

# Despair in BT Group Functions as CWU questioning of ‘needless’ compulsory redundancies is summarily dismissed

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**Members targeted for compulsory redundancy in BT Group Functions have delivered another damning indictment of the way they are being treated by an employer that is refusing to even discuss less brutal ways of addressing a tiny staff surplus.**

Amid general disbelief that a division that employs well over 11,000 has moved straight to a compulsory redundancy process to achieve just approximately 20 job losses, on September 21 the union lodged a ‘formal disagreement’ over management’s decision to ride roughshod over various collective agreements that have underpinned decades of industrial peace in BT by ensuring voluntarism in numerous far larger job cut situations.

On Tuesday this week, however, many of those facing compulsory redundancy learned that the brutal new approach to staff surpluses that was pioneered by BT Enterprise earlier this year – and is currently manifesting itself in [BT Technology where 200 compulsory redundancies](#) are currently progressing towards their grim conclusion – will progress largely unchanged in Group Functions after management unilaterally dismissed the CWU plea for a rethink.

Group Functions employees caught up in the current redundancies include a new group of 3 individuals in the seven-strong Events Team who were only added to the 24 initially declared ‘at risk’ after successfully delivering last month’s massive online *Consumer Live* event.

“It was really hard work, and all the time we were putting in really long hours to deliver that event the company must have known it was about to cut our jobs,” pointed out one of the affected individuals.

“It’s just disgraceful the way they’ve treated us. The six people in our team have done a total of 189 years service for the company. We’re all in our fifties so what chance do we have of ever getting another job?”

Insult has been heaped on injury by HR’s apparent lack of understanding of its own policies – with some earmarked for redundancy being told that their misleadingly termed ‘VR’ payouts were capped at a maximum two years’ money, even though the policy states that up to 12-weeks’ pay in lieu of notice also applies in most situations.

Bosses’ persistent refusal to reconsider a long list of CWU counter-proposals – including the offering of VR packages, the repatriation of previously offshored work and reductions in the use

of agency staff and third party contractors, in tandem with redeployment and reskilling – means that, to date, the only concession made by management in the face of intensive CWU lobbying has been a very limited rollout of a ‘job swap’ concept.

Under such ‘job swaps’ those not earmarked for redundancy but wishing to leave BT can opt to take the place of a comparably graded ‘at risk’ person with a similar skill-set who wishes to stay – but despite concerted CWU efforts to open up such arrangements to the widest possible number across Group Functions, management has narrowly restricted eligibility.

Further reducing the likely impact on eventual redundancy numbers, bosses are not offering volunteers full redundancy terms – limiting payments to considerably lower voluntary paid leaver packages, without, as yet, even confirming what exactly those packages will be worth! Another attendee of Tuesday’s members’ meeting lambasted the cumulative effect of successive offshorings of work in her business unit, insisting that was a large part of the reason her job is going.

Her sense of betrayal echoed that of another impacted member on the previous online meeting who had been asked to train up an outside service provider that has been lined up to provide the function he currently conducts providing digital support for vulnerable members of the community.

Explaining his overwhelming sense of hypocrisy when hearing senior managers preaching about the values of the ‘*BT Family*’ and the socially important work being conducted by the company in tackling digital exclusion he said: “I love working for BT but I now realise what the EIN means now: It means we’re all just numbers.”



Lamenting the fact that the current leadership of a great company that for decades has been at the forefront of enlightened employment practice are currently behaving like a “ bunch of chancers”, CWU national officer Dave Jukes concluded: “These people need to be stopped, and that’s why it’s so important that CWU members across BT Group get involved in the [\*Count Me In\*](#) campaign.”

- **The CWU is the trade union recognised to negotiate for team member grade employees across BT Group. The more members we have the more influence and success we will have. If any of your friends or colleagues are not members of the CWU, please share this news story with them and encourage them to join us by contacting your local CWU rep or CWU branch. Alternatively, they can join us online [here](#)**