

DIGITALEYE

Time to rebuild trust on BT performance management

MOVING TO twice-yearly ratings has been a key demand for Prospect, so we welcomed the agreement by BT to make this change from April 2015. Ratings will only take place in Q2 and at the year-end.

Alongside the move to six-monthly ratings there will be a new approach to performance management in BT called Continuous Development. We are about to start working with BT to build the new approach.

We saw a lighter touch to performance management in some areas of the business in Q3. Certainly, we have seen fewer calls coming through to the Helpdesk on performance management – that said we are getting lots of calls on other issues, especially assessment centres, location and redeployment issues.

Aveen McHugh, assistant secretary, welcomes BT's move to six-monthly ratings but says a new and positive approach needs to be delivered consistently

We know performance management has been a huge challenge for our members in BT over the last few years. Trust has been drastically affected by real or perceived manipulation of performance marks. It will take time to change that and to start to rebuild trust. Key to this will be a positive approach that is consistently delivered.

There is relatively little solid research about the effectiveness of different approaches to performance management but one study by the Corporate Leadership Council in 2002 provides some valuable insight on the drivers that have the greatest and least impact on performance.

Broadly speaking, the drivers with most impact are fair, accurate and positive feedback where people

are able to take risks and allowed to work on the things they do best in the context of clearly understood performance standards.

The drivers with least impact on performance (and possibly a negative impact) are the use of rank ordering, increasing the number of performance reviews and emphasis on weaknesses in either informal or formal feedback.

Intuitively, that makes sense and so this will be our focus in discussions. This is a real opportunity to provide a simpler and more positive approach that works for BT and its people. We will be doing everything possible to deliver the changes we know our members need to see.

Ultimately, we know the only real test of any approach will be how this feels to people on the ground.



ACCENTURE: 'LITTLE ENTHUSIASM' FOR PAY DEAL

PROSPECT members at Accenture have voted to accept the company's pay offer for 2014. The overall value of the offer equates to 1% of the salary pot, a non-consolidated payment for moving to a December settlement date and an improvement to levels of PHI income protection.

The deal was recommended to

members as being the best that was achievable following a series of meetings between the recognised trade unions and the company.

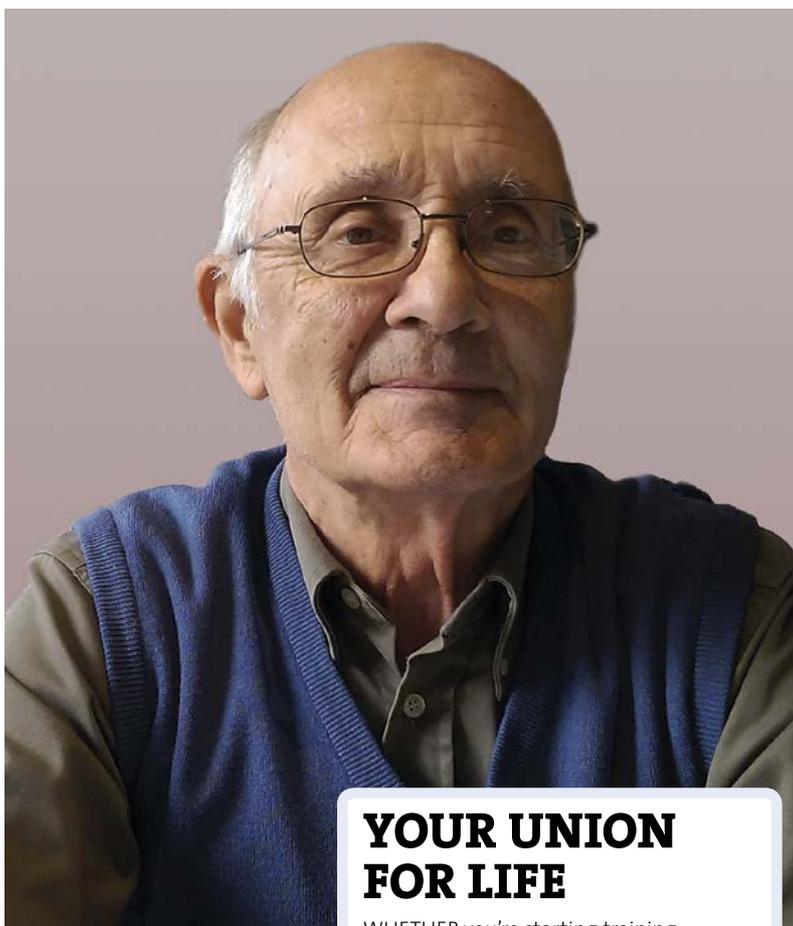
"While members have accepted the pay offer for 2014 we have written formally to Accenture to explain that our members have done so with little enthusiasm," says Steve Thomas (*right*),

