



CONNECT



CHRISTMAS 2020 VOL: 22 NO. 2

Merry Christmas



The CWU would like to wish
all our Members
a very Happy and Safe Christmas





CONNECT

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Editorial

Dear Colleague,

It is an honour and a pleasure on behalf of all the Staff, Officials, and the National Executive Council of the CWU, to wish all our members a Happy Christmas and hopefully, a Prosperous and Healthy New Year.

As you are all aware our Conference was to be held in May in Athlone, this had to be postponed due to Covid 19. A lot of uncertainty around government restrictions and guidelines led the NEC to make the decision to hold a conference in October either physical or virtual. On the 21st and 22nd October, we managed to hold our 10th Biennial Conference remotely with nearly three hundred delegates tuning in. The discipline shown to the organisation in order to ensure a successful Conference, was critical and while we hope, we never have to repeat the exercise, there have been many lessons learned that will be of real benefit to the Union and its members into the future. While we still strongly believe in physical conferences and meetings, it was essential to be able to communicate with our members under such strange circumstances.

At this stage last year, there was no one that could have foretold the events of 2020. The world has experienced a year unlike any other in the past, and as we finish this year, millions of people worldwide will have died from the COVID-19 virus and countless millions more will have contracted the virus and in many cases, will continue to suffer the after effects. People have seen their whole lives turned upside down as governments struggled to deal with the fallout from the virus. What once was considered normal, is now an event and bereaved families have seen loved ones die without any physical contact or the opportunity to say good-bye. Family occasions have been cancelled and people have been starved of human contact. Of course, some countries have done better than others. We see daily the battles between healthcare professionals, who wish to eradicate the virus, and politicians and leaders of industry, who are more concerned about the economic impact. It is remarkable that the countries who have been toughest on the virus have had the most successful economic outcome and the short-termism by many governments has indeed worked against their economic aspirations.

Here at home, our government have been reasonably successful when compared to others in Europe, but it has also fallen victim to the health versus economics argument. Indeed, it has been sickening at times to watch the internal politicking between the three government coalition partners, as they turn a national emergency into an opportunity to score points from each other. We have also seen our government steer clear from statutory sick pay, thus forcing the poorest of our workers to go to work when ill and further spread this terrible virus. The pandemic has also shown ordinary people how there is one rule for them and another rule for the wealthy elite, which has been aptly demonstrated through incidences such as 'golf-gate', but is daily demonstrated in the treatment of workers (many of them migrant) in meat and poultry processing plants.

Throughout all these trials and tribulations, most of our members have continued to work and provide much needed services to our fellow countrymen. Going to work daily during the pandemic adds additional stress on to people's already stressful lives. Your Union has done everything, and continues to do everything, to ensure that while you are in work, you are in work in the safest possible way and that the necessary PPE is made available to you. This is a daily task which your Union has

attempted to stay on top of since day one and to-date, we have been fortunate with very small numbers of our members contracting the virus. As General Secretary of the CWU, I am extremely proud of the work done by our members during this crisis and indeed, by the extra efforts made by members to assist in their communities.



*Steve Fitzpatrick,
General Secretary, CWU*

As we near the end of this dreadful year, there seems to be good news on the horizon in relation to the development of vaccines to tackle the virus. It is my sincere hope that these vaccines will put an end to this pandemic and that people can bring some normality back into their lives. I would therefore like us to look forward to the New Year with hope and in the expectation that as business gets back to normal, we can meet up together face-to-face as comrades, and to resume our struggles to better improve the pay, conditions and lives of our members and the communities.

Willie Mooney - Incoming President of CWU



- Joined the Post Office in 1982 as a Junior Postman and is a Clerk based in the GPO Dublin.
- Has served on the Board of An Post since 2012
- Currently Branch Chairman of the Dublin Postal Clerks Branch and previously served as Branch Secretary and Committee member. Former

member of the Dublin Postal Amalgamated Branch Committee.

- Is Vice President of the Communications Workers' Union, member of the National Executive Council and member of the Finance, General Purposes and Education/Training Sub Committees.
- He has campaigned tirelessly for postal workers and his friendly, down-to-earth, and approachable nature has brought many new members to the CWU and he helped to support and resolve issues for members over the years.
- Willie is Secretary of the National Worker Directors Group, which is a group of workers on Boards in Public and Semi State Companies, representing and furthering the views and interests of workers in the future strategies of the Companies represented.



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An Post Worker Director Election – 2020 CWU Candidates sweep the boards



*Poll topper, Martina O'Connell
(See the rest of the team overleaf)*

Wholehearted congratulations to the five CWU candidates on their appointment to the Board of An Post following the recent Worker Director Election. The successful candidates are Martina O'Connell, Frank Burke, Willie Mooney, Anthony McCrave and Gerry

Sexton. No doubt they will bring their own individual expertise and knowledge to assist the Board in the major challenges ahead. Collectively, operating as a team they will also be a strong force ensuring staff interests and concerns are well represented.

In such uncertainty and worry because of COVID -19, our members participated in large numbers in the election process, supporting so decisively the election strategy. Such commitment and support delivered the five seats and ensures CWU has a strong presence at the Board of An Post, which the Union is sincerely appreciate of. Hats off too for head office admin staff for their trojan behind the scenes work.

Commiserations to the unsuccessful candidates John Condon, AHCPS and Leonard, Shields Forsa. We also express our thanks to the Company Secretary's office for the manner in which the ballot was conducted. The outcome of the An Post Worker Direction Election 2020 is shown below.

AN POST EMPLOYEE DIRECTORS ELECTION 16 October 2020		TOTAL ELECTORATE		CANDIDATE(S) ELECTED MARTINA O'CONNELL FRANK BURKE WILLIAM MOONEY ANTHONY Mc CRAVE GERRY SEXTON
			8,391	
		INVALID BALLOT PAPERS	22	
		VALID POLL	4,289	
		NUMBER OF SEATS	5	
		QUOTA	715	
Names of Candidates (7 No.) (*Denotes outgoing member)	Gender	FIRST COUNT	SECOND COUNT	THIRD COUNT
		Number of Votes	Transfer of O'Connell, M's Surplus & Result	Transfer of Burke, F's Surplus & Result
BURKE, FRANK	M	809	809	-94 715
Condon, Gerry	M	288	+40 328	+25 353
McCRAVE, ANTHONY	M	652	+90 742	742
MOONEY, WILLIAM	M	724	724	724
O'CONNELL, MARTINA	F	934	-219 715	715
SEXTON, GERRY	M	636	+54 690	+57 747
Shiels, Leonard	M	246	+35 281	+12 293
Non-transferable papers not effective		-	-	-
TOTAL		4,289	4,289	4,289



Pictured l to r: Gerry Sexton, Frank Burke, Martina O'Connell, Willie Mooney and Anthony Mc Crave



**No handbrake applied.
Vehicle travelled for almost 1KM before ending up in river**



Another Rollaway Van ends up crashing into a tree



November 3, 2020

Colleagues,

The number of cases of vehicle rollaways (i.e. failure to correctly apply the vehicle handbrake), continues to be a grave concern for the Company and the Union.

It is expected that the number of cases in 2020 will exceed those experienced in 2019. Given this, we have agreed to take the unprecedented step of issuing a joint communication in relation to this issue.

The purpose of this communication is to clearly set out that we share the same concern and the same objective - to eliminate vehicle rollaways in An Post and to protect lives.

As we continue to realign our DSUs and increase our truck network capacity, we have more employees driving for work than ever before. We have agreed a number of initiatives over recent years to support and encourage good driver practice. We are also agreed to retrofit vehicles with brake alarms to indicate when the handbrake has not been properly applied. We will continue to jointly review what additional supports that we can put in place to improve driver and vehicle safety.

However, we cannot stress enough how important this issue is. A number of the rollaways involving An Post vehicles have been extremely serious and we have been very lucky so far that no loss of life was involved. We have had rollaways that have caused damage to property and other vehicles but most concerning is those rollaways that have jeopardised lives, including those of our own drivers attempting to stop the vehicle. We have had a rollaway close to a school entrance.

There have been multiple efforts to highlight this issue in recent years yet we are not seeing any sustained reduction in the number of incidents. We need your support to make a difference and we are asking for your commitment to eliminating vehicle rollaways from our workplaces so that no lives are lost because of a situation that is completely avoidable.

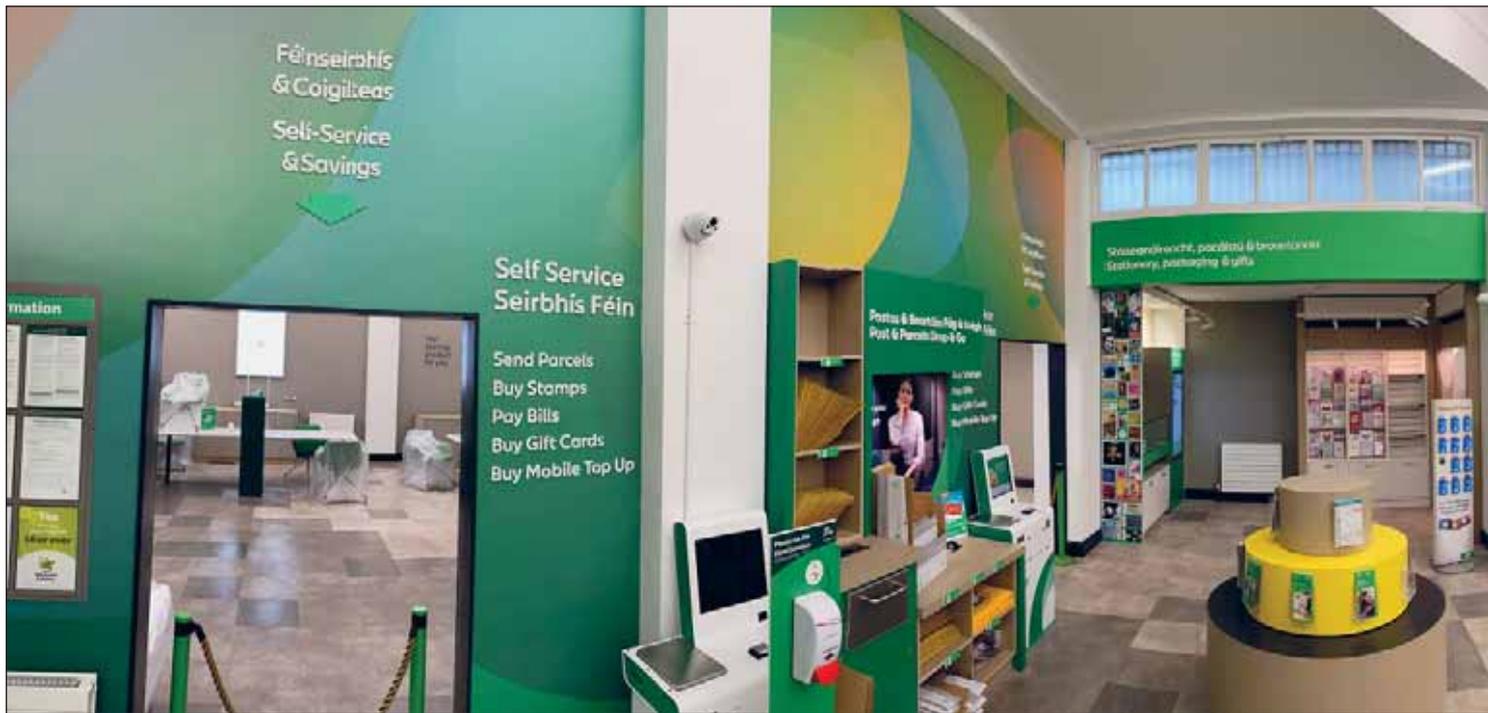
Please remember the following:

1. **ALWAYS APPLY THE HANDBRAKE FIRMLY** - do not press the button when applying the handbrake.
2. **ALWAYS TURN THE WHEELS** - if a kerb is present turn away from it when facing uphill, and towards it if downhill. If there is no kerb, turn towards the point of least danger (usually the side of the road).

Please refer to **Safety Bulletin- CMV Roll Aways** for further information and most importantly, double check that your handbrake is engaged before you leave the vehicle!

Craig Skelton
Operations Director M&P

Seán McDonagh
Deputy General Sec. CWU



Retail Branch Offices

Restoration of weekly social welfare payments at Post Offices

Fortnightly payments for all social welfare recipients was introduced at Post Offices nationwide at the beginning of the current pandemic in an effort to reduce the spread of COVID 19. The introduction of hand sanitising facilities, the implementation of social distancing measures and the wearing of face masks, where appropriate, all contributed significantly in controlling the spread of this virus. However, the introduction of fortnightly payments had unintended consequences as footfall in Post Offices slumped and customers encountered household budgeting issues and security concerns collecting two or more weeks payments at one time.

The General Secretary made representations to the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and a number of Branches across the country made representations directly to their local Government Minister seeking the restoration of weekly social welfare payments at Post Offices. This culminated in a partial restoration of weekly social welfare payments at Post Offices on the 10th August with a full restoration on 2nd November.

The efforts of local Branches in this exercise is appreciated.

Retail Concept Offices

The Company's plans to provide state of the art retail facilities for customers and staff alike at a limited number of locations nationwide continued throughout 2020. At the time of going to print, we can report that Cork, Limerick, Newbridge & Thurles are now completed, albeit some snagging issues may remain. Andrew Street Post Office in Dublin completed phase one, opening its doors to customers on 28th September, the second phase of works completed recently and the third phase is currently underway.

Retail Training

A new training programme for Branch Managers and staff called Customer Experience Excellence Programme is currently underway, having started week commencing 9th November, with plans to roll-out to the following nineteen office before the end of this year; Andrew Street, Cork GPO, Limerick, Dublin GPO, Tullamore, Carlow, Clonmel, Kilkenny, Blanchardstown Centre, Drogheda, Dundalk, Cavan, Tralee, Thurles, Dun Laoghaire, Mullingar, Naas, Letterkenny & New Ross and the remaining offices to be completed in early 2021. The objective of this training programme is to build on previous initiatives such as Customer Plus and Engage and to focus on developing and strengthening the relationship between staff and customers. The format will be an initial online session of 90 minutes duration, typically involving a group of Managers or staff around the country. Potentially, two Managers or staff in a Branch Office could be trained up in a day ie (over a morning and evening session). Course content



and approach to training may evolve in the light of experience and will in any event be ongoing in nature as the programme and the participants develop.

Work Measurement

Work measurement proposals under the initial phase were progressed in recent months for the following offices; Andrew Street Dublin, Blanchardstown, Clonakilty, GPO Dublin, Mallow, Tallaght, Tipperary and Waterford. The following offices were also advanced under the second phase; Athlone, Cork, Drogheda, Dundalk, Dun Laoghaire, Galway, Kilkenny,

Letterkenny, Limerick, Naas, Phibsboro, Rathmines, Sligo & Tralee.

These revisions are based on a desktop analysis of transaction volumes across three months; November 2019 and January & February 2020. The process requires local engagement and sense checking by local management, staff and CWU Branch reps, generally over a week. Staff input is both necessary and welcome. The revised baseline will then be applied, followed by a two-week review period. Any staff impact issues will be dealt with in tandem, through the usual agreed procedures.



Main photo: Andrew Street Retail Concept Office.

Photo above: Cork Retail Concept Office.

Pictured right: Limerick Retail Concept Office.



With a sharp rise in online shopping due to lockdown, what's life like for our postmen these days?

We join a local postman on his route as he prepares for his busiest Christmas yet

© Pat Fitzpatrick – *The Irish Examiner* online



Postman James Mc Sweeney on his rounds in Green Lawn, Cork City with writer Pat Fitzpatrick

People keep a close eye on James McSweeney's legs.

I use them as a weather forecast on the school run every morning, when we run into him on his postal route around Ballyphehane. You can forget about met.ie — as long as James has his legs out in a pair of An Post cargo shorts, we're going to be alright. If James is wearing his long pants, it's going to be cold, with the possibility of rain.

His legs are out when I join him on his route, on one of those dank, foggy mornings in late October that could go either way. "The fog will lift, don't worry about it," he tells me as he delivers to the row of houses at the top of Tory Top Rd.

"I can smell the rain when it's coming. I wear the shorts as long as it's in the double digits — once it goes below 10 degrees, I go for the long pants."

The postman isn't just another delivery man who rocks up in a van. James is part of people's morning, five days a week, signalling the weather with his legs, bringing a familiar smile and burst of chat to anyone who opens the door.

A mother gives a quick "Hi" as she signs for a package with three kids hanging off her; an older woman in her dressing gown opens the window upstairs and tells him

she's still waiting for a package; there are waves in the window at elderly people in lockdown, their hands wrapped around the first cup of tea of the day.

James McSweeney reminds me of *Sesame Street*. All of us who grew up watching *Sesame Street* in the 70s have the song 'Who Are the People in Your Neighbourhood?' etched into our brains. I liked it because it had a simple tune and the puppets looked funny.

Both of course, *Sesame Street* was always trying to turn us into better citizens as well, which is probably why Donald Trump hates it. So looking back at it now, 'Who Are The People In Your Neighbourhood?' was telling us that communities don't just happen — they are made by the people who live in them.

A lot has changed since the 1970s, but a postman or postwoman still knits your neighbourhood together, particularly now that the Covid winter is here and loads of us are spending too much time cooped up at home.

James McSweeney is one of those people who brings good times around with him. A local boy from Ballyphehane, he knows everyone and everything. (Forget about estate agents and the property price register, James is your only man if you need to find out how much a house sold for in the area. He even told me about a house that would be on the market soon, that's how good he is.)

