

BT/EE London Circular

Prospect supporting members as lockdown continues to ease

COVID-19 Update

Prospect continues to meet regularly with BT to review the situation with COVID-19. These meetings include detailed reviews of the impact on the business and plans for future working. Both Prospect and BT remain clear that a return to limited office working will only take place where this is safe and with agreed COVID-19 secure safety precautions in place.

For many this will mean continued working from home for the foreseeable future. The union has trained a number of new safety reps to make sure we have the resource to deal with developments and we have also raised specific concerns on those, such as BAME colleagues, where studies have shown a possible higher risk.

This is now a 'new normal' situation and is giving rise to a range of issues ranging from those who find continued working from home problematic to home office equipment concerns. BT has a range of help available via the EAP and the line but get in touch if you aren't able to progress a problem.



Better Workplace

Unit announcements on plans for future locations in Better Workplace hubs have continued and Prospect is consulted on each of these. There is an agreed framework in place between Prospect and BT on how changes and moves are handled and the Union's focus is of course on protecting members.

At the moment no change can take place and this will be the case for a while to come. Once it becomes possible to begin to occupy offices on a more BAU like basis, Prospect will look in detail with each business unit has moves are proposed. A key point here is that any move must meet the criteria of what is 'reasonable' in terms of journey times, impact on personal circumstances etc.

With many working from home over the last few months a focus on a balance between office and home working will be high on Prospect's agenda for discussions.

Staying in touch

The Prospect Helpdesk remains open on 0300 600 1878 and regular members update calls are being held in London. You will be mailed directly with the details of these. You may also contact the London Secretary Keith Flett directly at keith.flett@bt.com

Black Lives Matter: what Prospect in BT is doing

You will have seen comms from BT on Black Lives Matter and BT is now looking at improving its equality data and a range of other measures in consultation with the Unions. Prospect has welcomed this but we are also pressing BT on an equal pay audit based on the detailed data the Union has from our annual pay surveys.

Below is an insight on the BLM movement and its impact in BT

London Rep and BT Committee member Christine Danniell writes:

Making a difference

Several countries have been at the epicentre of recent protests, George Floyd's murder captured detached police brutality and unbridled callousness. The fact that none of Derek Chauvin's colleagues reacted or intervened to the horrific situation unfolding clearly demonstrates a toxic American culture.

The protests in London forced the UK to self-reflect, as a number of people genuinely do not believe we have a problem with racism in our country. Some BAME (Black Asian & Minority Ethnic) people have a different perspective, as they may have experienced institutionalised racism via recent government policies, such as the Windrush scandal, or are aware of the abnormal number of deaths recorded by BAME during arrests and whilst in police custody and other daily micro aggressions. More recently it has been reported or statistics have shown that racism may also have had a part to play in increased BAME Covid deaths.

Just saying Black Lives Matter is not enough, nor is it enough to say you are not a racist, the goal is to be anti-racist. But what does being anti-racist actually mean, it means that you actively challenge your mind-set, for example when you have a prejudiced or racist thought, think before you act. You can choose to use your influence for good, be intentional and interrupt racist practices, if you are silent you are reinforcing the system. Speaking up does not mean being aggressive or confrontational. George Floyd may not have died if one of the colleagues had corrected Derek Chauvin's behaviour, looking the other way when atrocities are happening around us does not absolve us. The collective inability to act reveals a lot about us as human beings.

We at BT have started to have uncomfortable conversations in our Workspace around racism, clearly we have "Work to Do". Moving forward we need to inform, educate and improve relations, whilst we are doing this we can be kind and respectable even if we do not always agree with each other. When you know better you do better. BT Senior Leadership Team have sent strong signals that things will change, hopefully we will begin to see the impact of BT's new Ethnicity Diversity plan.

History will thank you if you choose to be part of the solution. You may also want to learn about the Black Experience via conversations and via your own research. Do not be afraid to discuss the issues, however, be mindful that some may not want to discuss as it may be too traumatic.

If you have been affected by the recent events it is important to take care of your mental well-being.

The sheer amount of police brutality appearing in the news and on social media has been relentless, some may feel vicariously traumatised by watching this level of violence against BAME. The very act of watching these videos over and over again can wear you out.

How can you protect yourself?

- ⇒ Set a limit to your exposure and use of social media, you have the power you can turn off. Remember once you see it, it will most likely leave a mark on you.
- ⇒ Talk to friends or family about how you are feeling or speak to your Prospect Union Representative. Also join the Ethnic Diversity Network where robust conversations are being held on the impact of race in the workplace.
- ⇒ If you would like to talk to a professional please call 0800 917 6767. The EAP is a voluntary, confidential and free service for all BT employees. They offer face-to-face counselling and a number of advice lines are available.

At all times and whatever side of the debate you sit on be respectable and kind.

Recommended literature

- How to be an Antiracist by Ibram X Kendi
- Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race by Reni Eddo-Lodge
- Brit(ish) by Afua Hirsch
- Queenie by Candice Carty-Williams

Reports on Race

Race in the Workplace:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/race-in-the-workplace-the-mcgregor-smith-review>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/594365/race-in-workplace-mcgregor-smith-review-response.pdf

David Lammy Review:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lammy-review-final-report>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lammy-review-government-response>