Prospect's negotiations officer.

"Accenture's approach to pay over the last couple years is not sustainable and needs to change."

■ Mark Wassmer has stepped forward to become the new rep for Accenture members. The branch had been without one for some time. He will be working with Steve Thomas.





Ray Humphreys, an engineering development manager for 35 years from Billericay, Essex, explains why he stayed in Prospect after he lost his job

YOUR UNION FOR LIFE

WHETHER you're starting training, changing jobs or facing redundancy, you don't have to give up your Prospect membership.

We will continue to provide you with our professional support and services. Plus, if you are not currently earning or on a low income, you will pay a reduced subscription.

■ For more information: bit.ly/unionforlife

Why I stayed ...

“ I WAS made redundant from BT (in 1995) and at the time it was difficult to find full-time work. However, networking with other ex-BT employees enabled me to find work in a number of companies – part-time or as a contractor. It was networking through the union

branch that made a significant contribution to my employment opportunities.

I am currently working part-time as a consultant and, again, it is contact with the union that keeps me informed and also updates me on changes in the world of work.

Working alone or in a narrow field can often leave one unaware of what is happening in the more general work area. The union, through branch and publications, helps me to stay up to date with all this. Continued membership has been a boon to me. **”**



PROSPECT RECRUITMENT AND ORGANISING AWARDS 2015

PROSPECT is seeking nominations for its 2015 Recruitment, Retention and Organising Awards.

This is a fantastic opportunity for branches to showcase their initiatives and, in particular, to highlight how you are getting young professionals to join and become active in the union.

The categories are:

1. Branch Award
2. Individual Member Award
3. Young Member Award (aged under 30 at the time of nomination)

■ Contact jenny.arnold@prospect.org.uk for a nomination form, which needs to be returned by June 30.

Members accept Ericsson pay offer

AFTER EXTENSIVE and prolonged negotiations with Ericsson, Prospect members have voted to accept a two-year pay deal to settle claims for 2014 and 2015.

The headline value of the settlement is 2% for 2014, 2.1% for 2015, plus an additional 0.3% secured to help with progression. Payments will be backdated to 1 January 2015.

“We are pleased that members have overwhelmingly endorsed a straightforward two-year offer,” said Steve Thomas, Prospect’s negotiations officer.

“However, we’ll still be working hard to help fix the many other issues that frustrate our Ericsson members.”



LONDON BRANCH MEETINGS

THE Greater London Central, Greater London West and Greater London East and Essex CMD branches will be meeting on the following dates.

All meetings start at 4.30pm and are held upstairs in the Artillery Arms, Bunhill Row. The nearest Tube station is Old Street.

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| ■ March 5 (committee) | ■ September 3 (branch) |
| ■ April 9 (branch) | ■ October 1 (committee) |
| ■ May 7 (committee) | ■ November 5 (committee) |
| ■ June 4 (branch) | ■ December 1 (AGM) |
| ■ July 2 (committee) | |
| ■ August 6 (committee) | |



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MARCUS ROSE

Recruit a member – it will make them happier

PROSPECT'S MEMBER Recruit Member scheme, which is fast approaching its first anniversary, has added Help for Heroes to the list of charities that can benefit from the initiative.

