



Not in your name

Unite members and Workplace Representatives in the branch network have come to us in recent weeks with concern over the bank's decision to include second names on badges that can be seen by customers and the public in the banking hall.

Historically the union has effectively resisted this idea by arguing that use of surnames on name badges could endanger members' personal security where they were visible to the public. On this occasion, however, the badges had been ordered and were being distributed before the union became aware of what was happening.

As one of our national reps put it –

'Last week, my manager gave me my new name badge which had my full name on it (the new badges will also have on them the flags of the country whose language you can speak). I expressed concern and said I would refuse to wear it as, although I have a well-known name, there are very few in the phone book and so it would be easy for a customer to find my home phone no, and even more risky, where I live (hostage scenarios). He said it was now mandatory to have the full name on. My colleagues also said they were unhappy and so were quite a few from other branches as we are all aware that a few years ago a couple of our colleagues started to get strange phone calls from customers.'

In response to this, the union raised the issue through the Central Safety Committee which is made up of senior representatives of the bank and the union.

One of our senior reps takes up the story –

‘This was brought to our attention by many of our workplace reps and by members calling the Unite members’ helpline on 0845 604 5527. We raised it with the Central Safety Committee as we believed this would be the best and fastest place to pick up the concerns that staff were feeding back to us. They were mostly around hostage situations, stalkers and harassment.

We were right. We had a short debate on this and HR said they would pick it up with the policy team. We had a fast turn-around time on this and the result is individual choice.

This was later confirmed by the bank –

‘(I write) further to our conversation in respect of the case (you) raised regarding the issue of full names on badges for front line individuals. It has been agreed and the decision has been taken to provide flexibility where it is needed from a procedural perspective. Procedures will be updated for next week and will allow for colleagues to request, where they have concerns, to remove the use of the last name on badges.’

The intranet now says –

‘The preference is for both first name and surname, however please be aware that where there are concerns, first names only can be used.’

Unite’s recommendation to members in the branch network is that you should make your choice and protect your personal security by asking for your second name to be removed from your badge.

Bernadette Fisher, Unite National Secretary in HSBC, August 18th 2011.