Postal Update



Postman James McSweeney on his rounds with writer Pat Fitzpatrick: he covers around 14.5km on an average day

We follow his route down towards the Kinsale Rd, as he exchanges a short word on the weather with a couple of regulars. Does he have these chats every day?

“You’d have a lot of elderly people, they’d come out and have a kind word for you, a bit of banter, a bit of small talk, they mightn’t see someone for the rest of the day”, he says, sorting out the mail for the next house as he walks. “On occasion, it can be that they’re waiting for me, yeah, especially the people who live on their own. I suppose the postman is a friendly face, isn’t it?”

Does he ever worry about older people on the route? “As the years tick on, you build up a rapport with people, you get to know them on a personal level,” he says. “If you didn’t see someone for a while, who you’d normally see, say, running an errand, I might say it to another neighbour.

“There was a lady in this park, I didn’t see her active for a while, I brought it to the attention of another neighbour, they put my mind at rest. You’d keep an eye on things.

“I’d know everyone personally. I’d run into them at some stage, I’d know they’d be friendly with the neighbour or someone across the road where I can leave the package, that’s all very well understood. You wouldn’t be doing it if you were a new fella on a run.”

He’s a good looking guy. I’m dying to ask him if ever got a come-on from a woman on his route, but I chicken out because I don’t know him well enough, so I ask if he gets many people coming to the door in a state of undress. The answer is more than once, judging by the look on his face.

Did you ever come across a party, I ask. “Not for the longest time, no?”

Would you be inclined to go in?

“I never got the invite! I used to deliver up the northside, there was a lot of younger people living up there, but this is a quieter area.”

I asked him if he ever reckoned he might have interrupted something when he called to a house. “Jesus, I hope not,” he says, and I stop asking him schoolboy questions about randy postmen.

What about dogs? “I have no issue on this delivery. Other postmen — it’s a nightmare. People leave their dogs out. I remember having a problem with cats — you put your letter through the letterbox, the cats are inside going for your fingertips.”

It’s alright for me, rocking up at 8.45am after dropping the kids to school, to walk around with James for a while. He’s been on the go for hours by then.

“I watch the Nine O’Clock News at night and then I call it a day — I’d normally set my alarm for half-four the following morning. Frustratingly enough, I’d wake about six then at the weekends.”

He works the route, aiming to pick up his kids from school at 2.30pm. Does he get tired during the day? “I’d collect the kids, go home, make a bit of lunch, do the homework, I’d get a bit of a lull period alright then, and perk up again at tea time.”



Postman James Mc Sweeney takes Pat Fitzpatrick along on his rounds — he normally sets his alarm for 4.30am

For all the snippets of chat along the route, a lot of his working day is spent alone. Does he mind that?

“I enjoy a bit of banter more than others. There’s a great craic inside before we go out on our routes. There’s some mornings we’d be sorting our mail at our individual benches, but we can talk to each other, and the banter is so good, you don’t want to tie up your bag and go out, on your own. A lot of fellas listen to podcasts, radio while they’re out, but I find them a bit of a hindrance. I enjoy the chat, if you have headphones, you’re cutting people out.”

Still, the exercise is good. “So far today I’ve done 9.83km, on average a day I’d do 14.5km”, he tells me. “If I do overtime, take out a van and do another route, you’re touching on 20km or 22km a day. But then when it comes to Saturday and Sunday, I don’t do anything in terms of exercise.” Probably no need, in fairness.

I ask him how the job has changed with the advent of online shopping. “It has gone very busy with the shopping online thing, that’s very noticeable inside. I’d do about 50% packages now.

According to Anna McHugh of An Post, lockdown has had a seismic effect on their business.

“An Post has been handling Christmas levels of

Postal Update

parcels since April!", she tells me, via email.

"That's more than one million parcels a week going through our mail system. And now we have what we call the Christmas Peak, growing every day. We are seeing unprecedented levels of parcels, mostly related to online shopping, but also more parcels being sent between friends and families at home and abroad."

This isn't a good year to go for some last-minute present-posting, according to Anna.

"We are encouraging people to organise their Christmas gifting and posting earlier this year to allow for the impact of Covid restrictions such as reduced air freight capacity, on top of the usual weather conditions worldwide. There's no need for panic, just that customers get their parcels ready for posting a little earlier this year, most particularly those being posted to international addresses. Cards and packages from home will be even

initiative for this lockdown, according to Anna McHugh. "With the shorter, darker days, we will be doing all we can to keep people connected within local communities. We are also encouraging local schools to get involved in writing to nursing homes in their locality."

I'm nearly at the end of my walkabout with James. We chat about Liverpool, Manchester United, our kids, how it's not worth boozing at the weekend any more, the hangovers aren't worth it. He's easy company, the people on his route are lucky to have him.

A dog barks, but he's not worried. "That's only a bark. You'd know from experience. This area is an older generation, it's quiet and settled. They would be more open to chat, they're very warm kind of people to talk to, and sociable." We call to a regular, Tom.

"That big smile that he gives you, it would do you good", says Tom, who comes out with a beaming smile

“ This is my 25th year inside, my eighth or ninth Christmas on this run. Letter-writing has dropped — you get people writing their Christmas cards and well-wishers, but it has dropped. ”

more important this year, with travel restricted. Also, it's best to allow for more time for shopping from Irish and international e-tailers to be delivered."

James and I are finished with Tory Top Road now, and have crossed to the gaggle of estates on the far side of the Kinsale Road. I read once that someone sent a letter addressed, 'Rob Heffernan & Family, Gold Medal Winner, Cork', and it made it to the walking star's home on Leaside. I ask James if they get much of that.

"You would, especially at Christmas time, when people don't write to each other on a regular basis, you might get a letter addressed to David Such and Such, Ballyphehane. Very vaguely addressed. I might have an idea of it, if not then, it might do the rounds, or I'd go up to the other fella who does Ballyphehane. You'd go the extra mile."

Two identical ginger kittens are padding along with us as James breaks off and walks around a house to drop a package in the back door — he knows the guys who live there and they tend to work nights, so he doesn't want to wake them. Again, it's all very Sesame Street, in a good way.

It made more work for him, but James got a kick out of the An Post initiative during the last lockdown, where they issued free postcards to encourage people to stay in touch. "I'm telling you Pat, it would warm the heart to see what people were writing. You couldn't help but read it, especially when there were grandchildren missing their grandparents. It was fantastic."

An Post is lining up another community-based

of his own, that reminds me of my own dad. (Honestly, it would do you good to walk around at 10am and see all the smiles and goodwill when we're all supposed to be miserable under the cosh of Covid-19.)

I ask would he offer James a cup of tea. "Oh God no", replies Tom with a laugh. "He'd stay too long then." Cork people like to give with one hand and take with the other.

"I'd be waiting for a letter, and I'd see James over there talking to someone and I'd be: 'Would he ever hurry up!'," Tom adds, that smile still in place.

"That's the northsider coming out in me!" says James. "Full of guff. But it's nice to be nice."



Postman James Mc Sweeney and Pat Fitzpatrick chat to homeowner, Tom Henry

Authority for Deduction from Pay

To be signed by subscribers to Medisan.

I, the undersigned, hereby express my willingness, and undertake to have the sum of: (please tick appropriate box)

- Weekly paid
- Fortnightly paid
- Monthly paid
- Postmasters monthly

Other (Please Specify):

deducted from my wages/salary every week / fortnight / month, by (state name of company) to be paid over to the Honorary Treasurer of Medisan.

Full name in BLOCK letters:

.....

Private Address:

.....

.....

Job Title:

Office of Employment:

Staff/Payroll Number:

Date:

Signed:

Employee of (State Company):

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

To: (Employer)

The above has now been registered as a member of the Fund. Please arrange for the collection of his/her contributions.

Date:

Signed:

Please return completed application form to:

Ray Lawlor
Communications Workers' Union,
William Norton House,
575 North Circular Road, Dublin 1, D01 TR53
Tel: 085 174 4140

An Post Staff reminder – Don't forget your Medisan

The CWU and An Post have initiated a membership drive within the company to increase membership to the Medisan Fund. This Fund provides much needed financial assistance to employees of An Post and eir who suffer from a range of serious illnesses, including but not limited to cancer, cardiac diseases, conditions of the central nervous system, and addiction-related illnesses.

This Fund offers a wide range of benefits, such as, assistance with hospital expenses, grants towards consultation and medication, health insurance provider shortfalls, and assistance for members on reduced pay, for a small nominal contribution of only €1.50 per week. These benefits exceed our own Social Benefit Sickness Scheme, which is strictly limited to topping up wages for members on reduced pay, with no grants towards medical bills covered.

Many CWU members have benefitted from the Fund which has provided assistance during the uncertain and worrying times of illness which cannot be measured purely in terms of money. The sentiment expressed in the testimonials of the beneficiaries, which we have highlighted previously over the years in Connect, is the peace of mind that members have experienced without the added stress of financial worries during their illness.

The Union strongly recommends that all members give serious consideration to the merits of joining the Medisan Fund. As this year has starkly proven, the future and our health are both uncertain and fragile, so we should take the necessary steps to invest in both now. The Medisan Fund is also open to all our members in eir to join.

Don't forget your medisan, protect your livelihood and join today.

Information and membership applications are available from your Branch Secretary.

Pay - An Post

At the time of going to print discussions in respect of a pay increase for An Post staff were continuing. Although the previous agreement expired at the end of April 2020, for the main body of staff, the Group of Unions had agreed to pause the discussions until September at which time a more fuller assessment of the impact of Covid-19 could be made. It is envisaged discussions will be finalised one way or another before Xmas. Progress has however been made in a number of areas on a number of separate claims, the details of which are attached to this article.

Post Office Clerk/Postal Sorter - 2.5% Consolidation of Change Allowance

Consolidation of 2.5% Change Allowance Post Office Clerk/Postal Sorters

Agreement concluded to consolidating 2.5% of the Change Allowance into basic pay to serving Post Office Clerks and Postal Sorters. This allowance will be reduced to 10% with effect from 1st January 2020. 83.67% of this allowance is pensionable. Both pay scales will have a new, additional increment at the maximum point, with effect from 1st January 2020. The new max of the scale for POCs will rise to €771 and to €655 for Postal Sorters

Postal Sorter pay scale, productivity allowance and retained allowance (RWA) Dublin Mails Centre

As for all other Postal Sorters, this pay scale will have a new, additional increment at the maximum point, with effect from 1st January 2020. The Productivity Allowance payment to serving Postal Sorters in the DMC will be standardised at 10% with effect from 1st January 2020. 83.67% of this allowance will be pensionable. The Retained Allowance (RWA) will also be standardised for all Postal Sorters in receipt of this, on a personal to holder basis.

Clerk Incremental Pay Scale

Agreement has been concluded to remove the first point of the Clerk incremental pay scale. The revised starting pay becomes €483.74, effective from the 28th May 2020. This has benefitted members on the first point and for new entrants.

Mail Room Assistants

Agreement has also been concluded to increase the pay of the Mails Room Assistant to €554.47 at the max of the scale, effective from October 2020. In addition to this significant increase in pay, it is agreed they will have the opportunity to secure a Postal Operative position, when vacancies arise.

Front Line Supervisor (FLS) grade

The Monitoring Group issued the following Determination to finalise the FLS claim

1. FLS positions should be re-graded as CS1 in line with the Managers Salary review agreement
2. The following adjustments should be applied to existing employees serving in the FLS grade at the date of this Determination:
 - (i) They should be re-graded to the CS1 grade in line with the Company presentation given to the Unions in July 2020 with the following amendments:
 - a. They should each move to the CS1 pay range, at a percentage of the median equivalent to their existing position vis-à-vis the FLS median, plus two percentage points. For example, a currently serving FLS who is paid at 100% of the median, will move to a revised salary based on 102% of the CS1 median:
 - b. For these individuals only, any future performance-based salary increases will be calculated on the basis of the CS1 median plus two percentage points, on a personal to holder basis.
 - (ii) The above terms will be applied retrospectively from 1st January 2019, and the Company should calculate and pay arrears to those affected.
 - (iii) This Determination is unique to the circumstances related to this group of workers and may not be used as a precedent.

The company are making immediate arrangements to pay the retrospective payments to the people concerned.

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**Wishing all
CWU Members
and all of their
families a Happy
Christmas and a
Safe and Healthy
New Year in 2021.**



TOP 10 TIPS FOR WINTER DRIVING

Taking a number of simple precautions can ensure safety on Irish roads during winter. Don't get caught out if severe weather hits, make the necessary checks on your vehicle now.

There are a number of simple precautions the RSA advises for driving over the winter months:

1. **Check your tyres...** they are your only contact with the road. Tyres should be at least the minimum legal thread depth of 1.6mm but need to be changed before they get this worn. Tyres need to be to the correct tyre pressure to give the motorist the best chance in extreme conditions.
2. **Use your lights.** As we come into the winter months, motorists are advised to use dipped head lights during the day so you are easily seen. Headlights and taillights should be in working order.
3. **Understand your brakes.** Check your car manual and find out if your vehicle has safety assist technology such as Electronic Stability Control (ESC) or Anti-Lock Braking System (ABS). Learn how these technologies can assist your driving in harsh weather conditions.
4. **Safe Distance.** It takes longer to stop a car during the winter weather so slow down and allow extra distance between you and the car in front.
5. **Make sure you can clearly see.** All too often motorists do not de-fog or de-ice windows and mirrors which can compromise visibility. This winter ensure windows and mirrors are clear, and carry a de-icer and screen scraper. Do not use boiling water as this can crack the windscreen.
6. **Beware of "Black Ice".** Black Ice is one of winter's biggest hazards as it is difficult to see. Watch out for sheltered/ shaded areas on roads, under trees and near high walls.
7. **Be prepared.** During these winter months it is advised that motorists carry a number of essentials in the boot of their car.
 - 1) High visibility vest
 - 2) Spare fuel
 - 3) Appropriate footwear in case you need to leave your vehicle e.g. boots
 - 4) A hazard warning triangle
 - 5) Spare wheel (Check that your spare wheel is in good condition and is fully inflated. Some cars may have an inflation repair kit instead of a spare wheel. Make sure that you know how to use it.)
 - 6) Tow Rope
 - 7) A shovel
 - 8) De-icing equipment (for glass and door locks)
 - 9) Spare bulbs
 - 10) First aid kit
 - 11) A fire extinguisher
 - 12) A working torch
 - 13) A car blanket, additional clothing & some food and water
8. **In the event of a breakdown.** Drivers need to ensure their vehicle is well in off the road so as not to obstruct other vehicles. The driver should also put on their hazard warning lights. If the vehicle breaks down on the motorway pull in as far as you can, alerting traffic behind you with hazard lights. The driver should leave their vehicle, get behind the barrier (on the embankment) and call the Gardaí, on their mobile phone or roadside telephone.
9. **Keep up to date.** Listen to local weather and traffic reports. Pay heed to the weather warnings alerting drivers of unsafe and dangerous driving conditions.
10. **Check out the RSA's publication** 'Severe Weather Advice for Road Users' for more detailed advice on what to do if severe weather strikes!

eir chief apologises at Oireachtas committee hearing for failings in customer care

Members challenge CEO's claim that Sligo has 'no history' of contact centres'
Lennon rules out compensating thousands of customers.

by Conor Pope © Irish Times Online



Eir's chief executive Carolan Lennon repeatedly apologised for the company's customer care issues.

Photograph: Dara Mac Dónaill/The Irish Times

THE customer care offered by eir was condemned as “unacceptable” at an Oireachtas hearing on Wednesday as the company was accused of “penny pinching” when employing frontline staff and leaving sometimes vulnerable customers “out in the cold”.

eir's chief executive Carolan Lennon appeared before the Joint Committee on Transport and Communications Networks and over the course of two hours of what were described as “robust exchanges” she repeatedly apologised for the company's customer care issues.

She stressed staff were “doing their absolute best” and said failings were “my fault not theirs” adding that she had not come before the committee to offer any excuses.

However, she then outlined a list of reasons for the problems the company has had over the past year, including its large size relative to other players in the industry, the pandemic, the number of staff working from home, staff turnover, retail outlets forced to close during the first lockdown and even problems the company had when opening a call centre in Sligo last year.

Ms Lennon promised that the level of care would improve within weeks and said she hoped waiting times for making telephone contact with eir's staff would fall to under five minutes by the end of the year.

Vulnerable customers

However, she rebuffed repeated suggestions she should consider taking measures to compensate thousands of sometimes vulnerable customers who have been let down by eir.

When questioned about how much the company pays customer care staff, she said they earned between €21,000 and €23,000 “plus bonuses”; or just over minimum wage. She stressed they were “good permanent jobs” and denied the pay levels were responsible for 80 staff leaving its call-centre operations in recent months, saying instead challenges presented by working from home were more likely to blame.

“You are penny-pinching on the back end when it

comes to customer care,” said Fianna Fáil senator Timmy Dooley, adding “low-balling on the pay side” meant eir would inevitably get “people who are less skilled and less committed to your company”.

Ms Lennon said they would “have to disagree. I don't believe that is the issue.”

She said eir had chosen Sligo as a base for a customer care centre and that had posed challenges because “there is no history of contact centres there”.

Disputed

That point was repeatedly disputed by committee members who listed several large customer care centres either currently operating or which had recently operated out of the area.

Ms Lennon said it was working to reduce not only the wait times but to fix issues faster when contacts were made. If we do what we say we are going to do, there should be no reason [for customers] to ring back.”

Sinn Féin's Darren O'Rourke said the way the company had been handling customers was “inexcusable” and added eir had “blatantly failed them”.

Suggestions that a lack of suitably skilled staff in Sligo was in any way responsible for eir's poor levels of customer care were rejected later on Wednesday by the chief executive of the Sligo Chamber of Commerce, Aidan Doyle.