The scheme offers a reward of £10 to existing members who recruit someone new to the union. It can be taken as a £10 love2shop or M&S gift voucher; a charity donation to the union's Oxfam or benevolent fund, or Help for Heroes.

Some Prospect branches are also using the Member Recruit Member scheme to raise money for good causes in their local communities.

Members at the Intellectual Property Office gave £140 of M&S vouchers to help Llamau, a homelessness charity in Wales, and the Sellafeld branch donated £200 to a foodbank in West Cumbria.



HELP for HEROES
Support For Our Wounded

The gift of happiness

If a £10 voucher, or altruism, isn't a good enough reason to recruit a new member, then how about because it will make them happier?

American researchers have found that people who join unions are happier than those who don't join. After analysing US data

collected between the early 1980s and mid-2000s, researchers from Baylor University and the University of Arkansas concluded "union members are more satisfied with their lives than those who are not members ... The effect is large and rivals other common predictors of quality of life."

■ **News of the study was published in the *New York Times* and can be read: bit.ly/NYT_union**

■ **Find out more about the Member Recruit Member scheme: bit.ly/prospect_MRM**

Telecoms giants all set for 2015

IT'S all set to be another turbulent and eventful year in the telecoms and communications sector.

BT's £12.5bn deal to purchase EE will enable it to offer a true 'quad-play' proposition to customers – a fixed phone line service, broadband, mobile and TV.

The deal could still spark competition issues, and there have already been calls from TalkTalk and Vodafone for regulators to strip BT of its Openreach division.

Another mega-deal in the mobile market is in the pipeline with the owners of Three, Hutchison Whampoa, in advanced talks to buy O2 from Telefónica for £10bn. If the deal goes ahead, the combined company would enjoy a 40 per cent share of the UK mobile market.

Broadcasting giant Sky is also set to offer mobile phone services following its announcement of a separate deal with Telefónica.

In addition, we have already had the carving up of domestic Premier League rights between Sky and BT.

Then, of course, there's the general election in May and the question of how the new government plans to tackle the ever changing information technology landscape.

It's going to be interesting.

■ See: Calvin Allen, P6

PEERS URGE BOOST FOR DIGITAL SKILLS TEACHING AND BROADBAND PROVISION

CHILDREN should be taught "digital skills" in schools as a core subject alongside numeracy and literacy, according to a cross-party parliamentary report. The study by the House of Lords digital skills committee also concluded that the internet should be regarded as a utility with unimpeded access for everyone, similar to water or electricity.

It says that computer technology brings "huge opportunities for the UK" but warns that, without action, the UK risks being left behind in the digital era. The report recommends:

- No child should leave school without digital literacy
- Apprenticeships should have more emphasis on digital skills
- Urgent action is required to support teachers to help them deliver a new computing curriculum.

The report also highlights the meagre

numbers of women working in digital careers, and STEM in general, and says this is holding back UK competitiveness.

Baroness Morgan of Huyton, chair of the digital skills committee, and a former Ofsted chair, said that 35% of UK jobs were likely to be automated over the next 20 years. She described the report as a "wake-up call" to whoever forms the next government and said it was unacceptable that in some areas up to 20% of the population had never used the internet.

Prospect has consistently called for a greater focus on digital skills training and for positive action to encourage more women to see IT as a viable career option.

■ **See more: www.parliament.uk/digital-skills-committee**



Stay calm and get active

Trade unions are only as effective as their reps on the ground and everyone can find a role that suits them, says **Aveen McHugh**

OUR REPS find their union work interesting and enjoyable – even though it can be challenging. If you are interested in getting involved you can take it at your own pace and do as much as you like.

Some of our representatives simply act as local contacts: the face of the union in a particular workplace or location who undertake a range of tasks. These can include acting as a focal point for Prospect in their area, keeping the notice board up to date, distributing newsletters and generally acting as our local eyes and ears on the ground.

