

19th May 2003

Cheltenham & Gloucester

LTU Successfully Represents Members in C&G

Lloyds TSB Group Union is almost certainly unique in offering members individual advice 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We introduced the service because we recognised that it is often inconvenient or impractical for members to contact the Union during normal working hours on issues of real sensitivity. Equally, when members face disciplinary or other problems their need for advice and information does not finish at 5.00pm.

The 'Advice Line' is the Union's most important and most frequently used service by C&G members. It is run by a team of 8 full time LTU Officials based in the Union's Office in Bedford.

Our Advice Team is backed up by a large team of representation Officials all of whom worked previously either for Lloyds or TSB and who represent members in individual cases up and down the country. Where necessary LTU Officials can call on a range of specialist advisers including Thompsons, Britain's biggest firm of Trade Union lawyers, pension experts Aon Consulting, the Union's Medical Adviser and other experts.

Like all LTU Officials they are employed and paid for by the Union. We do not employ Officials seconded from and paid for by either the Group or the C&G. Our philosophy is that members need to be represented by people who are wholly independent of the C&G and have no potential conflict of interest. LTU is the only Union in the Lloyds TSB Group that is entirely independent in this way.

Success For C&G Members

LTU has recently represented successfully a number of C&G members in grievance and harassment cases. These members contacted the Union at our last surgery at Barnwood. An Individual Advice Representative was appointed to represent the members and we visited some of them at home to discuss their cases before pursuing them through the formal channels. I'm pleased to report that these individual cases were dealt with successfully following discussions with the C&G HR team.

Prompt, Professional Support

All C&G staff have the right to be accompanied by an Individual Advice Representative from LTU for any grievance or disciplinary dispute. Our guarantee to members is that should they require advice or representation then LTU's individual Representation Team will work with you individually, visiting you at home if necessary. It goes without saying that our support is available whenever you need it.

It is important that members contact the Union for our assistance as soon as problems are hinted at and imperative when any informal measures are instigated. However, the protection of LTU is only available to members. Just as you would not expect legal advice from a lawyer without paying a premium, so you cannot benefit from LTU services unless you are a member. LTU does not advise non-members in any way and non-members cannot join after a problem has arisen and then expect to get representation.

For confidential advice and assistance members should contact the Union's 24 hour advice line on 01234 262868.

Letters To Frontrunner

In the latest edition of Frontrunner two letters are published regarding LTU's activities in the C&G. The first a letter from a C&G member of staff was unsigned and sought to criticise LTU whilst at the same time extolling the virtues of the C&G funded Staff Association. LTU responded saying that C&G staff should not be prevented from joining LTU and that we should be given equal access to staff rather than being forced to hand out our literature on the street.

Given the constraints on space the Frontrunner editorial team edited both letters heavily. We had hoped, in the spirit of openness, to be able to publish both letters, unedited so that C&G staff can make up their own mind. However, because the letter from the C&G member of staff was unsigned we have no way of contacting them to seek permission to reproduce their unedited letter in full. LTU's full response is set out below.

Dear Sir

On reading this letter I wonder if I am the only person who smells the faint whiff of a 'put up job' by C&G Senior Management to discredit the activities of LTU? The evidence seems compelling. The person, or could it be persons, who wrote this letter has denied that they are a representative of the HR funded Staff Association or that they are a Manager in the C&G but they have so far refused to allow their names to be published. Why? What have they got to hide?

At LTU we understand that C&G staff are rightly proud of their individual identity and the contribution they make to the success of the Lloyds TSB Group. But the same is true of all Business Units within the Group. The C&G does not operate in a vacuum and we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that one of its key success factors is mortgage sales distributed through the Lloyds TSB branch network. It is also worth pointing out that mortgages are a key recruitment vehicle in support of the Group's cross selling targets. LTU represents over 80% of Mortgage Arrangers, Regulated Financial Consultants and Non- Regulated sellers. The C&G and its staff, like Scottish Widows, play a pivotal role in delivering the retail bank's strategy and our view, we believe supported by the vast majority of C&G staff, is that they should not miss out on better terms and conditions of employment simply because they are employed by the C&G. We accept that the C&G has its own distinctive culture and identity but that is no excuse for treating its staff poorly. LTU has been concerned for a long time that C&G staff could find themselves on inferior salary arrangements than apply to staff in the rest of the Group. The same could be true in respect of the total value of their benefits package. It's not a question of being perfect, it's simply one of fairness.

The author refers to the internal Staff Association but we all know that it is merely an extension of the C&G's HR Department. The two Seconded Representatives working for the Staff Association may do an job admirable in the circumstances but I think they would acknowledge that their role is limited because of their lack of independence. Membership of the Staff Association is free because it is funded by the C&G. It also provides office space, printing of literature, car parking spaces, mobile telephones and all the other Staff Association's running costs. In fact prior to LTU getting involved in the C&G many staff were not even aware that they were in the Staff Association. It is this lack of profile and independence which has resulted in staff becoming increasingly disillusioned with the Staff Association and joining LTU in their hundreds.

If C&G Management are confident that staff are happy then why does it refuse us access to speak to them directly? Why is LTU not allowed to visit C&G Offices? What have they got to hide? We know from the results of our recent survey that they have concerns about issues such recognition for performance, pay generally and career opportunities. In order to speak to staff and to tell them about LTU we are forced to hand out literature to staff when they arrive at and leave from work. Despite the circumstances, the reception we have received from C&G staff has been excellent. Over the months we must have distributed thousands of newsletters and membership packs and in all that time only about 15 members of staff, the same 15 on every visit, have refused to accept them and they are treated courteously at all times by our staff. Our aim is not to denigrate or undervalue anyone but to simply provide staff with the facts. If they choose to ignore them then that's their right in a free and democratic society; but to deny them access to another point of view, which is what the C&G are doing, is undemocratic. This is not about membership recruitment, the issues are far more important. It's about staff being given the freedom to join an independent Union and that Union being able collectively to represent their views to management. Recently LTU was barred by Employee Relations from inviting a C&G IT Representative to its monthly meeting with Group IT Senior Management because it would upset the C&G.

Some in the C&G have said that our literature is misleading or factually incorrect but they have been unable, despite our requests, to provide us with any examples. No such evidence is provided by the author of the letter because none exists. It seems to be a case of not letting any facts get in the way of a good argument. In our last Newsletter we compared Mortgage Advisers in the C&G and Lloyds TSB and showed that in the C&G they were being paid up to £9k less than their Lloyds TSB colleagues despite the fact they are doing the same job. No amount of Christmas bonus or a bigger pay pot could cover that discrepancy. In IT, we have shown that many C&G IT staff now work alongside better paid Group IT staff on Group IT projects. That is not a situation that should be allowed to continue. Rather than adopting a policy of shooting the messenger and the message, C&G Senior Management should engage in a proper dialogue to resolve these issues.

LTU is not in the business of disrupting the way the C&G works but we are in the business of making sure that staff are treated fairly and that their views are being represented professionally. If that is seen as being "bitter" and "childish" then I plead guilty to those charges.

Yours sincerely

Mark V Brown
Assistant General Secretary

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