He said that the chamber and various local organisations had offered on several occasions to help the company to train staff to work in its centre, and he said he was reiterating that offer now.

He accepted Ms Lennon had clarified that the company remained committed to Sligo and said that when she had referred to the area she had meant to say that she and senior eir management had underestimated the challenges in setting up a customer care centre from scratch and did not intend to suggest that would-be employees in the Sligo area lacked the skills to work in its centre.

eir Chief clarifies points made about eir's Sligo care operations.

eir's CEO, Carolan Lennon recently appeared before the Joint Committee on Transport and Communications Networks. During the questions and answer session she repeatedly pointed out that staff were doing their “absolute best” and the poor customer service was “her fault not theirs”. The CEO apologised for the poor service delivered to customers and listed a number of reasons that contributed including:

- **eir's size**
- **Pandemic**
- **Staff working from home**
- **Staff turnover**
- **Forced closure of retail outlets**
- **Senior Managements under estimating the work in setting up a customer care centre from scratch in Sligo.**

The CEO further clarified her comments in relation to the Sligo Centre in a memo to staff – see extract below

“I wanted to contact you directly to clarify some points I made at an Oireachtas Committee about eir's Sligo

care operations, and which have been misconstrued. We are absolutely committed to Sligo.

The point that I was trying to make and clarified during the meeting was that we, as a management team, made mistakes in how we set up the care centre in Sligo initially. We underestimated how complex it would be to establish a call centre at a greenfield site. With your fantastic efforts, we have achieved a lot since launch and before the pandemic hit we were meeting our care targets. We are very proud of our Sligo centre and all of our team who work there and I want to thank you for your continued efforts.” **CEO Carolan Lennon**

The CWU acknowledge the difficulties faced by customers and understand the anger and frustration faced by our centre and field based members. We are willing to work with eir management to resolve the customers service issues. We believe any long term solution, to this problem, has to take into account the list of outstanding staff issues particularly in the Customer Care Centres.

Oireachtas Committee's focus on pay of Eir's customer service staff lacks substance

ANDY PRENDERGAST

CEO of eir, Carolan Lennon, was chastised by members of an Oireachtas committee, this week, for “lowballing” its customer service staff on pay. However, a clearer analysis of the telecoms' customer service controversy indicates pay is not the issue.

The furore over eir's customer service shortcomings during the Covid pandemic reached a pinnacle this week, with unprecedented public criticism from the head of the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg).

Of the 5,355 complaints to ComReg during the pandemic, two-thirds have been directed at eir.

eir's care agents have terms & conditions that are the product of collective bargaining

eir's CEO, Carolan Lennon agreed to attend the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport and Communications, this week, to explain the failings of the company's customer service since March.

At the hearing, several TDs and Senators alleged that eir underpays its customer service staff/care agents and that this might explain why there has been such a shortcoming in the telecoms customer service during the pandemic.

However, eir's care agents have what can reasonably be argued to be competitive terms and conditions of employment, and which are the product of collective bargaining with the Communications Workers Union (CWU).

In fact, this year, the CWU negotiated a pay deal for all eir staff, first reported in IRN 38/2020.

The crux of the issue which has led to so many complaints about eir is the waiting time customers are experiencing to get through to a care agent. The main reason for this is that the company has been severely understaffed for much of the period since March.

Ms Lennon says that 80 care agents exited the company between March and July of this year. Initially, there was a “novelty” factor of working remotely and productivity increased. But this soon wore off as the pandemic persisted and remote working became the norm.

She explained the reasons for staff exits: many of the care staff could not work effectively in their apartments (with connectivity being an issue for some), while others left because they “found it too difficult.”

The understaffing issue was compounded by an inability to hire replacement staff during the period of restrictions, as staff need to be trained on-site.

Sligo Centre

eir’s new call centre in Sligo was opened in October 2019. It had around 500 care agents before the Covid pandemic began.

These care agents were recruited for eir by Morgan McKinley (based in Cork). Most of the staff who were hired in Sligo did not have experience working in call centres.

The decision to set up a ‘greenfield’ call centre site in Sligo was taken for a number of reasons, such as the hope there would be lower staff turnover than there had been with the outsourced customer service operation, previously run by HCL in Dublin.

The HCL operation in Dublin had a turnover rate close to 100%, partly explained by having more employment alternatives open to workers in the capital city.

The establishment of the Sligo centre was strongly supported by Sligo County Council and IDA Ireland, as it brought 500 jobs to the region.

Before Covid hit, customer calls to care agents were, on average, under five minutes. Care agents could handle up to 40 calls a day. But as Covid struck, care agents had to work from home. These staff had to field calls on issues that normally would be handled by a different division. Average customer service call times for eir customers rocketed.

‘Good jobs for rural Ireland’

At the Oireachtas Committee hearing this week, Fianna Fail Senator Timmy Dooley accused Ms Lennon of ‘lowballing’ care agents on their pay, further suggesting that because the pay level was “low” maybe the company was not attracting the right talent for the job.

Independent TD Michael Lowry, who chided Ms Lennon for her company having an “image problem”, also suggested pay might be a problem at eir.

However, none of the TDs and Senators offered an analysis of industry pay rates, or how eir’s pay compares to call centre staff elsewhere.

The eir care agent salary range is up to €23,000, with a bonus mechanism a core feature of pay. The company pays sick pay, and tops up maternity and paternity pay. It also has an employee assistance program.

It is understood that the average salary for call centre staff in Ireland is around €23,000. This salary would go

further in Sligo than it would in Dublin, for example, which has much higher living costs.

Ms Lennon described the jobs as “good, permanent pensionable jobs in rural Ireland.”

The pay level for eir care agents is the same across all of its contact centre locations (there are other sites in Limerick and Cork, established before the site in Sligo).

No evidence was proffered to suggest that eir is lagging when it comes to remuneration of its care agents. Moreover, there is nothing to suggest that the problems that emerged for eir’s customer service during the pandemic could have been offset by paying higher salaries for care agents.

It is now for the company and its management to ensure that staff have the proper support to enable them to do their job effectively going forward.

‘Insourcing’

It was also suggested to Ms Lennon that insourcing might have been a mistake (Labour TD Duncan Smith was the sole committee member who acknowledged the positive aspects of insourcing).

Another TD questioned how much eir was saving by insourcing its customer service when it is evident that outsourcing is the cheaper option – and is why any service is outsourced in the first place.

The move to ‘insource’ customer service staff was taken when Ms Lennon took over as CEO. She acknowledged then that its customer service division was in need of much improvement. The move would entail more cost to the company, but it was something that was figured to be necessary as its customer service was not held in good esteem in general.

Ms Lennon admitted that establishing the insourced customer service operation in Sligo has proved to be “a bigger challenge than anticipated”, and she reiterated her support for the insourcing move as the “right strategy”, as well as conforming her support for eir’s call centre in Sligo.

As soon as restrictions were eased in July, eir started to recruit 120 new staff. Half of new hires have been referred by existing staff.

While the negative inferences drawn from the CEO’s comments earlier in the week about the Sligo location have proved to be a distraction, the basic fact is that the customer service division of the company was not fully prepared for the pandemic, nor, evidently, was it able to adapt swiftly.

eir’s insourcing operation in Sligo, which opened just five months before the pandemic hit, was dealt an unforeseen and colossal challenge, similar to many other businesses, that it now has to meet.

eir Members Vote to Accept 6% Pay Offer

The pay proposals outlined in the recent General Secretary circular (below) were put to a ballot of the applicable members in eir which closed on December 4th. The Union auditors have advised that the result is 88% voted in favour of the offer which represents a very strong endorsement of the Executive's decision to recommend acceptance of the deal. Thanks to all the Branches, Officers and Committee members for their hard work in very challenging circumstances to effectively communicate the offer to their members.



eir GS Circular No. 13/20

INFORMATION

16th November, 2020

Re: Proposed Pay Increase for CWU members in eir – 6% over three years

Dear Colleague,

Please find attached a proposed agreement negotiated between the Union and the Company on pay increases for our members employed in eir.

For the first time the pay proposals apply not just to our graded members but also to members in the following work areas:

- SOMs
- FLMs
- Former Apprentices (within Openeir)
- Retail (shop) staff
- Call Centres
- ITPP (CIO and CTO only)
- FOTS

Including these members in our pay negotiations for the first time is a significant win for the CWU and our members in eir.

(Note -The company informed us that PC members will also receive the increases that will include the option of the DB transition payment where it applies).

As a result, the pay proposal which provides for a 6%

increase over three years (2% per year) will be applied in different ways for each group. The details of this are explained in the attached document which you are encouraged to read carefully.

As part of the pay proposals the company and the Union have agreed to review and amend the sick leave policy which is included in the attached also.

The National Executive Council (NEC) of the union has discussed the offer and has recommended its acceptance. They believe that with the economy in recession and with the continued uncertainty arising from the effects of Covid-19, that securing a pay increase now for our members is the best course of action.

Therefore, I sincerely ask that you study the documentation carefully and that you cast your ballot in support of this pay proposal which will ensure that our members in eir improve their pay over the coming years. The deadline for the return of ballots is 12 noon, Friday, December 4th.

Yours fraternally,
Steve Fitzpatrick
General Secretary

CWU/eir Pay Proposal Questions and Answers

This document should be read in conjunction with the terms of the pay offer document which details how it will be applied to different work groups in eir and their specific terms and conditions. Many of the questions below deal with how the offer applies to **'graded' staff** but many other groups will now benefit from this deal and will be invited to vote on it for the first time. The National Executive Council (NEC) is recommending a vote to accept the offer.

- **How will my pay change?**

The pay offer (6%) covers three years at 2% per year. Your pay will change depending on the work area and type of employee you are. For example, **staff who are 'graded'** will see their pay increase, partly in base pay and partly in the transition payment they receive (Transition payment is DB pensionable). Other staff who receive commission as a regular part of their pay will have the increase split between base pay and commission as has been the case previously.

In the pay offer information, each work group is covered separately, and this should be read in conjunction with this document.

- **When will pay increase be effective from?**

1st July 2021. The current pay deal is in its final year and will finish on June 30th, 2021.

- **What grades/PC population are comprehended by this deal?**

These deals encompass Graded staff, IT People Platform, FLM & SOM, Former Apprentices, Retail, Call Centre and those working in 'FOTS' roles. See the pay offer information for details on how the offer applies to your work group.

- **Is the pay deal performance related?**

The pay deal provides for a 2% increase per year for three years. For some staff pay is performance related. If you have a variable pay element i.e. commission; this will vary depending on your level of sales for example.

- **How long will the deal last?**

3 years (July 2021 - June 2024).

- **When does the ballot have to be returned by?**

The ballot should be returned in the freepost envelope to arrive with our auditors before 12 noon, Friday, December 4th.

- **What are the main terms of the deal?**

Please see the attached document for the main terms of the deal as they apply to your work area. For graded staff, the main point is that the increase will be split between the DB increase as per the Accord, Transition Payment which is eligible for DB and the balance will be eligible for the Defined Contribution pension.

- **Are staff in the call centres included in this deal?**

Yes, for the first time staff working in the call centres are included in the terms of this proposal. For call centre staff, the 2% increase will be applied to base pay in year 1, amounting to a 2.4%/2.6% increase (taking into account variable pay). Please see attached for details.

- **Why is my pay not fully DB pensionable?**

The rules of the Pension Accord, which was agreed by the Union and the company to protect the pension scheme, precludes all increases being eligible for DB pension. But the bulk of the pay deal will contribute to the DB pension.

- **On my payslip it shows non-pensionable pay – how or will this change in the new deal?**

This will remain and the element eligible for DC pension will be classified as this.

- **What is the Transition Payment?**

The transition payment is a payment for staff eligible for DB pension in recognition of the changing nature of the working environment within eir.

- **How is it calculated?**

Please see example in table attached to the Graded deal. For DB members the 2% per year will have 3 elements.

1. Accord element (CPI that is DB pensionable)
2. Transition Payment element (DB pensionable) that will be 70% of the 2% minus accord above.
3. Non Pensionable element what remains of 2% following 1+2 above.

In effect each year at least 1.4% will be DB pensionable.

- **Is the Transition Payment different from the previous pay deal?**

The pay deal is comprised of the Transition Payment. The difference with the previous deal is that it accumulates each year and it is a percentage of the pay increase as opposed to the previous deal where it was a set figure. This will lead to much higher transition payment being accrued for these staff over the period of the deal. For example, the previous transition payment reached a **maximum of €600** whereas this deal starts at this figure.

- **How will the Transition payment be reflected in my DB pension?**

It will be treated in the same way as a DB pensionable allowance.

- **What is the impact of this deal on my pensionable allowances?**

Allowances in the nature of pay will increase in line with the base pay increase. See appendices 1 and 2 in the enclosed documents.

- **How is the Pension Accord percentage calculated?**

As outlined in the Pension Accord, it's the lowest of three factors - CPI in the previous year, the increase in that year or a set percentage as documented in the Accord.

- **What is a DC pension?**

The Defined Contribution (DC) pension in eir is provided in conjunction with the DB Pension scheme. It is a matched scheme, i.e. eir will contribute along with the employee. It is seen as way to make the most of pay that is not going into the DB pension scheme.

- **Will my DC contributions increase under this new pay deal?**

Yes, if you are in the scheme and as your pay not going into the DB pension scheme increases so does your amount eligible for DC.

- **I am not a member of the DC Scheme – how do I become a member?**

Contact HR People Services.

- **Is the deal different for Retail/Centres/FOTS etc?**

Yes, it is. If you are in these work groups you should review the attached proposal for more info.

- **What are the differences?**

There is no DB pensionable element and the fact that they have a variable pay element is reflected in the deal specific to the relevant area.

- **How does the deal impact on the People's Platforms (SOM/FLM/IT Platform)?**

People platform members will receive the 2% per year also. Movement to band max is DB pensionable. Under this pay deal there will be over band payments of 2% that includes the pensionable transition payment.

- **Are there changes to the sick leave policy?**

Yes, there is an amendment to the application of the policy for staff during the first year of service after probation.

'5.2 Employees who have passed probation and have less than 1 years' continuous service

Employees who have successfully passed their probation but who have less than 1 years' continuous service post probation are not entitled to sick pay for the first 5 working days of any incidence of absence. Those on fixed term contracts are excluded from this.'

- **What is a redeployment process and what is required from the CWU?**

As there is no agreed redeployment process the company have requested us to enter discussion to agree a process. Any proposals will require agreement from the NEC as normal.

Redeployment might occur when an individual staff members' role has changed/ceased. This happens very rarely (the CWU had to deal with 1 individual who was redeployed in the last 12 months) and we will always endeavour to identify a number of possible options being made available to the member.

Vodafone Update

Obelisk

It's been a challenging time for all sectors and a very busy time for the telecoms industry. Members of the Vodafone branch in Obelisk have been very busy ensuring the smooth running of the network. Connectivity in the household has never been as important as it is now these guys are committed to keep the beating heart of the network alive.

Despite this commitment, these members had not received a pay increase in almost 9 years. The Branch, with the assistance of the National Officer, sought to change this and, with the help of branch committee members, we secured an offer for a 3.2% increase for members. The offer was accepted in a ballot of our member the line in late September. The increase will be effective from November.

Vodafone Retail

Covid-19 has thrown up many challenges and uncertainty for our retail members of the Vodafone Branch also. The different levels of restrictions meant that they continue to face uncertainty, and this will continue to until a vaccine is distributed and normal life returns. Our member's wellbeing and safety will always be the number one priority for the branch. Covid -19 has put these members on the frontline and the branch has worked to ensure they feel safe in their workspace. The branch secretary, Shane Murphy, has reiterated to the company that HSE guidelines should not be a target for health and safety, they should be a starting point.

As a result the branch successfully pushed to have a CWU member from retail as a lead worker rep. This role had originally been given to management outside of the retail space.

Uncertainty around members' income was also an issue. Stores were open for essential business only. Members would not have the same opportunity to earn commission. Through engaging with the company, it was agreed that members would earn a set average commission. This would be topped up with sales made throughout restrictions. No targets needed to be met. This gave members certainty and reward for their efforts and was welcomed by members as a fair and reasonable outcome in very challenging circumstances. The branch will continue to support all our members in the busy time ahead.

Regulation Report

Meeting with Department of Communications

National Officers Ian McArdle and John Clarke met with representatives from the Department of Communications in November to discuss the implementation of the National Broadband Plan (NBP).

The CWU reiterated that it welcomes the progress to date on the implementation of the NBP and the awarding of the contract to National Broadband Ireland (NBI) as a necessary step to realising this long awaited investment in the telecoms sector. CWU is a key stakeholder in the telecoms marketplace and views this state intervention as a positive development.

The €3bn National Broadband Plan, will be transformative for the telecom's marketplace and for the 1.1 million citizens who will benefit from improved broadband access. Of key interest to the CWU is the effect that this investment will have on the labour market in the telecoms and related sectors that will be utilised to deliver this huge project. This intervention will put significant pressures on the resources and skills available, with existing and new contracting companies all vying for an opportunity to benefit.

The CWU outlined its concern that in these highly competitive conditions, where significant investment and profit is available, companies will seek to make the cost of labour their competitive advantage. In simple terms, the workers and their terms and conditions are often at risk in these highly competitive but lucrative market opportunities. It is essential that this scenario is not allowed to occur under the auspices of a state contract.

As a key stakeholder in the telecoms market, the CWU has a vital role to play in ensuring that employment standards and terms and conditions are maintained, protected and enhanced across the sector.