Branches also have more formal roles such as secretary and chair; other key roles include membership and recruitment secretary and/or the branch organiser who may take a lead role in identifying and recruiting non-members within the workplace.

Many of our reps are also case handlers who play a key role helping and advising members who may have a particular personal issue within the workplace. They might help someone who has a grievance about a performance rating or advise someone who may be facing disciplinary action.

There are two types of representative, which exist on a statutory basis with specific rights under the law:

Health and Safety reps

Health and safety reps conduct regular workplace inspections, represent members' health, safety and welfare interests and investigate potential hazards, accidents, dangerous occurrences and health and safety complaints raised by members. They also have legal rights to receive information and to be consulted on health and safety issues.

Union Learning reps

Branches can also appoint union learning representatives (ULRs) who promote training and development within the workplace by providing advice and information on learning initiatives and support members who want to widen their skills.

Some branches also have specialist reps dealing with equalities, environmental or pensions issues or queries. Other people might dream of being in print and get the chance by writing and designing local newsletters.

We provide training courses for all these roles – you can find out more and apply online on the Prospect website:

bit.ly/prospect_learn

■ *If you are interested in finding out more about taking on a rep role then contact us at cmd@prospect.org.uk*



‘BEING A CASE HANDLER IS MASSIVELY AND OVERWHELMINGLY REWARDING’

Tom Machell has been a trade union case handler for more than 35 years, going all the way back to his days as a rep for the Post Office Engineering Union, a forerunner of the CWU.

BASED IN Sheffield, Tom currently works as a service designer for BT TSO and specialises in data centre environments.

In your own words, Tom, describe what being a case handler involves.

We help members prepare their case, whether defending some ‘charge’ under the disciplinary process or a challenge by the member to a failure in the BT performance markings. We offer advice, support and represent the individual within formal hearings.

What’s the range of problems that members might come to you with?

Virtually everything – from alleged credit card misuse, alleged internet abuse, discipline over misconduct and hearings under the absence policy through to challenges around performance markings, accusations of bullying and harassment, cases under what was called the MCC procedure, fair redeployment, fair treatment, working hours – the list goes on.

However, we would not expect a new case handler to be an expert on all these issues.

What makes a good case handler?

You need to be able to listen – often you are the first port of call for members to get issues off their chests. You need to be able to ask the correct questions so that you can identify the key issues to form the bulk of the arguments you will make in support of the member and often better structure their response.

You also need to understand your own limitations regarding knowledge so you know when to get advice from either your case-handling mentor (if a new case handler) or specialist support from a full-time Prospect officer.

Occasionally you need to be able to negotiate to try and get a result without formal recourse to process. You need to be honest with them about possible outcomes irrespective as to how strong they feel their case is.

You also need to separate yourself from the individual – it is their case and not yours, no matter how sympathetic you are.

What are the most challenging aspects of being a case handler?

You do need to listen despite sometimes knowing what the defence will say very early in the conversation.

Members can be distressed – their world has collapsed around them and while you can support them, you can’t remain their mental “crutch”.

You have to explain to members



MARTIN MAYER

that you aren’t their 24/7 support ie you have a day job and may be dealing with other cases – so managing expectations is very occasionally an issue.

Finally, you can’t always get the result that is fair and explaining this is sometimes difficult.

What are the most enjoyable and rewarding parts?

Getting a result; knowing you have made a difference when you keep someone in a job when, without you, they may not have one is incredibly rewarding.

Moreover, you get to learn a lot about the company, its policies and procedures and these can be very useful in your own career.

How does Prospect support and assist you?

I have had training over the years and am part of a network so if I don’t know the answer, I know that someone in the union does.

How would you, or what would you say, in order to persuade someone to be a case handler?

Irrespective of the few issues highlighted, it is massively and overwhelmingly rewarding. You learn a lot and make a real and practical difference to the lives of your work colleagues.

