

# Customer Care / Branch Helpline Closure

**T**he Bank will today announce that as part of the Telephony restructure - the main details of which I provided to Members in my Newsletter last week - the Customer Care and Branch Helpline Operations in Newcastle are to close on Friday 28th May. In all 41 jobs will be lost with the work being absorbed into the existing teams, predominately in Newport and Glasgow.

The Bank has said that all affected staff will receive a Voluntary Severance quotation and will be eligible to leave the Bank on 28th May. Members considering accepting this Voluntary Severance quotation should contact LTU's 24 Hour Advice Line on 01234-262868 for guidance.

Staff who wish to remain working for the Bank after their roles disappear will be treated the same as other staff in Newcastle Contact Centre who are affected by the transferring of their jobs to India.

**The Bank has not provided any guarantee that staff will not ultimately be made compulsorily redundant.**

Those staff who do wish to remain working for the Bank;

- **will have the continued support of Pathways in seeking a suitable alternative role.** Staff should already have been involved in two Pathways workshops

---

## INSIDE

### Suitable Alternative Employment

### Your Rights Explained

---

as part of the Newcastle Contact Centre closure programme, and will have completed Preference Exercise forms indicating whether they would prefer to remain in the Bank or take Severance.

- **who have been unsuccessful in finding a new role by 28th May will be found work within the Contact Centre.** They will then be subject to the Newcastle Contact Centre Closure process and timescales.

Inside this Newsletter I outline what 'Suitable Alternative Employment' means in practice and the rights staff have if they believe a job that they are offered is not suitable.

Any members affected by this announcement should contact the Union's 24 Hour Advice Line on 01234 262868 and speak to a full time official.

# Suitable Alternative Employment

During any reorganisation such as this staff should be aware that they have a number of rights both legally and under the Bank's Job Security Policy. In particular, staff have a legal right to be offered 'suitable alternative employment'. If this is not available then they must be offered the Bank's Voluntary Severance Terms as an alternative.

## 'Suitable Alternative Employment' would be:

- a position at the same band or level of seniority
- within the skills, competencies and experiences of an individual, subject to adequate training
- a 'proper job' rather than one of only a short-term nature
- with similar working patterns
- within recognised mobility parameters.

Some staff might be offered temporary secondments or projects, but these would only be genuinely suitable if there is the prospect of the individual continuing in 'suitable alternative employment' for the foreseeable future.

Where a member of staff is offered genuinely 'suitable alternative employment' then they cannot unreasonably decline it. However, if the Bank is unable to offer such a position then staff have a right to be offered the Bank's Voluntary Severance terms instead.

## Travel and Mobility

In some cases staff may be concerned that they may be offered alternative jobs which are some considerable distance from where they live.

The guidelines agreed between LTU and the Bank specify that that staff should not normally be expected to transfer where;

- the journey from home is more than 25 miles, or;
- the journey time for staff travelling by public transport is more than 1 hour 15 minutes.

Of course, each case needs to be judged on its own merits. In some circumstances (such as quick driving routes) a longer journey may be justifiable, whilst in other cases a shorter distance may be required (i.e. congested or cross-country journeys).

The Bank must also take into account the "personal and domestic circumstances" of staff when considering asking them to transfer; for instance, child care responsibilities.

## Trial Periods

Staff accepting new jobs or agreeing to consider positions that are not deemed 'Suitable Alternatives' by the Bank, should be offered trial periods of between four and twelve weeks before they confirm final acceptance of any new position. It is essential that staff establish their right to trial periods in advance of

taking up new positions and get it clearly understood if a job is deemed unsuitable and no further job is offered, they are free to take Severance. They can make this decision at the end of the trial or during it.

## Job Size and Duties

Any members considering accepting an alternative job should:

- ask for the Hay Job Units score for the new job. The job may be in the same broad 'Pay Band' but at a different level within that 'Pay Band', in which case the salary of the new job may be managed at a lower level
- ask for a clear description of the responsibilities and tasks of the new job and, where necessary, find out what training will be provided by the Bank.

Staff must remember that following the introduction of Broad Banding, just because a job is in the same Band doesn't mean that they will have their salaries managed around the same Market Indicators. So check the job size to establish that the same Market Indicator applies.

## Transfer to a Lower Grade

Under certain circumstances staff might be asked to accept a lower grade. It is important to note, however, that:

- this must be no more than one Band lower than the individual's current job
- salaries will be protected and managed in the new Band
- however, if an individual's salary is above the Market Indicator for the new job after three years following the downgrade, he or she will face the prospect of no pay increase for some considerable time
- anyone downgraded from a Band 5 to Band 6 (or Band 4 to Band 5) must be offered Voluntary Severance as an alternative.

## Job Security Appeals Procedure

Where staff feel they have been treated unfairly during a reorganisation - either through being pressurised into accepting an unsuitable alternative job or having been told they are being made compulsorily redundant - they can pursue a Job Security Appeal with full representation from LTU.

This procedure, which has been used successfully by a number of LTU members, means that staff can have their cases presented by experienced Union Representatives in front of Panels consisting of an equal number of senior Union and Bank Officials.

It is up to the Appeals Panel to decide whether staff have been treated fairly and, where they believe this hasn't been the case in terms of redeployment, they can decide that staff should either be offered a different role or offered Severance Terms instead.

It is essential that any members who are concerned with their treatment or who require any advice or assistance telephone LTU's Advice Team on 01234 262868.

**NICK HOLT**  
Assistant General Secretary