



Clive Gunby
Employee Relations

14 March 2012

Dear Clive

SOM Development Centres

I'm writing to formally express my disappointment at the outcome of these Development Centres, a process which will result in 27 substantive SOMs being displaced from role from 1 April 2012.

As you're aware, the union engaged with consultation on this programme in good faith. We publically supported the programme with particular reference to the positive career development and emphasis on training. However, we are now of the view that the communications around this project were vastly lacking. We supported the project based on the information shared with us, which we now consider to have been insufficient.

We have a number of concerns on which we would welcome your urgent response:

- **An Appeals Process.** We do not believe that a one day Development Centre can confidently assess anyone's future ability in role. This was not a competency based interview process, but individuals were set a series of tests seeking to identify areas for development. Our feedback from members suggests that too many people with particular personal/exceptional circumstances have not had these concerns taken into account nor were they fully aware of what the consequences would be at the outset. This leads us to conclude that Openreach should allow individuals the right of appeal so that their personal circumstances can be reviewed or the opportunity to go through the development centre again.
- **What happens next?** There is too much confusion around what happens next to those who are deemed not to have met the standard. Not only do we feel the timetable was rushed and inappropriate (forcing people to make life changing decisions over a weekend) but we are still waiting for clarity on vacancies and redeployment options for displaced SOMs. Unfortunately the large number of SOMs now in this category makes it difficult for us to have confidence that suitable alternative roles are readily available for people. We believe this needs urgent attention and would welcome further detail.

- **Diversity.** We are highly concerned that with the use of Development or Assessment Centres, care must be taken not to disproportionately impact on particular groups within the Openreach demographic. In this case, we're anxious to understand better the numbers of those over 50 who were deemed to have not met the standard.
- Finally, while Prospect remains fully committed to an effective and strong relationship with Openreach. This exercise has undeniably had a negative impact and will undoubtedly temper our approach to any future programmes of this kind. I feel I must be absolutely clear that should Openreach seek to replicate this programme for Operations Managers this will be met with great caution, suspicion and in all likelihood, rejection by our members.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Ward
National Officer

Sarah Ward
National Officer
Prospect
30 St. Georges Road
Wimbledon
SW19 4BD

29 March 2012

Dear Sarah,

SOM Development Centres

I write in response to your letter of 14 March regarding the above, and your concerns about the outcomes. The concerns and issues that you have raised in your letter we also discussed in detail at our meeting on 12 March.

As I confirmed at our meeting the focus and priority for the SOM Review development centres has been to invest in the SOM capability levels. This has been done through understanding existing capabilities and we will now use personalised and focused development plans to support overall improvements and deliver meaningful changes to business performance. This is very much a development based approach as a result the substantial majority of our SOM population will now have the benefit and support of a focused personal development journey to reach their full potential in their roles.

Your concerns, as expressed in your letter, though are for the 26 substantive SOMs who did not meet the threshold and who are not expected that to continue in role beyond the end of April. I confirmed at our meeting that the level below threshold was greater than we expected and in both our original meetings with Prospect and in our communications prior to the development centres we reflected this lower expectation, in absolute good faith, of what the outcomes would look like. I also note from your letter that Prospect's future approach to any similar type of programme will be tempered by your experiences related to this issue.

Despite the outcomes being different in balance to our expectations we consider that we must respond to the evidence and the feedback and confirm for those who were below threshold their abilities are not best suited to the SOM role going forward. Our focus for these people will now be to secure them options better suited to their future careers within either Openreach or BT.

In response to the specific additional points you made in your letter I can confirm:

- There is not a formal facility for a review or appeal process on the outcomes. The process allowed for people to raise issues on the day if they had any personal circumstances they wanted to take into account. The process has been very thorough with detailed input as a result of the evidence from the development centre, the wash up process, and discussions with the respective GMs to ensure that the outcomes are considered appropriate. It was not simply a consideration of evidence from the one day development

centre. If people do have specific personal issues that they did not share and now wish to do so they can raise those through the feedback process with their GM or on a case by case basis via Prospect and we will look into specific issues or concerns any individual may have.

- The options for those below threshold have been made clear and previously shared with Prospect. I can confirm these options as:
 - Move to a vacant alternative role at level transfer
 - Move to a vacant role, though not at level transfer, with salary unchanged and previous benefits retained on a personal basis.
 - Move to the Openreach Resource pool/BTTC, only if there are no alternative roles to move into
 - Be considered for a voluntary leaver payment where an interest is expressed
- I will arrange for Prospect to receive information on potential vacancies and I can reiterate that our prime objective remains to support these individuals to find a suitable alternative role before the end of April.
- We have previously shared with Prospect the breakdown of age related information on the outcomes and we can provide further information on the outcomes excluding the internal pipeline.

I acknowledge the Prospect commitment to an effective and strong relationship with Openreach and I can assure you that remains our clear desire also. We shall, going forward, continue to work with Prospect to meet that commitment.

Yours sincerely

Clive Gunby
Employee Relations Director