“You get to learn a lot about the company, its policies and procedures and these can be very useful in your own career”

A communications manifesto for the next government

BROADBAND PLAYS an increasingly important role in underpinning our economic and social lives. It is also evident that communication services – voice, data, broadcasting and entertainment – are now an essential element of the UK's public infrastructure.

At the same time, communications has reinforced its role as a key driver of economic growth, and the part it can play in the delivery of efficient and cost-effective public services has increasingly come to the fore.

Not long after the coalition government took office, it developed an ambition to ensure that the UK would have “the best superfast broadband network in Europe by 2015”.

Communications regulator Ofcom has subsequently produced a number of reports assessing what the UK has achieved in comparison to other European countries along the lines of a “scorecard”.

The 2014 scorecard shows the UK doing comparatively rather well when set against the records of the four other major EU countries, but somewhat less well when measured against the whole of the EU.

Who deserves credit?

It is undeniable that substantial progress has been made on the 2010 position, both in terms of fixed and mobile broadband. However, the extent to which the government can claim credit for this is a very different matter:

- BT's own £2.5bn investment programme has shouldered the bulk of the burden of the progress that has been made.
- The coalition's level of support for superfast broadband, in terms of public funding, is simply insufficient against the scale of the need and will leave a number of people on the wrong side of a digital divide, both in rural areas and elsewhere.
- A competition-based approach to the delivery of the communications infrastructure, which leaves some areas under-served while others are



Ensuring that every household has access to superfast broadband is just one of the many issues that the next government will need to address,
Calvin Allen

over-served, remains an unresolved policy aim and one to which Prospect is not sympathetic.

Consequently, the completion of broadband infrastructure needs to be a top priority for the incoming government.

We believe that the new government needs to set clear milestones to mark progress over the lifetime of the next parliament.

There are also several other key policy priorities within communications, which it will need to address.

Mergers and consolidation

The strategy behind the BT merger with EE has major implications for all telecoms companies, as well as for the infrastructure over which their communications services are delivered.

This will require a re-examination of the structure and shape of the industry.

We think the government cannot leave such questions to the market but request that it takes steps to ensure that workers' rights and the right to dialogue are openly protected and respected.

Public service broadcasting

TV channels broadcast as Internet services represent a major challenge to the role and function of public

service broadcasting.

The government must act to ensure that public service broadcasting is supported and properly financed in the forthcoming renewal of the BBC Charter.

Mobile technology

Continued advances in mobile technology (the as-yet undefined '5G' standard) and the growth in data associated with the 50bn connected devices, which is expected across the globe by 2020, will require the provision of greater amounts of spectrum.

The frequencies which are to be used for that purpose, as well as the prices at which they are sold to operators, must be addressed.

The government must prioritise investment in network roll-out over financial returns to the Treasury.

