



**WELCOME** to the first edition of our BG Sector newsletter. With all the changes happening within British Gas we want to ensure that we are able to keep members' updated on what's going on across the business and what we've been involved with on your behalf. The last year has seen British Gas undergo a massive upheaval with the senior leadership team implementing a fundamental restructuring of the whole business organisation. This included changing the management structure to reduce numbers and cut costs as well as significant alterations to our existing terms and conditions. In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic continues to seriously impact our lives with offices' closed and staff restricted to home working for the foreseeable future. This has limited the ways we've been able to communicate and keep in touch with members' the way we were used to doing. With face to face meetings and open surgeries no longer possible we have to rely on remote technology with virtual meetings and Team's sessions becoming the norm. We hope you find this newsletter helpful and informative.

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## What we do

The Sector team represent all UNISON members covered by the office collective agreement within British Gas and consists of TU reps from various part of the business including Energy, Services, BGB and HSA. We regularly consult and negotiate with management on behalf of our members' for better pay & working conditions and a safer working environment.



## Quality Assurance

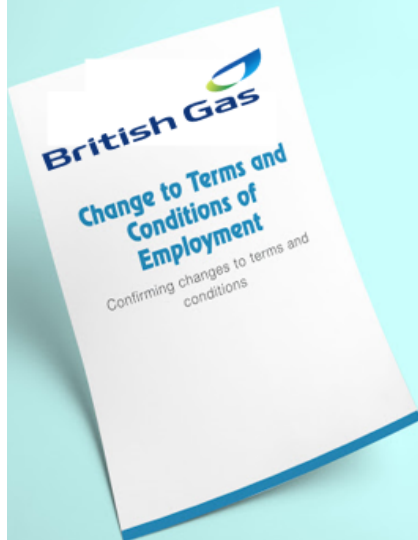
UNISON has been in discussion with the business regarding the Quality Assurance (QA) Team for the past few months.

The business had previously announced that as a result of the implementation of speech analytics, the role carried out by the QA team would no longer be required and they would be disbanded. LB employees within the team would be realigned into frontline customer faces roles. However, UNISON believed that management's original approach was not appropriate as it failed to take into account employees' skills, experience and aspirations. Following ongoing discussions with the union and feedback from staff, management have now agreed to revise their approach and enter formal consultations with the TU.

Collective consultations will commence from week commencing Monday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2020 to discuss the terms of the EOI and the selection process.

There will be no compulsory redundancies as part of this process and it will be conducted on an entirely voluntary basis. Members of the team wishing to apply for voluntary redundancy will be given a three week window to submit an Expression Of Interest (EOI) request form. Once submitted this will be binding on the individuals and cannot be withdrawn. Those wanting to remain will be offered the opportunity to retrain in a different role. As a result there will be no redeployee status given at this stage.

A share point site will be available to all impacted staff with information on the process and FAQ's.



With the dust now beginning to settle on the Terms and Conditions negotiations in the staff collective, it's an opportunity to reflect on the changes that have taken place and what this means for existing staff benefits once the new contracts are implemented on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.

**Annual Leave and bank holidays**

Level 8 staff who previously only received 23 annual days per year will see this increased to 25 days (pro-rated for part time employees). L8 staff on legacy contracts will see their holiday allocation reduced down over the next 2 years with everyone eventually moving to a maximum of 25 days per year plus 8 bank holidays. In addition, all staff will be able to purchase an additional 5 days holiday which will be paid for from their base pay.

The new terms stipulate that staff working in customer contact centres may now be required to work up to 4 out of the 8 Bank Holidays, depending on call volumes. They will be asked to submit their preferences which will be assessed on business requirement and customer demand forecasts.

In Edinburgh, the 2 public holidays previously known as floating days and included within your annual time off allocation will now become fixed dates on the calendar, and the New Year 2<sup>nd</sup> January and late spring May bank holidays will be reinstated.

**Transition arrangements**

The business is in the process of organising how the holiday transition and changes to sick pay and staff benefits will be arranged and we will ensure that staff are kept informed and supported throughout this changeover.

# Proposed changes to policies and procedures

Management are currently reviewing all the separate policies and procedures that exist within each part of the business. They intend to replace these with new policies that will cover the whole of Centrica. This includes the following processes: the Performance Improvement/Enhancement Procedure, the Disciplinary Policy & Procedure, and the Absence Management Procedure.

We are currently in discussion with them regarding these changes and have raised a number of issues we have with the timing of their proposals and concerns about the lack of time to sufficiently review and revise these procedures before they are implemented. This is a major change to the existing policies and comes at a difficult time following the recent changes to our T&C's and ongoing industrial action being taken by the field staff and engineers.

