

Communication Workers Union - Midlands Division

Dear Colleague,

Burslem Delivery Office – The Facts

Members employed at Burslem Delivery Office, Stoke-on-Trent, commenced official strike action at 04.00am on the 18th December 2007; the strike action will be continuous until the 2nd January 2008. The dispute is in support of 12 members who were suspended by Royal Mail in September 2007, of which 9 remain suspended, and subject to conduct code proceedings.

The 12 suspended members which includes the CWU Burslem Office Reps and Deputy Reps, occurred as a result of vague and unspecified allegations of bullying and harassment by an anonymous individual who may or may not be a manager.

The CWU believes there is a problem at Burslem with bullying and harassment, but that management need to look in the mirror to identify the culprits.

CWU members at Burslem have nothing to hide, and we formally proposed to the business that they agree to a genuinely independent investigation into **all** allegations of bullying and harassment at Burslem. Their response, to **reject** this proposal. In a further attempt to avoid a dispute we proposed that all of these cases should have any appeals against conduct penalties heard by the National Appeal Panel (which contains an independent Chairman). The business response, to also **reject** this proposal.

So who is it that has something to hide? And who is it that is actively seeking a dispute?

In view of Royal Mail's outright refusal to have any of their anonymous allegations tested by an independent authority, here are a number of **facts** that should give members food for thought on the truth about Burslem.

When the union balloted Burslem members for official strike action, management made a great play on the fact that the industrial action ballot would be a **secret ballot** and this was an ideal opportunity for employees to reject the industrial action call and vote 'no' without fear of any reprisals. The result of this secret ballot – **83% of Burslem members voted for strike action.**

Equally as relevant, earlier this year Burslem Delivery Office had its annual *Have Your Say* survey. This is also a **secret survey** where members can record their responses honestly based on their personal experiences. Below are some of the main scores from the survey, together with a comparison of how each score compare with the national average, and whether the office is improving or worsening on each score.

Firstly, **84%** of Burslem employees completed the *Have Your Say* survey. A very high participation rate, that makes the scores statistically valid and highly relevant.

The **Managerial Index**, which is a basket of questions relating to the office management and how they treat employees, scored a miserable **15%**, which was a **53%** lower score than 2006.

An astonishing **76%** of employees stated that they had **witnessed** bullying or harassment at work in the last 12 months.

The level of bullying and harassment at the office has risen almost four fold in the last 12 months from **6%** to **21%** of employees stating that they been the **recipient** of bullying or harassment at work in the last 12 months. Of that figure, **16%** said the bullying or harassment was by **Managers**, only **2%** said it was by a **colleague**.

Of those who experienced bullying or harassment and reported the fact, **42%** said they reported this to their union, only **16%** felt able to report this to a manager. **(It is interesting to note that the Office Union Reps are amongst those suspended, accused of bullying and harassment, and yet, by far, employees feel more able to report bullying to them, rather than their manager)!**

Over half of employees (**58%**) reported that bullying and harassment at the office was ongoing.

To the question "*In my workplace people are treated fairly.*" only **8%** agreed with this statement, whilst a massive **80%** disagreed. A massive drop of **57%** from last years score. The office score was also **38%** below the national average.

Other relevant scores include Burslem being **41%** below the national average

for feeling able to approach their line manager to discuss issues. An office worsening of **55%** since 2006.

Only **12%** of employees said that their manager says "*well done*", **45%** below the national average and a **71%** drop in last years score.

Only **5%** of employees said their manager provided constructive feedback to them.

Only **13%** of employees felt that their manager cares about their health and well-being, a **53%** drop in the 2006 office score, and **40%** below the national average.

70% of employees also made comments in the survey. The top five subjects commented on were:

1. *Need good/better/competent managers*
2. *Managers need to respect staff/treat staff better*
3. *Stop bullying/harassment by management*
4. *Not a nice place to work*
5. *Improve/boost morale/moral is at an all time low*

The above are FACTS taken from Royal Mail's own internal employee survey. It is abundantly clear that there is a bullying and harassment problem at Burslem. It is also clear where that problem lies. Yet again Royal Mail is in denial of the evidence before their own eyes.

SAY NO TO BULLYING AND HARASSMENT BY SUPPORTING OUR BURSLEM COLEAGUES