Privacy

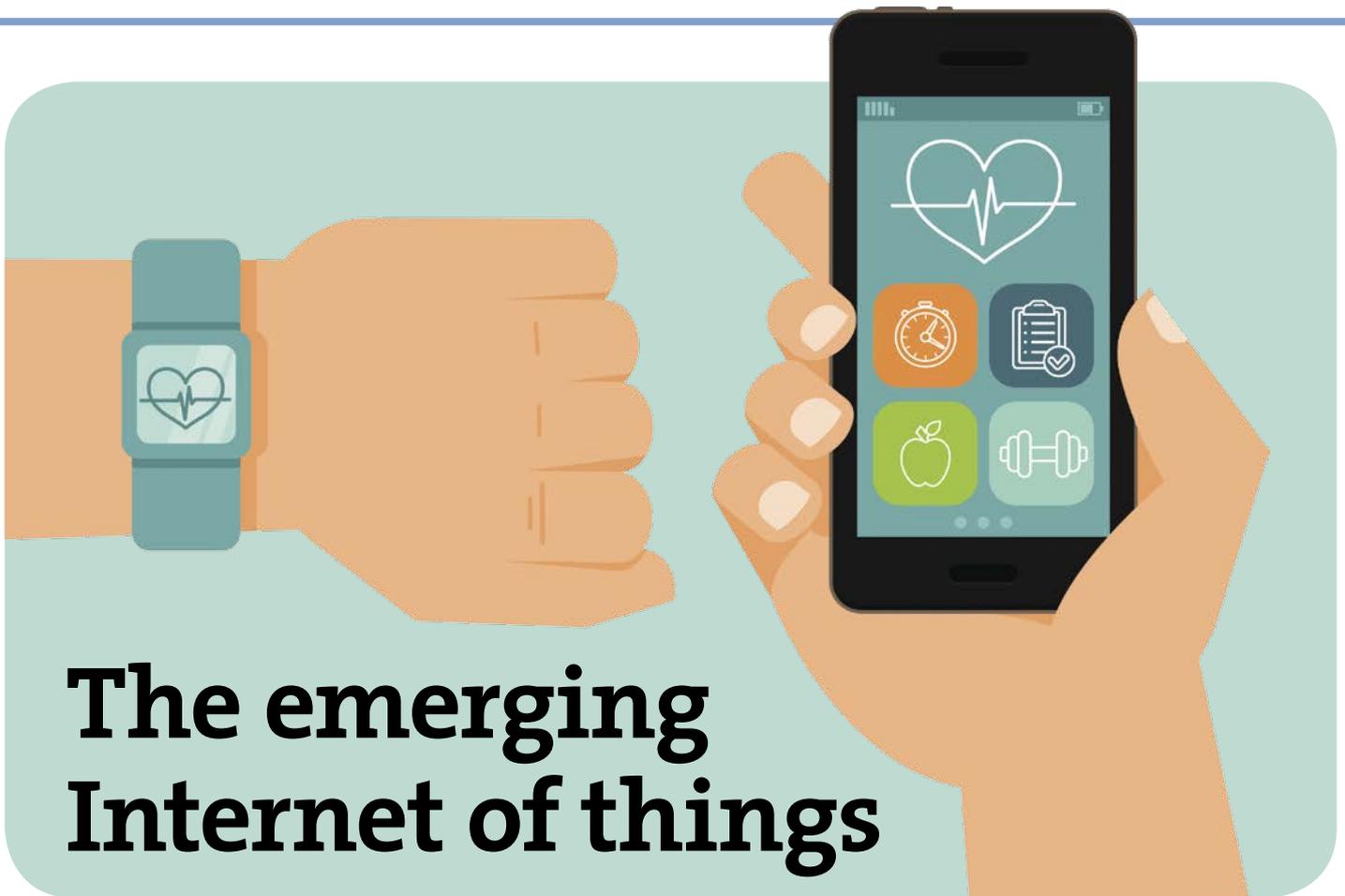
Cyber security will continue to rise in prominence, both in terms of protecting individual data as well as the protection of wider society.

The incoming government must ensure individuals' rights over the usage of their data and their right to privacy is not compromised.

- See Prospect's general election microsite: gez2015.prospect.org.uk

YOUR VOTE, YOUR VOICE





The emerging Internet of things



Ever more rapidly, the Internet is connecting more devices than people, explains our columnist

Roger Darlington

FOR DECADES, the Internet has been seen as a way to connect people, whether communicating one-on-one through emails or in groups through chat rooms and social media; whether obtaining information from websites, like Wikipedia; or making purchases through ecommerce sites, like Amazon.

Quietly, in the background, however, more and more, the Internet has been connecting devices, leading to the notion of the “Internet of Things”.

In the UK, a nation of 64 million, 83% of homes are now connected to the net. But already more than 40 million devices are connected. A report commissioned by Ofcom suggests that number will increase eight-fold to 360 million devices by 2022.

