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CWU London & South East News

Addressing Unfair Work Allocation and Contractor Use in Openreach

The CWU has been pushing for fairer work allocation practices within Openreach, specifically challenging the widespread “hard pinning” of tasks to Service Delivery (SD) engineers. Recently, some managers have been directed to allow the system to allocate work automatically, but the CWU is urging members to keep up the pressure. If you prefer single-task allocations, make your voice heard. And if you’re facing pressure or bullying from managers regarding this stance, don’t hesitate to speak up.

Increase in Contractor Use Across Openreach

CWU investigations have uncovered a sharp rise in the amount of work being assigned to contractors across Openreach, notably in SD and Fibre to the Premises (FTTP). This practice, typically more common in areas like Chiefs and Build, is now encroaching into other departments, which has sparked concerns about job security for directly employed staff. Despite repeated requests, Openreach has not provided contractor numbers, leading the CWU to question what the company might be trying to conceal.



According to CWU estimates, upwards of 500 jobs in some Service Area Management (SAM) patches are assigned to contractors on certain days—a figure that could represent over 100 direct labour roles. While flexibility is essential for many employers, the CWU believes that a blue-chip company like Openreach should prioritise a capable, respected in-house workforce. The increased outsourcing affects the work mix for direct labour employees, with many feeling they’re unfairly measured against contractors who are often be handling less complex tasks. It’s particularly concerning when managers suggest that contractors could complete work more cheaply—a notion that doesn’t always hold up to scrutiny.

Support for Members Facing Workplace Stress

If you’re experiencing stress as a result of work allocation or managerial pressure, remember that resources are available. The CWU encourages members to speak to their GP if they’re experiencing “Work-Related Stress” and to ensure it’s correctly recorded in BT/Openreach systems. Confidential support is available through the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), which allows access to counselling without managers being informed. In some cases, work-related stress could qualify as a reportable incident, potentially leading to an investigation.

Standing Together Against Unfair Practices

The CWU is committed to ensuring fair work distribution and opposing the misuse of performance metrics. No employee should be subjected to undue pressure or harassment. Join the CWU to stand united against these unfair practices in the workplace.

Remember: No Targets – Stand with the CWU