The Union relayed the importance of companies like NBI, and others, adhering to a high standard of corporate governance that will ensure they respect the norms and standards of industrial relations in sector which includes the use of the industrial relations machinery of the state, namely the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) and Labour Court.

Assurances were given by the representatives from the Department that this message would be relayed to NBI and that the Department of Communications would expect that these standards would absolutely be met.

Pension Accord Review

IN LINE with Conference motions the CWU and Leir agreed to exercise the review mechanism in the Pension Accord to assess whether improvements could be made to the pension payments accruing to members within the scope of the Accord.

Following a review conducted by KPMG and in conjunction with the Triennial Review 2019 it was accepted that the fund was financially stable and recently met the Minimum Funding Standard (M.F.S.), however, a number of risks e.g. Brexit/stock market still required serious considerations. It was agreed to review the impact of the pension levy on the scheme and its subsequent impact on potential pension increases.

As a result of this, it has been agreed to request the Schemes Trustees to reconsider their previous decisions to withhold pension increases in respect to 2015 (0.2%) and 2018 (0.4%) which were a contribution towards the cost of funding the pension levy mandated by the Government on the Fund. The Board of Trustees met on the 17/08/2020 and agreed to restore the previously

withheld increases for active, deferred members and pensioners. Combined with the 2019 (0.5%) pensionable increase and the 0.9% increase for 2020 has resulted in a 2% increase for members of the Scheme. Increases that included back payments were included in the October pension payments. (note the 0.9% increase is awaiting Ministerial approval and is expected in the coming weeks).

The Scheme continues in a stable financial position meeting its Minimum Funding Standard (MFS). The assets have been significantly de-risked from growth assets to matching assets since 2011. At present the asset split is 81% secure or matching assets e.g. bonds and 19% growth e.g. property and equity. As a mature fund with less than 1500 contributing members (active members) it is important to reduce the risk and match the financial outflows for the members.

In summary the Pension Accord has delivered a scheme/fund that is in a strong financial position and continues to deliver the pension payments to pensioners and future pensioners. When you look at other Defined Benefit schemes this is a good position to be in. The Accord review resulted in a 2% pension increase and the CWU will await the next Triennial Review to engage on any further pension improvements.

Outgoing President, Mike O'Connor, concludes a long and distinguished career of trade union activism



The recent 10th CWU Biennial Conference saw Mike O'Connor conclude his term as President of the Communications Workers Union.

This brought to close a long and distinguished journey of trade union activism that began in the Department of Posts and Telegraphs in 1979 when he was a Trainee Technician. This journey brought him from a civil service role on to a major multinational company in the form of Vodafone. Looking back on when he started in

the Dublin No. 4 Branch which then became the Dublin No.1 Branch, Mike has demonstrated an unstinting commitment and enthusiasm for representing the best interests of his colleagues. He also helped to set up the Vodafone Branch. All in CWU hope that this activism will continue as he now joins the retired members branch as he reached that significant milestone earlier this year when he retired after 19 years' service with Vodafone.

He was first elected to the NEC in 2002 as the candidate from the Vodafone Branch. In 2016 he was elected as Vice-President of the union before becoming President in 2018. For the last four and half years he has been a fine ambassador for all members of the CWU and had the distinction of chairing our first virtual conference which in no small part helped to ensure it was so successful.

Throughout his long career he has served the union and the members he represents with distinction, a keen eye for detail and always with an acute sense of what is fair and reasonable. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to Mike for everything he has done for the CWU over the years and wish him and his family the very best in his retirement.



eir GS Circular No. 11120

INFORMATION

12th October, 2020

Re: Agile Working Policy

Colleagues,

The Union is pleased to advise that an agreement has been reached with eir regarding agile work. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic for many eir employees their home has now become their workplace and our recent survey has shown that there is a need to have in place a long-term sustainable workplace policy that accommodates remote working.

Accordingly, the eir agile working policy has been put in place for suitable roles. An agile worker is defined as a worker who is not based full time (5 days per week) in an eir office but can split their time between working from home and the office depending on business requirements, personal circumstances and subject to manager approval.

We wish to emphasise that participation in agile work is completely voluntary and operates on an 'opt in' basis. All opt-ins to becoming an agile worker are conditional on acceptance of the attached policy and are subject to approval by SMT.

In agreeing this policy with eir, the Union aimed to secure the best possible terms and conditions for our members who become agile workers. This includes:

- Proper health and safety measures while agile working
- Measures for data security and access to equipment
- Promoting proper rest breaks, start and finish times
- Disconnecting from work and maintaining a proper work life balance
- Promoting good mental health while being an agile worker
- A mechanism to review the policy in line with best practice and changes to the law

We would ask members who wish to opt in to carefully read the Agile Working policy enclosed. Thereafter you will need to refer to the company communications and complete the ergonomics questionnaire and any other necessary forms.

We believe this should prove to be an effective policy towards work life balance and employee welfare during these unprecedented times.

Yours fraternally,

Steve Fitzpatrick
General Secretary

(Any enquiries relating to this Circular should be addressed to Carol Scheffer)

Hello eir, is anybody there? Four unhappy customers complain

Four stories show how difficult it is to contact the uncommunicative communications firm

By Conor Pope - © Irish Times Online



eir Headquarters:

'It is extraordinary how difficult they are to contact considering they are a communications company.'

Photograph: Alan Betson/The Irish Times

The subject field in the email we receive from a reader called Emma reads simply “eir”. Our hearts sink. “I recently upgraded my mobile phone as my two-year contract had ended,” she writes. “I tried on two occasions to order the phone by ringing them (an ordeal in itself), waited 40 minutes each time, and then, as soon as I reached someone, got cut off. I decided to then order it online, as I thought it would be easier. I ordered it on September 6th – today is September 22nd – and I have still not received it. I did not receive any tracking email. I have checked both my junk mail and inbox.”

So on September 14th, she rang the company’s “customer care” line again and waited 30-40 minutes and spoke to one of their advisers. “She said she could give me the tracking number for my package over the phone, which she did. I asked her to wait on the line while I tracked it, as I didn’t want to have to ring back and wait another 30-40 minutes. When I tracked it, it said it got delivered to an address in Galway (I live in Mayo) and was then returned to eir as a failed delivery. I asked the adviser if she could kindly arrange for it to be sent by express, she said they don’t have the express option. I calmly asked her to make sure it was going to the correct address and asked her to make sure I received tracking. I have yet to receive tracking, or the phone.”

Last Monday, Emma rang eir again, “waited 35 minutes and spoke to an adviser, who said she would have to call me back as she had no visibility

on tracking numbers. No returned call. As you can imagine, the wait time on the phone is enough to make you frustrated, and then when you cannot get satisfactory answers, it makes it even worse. For a ‘communications’ company their service is absolutely deplorable. It’s not the first bad encounter I have had with eir. I cannot blame the customer service advisers as I would say they are not armed with the information to be able to deal with these kinds of complaints. In fact I feel sorry for them as I would say they are taking abuse daily because of the failures of their employer. They cannot blame Covid – their service has been bad a long time before Covid showed up.”

She adds a PS. “I actually also sent them a Facebook message on September 10th to get tracking details and got no response. They had said that this was one of the ways to get in touch with them.”

“I have a problem with eir,” starts a mail from a reader called Gus. “They changed their email service from free to paid in July. Because I have had it 20 years, I elected to pay for one month as per their website to extract what I need. However, they also took for August and September. They are almost impossible to contact as there is no email address,” he says. There is an 1800 number, but as Gus is abroad, he can’t ring that.

“I have tried as many ways as I can to contact them but it is proving difficult. However, I finally rang a shop and they gave me an email address wmsupport@eir.ie. I will include the complete

text that I have had with them. As you will see, they agreed to cancel it in in early September but still September has been taken. Now, the wmsupport@eir.ie is bouncing back and my only possibility of contact seems gone. The September payment was taken on September 17th. As I only agreed for one month but they made it impossible to contact them, I feel I should be refunded for August and September, but I would settle for them just confirming the cancellation. It is extraordinary how difficult they are to contact considering they are a communications company.”

School cut off in ‘most challenging time’

We also hear from a primary school in Kerry. The mail comes from Brian Flood, principal of Scoil Mhuire in Horeswood. “We first reported a fault on September 7th and a technician visited the school on September 9th. We received a text to ask if the issue had been resolved and we duly replied that it had not been resolved,” he says.

“We have logged a number of fault reports online and our patient secretary has spent many hours over the past few weeks listening to music waiting for eir to answer the phone. We are so frustrated that we can’t get our phone line fixed, during what is the most challenging time for schools in many, many years.”

‘I did not succeed in speaking to anyone’

Then there was a letter from an older reader called James, in Adare. He is 87 and while he is well able to look after himself and goes to the shops every day “hail, rain or virus”, he is struggling when it comes to making contact with eir.

He has a mobile phone that he cannot manage and is “anxious to install a landline but all efforts to make contact with eir over the past few months have failed. No response to letters and only recorded messages to be heard on 1901. I did not succeed in speaking to anyone.”

He says there is no social supports for the elderly in his area. “Any suggestions as to how

I might contact eir would be welcome. I do not have a computer. I have already sought assistance from doctors, public health nurses, politicians and gardaí, to no avail.”

Keen-eyed readers will see that while all of these problems are different they all have a common thread. Each one of these stories highlights how incredibly difficult it is for people to make contact with eir.

eir responds

We got in touch with eir and received the following statement:

“We have been in touch with all customers and all issues are resolved with the exception of James in Adare, we are working with him on the installation of his landline which will take a little more time.

“The Covid-19 pandemic has elevated the importance of reliable connectivity for work, education, security and life.

The pandemic has also brought with it increased challenges for all businesses, for eir the challenge we face is the impact on our care services.

Customers have faced longer than acceptable wait times when contacting eir care in recent months for a number of reasons, including increased demand for services, the move to remote working for hundreds of our agents, and the closure of retail stores. Resolving care wait times is our number one priority and we are making steady progress.

“Having been unable to recruit and train staff during the lockdown restrictions, we are recruiting nationally and have hired 60 new recruits since last month, with further team members joining in the weeks ahead. Digital support and social channels continue to operate as usual, and we have made additional self-service forms available on eir.ie to provide customers with answers to many frequently asked questions. We have introduced priority care hours for elderly and vulnerable customers and for carers in eir retail stores before 11am Monday to Friday. These are just a few of the many steps eir is taking to rectify care wait times, we are already seeing improvements.”

‘They are almost impossible to contact’



Rules & Constitution

We wish to advise all members that, at our recent Biennial Conference, the Union's Rules & Constitution were amended, primarily to be written in plain English without any change to the meaning of the Rules. However, some Rules were updated to reflect actual processes at an operational level. To that end, we would like to ask all members to familiarise themselves with the two Rules most relevant to their membership of the Union – i.e. Rule 2 Membership and Rule 10 Union Benefits & Funds – which are printed below.

We also include a copy of the NEC sanctioned “Code of Conduct”, which members should take the time to read.

Rule 2 MEMBERSHIP

2.1 ENTRY INTO MEMBERSHIP

1. Membership of the Union is open to anyone who accepts the principles, objectives and aims of the Union.
2. An application for membership must be signed by any Branch Officer who is authorised to do so by the National Executive Council.
3. All written membership applications must be made on an official form. All digital membership applications must be made through the online join portal. Both are processed in the same manner, with the National Executive Council having the final decision on acceptance into the Union.
4. The National Executive Council has the power to instruct a Branch to refuse admission to the Union, or to cancel the membership of any person who, in its opinion, is not desirable as a member of the Union and/or does not accept the principles, objects and aims of the Union.
5. The National Executive Council may cancel the membership of any member that has been obtained by misrepresentation and to return all or part of the contribution(s) paid by that member.
6. An applicant for membership who is rejected by a Branch may apply to the National Executive Council for admission to membership. If admission is accepted by the National Executive Council, it has the power to prohibit that person from holding any office in the Union following their admission for any given time.

7. The Union does not discriminate on any ground in determining acceptance to membership of the Union.

2.2 NEW MEMBERS

1. Each new member will be issued with a Membership Card, a copy of the Rules of the Union and a Union Badge.
2. New members will be assigned to an existing Branch (where possible) and the contact details for their Branch Secretary will be provided. Once processed, the Branch Secretary will also be notified of any new members.
3. A member of a Branch may transfer to another Branch once each Branch Secretary has consented to the transfer and it has been approved by the National Executive Council. The National Executive Council may also approve a transfer from one Branch to another in certain circumstances and at its sole discretion.

2.3 MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES & CONTRIBUTIONS

1. Regular contributions will be paid by all members of the Union in accordance with the following scales:

Scale A: 1% of basic pay plus €0.13 per week paid through Deduction at Source. This includes a contribution of 20% to the Social Benefit Fund, €0.13 to the Distress Fund and €0.13 to the Charitable Fund.

Scale B: 1% of basic pay plus €0.26 per week paid through Deduction at Source. This includes a contribution of 20% to the Social Benefit Fund, €0.13 to the Distress Fund.

Scale C: 1% of basic pay per week paid through Deduction at Source. This amount includes a contribution of 20% to the Social Benefit Fund and €0.13 to the Distress Fund.

A maximum weekly ceiling amount for Scale A, B and C subs is agreed by the National Executive Council, which has the sole power to change this rate from time-to-time.

Scale D: Contributions by members paid monthly through Direct Debit or online Standing Order in accordance with Rule 2.3.5, are divided into the following categories, with the National Executive Council agreeing the applicable rates:

- D1:** Managerial
- D2:** Non-Managerial/Contractor/Engineers
- D3:** Call Centre/Customer Care/Retail
- D4:** Temporary/Part-Time

The National Executive Council has the sole power to change the rates for the Scale D membership categories from time-to-time.

Scale R: Retired members will pay a nominal contribution of €1 per week through Deduction at Source, OR €4.16 per month through Direct Debit, OR €50 per year in cash or by cheque/postal order

Scale T: Members in a transitional position, such as Career Break or unpaid Sick or Statutory Leave greater than 26 weeks may choose to maintain their Union membership for the purpose of availing of a range of limited benefits. Transitional members will pay €8.32 per month through Direct Debit OR €100 per year in cash or by cheque/postal order.

Scale U: Unemployed members will pay a nominal contribution of €4.16 per month through Direct Debit or online Standing Order.

Every Member shall pay contributions in accordance with the scale to which the person is assigned by the National Executive Council.

2. A member is considered to be “In Benefit” after eight (8) weeks’ contributions have been paid in accordance with these Rules.
3. After 52 weeks’ Union contributions members of Scales A, B & C may be entitled to the full range of benefits set out in Rule 10. Members in Scales R, T & U may be entitled to a limited range of benefits under Rule 10.
4. Any member who is not in receipt of pay because of certified illness or injury, or who is on unpaid Statutory Leave, is considered to be an “In Benefit” member and is exempt from paying weekly contributions, subject to a maximum of 26 continuous weeks.
5. The National Executive Council has the sole discretion to determine the union subscription rates.
6. The National Executive Council has the power to impose a special levy on some or all of the membership to augment any of the Funds provided for under these Rules or for any other purpose deemed to be appropriate by the National Executive Council.

2.4 CESSATION OF MEMBERSHIP

1. A member in arrears of eight (8) weeks’ contributions or more is deemed to be a lapsed member and is not entitled to have representations made on their behalf or avail of the benefits provided under these Rules. This is exclusive of members who are not in receipt of pay as a result of unpaid Sick or Statutory Leave less than 26 continuous weeks.
2. Any member whose contribution is thirteen (13) weeks’ or more in arrears or who has failed to pay in full any levy imposed under Rule 2.3.6 and/or Rule 3.4.3 is deemed to have ceased their membership of the Union. A member may re-join at the sole discretion of the National Executive Council.

2.5 RETIRED MEMBERSHIP

1. Retired employees of the companies organised by the CWU are eligible for membership of the Union subject to the following:
 - (a) A Retired Member is bound by the Rules and will be allocated to a particular Branch in accordance with Rule 3.1;
 - (b) Membership fees and benefits for Retired Members are those which are set out in the Retired Members’ Benefits Handbook as amended and updated by the National Executive Council from time to time.

2.6 OBLIGATIONS OF MEMBERS

1. By accepting membership of the Union, every member agrees to be bound by these Rules and any alterations or amendments that may be made, from time to time, as provided for under Rule 12.

2.7 DISCIPLINARY ACTION

1. A member who is considered to have consciously acted in a manner contrary to these Rules and/or the CWU Code of Conduct, as agreed by the National Executive Council, may be:
 - (a) Prohibited from attending Union meetings for a given period
 - (b) Removed or suspended from office, prohibited from holding office or participating in any way in Branch or Union administration for a given period;
 - (c) Deprived of some or all of the benefits of membership for a given period;
 - (d) Suspended from membership for a given period;
 - (e) Expelled from membership of the Union.
2. The Branch Committee or National Executive Council may impose one or more of the sanctions referred to above following a thorough investigation of the allegations of misconduct. The procedure for investigations is set out separately in the CWU Code of Conduct.
3. A member who has an allegation of misconduct made against them under Section 1 of this Rule will be given written notice to be sent by registered post. The notice will also state the details of the allegation, the time, date and place set for the hearing of the case, which the member will be invited to attend. The member may choose to submit a defence in writing instead of attending the hearing.

2.8 APPEALS/GRIEVANCES

1. Any member with a grievance against a Branch or who is in receipt of a disciplinary sanction from the

Branch Committee (under Rule 2.7) may appeal in writing to the National Executive Council, provided the appeal is received in Union Headquarters not later than 21 days after the sanction is notified to the member by the Branch Officers. The appeal will be considered by the National Executive Council and the decision, once made, will be final subject to Rule 2.8.2.