What sorts of devices are going to be involved? The variety is exploding, but three sectors illustrate the kind of transformation that is taking place and the potential benefits to citizens and consumers.

Healthcare: Devices that monitor fitness and activity levels within the home, to treat illness and encourage a healthy lifestyle.

Transport: Collecting information from vehicles could help improve traffic flow, allow drivers to avoid traffic accidents and provide information for better vehicle design.

Energy: Connecting a wider range

of household, office and industrial equipment could enable their energy use to be monitored, with implications for cost-saving.

Beyond these direct citizen and consumer benefits, additional benefits will be realised through the existence of a multiplier effect as a result of ‘big data’.

The volume and variety of raw data from such a diverse range of devices will stimulate innovation and new services across multiple sectors.

Policy issues

Like any new technical development, a host of policy issues are thrown up.

First, this sort of connectivity requires spectrum – some licensed, some licence exempt – in various bands. The latest Ofcom review concludes, however, that existing initiatives will meet much of the short-to-medium term spectrum demand for IoT devices.

Second, as IoT services become an increasingly important part of our daily lives, there will be growing demands for greater resilience and security of the networks used both to transmit IoT data, and to store and process the data collected by IoT devices. We cannot afford network outages or data leakage.

Third, all these IoT devices need their own unique addresses. The

current internet protocol version 4 (IPv4) has run out of its 4.3 billion addresses, so speedy migration to IPv6 – which generates two to the power of 128 addresses (a lot, lot, lot more than IPv4) – is necessary.

Fourth, many of these IoT devices will be generating data specific to an individual or organisation, so it will be vitally important to ensure that this data is stored and processed securely and used with appropriate consent. People need to know what data is being generated and who is using it.

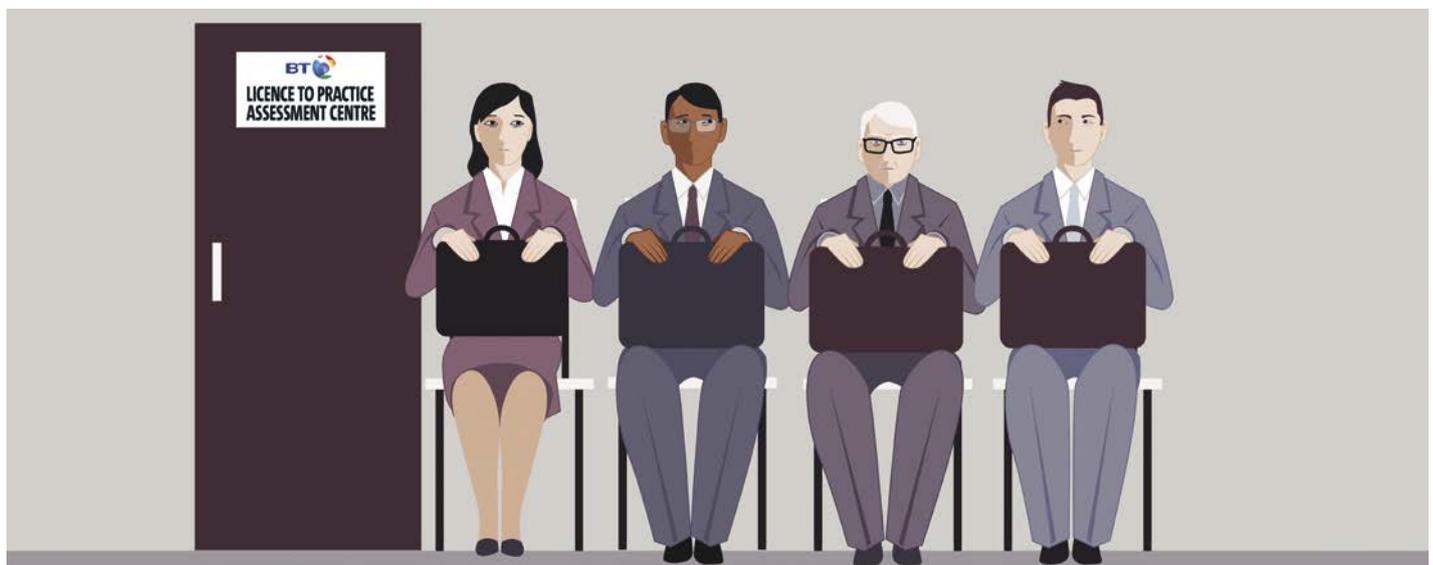
Take, for example, the case of an elderly woman with a heart irregularity who is still living independently. Her son buys her a health monitor that she wears on her wrist that measures and transmits information on a variety of life functions.

