like myself to someone who after 20 years had enough and wanted to instigate some change in their workplace.

The course went through the union structure, what the function of a trade union is, how negotiations with companies work, how strong branches make a strong union, organising and campaigning.

We also delved into the core elements of what is a rep – remember how earlier I told you of how I took my colleagues' issues to the branch meetings, well turns out that's also part of being a rep – who knew! Then there's stuff like recruitment, sign posting, health and safety and the environment... it's quite a broad spectrum and you can find what suits you.

My biggest takeaway is that all it takes to be a good rep is to be a good listener.

Being a rep opens up the doors to so much of the work that the union does, and ultimately empowers you to act in some capacity, to be the voice of your friends, peers, and colleagues in the workplace. You can with something as small as getting new microwave for your shared kitchen at the office, to getting the training you deserve and even negotiating things like pay disputes and redundancies. So all we have to do is start...

If you'd like to get involved in Prospect, let us know by emailing: ray.muir@prospeect.org.uk