2. Any member with a grievance against Union Headquarters or the NEC, or who is in receipt of a disciplinary sanction from the National Executive Council (under Rule 2.7), may serve notice of appeal in writing to the National Executive Council, provided the appeal is received in Union Headquarters not later than 21 days after the sanction is notified to the member by the National Executive Council.. The appeal will be heard by a committee appointed by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. Any decision from the appeal is final.

2.9 UNION BADGE AND SCROLL

1. A Union badge will be issued to each member on joining the Union and thereafter from time to time as agreed by the National Executive Council.
2. A Branch may request an “In Benefit” member who has twenty (20) years’ continuous membership be presented with a Silver Badge of the Union.
3. A Branch may request an “In Benefit” member who has thirty (30) years’ continuous membership be presented with a Gold Badge of the Union.
4. A Branch may request that an “In Benefit” member be presented with a scroll of the Union on their permanent retirement from employment.

2.10 MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT

1. Notwithstanding any other provision of these Rules, the National Executive Council shall be empowered, at its absolute discretion, to:
 - (a) create Branches, Sections or workplace representative structures in order to assist in recruitment outside of traditional areas;
 - (b) make any special provision it regards as desirable, as regards benefits for such Members;
 - (c) set special contribution rates for such Members and arrange transfer of membership for all Members with special contributions rates, if considered desirable;
 - (d) make all the necessary organisational, financial and other arrangements considered necessary to assist the recruitment process.

Rule 10 UNION BENEFITS AND FUNDS

10.1 SOCIAL BENEFIT FUND

1. The National Executive Council established a “Social Benefit Fund” which is financed by an amount equal to 20% of each Scale A, B & C members’ basic contribution. The National Executive Council will arrange for the transfer from time to time from the Central Fund all monies so apportioned to a separate account known as the Social Benefit Fund. The Social Benefit Fund will comprise three schemes:
 - (a) Sickness Benefit Scheme
 - (b) Mortality Grant Scheme
 - (c) Hardship Grant Scheme
2. The National Executive Council will include the Accounts of the Social Benefit Fund for audit each year by a firm of qualified Chartered Accountants and submit these Audited Accounts to Biennial Conference.
3. The administration of the Social Benefit Fund is under the control of the National Executive Council who will elect every two (2) years a Finance Committee to administer the Social Benefit Fund on its behalf.
4. The Finance Committee will meet ahead of the National Executive Council meeting, or as required, with a provision on the agenda to review the operation of the Social Benefit Fund and make recommendations as it thinks fit to the National Executive Council on the operation of the Social Benefit Fund.
5. After 52 weeks’ contributions, members of Scales A, B & C may be entitled to the full range of benefits set out in this Rule. Members in Scales R, T and U may be entitled to a limited range of benefits as set out in this Rule.
6. All claims for payment from the Social Benefit Fund must be submitted in writing on the relevant form along with the requisite documentation to the General Secretary for consideration by the Finance Committee.
7. Any dispute arising as a result of the payment or non-payment of a claim from the Social Benefit Fund may be resolved by, and at the discretion of, the Finance Committee subject to final appeal to the National Executive Council.
8. In the event of severe financial strain on the Social Benefit Fund due to civil disorders, an unforeseen level of claims or unforeseen disasters, the Finance Committee, subject to the sanction of the National Executive Council, has the power to limit or defer any or all of the benefits specified in this Rule.

(A) SICKNESS BENEFIT SCHEME

1. Subject to these Rules and on production of the requisite documentation, an “In Benefit” member on reduced basic pay, resulting from illness or injury may be paid an amount up to 70% of their basic pay while a member of the Union. Requests for Sickness Benefit from members who have not had such an absence may be considered on their merits by the Finance Committee subject to the sanction of the National Executive Council.
2. Any such payments will be inclusive of payments/grants from other sources, including the Medisan Fund and the Social Welfare Illness/Occupational Injury Benefit.
3. In the event that the member is successful in recovering damages at common law or through any other avenue for their accident or illness, then the member must reimburse the Social Benefit Fund in respect of any payments made to them. The member (and/or their legal representative) must provide particulars of the amount recovered to include, where requested, supporting documentation.

(B) MORTALITY GRANT SCHEME

1. A member may be paid €635.00 on the death of their spouse or civil partner. The estate of a member may be paid €5,080.00 on their death. A member may nominate during their lifetime to whom the grant, if approved, should be payable.
2. A Retired Member (as referred to in Rule 2.5) may be paid €635.00 on the death of their spouse or civil partner. The estate of a Retired Member (as referred to in Rule 2.5) may be paid €1,270.00 on their death. A Retired Member (as referred to in Rule 2.5) may during their life nominate to whom the grant, if approved, should be payable.

(C) HARDSHIP GRANT SCHEME

1. Members in financial distress may apply for a Hardship Grant from the Union. Such applications are considered on their merits by the Finance Committee and grants are made in certain limited circumstances subject to the sanction of the National Executive Council.
2. Requests for assistance relating to matters covered by the Scheme must be submitted in writing on the relevant form, with supporting documentation included, to Union Headquarters and the General Secretary will bring such application for consideration by the National Executive Council.

10.2 CHILDREN’S GRANT SCHEME

1. In the event of a member’s death in service, a sum of €20 per week (paid monthly) may be paid in respect of each child registered with the Scheme, until that child reaches the age of 18 years.

2. To register a child/children with the Scheme, a copy of each child’s Birth Certificate must be provided.
3. No payment will be made from the Scheme if:
 - (a) a child has reached 18 years of age
 - (b) a child of a member who died in service and was not registered with the Scheme
4. The National Executive Council, at its sole discretion, may make payments to the legal personal representative of the deceased member, or to the surviving parent/legal guardian in whose care the child is placed, or to the person authorised to receive payment under the Social Welfare Acts in respect of that.
5. The National Executive Council has the power, in accordance with these Rules and the Rules of the Scheme to increase or decrease overall benefits. Due notice of any such alterations will be notified by way of GS Circular to all members of the Union.
6. The National Executive Council may, at any time, discontinue the Scheme. The decision of the National Executive Council on any matter connected to the Scheme (including any matter not provided for in the Scheme) is final.

10.3 LEGAL AID FUND

1. This Scheme, which is funded from the central funds of the Union, provides assistance to “In Benefit” members of the Union in certain circumstances and subject to certain conditions. The initial consultation is free of charge and proceeding with any case thereafter is solely a matter between the member and solicitor. The legal aid covers referrals for matters such as:
 - Offences under Road Traffic Acts
 - Compensation claims
 - Inquests
 - Wills
 - Certain legal advice
2. Requests for assistance relating to matters covered by the Scheme must be submitted, with details of the case, through the Branch/Section Secretary, to Union Headquarters. The case will then be forwarded to the Union’s solicitors.

10.4 DISTRESS FUND

1. The National Executive Council has established a Distress Fund. The Fund is financed by an amount equal to €0.13 per week apportioned from the contributions of Union members for the purposes of relieving distress amongst members of the Union who are “In Benefit” at the time of any industrial action in which they are involved.
2. The National Executive Council will arrange for the transfer from time to time from the Central Fund all monies so apportioned to a separate fund known as the Distress Fund.

3. The administration of the Distress Fund is under the control of the National Executive Council which has full and final authority on whether any particular payment or payments should be made therefrom and if so the amounts and terms of such payment or payments.
4. The National Executive Council has the power, in the event of a serious strain on the Distress Fund, to either stop payments or diminish such payments or close the Fund subject to review by Biennial Conference following such decision. No member will have any claim against the Union or any of its Officers or members resulting from such a National Executive Council decision.

CWU CODE OF CONDUCT

Introduction

All members have the right to expect a quality service from their union, within the rules and the guidance laid down by the National Executive Council. Where a member feels that the union, its employees or its agents (e.g. solicitors) have not provided such a service, they have the right to complain and to seek a valid explanation of the union's actions. Valid complaints may also give the Union an opportunity to learn and improve its service to members.

In addition, any member or any Branch Committee may make a complaint against a member to the effect that that member has engaged in an action or activity which is in breach of the Rules of the Union or is guilty of conduct unbecoming that of a member. (Such conduct includes the failure to act in accordance with the instructions of the National Executive Council during the course of an industrial dispute).

The Union is a voluntary organisation and is hugely dependent on the volunteers who act as Branch Officers or Committee Members. These representatives take on these roles in addition to working for their employer and this should be recognised by all.

The purpose of this code of conduct is to set out a process where issues that arise in respect of

- discipline of members;
- complaints against Branch Officers or Representatives; or
- complaints against National or Regional Officers

can be addressed fairly and speedily in accordance with the principles of natural justice.

Discipline of Members

From time to time a member may be charged under Rule 2.7 with:

- Acting in any way contrary to the rules of the Union, whether in their capacity as a member or a Branch Representative;
- Being a party to any fraud or any misappropriation

- or misuse of its funds or property;
- Knowingly, recklessly or in bad faith providing the Union with false or misleading information relating to a member or any other aspect of the Union's activities;
- Inciting, espousing or practising discrimination or intolerance amongst members on grounds of race, ethnic origin, religion, age, gender, disability or sexual orientation;
- Bringing about injury to or discredit upon the Union or any member of the Union, including the undermining of the Union, Branch or workplace organisation and individual workplace representatives or Branch Officers;
- Obtaining membership by false statement material to their admission into the Union or any evasion in that regard;
- Breach of the Union's policies on diversity, bullying and harassment in the workplace, which includes cyber bullying and harassment; and/or
- Making a vexatious complaint.

The above list is not exhaustive.

A charge under this Rule can be heard by a Branch Committee or by the National Executive Council. The National Executive Council may delegate the responsibility for investigating any such charge to a sub-committee of the National Executive Council. It would be the normal practice for such charges to be heard at Branch Committee level in the first instance. However, disciplinary charges deemed to be of a serious nature may be initiated by the National Executive Council.

A member charged under this Rule may be suspended by the National Executive Council from holding any office or representing the Union in any capacity pending its decision. In such circumstances a member shall be given written notice of any such suspension as soon as reasonably practicable.

A member under disciplinary investigation or charged with a disciplinary offence, including Branch Officers and Branch Committee members, may not attend meetings of their own Branch other than as part of the disciplinary process.

Procedures for Disciplinary Cases

Cases initiated by Branch Committee

1. If a Branch Committee decides to investigate the conduct of any member under Rule 2.7 then it will establish a special sub-committee consisting of three (3) members of the Branch Committee. This sub-committee will be responsible for formally gathering relevant information and conducting a prompt preliminary investigation. They will inform the member concerned that they have been requested to undertake this investigation. The member concerned is expected to cooperate fully with the preliminary investigation and will

- be asked to provide the sub-committee with any relevant documents. The purpose of the preliminary investigation is to allow the sub-committee to gather factual information relating to any concerns or allegations against the member.
2. Following a thorough investigation and as soon as practicably possible, the sub-committee will determine whether the member concerned should be charged under Rule 2.7 and will present a report to the Branch Committee. If the Branch Committee accepts the report and decides to charge the member, then the Branch Secretary shall notify the member in writing of the charge(s), the penalties which may be imposed, and the date when the charge(s) will be heard which will be at least fourteen (14) days after the date of the notice.
 3. At the hearing the charges against the member shall be presented by the Branch Secretary.
 4. The member has the right to either attend the hearing or they may choose to submit a defence in writing.
 5. The member under charge may be accompanied by another member of the Union. Their role is to support and assist the member concerned.
 6. If the member fails to either attend the hearing or submit a written defence, then the meeting will proceed to deal with the matter in the member's absence.
 7. Following consideration of the matter by the Branch Committee and if by a majority they find the member guilty, then it may impose one of the penalties provided by in Rule 2.7.1:
 - a. Prohibited from attending Union meetings for a given period;
 - b. Removed or suspended from office, prohibited from holding office or participating in any way in Branch or Union administration for a given period;
 - c. Deprived of some or all of the benefits of membership for a given period;
 - d. Suspended from membership for a given period;
 - e. Expelled from membership of the Union.
 8. The member will be advised of the decision of the Branch Committee by written notice sent to their address by registered post and the member will be advised of the right of appeal.
 9. The Branch Secretary will inform the National Executive Council of any decision made and that the member concerned has been advised of the right of appeal.
2. Any appeal must be submitted to the General Secretary within twenty one (21) days of the notice to the member advising of the outcome of the investigation and the penalty imposed.
 3. If an appeal is submitted, the National Executive Council will establish a sub-committee consisting of at least three (3) members of the National Executive Council.
 4. The appeal to the sub-committee may be by way of an oral hearing or a written submission by the member.
 5. The member shall have the right to be accompanied to the appeals hearing by another member of the Union.
 6. The sub-committee may reject, accept the appeal in whole or in part or vary the penalty imposed.
 7. The report from the sub-committee will be submitted to the National Executive Council and if accepted, the member will be advised of the decision by written notice sent to their address by registered post.
 8. The decision of such an appeal if final, subject to Rule 1.2.

Cases initiated by the National Executive Council

1. The National Executive Council may decide to investigate the conduct of any member under Rule 2.7. If so, it will establish a special sub-committee consisting of three (3) members of the General Purposes Committee. They will be responsible for formally gathering relevant information and conducting a prompt preliminary investigation. They will inform the member concerned that they have been requested to undertake this investigation. The member concerned is expected to cooperate fully with the preliminary investigation and will be asked to provide the sub-committee with any relevant documents. The purpose of the preliminary investigation is to allow the sub-committee to gather factual information relating to any concerns or allegations against the member.
2. Following a thorough investigation and as soon as practicably possible the sub-committee will determine whether the member concerned should be charged under Rule 2.7 and will present a report to the National Executive Council. If the NEC accepts the report and decides to charge the member, then the General Secretary shall notify the member in writing of the charge(s), the penalties which may be imposed, and the date when the charge(s) will be heard which will be at least fourteen (14) days after the date of the notice.
3. At the hearing the charges against the member shall be presented by the President.

Appeals Process

1. The member concerned shall have the right of appeal against a decision of the Branch Committee to the National Executive Council.

4. The member has the right to either attend the hearing or they may choose to submit a defence in writing.
5. The member under charge may be accompanied by another member of the Union. Their role is to support and assist the member concerned.
6. If the member fails to either attend the hearing or submit a written defence then the meeting will proceed to deal with the matter in the member's absence.
7. Following consideration of the matter by the National Executive Council and if they find the member guilty, then it may impose one of the penalties provided by in Rule 2.7.1:
 - a. Debarred from attending Union meetings for a period as decided;
 - b. Removed from office, suspended from office, debarred from holding office or participating in any way in Branch or Union administration for a period as decided;
 - c. Deprived of some or all of the benefits of membership for a period as decided;
 - d. Suspended from membership for a period as decided;
 - e. Expelled from membership.
8. The member will be advised of the decision of the National Executive Council by written notice sent to their address by registered post and the member will be advised of the right of appeal.

Appeals Process

1. The member concerned shall have the right of appeal against a decision of the National Executive Council to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.
2. Any appeal must be submitted to the General Secretary within twenty-one (21) days of the notice to the member advising of the outcome of the investigation and the penalty imposed.
3. Any such appeal will be heard by a committee appointed by the Irish congress of Trade Unions.

Complaints against Branch Officers or Representatives

Any member or members who are unhappy with the service provided by their Branch Officers or Branch Representatives should, in the first instance, raise their concerns with either the Regional or National Officer. If the member concerned is unhappy with the outcome, they may refer the matter to the General Secretary or Deputy General Secretary. If the matter is still not resolved, the General Secretary may refer the issue to the National Executive Council.

In investigating the issue, the President shall seek a report from the local representative, the Regional or

National Officer, the Deputy General Secretary/General Secretary, or any other person connected with the issue. The National Executive Council will establish a special sub-committee consisting of three (3) members of the General Purposes Committee. They will carry out a preliminary investigation. They will inform the member concerned that they have been requested to undertake this investigation and will following investigation issue a response to the member concerned.

The member, if still unhappy, may seek to have this matter reviewed. Any request for a review should be submitted to the President within twenty-one (21) days and should specify the grounds on which the member is appealing against the finding of the sub-committee. The National Executive Council will consider the case and the details of the appeal, and issue a decision which will be final.

Complaints against Regional or National Officers

If a member or Branch Officer/Representative wishes to make a complaint regarding the service provided by a Regional or National Officer, they may do so in writing to the General Secretary. The General Secretary will seek reports from all those involved and following investigation will issue a response to either the member or Representative involved. If the member/Representative is unhappy with the decision they may appeal to the National Executive Council.

If a member/Representative wishes to appeal this outcome they should indicate in writing to the General Secretary within twenty-one (21) days specifying the reasons for the appeal. The National Executive Council will establish a special sub-committee consisting of three (3) members of the General Purposes Committee. They will carry out a preliminary investigation. They will inform the member/Representative concerned that they have been requested to consider the appeal will following investigation issue a response.

The member/Representative, if still unhappy, may seek to have this matter reviewed. Any request for a review should be submitted to the President within twenty-one (21) days and should specify the grounds on which the member is appealing against the finding of the sub-committee. The National Executive Council will consider the case and the details of the appeal, and issue a decision which will be final.

Vexatious Complaints

Vexatious Complaints are a form of abuse. They have the potential to hurt and disrupt another person's life that could have a negative impact on them and cause them psychological injury. Members will not be penalised for making a complaint in good faith. However, if it is found that the complaint is vexatious, then the member concerned could be charged with a breach of Rule 2.7 as detailed above.

Covid has exposed Ireland's failure on statutory sick pay

Sick pay should be a fundamental right of all workers, yet Ireland has no statutory sick pay policy. Labour's new Bill seeks to change that.

