

13TH JULY 2010

ALL MEMBERS IN ANDOVER

# Digital Banking, Andover Today's Work Today Members Advice

**G**roup Operations has announced plans to introduce changes to the working patterns of staff working for Digital Banking in Andover as part of its *Today's Work Today* programme.

*Today's Work Today* is a Divisional initiative focused upon doubling the number of processes that are completed on the same day as work is received.

In the case of Digital Banking, the Bank has said that within the next three months (by October 2010) it aims to reduce the time it takes to complete work from between 2 and 6 days now, to completion on the same day it is received. **Since Digital Banking Account Opening Applications and Registrations can be received at any time - day, night or weekend - this means that to achieve this objective, the Bank must increase the number of staff working at weekends.**

The Bank has also said it intends to extend the times that staff are available to work each day and achieve greater multi-skilling of staff so that they can switch between processes.

## Voluntarism ... Or At Least For The Time Being!!!

LTU has always been supportive of changes by the Bank that enhance operational efficiency and the quality of service provided to customers; but only so long as these are not to the direct detriment of staff.

**At this stage, the Bank is 'initially' seeking volunteers from amongst the Digital Banking teams to agree to work additional Saturdays and Sundays and to also work earlier and later each day.** It requires around two-thirds of week-day staffing levels on Saturdays and half on Sundays.

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**However, the Bank has refused to rule out attempting to force staff to change their working hours if it gets insufficient volunteers.** In fact, at a meeting last week between the Union and Bank to discuss the introduction of Group-wide terms and conditions, the Bank went out of its way to emphasise its intention to force through changes in working hours whenever it cannot achieve the changes it is seeking from volunteers alone!

**LTU foresees pressure upon staff to change their working patterns becoming a battleground between the Bank and staff over the next year or so as it drops its commitment to being a 'family friendly employer'. LTU is also concerned that the Bank's proposed changes to the new terms and conditions are part of a deliberate strategy to remove from staff protection against them being forced to change their working hours.**

## Support From LTU

LTU explains inside the considerations that staff should take into account when deciding whether or not to change their working patterns and also the rights of staff should the Bank eventually resort to attempting to force through changes.

To join call 01234 262868... today!

# Considerations For Staff

In its presentation to staff, the Bank naturally 'plays up' the advantages to staff of working at weekends.

**LTU would certainly encourage any staff who feel willing and able to change their working patterns to accommodate weekend working to consider doing so; particularly since by doing so they may divert pressure from other staff who may subsequently be pressurised into involuntary changes to their working hours.**

In fact, the Bank's presentation shows a lack of vision concerning the sort of working patterns that might be sufficiently attractive to persuade staff to volunteer to work weekends.

Rather than still working, say, five days a week whilst in future incorporating weekend working, other options that staff might want to consider include compressed working weeks: that is, still working the same number of hours each week (i.e. 35 hours) but over just a four-day week. That would mean they could have 3 (not 2) days off a week!

In fact, there are a number of permutations along this same theme, which could potentially lead to reduced travel and childcare costs, as well as providing more free time for staff.

Furthermore, if some staff were to agree to work

longer than normal hours at weekends (perhaps 9 hour days), it would remove pressure on other staff to have to change their working hours at all ... a win, win situation for everyone!

## Take Care - Call LTU!

Even when staff are agreeable to changing their contracted working hours, it is still important to check arrangements with LTU's Advice Team to ensure that there are no 'catches'.

In similar circumstances previously, staff have been unaware that they have left themselves wide open to further changes to their working hours, requirements to work bank holidays, etc. Some staff have even reached verbal agreements with their line managers - perhaps involving assurances that they can change their hours back if their personal circumstances change - only to find out later that such verbal agreements are worthless.

**It is therefore essential that staff have a clear understanding, confirmed in writing, of what they and the Bank are and are not committing to if they agree to change their working hours.**

Members can telephone LTU's 24 Hour Advice Line Service at any time on 01234 262868.

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# Working Hours Rights Explained

Although at this stage the Bank's plans for introducing *Today's Work Today* are initially based upon finding volunteers to change their working hours - by working earlier, later or at weekends - **there is no hiding the fact that the Bank may resort to pressurising staff to change their working hours if there are insufficient volunteers.**

**The Bank has refused to rule out this possibility and one of the Bank's key objectives when introducing new Terms and Conditions**

**has been to give it more freedom to force staff to change their working hours.**

## Who Can Refuse To Change Their Working Patterns?

Whilst some staff may not have any choice but to change their working patterns in accordance with the Bank's wishes - especially those who only recently started working for the Bank - many others will have a legal or contractual right to refuse to do so.

These categories of staff who have a legal or contractual right to insist upon remaining on their existing working patterns are:

- **Full-Time Staff who were originally employed on Fixed Hours Contracts, which set out the specific times that they are required to work.**
- **Reduced Hours Staff who almost certainly will also have contracts that set out the specific times and/or days that they are required to work.**
- **Staff who have varied their working patterns through Work Options, which invariably set out in writing the days and/or hours they are required to work.**
- **Staff who, despite having originally been employed on Variable Hours Contracts,**

**through a legal process known as 'affirmation' have now accrued fixed working hours rights (see last Newsletter). This will apply where staff have not changed their working hours or working pattern for more than six months and have not received a 'Flex letter' from the Bank.**

**Even those staff who do not fall into one of the four categories above may still be able to refuse to change their working patterns for personal or domestic reasons.**

**This would apply if - for reasons such as childcare or caring for an elderly or dependent relative - they would have serious difficulties continuing to work for the Bank on the alternative working patterns that the Bank would like them to accept.**

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## Professional Representation

As always, LTU is alone in having the resources, commitment and expertise to provide Digital Banking Staff at Andover with the highest quality union representation.

This professional support will be provided to Digital Banking Staff in a number of important ways:

- Regular meetings between LTU's experienced Officials and Group Operations' senior management, when the Union will be insisting that any changes to working hours should continue to be handled on an entirely voluntary basis only.
- Detailed, informative Newsletters explaining to Digital Banking Staff the legal and contractual rights of staff and updating members on all developments as they unfold.
- A genuine 24 Hour Advice Line Service that members can call at any time - day, night or weekend - to talk confidentially direct to an experienced LTU Official. The telephone number is 01234 262868. If you are working, so are we!
- Regular visits to Andover by LTU's highly

experienced Regional Officer, Stuart Rankin. Stuart will be able to provide members with detailed face-to-face advice and guidance on their options, rights and entitlements.

Stuart will also be in contact with local management throughout this process.

- If the Bank eventually resorts to pressurising staff to change their working patterns against their will then, where necessary, full legal support from LTU's specialist lawyers.

Of course, this support is exclusively available to LTU members.

### Not Yet A Member?

LTU has a strict policy of only assisting existing members.

If you are not yet a member and fall into difficulties then it will simply be too late to join. You will be on your own and vulnerable.

To join LTU, staff can complete and return the Application Form overleaf or phone 01234 262868.

**STEVE TATLOW**  
Assistant General Secretary

To join call 01234 262868... today!