

LBG Investigated By Border Agency

Members will recall that the Bank has been flying Indian staff to the UK to do the work of UK-based IT staff. At the time we found out about this covert policy the Group said that it couldn't say how many Indian staff had been flown to the UK, how long they had been working for the Group and how long they were expected to work in the UK?

Since we highlighted this issue thousands of members have written to their MP's asking for their support to help protect the jobs of Lloyds Banking Group (LBG) staff. In a standard response sent to all MP's, the Bank has continued to peddle the line that the numbers of Indian staff flown to the UK are small. In the letter the Group says "At any one time, **some** of the staff from these companies will be based in the UK.....". **That's being economical with the truth. The Group has known for some time that 1,300 Indian contractors have been flown to the UK to do the work of IT staff and many of those have been moving from project to project and have worked for the Group for many months, if not years.** Whilst some of those contractors will go back to India over the next few months there will still be at least 400 who will be permanently based in the UK doing work which could be done by displaced IT staff. The Group has admitted that displaced LBG staff will be redeployed into 300 of the roles that are currently filled by staff flown over from India. Whilst this is a welcome move the fact that this work was being done by Onshore staff in the first place makes a mockery of the Group's Offshoring policy. Some IT staff who could have done that work will have already been made redundant.

We understand that at least one MP has received a letter from the UK Border Agency regarding the Groups's policy of replacing existing UK based IT-staff by non-European Economic Area (EEA) nationals. Last year the old system of work permits was replaced by a points based system. We understand that Indian staff working in the UK are employed by Offshore contractors based in India. The basis on which those Indian staff are being employed and flown to the UK is something we are investigating; to ensure that there are no breaches of existing border controls. **The Chief Executive of the Border Agency has said that the concerns raised by the MP in respect of the Lloyds Banking Group are being investigated by the UK Border Control's Intelligence and Sponsor Management Units.**

What's also interesting is that in the letter to MP's the Group has switched its position in respect of its so called 'new' Offshoring policy. In June LBG said "We have today announced our commitment not to Offshore any further existing permanent operational roles held by LBG.....This is a commitment to keep existing permanent operational roles in the UK **whenever we can**". In letters to MP's issued following that commitment the Group excludes the words "whenever we can" thus giving the impression that no operational jobs would ever be Offshored. In more recent letters, one assumes after someone realised that they could be accused of misleading MP's, that commitment is qualified and the words "whenever we can" are included thus rendering the Group's original commitment worthless.

Members with any experiences of the Indian operations can share those with their colleagues on the Union's eForum at www.ltu.co.uk/eforum.

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