

## Summary of submissions from the Retired Members Recruitment Sub-Committee on boosting CWU retired membership

### Introduction

The CWU recently set up a Retired Members Recruitment Sub-Committee to begin considering ways of boosting retired membership within the CWU. Members of the Sub-Committee were invited to contribute their views in writing<sup>1</sup>, and the following document identifies key themes and ideas from their contributions that could be used as a basis to launch a recruitment initiative.

### Key Themes

There were a number of themes identified by Sub-Committee members to address the question of how the CWU can recruit and retain retired members, as follows:

- 1. Identifying and contacting members when they retire**
- 2. Improving our offer and representation of retired members**
- 3. Communicating better with retired members**
- 4. Strengthening retired members' representative structures**
- 5. The identity and role of the Retired Members section**
- 6. Retired membership rights and participation**

### 1. Identifying and Contacting members when they retire

The majority of submissions noted the absence of an effective mechanism for identifying and contacting CWU members when they retire. Several submissions put forward ideas for addressing this.

#### Challenges identified:

- Older members are likely to pay their membership description by DAS. When they retire, they will automatically cease to be a CWU member, rather than making a conscious decision to leave the union.
- Where subscriptions are paid via payroll, information provided to branches about members leaving can be delayed by up to six months, making it too late to offer retired membership.

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<sup>1</sup> Submissions were received from eight members of the Retired Members Sub-Committee.

## Solutions and ideas put forward:

### Identifying and accessing retired members:

- The CWU should establish what information on leavers/retirees is provided to the CWU by employers, and consider how best to use this information to increase retired membership.
- We should consider how CWU HQ or regional reps can seek cross business access to members as part of the formal leaving/redundancy process to offer retired/extended membership.
- We should negotiate with the HR department of each recognised employer to ensure that everyone who takes Early Voluntary Retirement is advised that they can retain CWU membership through becoming a retired member.
- We should consider using demographic information in the CWU membership database to send branches a list of members nearing retirement age, who can then be contacted about retired membership.
- The Membership Department at CWU HQ should identify all stopped members and issue a standardised letter about retired membership.

### Informing retired members about the benefits of retired membership:

- Information received by CWU HQ on leavers from our major recognised employers should be used to send out recruitment packs or alert branches to remind them to contact these members.
- Branches should use any notification they receive of leavers to contact those members informing them of the benefits of retired membership.

### Campaigning around CWU Retired Membership:

- Consider launching a 'Thinking of Retiring' campaign, which could bring together the retired members' constituency and help to promote the benefits of retired membership.
- The CWU's GROW campaign should include a focus on retired members.

## **2. Improving our offer and representation of retired members**

A number of submissions expressed the view that there is a need to update and improve our offer to retired members and to consider how we can best represent their interests.

### Challenges identified:

- The CWU's current offer to retired members simply has not proved attractive and is very difficult to sell to members. There is not enough in it.
- The most significant benefit available is the CWU Death Benefit, which requires a certain amount of forward consideration from members, given that it only becomes payable upon death.
- Most discounted products and services offered as CWU membership benefits are exclusively accessible by internet access, which many retired members do not have.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> One submission stated that about 33% of their Retired Members do not have access to the internet and about 20% do not have a landline, so they rely on communications by post.

- The current legal services package does not cover the needs of retired members, such as advice or representation in relation to benefits, state pension, and care provision.
- There appear to be no benefits carried into retirement from either of the two main employers (for example free internet from BT). Other organisations including in gas, water, and railways provide carry over benefits to their retired staff.
- There is a lack of social contact with Branches. One of the main reasons that retired members join is that they are looking for social contact with other retired members and their Branch.

#### **Solutions and ideas put forward:**

- Redefine the purpose and benefits of retired membership, improve the package we offer and consider a re-launch of this with the assistance of regions and branches.
- Conduct a survey of all retired members to ask them what they want.
- Consider whether we should develop a different offer to retain members from diverse groups, such as younger members leaving employment for reasons other than retirement, such as VR.
- Establish how well the CWU compares in terms of what we offer to retired members. Are there other areas we could look at to improve our offer and how well are we doing in comparison with other unions?
- Keep retired members regularly updated about CWU membership benefits, via post.
- Negotiate with Royal Mail, BT and other major recognised employers to secure benefits for retired staff.
- Encourage branches to arrange social events to promote social interaction.
- Consider if there is a need for better campaigning techniques when dealing with issues of real concern to retired members, such as state pensions.

### **3. Communicating better with retired members**

There was a widely held view that one major failing has been a lack of information flowing to retired members in recent times.

#### **Solutions and ideas put forward:**

- The CWU should consider whether we communicate enough information, frequently enough to our retired members sections.
- The reintroduction of a quarterly magazine would be helpful to keep retired members informed.
- Communications should not be the sole preserve of HQ, and branches and retired members reps have a role to play in this by sending out emails and branch publications to members on a regular basis.
- Each CWU region and branch should appoint an individual(s) who will take responsibility for disseminating relevant information to retired members.
- The CWU should insist that branches contact their retired members regarding the need to collect current addresses and email info (there is a legal requirement to do so anyway) and to use this database to enhance the comms we send to branches.

- Branches should provide a contact number specifically for retired members to contact their Branch.
- We should communicate better and more with our members who are approaching retirement.

#### **4. Strengthening retired members' representative structures**

More than one submission expressed concerns about a weakness in retired members representative structures, in particular the lack of reps undertaking the role of Retired Members Secretary.

##### **Solutions and ideas put forward:**

- In the absence of reps taking up the role of Retired Members Secretary, consider whether to make it conditional that it become part of the role of the Branch Treasurer or another officer.
- Consider whether the CWU should be looking at how we can involve our retired members more in the day to day running of the branch.
- Ensure where possible that a Retired Member with responsibility for the Retired Members in the Branch is a member of the Branch Committee where there is a Retired Members Section.
- Where no Retired Members Section in a Branch the Regional Lead should act as a contact point for Retired Members with no Retired Members Section.
- Where there is no Retired Members Section ensure the Branch establishes a point of contact.
- Branches should ensure that one seat on their Branch Committee' is specifically reserved for the Retired Members Representative.

#### **5. Identity of the Retired Members Section**

A question was raised about what it means to be a retired member, and whether there needs to be a change in the identity and purpose of this section of the membership. Consideration should also be given to whether the Retired Members section should be restricted to campaigning on behalf of pensioners or whether it should involve the broader membership to support the interests of future retired individuals. The CWU could look at whether the name of the section should be changed to the "CWU Leavers Section", given the increasing state pension age and that many people leave through VR without necessarily retiring.

#### **6. Retired membership rights and participation**

One submission raised a concern about the decision by the NEC to debar retired members from voting or standing in certain elections, particularly at Branch level. The submission noted that the same debarments do not apply to those who have chosen to take up portability membership but who have ceased employment. Those who have taken that option and perform roles within the CWU provide valuable service at a number of levels. The submission suggested that the CWU should consider to what extent portability membership has contributed to the decrease in retired membership.