Excerpt from letter to Steve Fitzpatrick, CWU from Senator Marie Sherlock.

Dear Steve,

Thanks very much for coming back to me last week on the bill and for your helpful comments.

I've attached an article and would be very grateful if you published it in your communication to workers.

I'm conscious that sick pay is one of a whole range of employment rights that we need to address in this country so please do get in touch about the other gaps if they are an issue for your members or potential members

Kind regards,
Marie

It is six months since Ireland first recorded a case of Covid-19 and if the crisis is to have taught us anything, it must be that we need to value each and every worker in our country. Nowhere is this more important than when a worker becomes ill or is forced to self-isolate because of the possibility of Covid infection. Yet in Ireland a minority of private sector workers have access to paid sick leave from their employer from the first day of falling ill. In childcare, we understand from SIPTU's Big Start survey of over 3000 childcare workers that just 16% have access to paid sick leave.

I believe that paid sick leave must be a basic employment right, a right which is critically important to help combat the pandemic in our country, but one which must become a permanent right for all employees. Ireland is one of only five EU member states without statutory sick pay – a distinction we share with Denmark, Cyprus, Greece and Portugal.

No worker should be out of pocket when they fall ill, yet too many workers in this country are being forced into that difficult choice of either going into work while sick, or else losing a portion of their income.

We need only look at the recent developments in meat processing plants, with outbreaks occurring in

workplace settings where as few as 10% of workers are estimated to be entitled to paid sick leave, to see the terrible consequences that such a policy can lead to. And as usual, it is typically workers on low pay, in poor conditions, without trade union representation and from disadvantaged communities who bear the brunt of not having this employment right.

The Labour Party published a Sick Leave and Parental Leave (Covid-19) Bill 2020 at the start of September. This would give all employees the right to paid sick leave from the first day of falling ill. At the moment, those without access to a sick pay scheme have to wait a full six days before accessing the State's illness benefit. Importantly, illness benefit is only available to those who have at least two years PRSI contributions and have contributions in the previous year. Our bill is of particular benefit to young workers who have recently come into the workforce and don't have the necessary two years of PRSI contributions, and those who have recently returned to the workforce after a long absence.

Some in Government have already pointed to the Covid Enhanced Illness Benefit as being sufficient. It's not. The flat €350 per week payment to those who have to self isolate with a covid diagnosis or suspected covid diagnosis is less than half the average weekly earnings of a private sector worker. If you are on average earnings or less in this country and struggling to make ends meet, then €350 is simply not enough.

The second purpose of our new Bill is to extend a benefit known as force majeure leave. Anecdotally, we know that working parents and in particular working mothers and single parents tend to take annual leave or sick leave themselves if a child has to stay at home due to illness or injury. With children now back at school and in childcare, there are many concerns about what will happen if they are sent home to isolate because of an outbreak of covid 19. Our bill proposes a temporary extension to the maximum three days of force majeure leave that is currently available.

The pandemic is too serious and the risks are too enormous for workers in this country not to have a right to paid sick leave. Covid has exposed the very large inequalities in our workplaces like no other occasion in our history. If anything positive is to come from this crisis, it must be that the gaps in our basic employment rights that have been laid bare, are fixed for the benefit of the least secure and lowest paid in our country.

Senator Marie Sherlock

Labour Party spokesperson on Employment Affairs

Findings of *DPD Survey* on Contracted Hours

The DPD Committee, in conjunction with the Organising Department, have recently conducted a survey of staff in the Athlone Depot. The survey was prompted in response to the recent rise in parcel volumes and the resulting impact on attendance times and staffing levels. There was a high response rate to the survey which provided workers with the opportunity to outline the reality of their working week in comparison to their contractual obligation in relation to the hours that they work. It also allowed workers to voice their concerns to Company management in relation to their workplace.

The survey was conducted alongside the recent pay ballot and provided an opportunity for the DPD Branch committee to engage with new staff who had been hired as a response to increased parcel volumes. As a result of this engagement the vast majority of those new staff members have joined the CWU.

The survey revealed that a large proportion of DPD employees work longer hours than their contract stipulates and that those workers would like to have their contracted hours increased. The findings of the survey also revealed that a large majority of participants would like to condense their working week by working longer hours over fewer days. However, a significant minority indicated that they would not be in favour of a condensed week which is informative for the Union in ensuring all preferences are considered in any potential

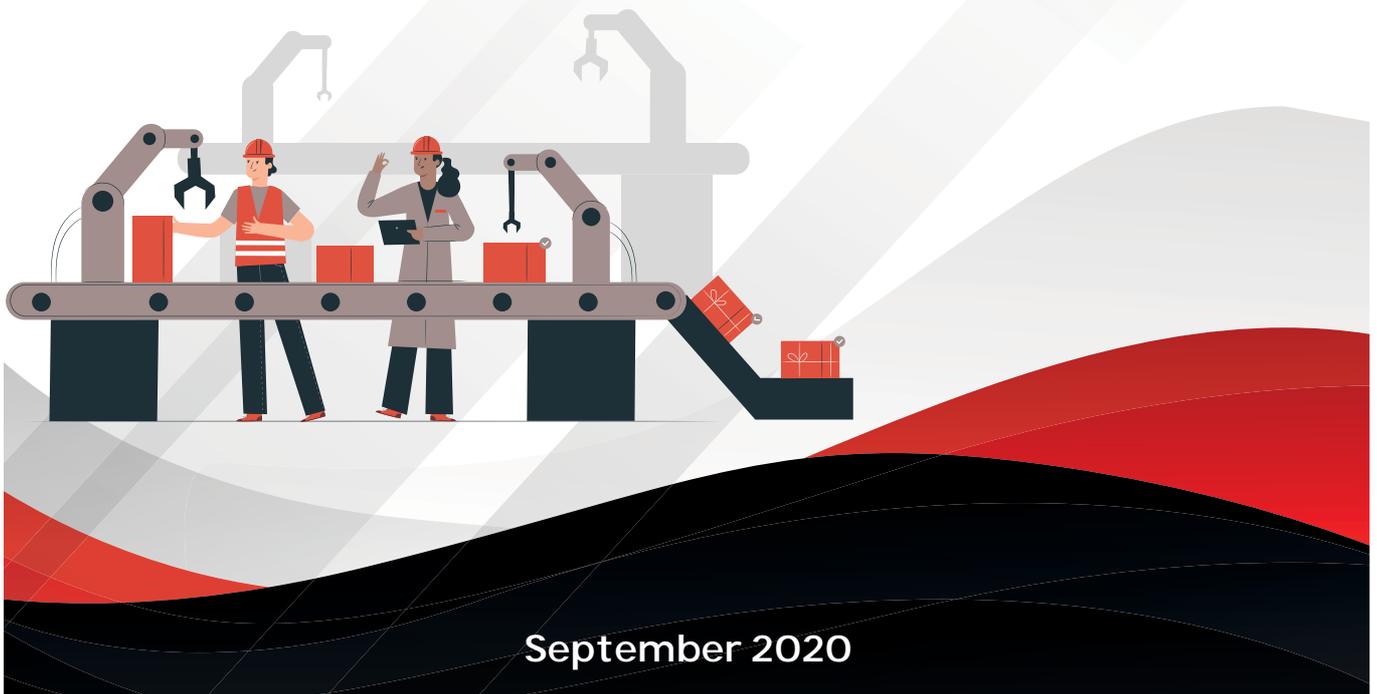
shift reconfiguration that may take place.

An open question at the end of the survey revealed that workers were unhappy with a wide range of issues such as, the lack of a bonus payment for working through COVID-19, pay levels both generally and more specifically on a Sunday, and transparency and fairness regarding upgrades and rotas. The survey also revealed that the lack of proper sick pay was a bone of contention for workers which is a salient point in the context of COVID-19 and the necessity to stay out of work whilst sick to protect each other from the virus.

Since the survey was conducted, DPD management have addressed the top concern highlighted by staff in the survey with a Covid-19 bonus payment of €250 for staff. The Union will engage with the company on the other issues that have been identified and members will be updated on developments.

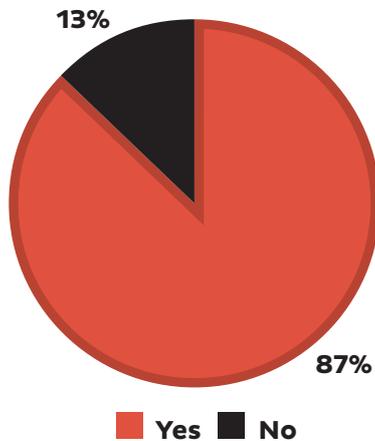
The high level of engagement in this survey demonstrates a desire among DPD workers to effect positive change in their workplace and their input is both valued and welcome. As the survey demonstrates, membership of the CWU offers workers the opportunity to have a voice within their workplace and influence improvements in their working conditions. You can join the CWU by contacting Christy Coyne or Paddy Finnerty.

The survey results are set out on the following pages.



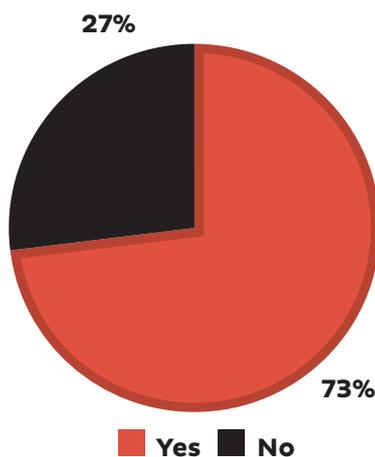
September 2020

Figure 1:
Staff who work in excess of their contracted hours



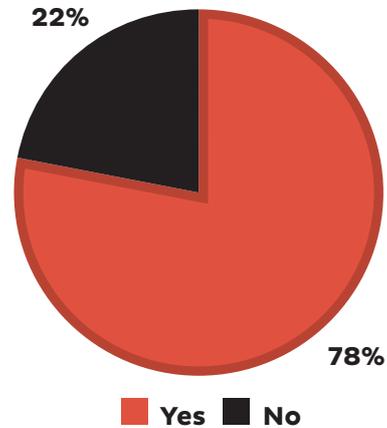
In an attempt to establish how many workers were working in excess of their contracted hours, participants were initially asked in question one **“What are your contracted hours?”** This was followed up in question two by asking **“How many hours per week on average do you currently work?”** The survey revealed that 87% of those surveyed work in excess of their contracted hours.

Figure 2:
Would you like to have your contracted hours increased?



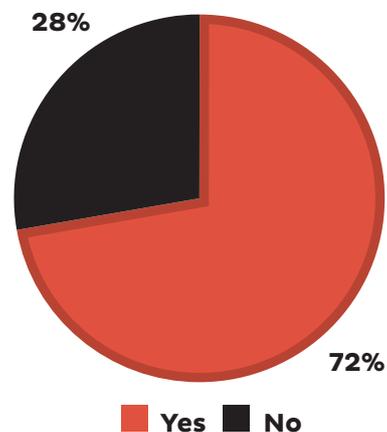
When participants were asked if they would like to have their contracted hours increased, 73% indicated that they would. This figure includes those who are not currently working extra hours and demonstrates a widespread desire among DPD workers for increased contractual hours.

Figure 3:
Staff who work extra hours and would like their contracted hours increased



When we examined the figures for those who are currently working hours in excess of their contracted hours the demand for a contractual increase was even higher at 78%. The average amount of hours worked in excess of contracted hours was reported to be 15.5 hours per week, with some reporting that they work as many as 29.5 hours extra per week. The results suggest that the majority of staff surveyed would like the security of having those extra hours reflected in their contract. This was revealed in a number of responses including the following **“Need it badly for bank mortgage application”**.

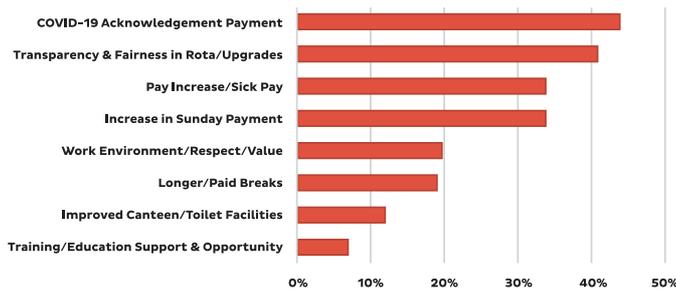
Figure 4:
Would you like to work for an increased number of hours over fewer days?



In order to ascertain how workers would like to configure their work week, question four asked

participants whether they would like to work for an increased number of hours over fewer days. Examples of 3 x 10-hour shifts, 4 x 9-hour shifts, 3 x 12-hour shifts were given. 72% of respondents indicated that they would be in favour of working a more condensed week.

Figure 5:
What three things would you like to changes in your workplace?



In order to gain an understanding of the challenges that DPD staff face at work, the final question of the survey asked participants **“What three things would you like to change in your workplace?”** The responses to this question were varied and are grouped above in figure 5.

We have included some direct quotes from participants that capture the overall sentiment on the various issues.

Transparency & Fairness in Rota/Upgrades

“A clear set of criteria which must be met in order to receive an SG 1, 2, 3. Very unclear format currently”

“Fair rotation on Sunday shifts”

“Better communication regarding benefits, working hours; i.e. rota or contract hours changing or being implemented without prior notice. Sneaking it into rota and saying nothing is disgusting”

COVID-19 Acknowledgement Payment

“Bonus for working during COVID-19. When a lot of places were closed workers worked hard and started very early because of it being so busy. All we got was a €15 voucher for Eddie Rockets.”

“COVID-19 bonus payment like An Post, Tesco, Lidl, etc”

Pay Increase/Sick Pay

“We should get sick pay, especially since the COVID pandemic so that the lads aren’t coming in sick and coughing all over each other”

“More wages – doing a lot more work for same wage”

Increase in Sunday Pay

“Time and a half for Sunday”

"No extra payment after four hours on Sunday is degrading"

Work Environment/ Respect/Value

"Respect from Supervisor and Buddy"

"More care about lads and their physical and mental health, instead of just going by the government regulations during COVID-19"

"More respect"

Longer/Paid Breaks

"Pay by cash in canteen and get paid for all breaks"

"Longer breaks"

Improved Canteen/ Toilet Facilities

Have cash accepted at canteen"

"Men's toilets should be cleaned regularly"

"Free food onsite if on 12-hour shifts"

Training/Education Support & Opportunity

"Paid Study Leave"

"All staff should get some opportunity to be upskilled"

Greater access to training"

Summary

This CWU survey offered DPD workers the opportunity to outline the **reality of their working week** in comparison to their contractual obligation in relation to the hours that they work. It also allowed workers to **voice their concerns to Company management** in relation to their workplace.

The survey reveals that the vast majority of DPD employees work longer hours than their contract stipulates and that those **workers would like to have their contracted hours increased**. The findings of the survey also reveal that a large majority of participants would like to **condense their working week by working longer hours over fewer days**. However, a significant minority indicated that they would not be in favour of a condensed week which is informative for the Union in ensuring all preferences are considered in any potential shift reconfiguration that may take place.

The open question at the end of the survey also revealed that workers were **unhappy with a wide range of issues such as, the lack of a bonus payment for working through COVID-19, pay levels both generally and more specifically on a Sunday, and transparency and fairness regarding upgrades and rotas**. The survey also revealed that the **lack of proper sick pay** was a bone of contention for workers which is a salient point in the context of COVID-19 and the necessity to stay out of work whilst sick to protect each other from the virus.

The DPD Branch Committee of the CWU will present the survey to Company management with a view to having the issues identified in this survey addressed for our members. Members will be kept up to date on the progress of these discussions.

Membership of the CWU offers workers the opportunity to have a voice within their workplace and influence improvements in their working conditions. You can join the CWU by contacting Christy Coyne on 087 2727605 or Paddy Finnerty on 0851832320.

Update on Union Inductions during the Covid-19 pandemic

The Organising department has resumed conducting Union inductions in a number of companies following their cessation due to the initial restrictions that were imposed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The communications sector has been designated as an essential service, and as the nation adapted both how it communicates and purchases goods, the pandemic has highlighted the essential role our members play in our society. Naturally, the increased demand for phone and broadband services, in addition to an increase in online

shopping, has resulted in the recruitment of new hires to the various companies in our sectors. From the Union's perspective, it is vital that we engage with these workers as early as possible to inform them of the work that the CWU does: the benefits of Union membership and the importance of them joining to maintain the power that members before them have built through their Union. We are happy to report that these inductions have been going extremely well with a high percentage of new hires joining the CWU.

Taking Photos for the Connect Journal

When taking photos which you would like to include in the Connect journal, aim for the following:

- (1) Look carefully at the background. If it looks dark and dingy, then that is how your photograph will turn out. Try to find a spot that looks good and bright to the naked eye. If you think it looks good, then chances are you will give your photo a better shot at coming out looking well.
- (2) Make sure there is light shining towards your subject. If there is light behind the person or people you are photographing, then you will not see their faces clearly. Don't stand people with their backs to a window in daylight - instead, have them turn around to face the light. You will get a much better result, if you do this.
- (3) When you stand back to take the photograph, aim to make sure that you are not accidentally cropping off the tops of people heads, or their sides. It is quite okay to just photograph someone from the waist up, if that is what you require, but if you want the full figure, then don't crop off the feet by accident.
- (4) Don't stand too far away from the person you are photographing. Remember, you want to see their face in the photograph - the background is not all that important. If they are being presented with a Union Scroll (or other presentation), then try to get the Scroll and/or handshake into the photograph also.
- (5) If you are in a position to do so, try to ensure that your camera is set to capture images at 300 dpi (that's "dots per inch") which will give you the required high-resolution result. Don't worry too much if you are unable to change those settings on your mobile phones - if you pay attention to the other points mentioned here, your photograph should come out looking well in print.