Who should have access to that data, and how should that data be used? The son? The woman’s doctor when at the surgery? Other medical staff 24/7?

Who would need to give consent? The woman herself? Suppose she won’t agree even though her son believes her life is at risk? Suppose she suffers from dementia and is in no position to give informed consent?

The IoT is going to change all our lives big time.

■ www.rogerdarlington.me.uk/IT2015



Is the new ‘licence to practice’ assessment discriminatory?

IN JANUARY BT announced that there is now a requirement to obtain a “licence to practice” within current BI/PPM roles by passing a half-day assessment centre. Failure to do so at reassessment will mean individuals cannot remain in their role.

People who have failed their reassessment have been told they must leave their current role (and get some support to find a new role in a different area of work but not joining the Transfer Centre) or take a leaver package. **This has not been agreed with Prospect.**

We have tried very hard to get BT to change this position. Much to our regret we have been unable to persuade BT that this is potentially a very destructive distraction for individuals and BT. Not only that, but we now think we have found evidence of potential discrimination on grounds of age.

We have been carefully monitoring all the members who have contacted us who have failed the assessment centre twice. We now have over 40 such cases and can clearly see that the majority of these are people aged 50 or over. That’s about 60%. That just feels wrong and is highly unlikely to reflect the overall population.

We have written to BT asking them to suspend the programmes pending a full review of the assessment process and consequences for individuals. We will, of course, be seeking to challenge this legally.

That will take time. Meanwhile, we

Aveen McHugh, assistant secretary for Prospect’s CMD sector, expresses concerns about the new “licence to practice” requirement for individuals in BI/PPM roles



■ For more information on the BI assessment centre process: bit.ly/BI_assessment

■ For more information on the PPM assessment centre process: bit.ly/PPM_assessment

have said to BT that they should review and publish all of the stats associated with the programmes including:

- pass rates for individual tests/elements
- overall assessment centre passes
- DPR marks
- all consequential actions with corresponding demographic information for all key equality markers.

If BT are unwilling to do this then people will draw their own conclusions.

Meanwhile, we are seeing how individuals are being consistently subject to on-going detriment as a consequence of the policies and practices being rolled out by BT HR. We believe these practices are specifically designed to put pressure on the individuals concerned to leave BT.

People are being marked down to DN without any reference to problems in their day jobs. There can

be no coaching plan as people are just being removed from role regardless of operational impact.

Potential sideways remappings are being blocked and, most shockingly, where people have got themselves new jobs we have had instances where the job has been pulled as it is in a similar job family.

Advice to members – do this now

There is advice on our website for both BI and the PPM communities. Make sure you look at it and act on it.

We welcome views and feedback from members – that feedback will help inform our next steps. **If you want to give feedback or views** then send them to BTAC@prospect.org.uk

If you know any non-members please encourage them to join Prospect. They can do that online at www.prospect.org.uk/join

Prospect will not provide advice or assistance on matters arising prior to membership, so people need to have joined before the first assessment centre.

UPDATE YOUR DETAILS

PLEASE check that the information we hold on you is up to date – especially your **job family** and **non-BT email**.

When you login to www.prospect.org.uk you will be greeted by a welcome page where you can click on “Change your settings” to get to “My Details”.

If you need any further information about logging in have a look at www.prospect.org.uk/help