We are in the process of reviewing these documents and have highlighted a list of concerns that we've got with their current proposals. As a result, the implementation dates have been put back to give more time for our feedback to be properly considered. We want to ensure TU representation and the right of appeal is available at all stages to prevent the risk of employees being fast tracked through the process quicker than existing policies would allow.

We believe that if the business is looking to replace the existing procedures and have one policy that covers the whole of Centrica, then they should be adopting best practices not minimum statutory requirements into their new policies. We will keep you updated on how discussions progress.





## GOVERNMENT U-TURN OVER CUTTING



The UK government recently announced that it was looking to review workplace employment rights, now that they no longer needed to follow EU directives. Their intention was to 'deregulate the market' by scrapping work safety rules and legislation to save on administration costs.

This included workers protections and rules brought in under the EU's Working Time Directive- including the 48 hour working week limit, rules on paid rest breaks and the inclusion of overtime pay in holiday pay calculations which were now at risk.

TUPE, fixed term workers directives and the framework health and safety legislation have always been an issue for the Tory party and UK businesses. And there have been serious concerns that the government was planning to use the Covid-19 pandemic as a smokescreen for an 'economic recovery' plan that would dismantle key workers rights and health & safety requirements.

Following fierce criticism from the Trade Unions and opposition parties, the government has now backed down. They've announced that they don't want to water down workers' rights after all and the controversial review is no longer going ahead. However, as they've so far failed to bring in an employment bill which they promised would protect and enhance workers rights after Brexit, legislation like the Working Time Directive are still at risk of being scrapped.

UNISON wants to ensure that your rights are safe-guarded at work not at risk of being reduced by the UK government, and we will continue to campaign to ensure that workers' employment rights are protected.

Please join us for our virtual Annual General Meeting. Due to COVID-19 we're doing things differently this year and will be holding the AGM over a number of dates to allow members to drop into any one of the available session's. Joining details will be sent out via email closer to the time.

# UNISON AGM 2021

**Your Branch is only as strong as its members' participation**

## Dates for this year's Virtual AGM's

North East Branch (Leeds): 22 & 24 February 2021

Gas Branch Scotland (Edinburgh/Uddingston): 3, 4 & 5 March 2021

North West Branch (Manchester): 5 March 2021

Cymru/Wales & the South Branch (Cardiff/Chandlers Ford): 15 & 17 March 2021

Midlands Branch (Leicester): 16, 17 & 18 March 2021



UNISON is currently in consultation with the business to discuss the new Super Solver role.

We have been meeting with management to define what the Super solver role should include, the skills and requirements needed for this position and how this role will help support both our customers and staff.

This will take into account the current (Virtual /WFH) operation and any future office based working environment.

As part of the working group, UNISON has requested the Super Solver role should replace the advocate and expert roles which were introduced as part of the energy expert process back in 2008 and, customer contact agents currently in these positions should be in scope to apply for this new role. Details will be available once the application process has been established

We hope that the creation of this new role will allow for career progression, cater for staff aspirations and provide greater training and development opportunities. Consultations are progressing well and if all goes to plan then the business intends to launch this in Q2 2021.

## Meet The Sector Team

**Name: Angela Greenhalgh:**

Position: National Rep/Sector Chair  
Branch Role: Branch Secretary  
Location: Manchester

**Name: Lindsay McNaught:**

Position: National Rep/Vice Chair  
Branch Role: Branch Secretary  
Location: Uddingston

**Name: Stephanie Stoker**

Position: National Rep  
Branch Role: Branch Secretary  
Location: Leeds

**Name: Vicki Blackburn**

Position: Sector Rep  
Branch Role: Branch Chair  
Location: Stockport

**Name: John Fallon**

Position: Sector Rep  
Branch Role: Branch Chair  
Location: Uddingston

**Name: Gavin Flowers**

Position: Sector Rep  
Branch Role: Branch Chair  
Location: Leeds

**Name: Alisdair Macdonald**

Position: HSA National Rep/Sector Rep  
Location: Manchester

**Name: Neil Tomany:**

Position: National Rep  
Branch Role: Education  
Location: Edinburgh

**Name: Liana Masella**

Position: Sector Rep  
Branch Role: Vice Secretary/Welfare  
Location: Leeds

**Name: Karl Whitehead**

Position: National Rep  
Branch Role: Branch Secretary  
Location: Cardiff

**Name: Kris Reid**

Position: Sector Rep  
Branch Role: Vice Secretary  
Location: Edinburgh

**Name: Neville Fanibanda**

Position: National Rep  
Branch Role: Branch Secretary  
Location: Leicester

**Name: Julia Clarke**

Position: Sector Rep  
Branch Role: Branch Treasurer  
Location: Cardiff



**Name: Devan Anand**

Position: Sector Rep  
Location: Leicester



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