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Education Update



UNIONlink – Online Trade Union Training

The CWU, FSU and Mandate have come together to develop online learning courses that will assist our members and representatives in developing their skills. Through Unionlink, all members in our sectors have an innovative way of accessing a variety of courses. Education is an important part of the Union agenda: It not only enhances personal abilities, it also builds self-confidence. Unionlink assists members and representatives to create their own pathway to learning, while at the same time contributing to Union aims.

If you want to explore the online learning world, then Unionlink is for you!

How UNIONlink helps our Members

We believe that all our members should have the opportunity to develop their skills at a time and a place that suits them. With Unionlink this is possible as you can complete courses 24 hours a day, be it on your tablet, computer, laptop or smartphone. All courses are **free of charge** and are designed to be engaging and interactive.

Some examples of the types of courses that can be accessed are:

- Stress Management in the Workplace
- Mindfulness
- Understanding Trade Unions
- Sexual Harassment
- Whistleblowing
- Political Economy
- Getting to Know Your Computer

You can also download a Unionlink certificate, once you have successfully completed your chosen course.

Helping Members develop their skills

We have been assisting members and representatives to avail of learning opportunities for the last number of years. We can help you to develop your skills and create a greater awareness of courses that you might like to avail of through Unionlink. Unionlink supports a variety of e-learning courses. We have also set up partnerships with other learning providers to deliver a wider range of quality courses. This, in combination with our own expertise, has allowed us to establish a valuable online learning platform for all our members.

How UNIONlink helps our Representatives

To be a successful Union Representative, there are core skills that you must develop. As part of the Union Representative training package, you will have access to several online courses that will ensure that you are familiar with your role, which will then be developed further as part of the classroom training. This blended learning approach ensures that our representatives have every opportunity to contribute to their Union and make a difference to our members' working lives. The content of our representative courses reinforces the ethos of the Trade Union movement, while at the same time being an advanced way of representative learning.

Some examples of the types of courses for Union Representatives include:

- The Role of the Representative
- Organising and Recruitment
- Industrial Relations
- The General Data Protection Regulations
- Understanding Union Conferences

What do I do next?

- Go to our Unionlink website www.unionlink.org
- Register on Unionlink as a learner
- You will require a username and password to create an account
- Have your membership number at hand when creating an account
- Once your account has been confirmed by email, you can log in and select the course on which you wish to enrol
- Some courses require an enrolment key, which will be provided by your Union





GS Circular No. 28/20

INFORMATION

05 November, 2020

Re: Unionlink – Digital Photography Competition 2020 Winners

Dear Colleague,

I am pleased to confirm the winners of the CWU Digital Photography Competition for 2020.

Entrants were judged by our resident photographer and winners announced at our Biennial Delegate Conference.

The results are as follows:

	NAME	BRANCH	PHOTO CAPTION
1st prize	Dermot Walsh	DPAB	Empire State of Mind
2nd prize	Aidan Griffin	Dublin Postal Managers	Blennerville Windmill
3rd prize	Brian Kane	Dublin Postal Clerks	Singing Dunnock
Runners up	Aoife Sarah Doyle	Enniscorthy Postal	Girls Just Wanna have Sun
	Christopher Fagan	Dublin Mails Managers	Pulling in the Boat
	Stephen McNulty	Sligo District	Camping in the French Alps
	Ciara Melinn	CWU	All Eyes on You
	Heidi Sweeney	Galway Postal	Cornflower

A video presentation of all the entries was shown at BDC and can also be seen on our digital photography course on Unionlink.

Please go to www.unionlink.org for the course and to see the entries. Our congratulations to all the winners.

Yours fraternally,

Steve Fitzpatrick
General Secretary

CWU Digital Photography Online Course

Why not take the plunge and try out our new online Digital Photography course? Simply login or create an account on www.unionlink.org and get started. This basic course will give you the necessary skills to go out and enjoy taking photographs, whether you are a complete beginner or simply want to learn more.

The course will introduce you to the following:

- Camera basics and functions
- Light – and how to use it
- Composition techniques
- Tips and guidelines for excellent photos

CWU DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION RESULTS



1st Prize
Dermot Walsh



Empire State of Mind

2nd Prize
Aidan Griffin



Blennerville Woodmill

3rd Prize
Brian Kane



Singing Dunnock

Register To Vote

All you need to know, and do,
to get on the Register of Electors



At a recent Biennial Conference the following motion was passed and it was agreed to publish the following information annually.

“Conference acknowledges the large number of younger people who are not listed on the voting register and the ensuing lack of engagement in civic life that entails from same. Therefore, Conference instructs the incoming National Executive Council to undertake an annual campaign among all our union members to promote the benefits of being listed on the electoral register.”

DUBLIN CLERICAL & ADMIN BRANCH

Are you registered to vote? **CheckTheRegister.ie to see if you’re on the register of electors.** If you’re registered, great. If not, don’t worry! They’ll guide you through it.

The annual electoral register deadline is in November each year for all new voters and those looking to change their details. If a vote is called (e.g. a general election, Presidential election or referendum) you can also apply to be added to the register (known as the supplement to the register), **but your application must be received by your local authority at least 15 days before polling day, not counting Sundays or public holidays.** To be included on the supplement to the Postal or Special Voters list, you must apply by **28 days before polling day.**

How do I register?

There are two types of registers that you can apply to be on. Which one you apply for depends on the time of year that you’re filling out the application.

Supplementary Register

If there is an election or a referendum coming up and you’re not included in the register of electors, then you can apply to be included on the supplementary register.

Draft Register of Electors

The draft register of electors is published on the 1st of November each year. This shows a list of the people included on the official Register of Electors on the 15th of February the following year.

To be included in the Draft Register, you must send in your application form **before November 25th.**

The register which came into force on 15th February 2020 is on display from 1 November to 25 November 2020. This means that if on 15th February 2020, you are aged 18 or over, you should check that your name, address and other details are present and correct on the Draft Register.

If there is a mistake, tell your local Council as soon as possible.



**10th Biennial
Conference
& 30th
Anniversary**



*Mike, Imelda and Ian
monitor the voting app used
at Conference*



*Ian McArdle
National Officer*



*Séan McDonagh
D.G.S.*



*Pat Kenny
addresses Conference*



*Carol Scheffer gives a
response to Conference*



*Newly-elected President, Willie Mooney,
makes a Presentation to outgoing President,
Mike O'Connor*



*John Clarke
at Telecoms Conference*



*Sarah Vaughan takes
minutes at eComms
Conference*



*Headquarters stand to remember our Colleagues
who sadly passed since our last Conference*



*Imelda gets masked up
for Conference*



Christy Hoffman, General Secretary, Uni Global, joins remotely

Martina joins from Cork

Patricia King, General Secretary, ICTU, addresses Conference remotely.



Tommy Devlin from Finglas

Leonard Coote from Ennis



Technology used to communicate remotely

Mike O'Connor, President, talks to delegates remotely

Bernard and Ryan, our technical experts

Diarmuid admits Delegates to the Event



"Behind the Screens" with Pat Kenny



Socially distanced Standing Orders Group govern Conference proceedings.

Canford and Ruth, socially distanced



An Coimisiún um Chaidreamh san Áit Oibre
Workplace Relations Commission

Áras Lansdún, Bóthar Lansdún, Droichead na Dothra,
Baile Átha Cliath 4, Éire.
Lansdowne House, Lansdowne Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4, Ireland.

T: 1890 22 02 27 or +353(0)1 6136700
F: +353 (0)1 6136701

**WRC PROPOSAL
ACCEPTED BY
BALLOT OF MEMBERS**

Lisa Smyth, United Parcel Service of Ireland Ltd
Cormac O’Dalaigh, CWU

CASE NO: C-165089-20
PARTIES: United Parcel Service of Ireland Ltd (UPS) and CWU
ISSUE: Pay claim for 2020

Following extensive conciliation on the above referenced issue, the following proposal is made in resolution of this matter. Both parties have agreed to recommend this for acceptance.

PROPOSAL

The following pay increases will apply from 1st April 2020:

- 2.75% for all employees earning up to the maximum point on their pay scale
- 2.25% for all employees earning in excess of the maximum

The following revisions in pay scales will apply from 1st April 2020

Category	After 1 year service	After 3 years service	After 5 years service
C licence holder	€31,827 per annum	€33,784 per annum	€35,100 per annum
B licence holders & Bikers	€29,767per annum	€31,930 per annum	€33,250 per annum
Warehouse Operatives	€11.64 per hour	€12.13 per hour	€13.10 per hour
Feeder Drivers	€35,875 per annum	€37, 500 per annum	€40,500 per annum

From 1st January 2021 any B licence holder that upgrades to a C1 licence will receive a net bonus of €500.

This proposal is made conditional on it being recommended for acceptance by both parties. If it is rejected by either party, it will be deemed to be withdrawn and without status.

Mary Dooley
Industrial Relations Officer
19th November 2020



Andy Doherty Retires

Andy Doherty retired after 42 years' service with Donegal Town PO. He first joined as a telegrams officer before taking up a post in Kilcar and Carrick.

He will be missed by all who have had the pleasure of working with him, and his contributions at Branch meetings.

Andy is pictured here (on the right) receiving his Union Scroll from Hugh Quinn, Branch Secretary, Donegal S.W.

Dermot Barrett Retires

Dermot Barrett, who was Postman in Barnatra DSO, recently retired. He is pictured here receiving his Union Scroll from Deirdre Medlar, (NEC) All his work colleagues wish him the very best for a long and happy retirement.

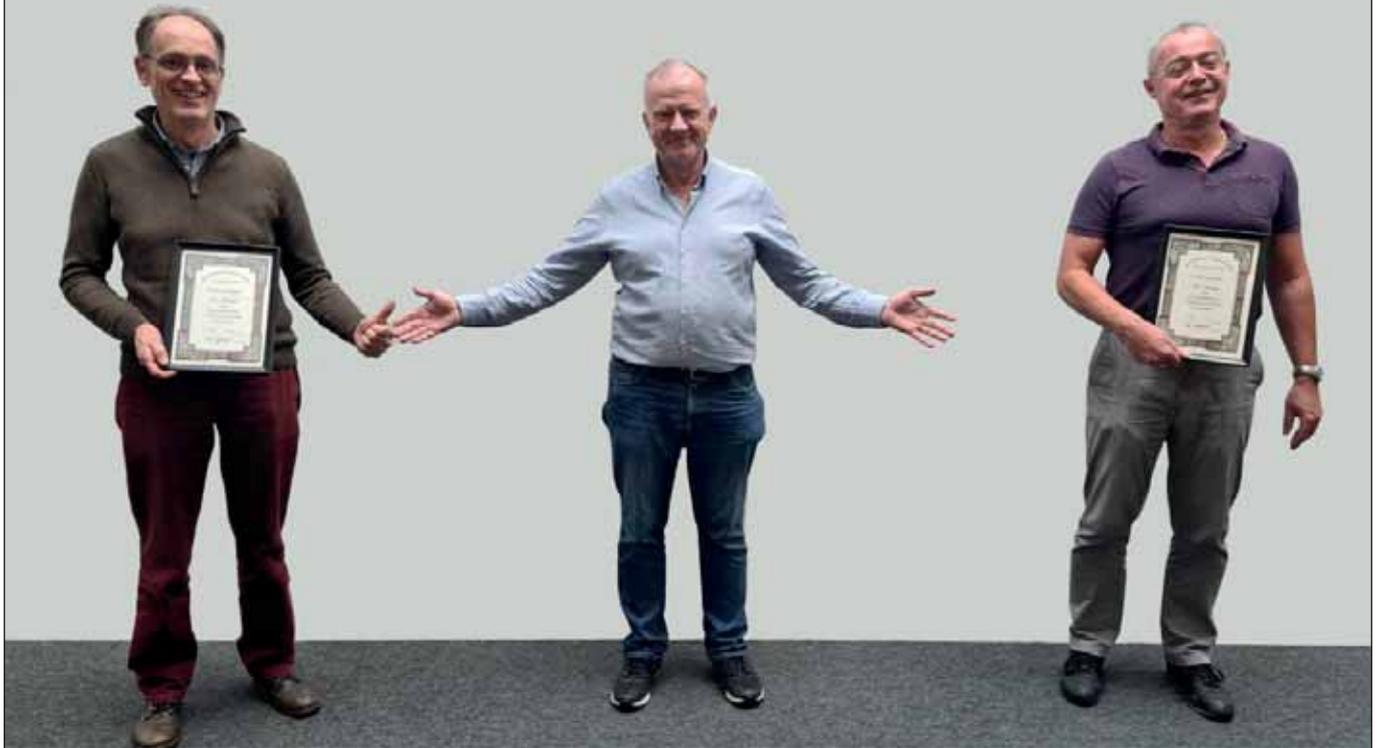


John Joe Barrett Retires

John Joe Barrett, who was Postman in Barnatra DSO, recently retired. He is pictured here receiving his Union Scroll from Deirdre Medlar (NEC) He will be missed by his colleagues, who wish him a long and happy retirement.



James Gallagher and John Kennedy Retire



Dublin No 1 Branch Chairman, Will Meegan, presented James Gallagher and John Kennedy with their Union Scrolls and wished them both well on their retirement.

John Delaney Retires



*Branch Secretary, John Delaney, Thurles Postal Branch (pictured centre), with Declan Ryan, Chairman (left), and newly-appointed Branch Secretary, Fergal Horgan (right), who presented John with his Union Scroll.
We wish John every success in his retirement.*

PJ Delaney Retires



PJ Delaney, Process Area Manager, Portlaoise Mail Centre, receiving his Union Scroll from Branch Secretary, William Kehoe, from the Portlaoise Naas Managers Branch, following his retirement after 39½ years' service.

Michael Holland Retires

A presentation was held recently (pre-Covid) in Mervue A.E.H to mark Michael's retirement after many long years' service. Michael was a great Union activist in his area and will be greatly missed. Galway District Branch CWU wishes Michael and his family many years of happy retirement.

Pictured l to r: Anthony Doyle, incoming Galway Section Secretary CWU, presenting the Union Scroll to outgoing Galway Section Secretary, Michael Holland.



Pat O'Dwyer Retires



Pat O'Dwyer, Postal Clerk, retired on Sept 16 2020 after 46 years' service. He began his career in an post in Sherriff St in 1974 and worked as a postman on several routes before moving to retail.

Pat has held many positions in the Clonmel CWU Postal Branch and his opinion and vast experience were always called upon, even when he stepped back from committee positions. Right up to the day of his retirement, he was still being asked to offer his take on various issues.

He celebrated his last day of service with a Retirement Dinner in the Minella Hotel, Clonmel, attended by Branch and Committee Members, where he received his Union Scroll and Presentations from both his Branch and from Management.

It goes without saying that Clonmel Postal Branch want to wish Pat a happy & healthy retirement.

Richard Shortall Retires



Richard Shortall receives his Union Scroll and Branch Presentation from Willie Kehoe (Branch Secretary Portlaoise/Naas Managers Branch)

Peter Lowe Retires



Peter Lowe (Bray Postal) is pictured being presented with his Union Scroll by Darren Clucas (Branch Secretary, Bray)

Retirement of Pat Flynn and Jerry O'Sullivan



Pictured back row l to r: Declan Boggin, Pat McCarthy, Con Coakley, Sean Harte, Eugene Brennan, Denis O'Donovan, Maurice Sheehy, Pat Lynch.

Pictured front row l to r: Finbar Tobin, Liam White, Pat Flynn, Jerry O'Sullivan and Jerry O'Donovan.

A function was held recently in Clonakilty AEH, to mark the retirement of Pat Flynn and Jerry O'Sullivan. Pat's retirement came after 40 years' service, while

Jerry's came after 26 years' service. Both were joined by their work colleagues from Clonakilty and Bandon, to mark the occasion.

Small amount of t-shirt stock remaining from Conference



If you would like one of the "Black, Irish and Proud" t-shirts, email info@cwu.ie with your Staff Number, Name, Address and Size.

Please Note, there is a LIMITED STOCK of these t-shirts, so they will be issued on a strictly first-come, first-served basis.

Steve Cunningham Retires



Picture back row l to r: Willie Pyne, Liam McGee, Kevin McGreal, Kevin Doonan, Mike Boland, John Breenan, Paudie Hickey, Michael Concannon, and Dermot Hayes.

Pictured front row l to r: Dominic Boyce, Noel Sheehan, Jerry Dorigan, Steve Cunningham, John McIntere, Paudie Prendergest, Pat Drohan, and Bart McDonnell.

The retirement of Steve Cunningham, FLM, Crusheen, Co Clare, took place recently in the West County Hotel in Clare.

His colleagues on NRT travelled from all over the

country to share in the occasion.

Steve was a brilliant manager, who brought the best out in his team, making it a pleasure to work with him. We wish him all the best on his retirement.



Pictured from l to r: John Morris (Chairman), Richard Delaney, and Sean Morrissey (Secretary).

Richard (Richie) Delaney Retires

Richard Delaney retired last August from Kilkenny DSU after 38 years' service.

During his time in An Post, Richie was highly regarded by all in An Post as well as among his customers on his rural deliveries

He spent many years as a hard-working Committee Member of the Kilkenny Branch and is wished many happy and healthy years for his retirement.



John Hassett Retires

John Hassett celebrated his recent retirement from the Dublin Postal Clerks Branch. He was presented with his Union Scroll by Willie Mooney (President)

Des Clarke Retires

Des Clarke being presented with his Union Scroll by President, Willie Mooney. Des retires from the Dublin Postal Clerks Branch and is wished the very best by his work colleagues, for a long and happy retirement.

