

Convenient Branches - Are They Convenient for You?

Unite have been in consultation with LBG over Convenient Branches. Convenient Branches is a pilot in the whole of the Bristol & South Midlands region during the first half of 2011 starting in the first quarter. The intention is for Convenient Branches to be rolled out nationally across Lloyds TSB, Bank of Scotland and Halifax branches.

What Does 'Convenient Branches' Mean?

Some changes will be made to all of the branches in the pilot, including some of the roles, the structure of the branch team and in some cases the branch opening hours.

In essence branches which will operate different working hours that should appeal to their particular customer base. Saturday opening hours could also be altered, albeit, there is no intention of operating Sunday opening.

To this end Unite have a commitment from LBG that there will be an additional investment in FTE to support the new opening hours and queuing to meet customer demand.

The career structure in the branches will alter from what is currently in place in LTSB Community Bank to what is detailed below;

The following will automatically move to a new role:

Existing Role	New Role
Customer Assistant Team Leader	Customer Service Assistant Customer Service Manager

The current Bank Manager, Financial Advisor, Mortgage Advisor and Customer Service Manager roles remain unchanged.

The remaining sales – related roles will participate in a selection process. Everyone will go through a preference and selection process and will have a one-to-one discussion about what this means for them in more detail.

Current Role	Current Grade	New Role	New Provisional Grade*
Personal Banker	B	Customer Service Assistant	A
		Customer Banker	B
Personal Banking Manager	C	Customer Banker	B
		Senior Customer Banker	C
		Customer Banking Manager	C
Senior Personal Banking Manager	C	Customer Banker	B
		Senior Customer Banker	C
		Customer Banking Manager	C
Sales Manager	C / D1 / Du	Senior Customer Banker	C
		Customer Service Manager	C / D1 / Du
		Customer Banking Manager	C / D1 / Du

New Branch Structure and Opening Hours

Along with the new sales structure there will be, depending on the size of the branch, a new management structure with Bank Managers directly managing a maximum of six front line colleagues. If there are six or more sales colleagues a Customer Banking Manager will be introduced to manage them. Six or more Customer Service Assistants a Customer Service manager will be introduced to manage them.

Unite know that the issue of opening hours will be of paramount importance. It is expected that if the branch is in a city centre it may be that the branch will open earlier or if near a shopping centre it will open later. Because of this working patterns will be looked at. Full discussions will take place regarding working patterns and wherever possible changes should be achieved by mutual consent. No one's hours will change automatically.

Unite's Concerns

Sales v Service

Salaries and grades will not change during the pilot period unless a role is applied for at a higher grade and an offer is made.

Once the pilot has been completed, for those existing Personal Bankers (Band B) who want to pursue a service role the only option open is to become a Customer Service Assistant (Band A), albeit salaries will be protected as per current agreements.

The issue of sales v service has once again been brought to the forefront with the main service role within the branch being that of a Customer Service Assistant, Band A. The CSA will be expected to operate tills, manage queues and carry out non sales related functions. Unite is of the opinion that the role of the CSA is seriously under valued and that there is a perception within LBG that the CSA will only carry out counter work and queue busting, ignoring all the other work that is vital to the operation of a successful branch. Unite is acutely aware of the overtime currently worked by Customer Assistants, often unpaid, to ensure that the days work is completed, therefore, Unite will be keeping a close watch on the commitment from LBG to increase staffing where the need is identified. For Convenient Branches to be successful it is imperative that the FTE levels are correct and the branches are not running on the goodwill and overtime of existing staff.

Unite reiterate that any overtime worked at management's behest must be paid in line with the current overtime procedures. If the work causing the overtime is required to be completed, overtime must be paid, it is not good enough to be told that there is no budget to pay overtime. Legitimate unpaid overtime is classed as 'Unlawful Deduction from Wages'.

Working Patterns

As part of the Terms & Conditions – Working Hours negotiations that took place in September 2010 a procedure was agreed between Unite & LBG that all managers will be trained in the process of changing working hours to ensure they understand and adhere to being consistent and fair throughout the whole working pattern change consultation.

Any alteration to working patterns should be reached by mutual consent. It is not good enough to be told that if you have signed the new contract then you will work to pre determined patterns. Due consideration must be given to a number of factors including personal circumstances, caring responsibilities, be it child care or a dependant, disability or safety. Additionally a sensible approach should be made when public transport is the only mode of travel available.

If you have not signed the new contract and still do not wish to do so Unite advice is not to change your working pattern outside of your current contractual hours or days.

Your concerns over working patterns must be taken seriously and should you be unable to reach an agreement by mutual consent you may appeal through Stage 1 of the Grievance Procedure. Unite urge you to contact your Unite Rep for further guidance, support, advice and representation.

Bonus Schemes: Transitional Arrangements & Targeting and Incentives

Unite have been consulted on the above and will issue a further newsletter when consultations have concluded.

Should you have concerns, questions or queries on the subject of Convenient Branches please contact the Unite Helpline on:

08081 449595

Or e-mail Unite support on lbg.support@unitetheunion.org

If you wish to join Unite you can do so online at www.unitetheunion.org