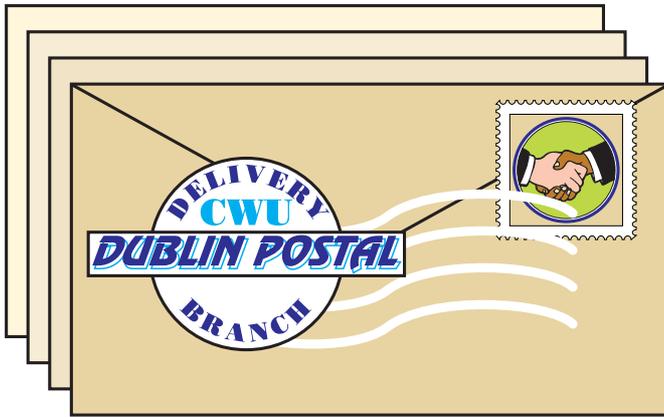


Ken Curran Retires

Ken Curran (Clerk in Dun Laoghaire Office) retired recently after 43 years' service. He is pictured here (on the left) being presented with his Union Scroll by President, Willie Mooney.



Retirements



Frank Toner, Blanchardstown



Kieran Forsyth, Glenageary



Leo Mulville, Blackrock DSU



Thomas Fullam, Rathmines DSU



Peter Gaffney, Lucan DSU

CWU People



Denis and Paddy are presented with their Union Scrolls.

Pictured l to r:
*Dennis Tyrell,
Gerry Sexton,
Paddy Doyle and
Anto McMahon,
Whiteheather DSU.*



Alex Ryan, Swords DSU



Liam O'Toole, Bannow Road DSU



Joe Donoghue, Bannow Road DSU



Kathleen Kelly, DSU 2



Brian Malone, Bannow Road DSU (centre) with Frank (left) and Seán Coultry (Branch Secretary).



*Brian Whelan,
Blackrock DSU*

Jimmy Mulqueen Retires



Jimmy was presented with his Union Scroll by Donie Curran, Limerick District Branch.

Jimmy Mulqueen retired from eir on May 8th 2020 after working for 40 years in the Company and its predecessors.

He joined the P& T in August 1980 in Edward Street, Limerick, and initially worked in the jointing area. Later, he worked under various CTLs in the Limerick City area, where he was a diligent and multiskilled Technician, along with being a very customer-focused person. His retirement has left a big void in his team

Jim was involved in various social clubs during his time in the Company, such as football and GAA teams. He was also involved in the Tops of the Town.

He was a very much a CWU activist, who gave of his time to many issues and will be sorely missed.

The Limerick No. 1 section of the CWU would like to wish Jimmy and his family the very best on his deserved retirement.

Gerry Rafter Retires



Gerry Rafter of eir Core Service Assurance Field Force on Tues 09/06/2020, on his 65th birthday, and his retirement after 47 years in eir. Best wishes from all in the Dublin No 1 Branch.

Niall Patton Retires



Niall Patton, Lifford DSU, retired recently after 32 years' service with An Post. He received his Union Scroll from Gavon McDaid (Working Leader) and Michael Gallagher (Branch Secretary).

John Murphy Retires



John Murphy retired from eir on Friday 30th Oct, after 46 years working for P&T, Telecom Eireann, eircom and eir.

John joined the P&T in Sept 1974 as a 17-year old raw recruit and he worked with many people over those years in different areas of the Company, witnessing many changes in the communications world, from the sturdy magneto phone to the great smartphone. He will tell that he had to use his influence to get a line at home

and it took the P&T only **3 years** to get it installed!

John was very much involved in the social side of the job through the Limerick Sports and Social Club, inter-firm soccer and, of course, the Tops of The Town. He finished his time working out of Roches Street, where his experience and hard work proved invaluable to the team in Incident Management.

We wish John and Ann the very best for a long and happy retirement.

Terry Moorhouse Retires

Terry Moorhouse has retired from eir after almost 44 years' of service. Terry started in 1977 as a fresh-faced youth with the P&T in the GPO, delivering telegrams and continuing to do so throughout the lengthy postal strike of 1979. After a period of time, he moved to the Engineering Branch in Western Depot.

During the 90s, Terry was an active member of the CWU Dublin No 2 Branch. He was a Committee Member for many years. Terry held many Operations Management roles but he continued his involvement with the CWU, leading to his election as Branch Secretary of the Central Regional Managers Branch, and he was instrumental in the development of a National Managers branch, of which he served as Branch Secretary since its inauguration.

The CWU eir Managers Branch would like to wish Terry and his family all the best in his retirement. We would also like to thank him for his dedicated service to this Union over the years.



Dublin No. 2 Branch Retirements

Gerry O'Hanlon and Eugene Keogh Retire

Gerry O'Hanlon and Eugene Keogh (FMs) receiving their Union Scrolls and Badges from NEC member John Dunleavy, Dublin No 2 Branch.



Paul Bermingham Retires

Dublin No 2 Branch Member, Paul Bermingham, receiving his Badge and Union Scroll, with John Dunleavy (NEC) and Gerry O'Hanlon (Team Manager).

CWU People



Dublin No 2 Branch members: Frank McDermott, Mick Bourke, Charlie Branagan, and Joe Gibbons with NEC member, John Dunleavy, receiving their CWU Scrolls and Badges on their retirement from eir.



eir retirees: Martin Carthy, Bob Marshall and Robbie Fitzsimons receiving their CWU Badges and Union Scrolls with their team and NEC member, John Dunleavy, on their retirement.

Paul English & Stephen Kelly Retire



Pictured l to r: NEC member, John Dunleavy, with Paul English and Stephen Kelly, both of whom recently retired from eir.

John Verner Retires



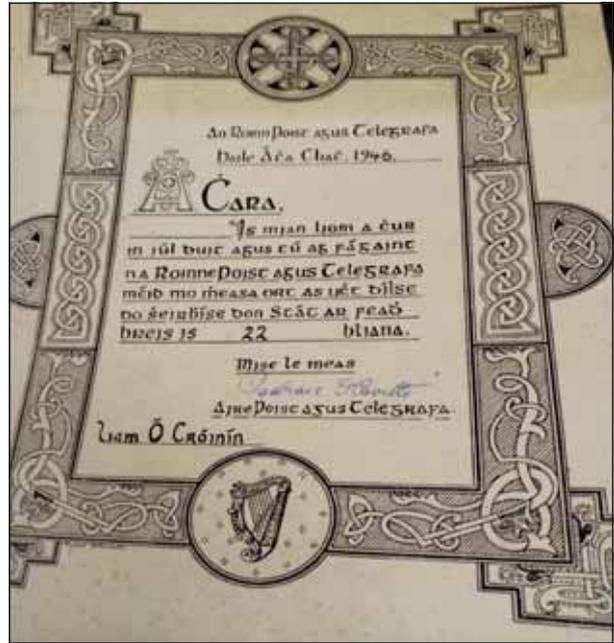
John Verner, who retired in July, is pictured with NEC member, John Dunleavy, who presented him with his Union Scroll.

Padraig Cronin Retires

A brief outline of the service given by one particular family to the P&T, Telecom Eireann, eircom, eir and the CWU Union over the decades.



Padraig Cronin proudly holding the Union Scroll.



The Union Scroll which was presented to Padraig's grandfather, Bill.

On the 30th of October, Padraig Cronin retired from eir. This retirement brought to an end an era of service by three generations of the Cronin family of Tipperary and Kilmallock.

This service started with Padraig's grandfather, Bill, who retired from job in 1946. Bill had four sons, three of whom worked in the old P&T: John (R.I.P.), who worked mostly out of Tipperary; Tom (R.I.P.), who worked in Tipperary, also finishing up as a Survey Technician and then Tom's son, Gerard, who also worked in eircom. The last of Bill's sons to work in P&T was Ned.

Ned joined P&T after army service. He worked first in Tipperary and then in Kilmallock. Initially, Ned used to travel from his home in Tipperary on a motor bike, where he was a familiar figure on the road at the time. Eventually Ned and his wife, Joan, moved house to Kilmallock, where they raised a family of three boys and four girls.

On 19th April 1960, a Headquarters was set up in Charleville. Kilmallock staff became part of this group. Officially known as "Rathluirc", Bill Browne was appointed Inspector in 1962.

Ned became a Survey Technician and held this post up until his death in 1975 (May he Rest in

Peace). Ned had a keen interest in the IPOEU and the setting up of the Rathluirc /Kilmallock Branch, where he held a number of official positions. He was instrumental in setting up the Social Club Fund, collecting Union Subs and Social Club Sub, as in those days there was no Deduction at Source.

Ned's daughter, Marie, transferred from the Department of Defence to the Department of Post & Telegraphs, working in the Limerick District Office until her retirement. His sons, Liam, Eamonn and Padraig also joined P&T.

Liam (R.I.P.) joined P&T in 1969, working in construction, fitting linesman duties, then C.T.L., before retiring to work for the HSE. Eamonn (R.I.P.) joined P&T in 1974, where he worked in construction and jointing until his retirement.

Padraig, the final member of the Cronin clan to work in the P&T and finally eir, commenced work in Charleville in August 1980, working on overhead construction, cable jointing, and then planning office in Limerick. He finally finished his career in the National Fault Management Centre in Limerick.

We wish Padraig and his wife Mary long life and happiness in his retirement.

Lives Lost to Covid-19

George Callis (1946 – 2020)

*A Postman who delivered magic moments to his family:
His children recall summer holidays filled with activity.*

by Olivia Kelleher - ©Irish Times Online



George Callis with his grandson Zach

George Callis was born on July 29th, 1946 and grew up on Cathedral Road on the northside of Cork city. He met his future wife Margaret Aher when they were both in their teens. They were together until her death in 2004.

Daughter Deirdre Callis says her father first worked on the buses before getting a job as a postman. A keen trade union man, he worked hard negotiating for better pay and conditions for his colleagues.

Deirdre says their summer holidays were magical.

“I remember during the school holidays he would head off at five in the morning to put up his post delivery and he would swing back around home at about 6.30am. One of us kids would be waiting to go off to work with him for the day.

“He would have a small wooden box in the front of the van next to him that would be our seat. We would take up pride of place with the bundle of letters on our laps, handing him his next letter, shouting out the address of the next

house.”

Deirdre recalls summer holidays at Red Strand in West Cork. “On the last day of school we would be collected and packed into the car, a car that would be filled to the brim with supplies.

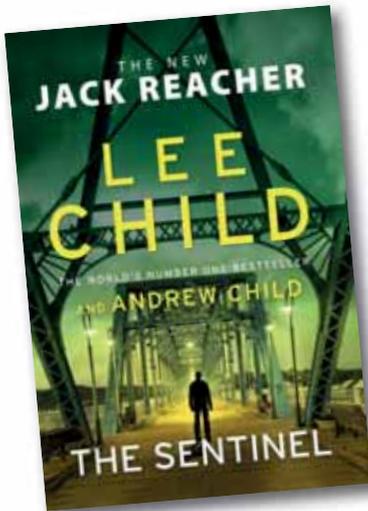
“We would head off to our mobile home. Dad would have to leave on a Sunday night to go back to work. Every Friday we would be waiting and see the little Ford Fiesta come round the bend of the coast road.

“Our summers were filled with diving from the pier, playing on the beach till the sun went down and getting a bag of crisp and glass of Tanora in the local pub where dad always belted out the songs by Neil Diamond and Willie Nelson. We didn’t have much but we had everything we needed.”

Covid-19 can’t take away those memories, Deirdre adds. “The one thing it hasn’t robbed us is the life we had as kids, the memories we hold in our hearts and courage we have to move forward as best we can.”

***“Every Friday we
would be waiting and
see the little Ford
Fiesta come round
the bend of the coast
road”***

Book Review by Adrienne Power



THE SENTINEL

Author: Lee Child and Andrew Child

(Jack Reacher Series – No 25)

Published 27 October, 2020

This is the most popular book series in the last two decades. Selling 100 million copies (at least) worldwide so far. The character, our hero, Jack Reacher was introduced in the first book in the series “*Killing*

Floor” in March 1997.

Why is the character so popular? He is a modern avenger. Always fighting for the little guy. Seeking justice, no matter what.

Drifting from place to place. Usually travelling by bus or hitching a ride. He only ever has the clothes on his back. Buying another set in second-hand shops and dumping the clothes he has been wearing. He puts his clothes under the mattress at night to press. All he ever carries is a toothbrush and ATM card. He goes by the clock in his head. His diet consists of pizza, burgers, cinnamon rolls, and coffee. Maybe it is because he is 6ft 5 inches tall, he can get away with a diet like that?

In the latest instalment, Jack Reacher, ex-Army Major, finds himself in another small town in Tennessee. He comes to the aid of a man called Rusty Rutherford. Rusty is hated by everyone. As IT Manager for the town he is blamed for letting the network become completely crippled by cyber criminals who have invaded the computer systems and are holding the whole town to ransom.

There are also Russian spies in the small town ready to meddle with American Elections. Earlier in the book he must deal with dodgy Nightclub Owners in Nashville Tennessee. There is plenty of excitement and page turning action.

This “Reacher” seems younger, more revitalised. He has less aches and pains than in the last few books. The character is now meant to be in his mid to late 50s. Also, in this book he has a sudden interest in music that he never seemed to have before.

There is a great scene in the book where he takes on the group of Nazis who are working on cars and is planning his attack on them. He points out all the tools they could use against him so that they will seem weak if they pick up any of the tools.

The book is pure escapism!

Excerpt:

Reacher had spent plenty of time in places he did not want to be. Mostly during his army service. Places that were too hot. Or too cold. Where everything that moved wanted to bite him. Or where everyone he met wanted to kill him. But in those days, he did not have a choice about where he went. He was following orders. And at least he was getting paid.
(Paragraph 1, C 27)

After the last book – No 24 – *Blue Moon*, the word was that Lee Child was hanging up the gauntlet and his younger brother was taking over the writing. However, both their names are on the cover of *The Sentinel* so the decision must have been to co-author this one.

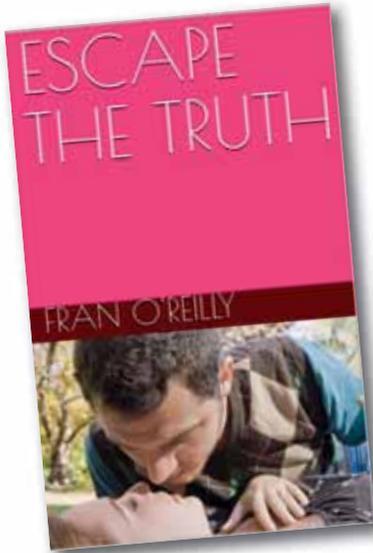
So as not to be confused the name “Child” is the Pseudonym name for Lee and Andrew – their actual name is Grant.

Andrew Grant (Child) has written a spy series featuring the character David Trevelyan (3 books) and a detective from Alabama called Cooper Devereaux (also 3 books in series).

*5 out of 5 for this one.
A great antidote for lockdown!*



Book Review by Adrienne Power



ESCAPE THE TRUTH

Author: Fran O'Reilly

Published by Amazon

Price €9.99 (plus P&P)

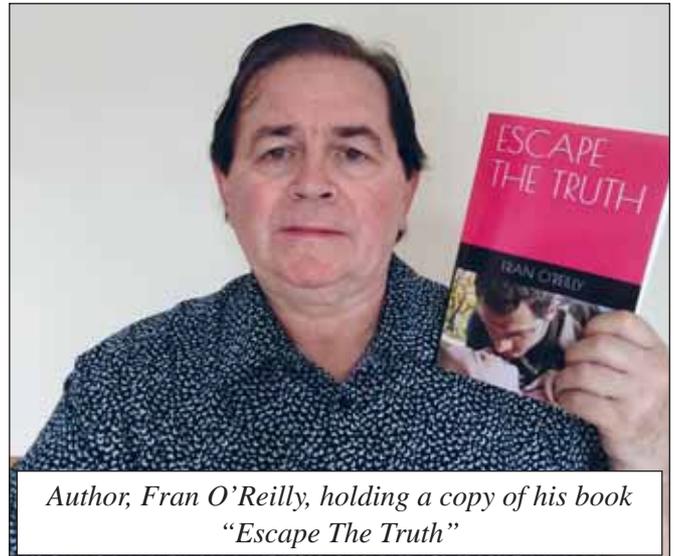
“Escape The Truth” tells the story of Jean & Freddy who move from the inner city in 1985, to the suburbs of Dublin. It’s all a great shock for both, but Jean is anxious to put her past behind her and begin anew. Feddy is not so

assured. He misses the city, which is being revamped at an alarming rate. Try as he might, Freddy is drawn back to his old stomping ground, where he knows a lot of dubious characters. At Jean’s place of work, she meets a man who gives her some unwanted attention. Could Freddy’s apathy push her in his direction? Jean & Freddy cannot have children, a fact that they never discuss. Can they save their failing marriage or will their old lives return to haunt them?

The story is a comedy/thriller/ romantic/adventure, and should appeal to all ages. It retails on Amazon books for €9.99 (plus p+p) and is also on Kindle. Also, if people want to get in touch, I have a limited amount of

books available direct. Contact headquarters for details.

Fran worked at Crumlin District Office most of his working life – in fact he was born yards from the office and grew up in the area. Last year Fran decided to retire, having reached 65 and having achieved almost 43 years of service.



Author, Fran O'Reilly, holding a copy of his book "Escape The Truth"

“This book should appeal to all ages!”

SOME BOOKS
LEAVE US FREE

AND
SOME
BOOKS

MAKE US
FREE

Ralph Waldo Emerson