



## Prudential UK: The UK employee forum

**The two-tier information and consultation arrangements developed at Prudential UK cover all employees and demonstrate how an all-elected consultative forum can be introduced into a partially unionised environment – making it one of the first companies to develop a model which fully meets the terms of the information and consultation regulations.**

*'Linking good employment relations with better decision making and enhancing the capability of the organisation to grow through employee consultation'*

Prudential UK, part of Prudential plc provides a wide range of assurance, investment and savings products and markets through a number of channels including direct advertising and through Financial Advisers.

The UK employee forum covers all permanent employees within the UK, including managers up to direct reports to the UK chief executive. Historically, the Prudential had partial union recognition with MSF (now part of Amicus) and elected employee representatives in other parts of the business. The new forum gives the company a model that meets the needs of these different cultures.

The 27 all-elected representatives ensure representation covering all business areas, locations and grades. The structure is designed to ensure that, no matter what the topic, or interested parties, a suitable group of representatives can be gathered to discuss an issue and provide input. Specific representatives are also elected to cover senior management.

The forum operates at two levels. At level one, business area representatives are directly elected in the area, location and/or grade that they represent. Between 5 and 8 representatives are elected into each of the four main business areas and meet

### Business information

<b>Company:</b>	Prudential UK
<b>Business description:</b>	Financial services
<b>UK Headquarters:</b>	London
<b>Staff:</b>	6,800
<b>Sites:</b>	Craigforth, Reading, Belfast, London, Dublin and Mumbai (India)

separately on a monthly basis. They in turn appoint a business area chair from their own number to represent all sites and grades within their business area at the UK forum board (level two).

The UK forum meets formally on a biannual basis and this meeting is attended by the chief executive of Prudential UK, along with the human resources director and other members of the executive. These meetings, are planned well in advance and are primarily for sharing information at UK level. A vast

*continued overleaf*

### Consultation arrangements

<b>Structure:</b>	A two-tier arrangement, with four business area committees combining as a UK-wide employee forum to cover all employees up to and including direct reports to the chief executive
<b>Union role:</b>	Single union recognition. All employee representative seats are elected
<b>Frequency of meetings:</b>	Monthly business area committees and biannual UK employee forum meetings. The majority of consultations take place on an ad-hoc basis between relevant management and employee representatives
<b>Representatives:</b>	27 elected business area representatives. Each area elects a chair to represent the business area at the UK level. Formal Employee Forum meetings are attended by the chief executive and HR director.

majority of the forum's activity takes place on an ad-hoc basis as items requiring consultation arise.

The forum has two full-time seconded representatives (an employee chair and a vice chair) and a full-time administrator. These roles provide the necessary support to ensure the smooth operation of the forum.

A key responsibility of all employee representatives is to regularly seek views and provide feedback, both on behalf of the employees they represent and their colleagues at other levels of the forum. The representatives do not provide support for individual representation in processes such as grievance, capability or disciplinary.

Managers also have a responsibility for raising collective issues with the business area representatives, seeking their views and providing feedback. Both managers and representatives work with the company's human resource business partners, who ensure that both senior and line managers understand the importance of sharing information and consulting before decisions are taken. These are supported by employee relations consultants, whose responsibility it is to ensure the development and implementation of consistent practice across the business.

### **Making it work**

*Training:* The elected representatives receive training from the IPA and in-house on specialist matters. Personal development is also an important feature of the new arrangements and each representative has been offered a personal co-active coach and a place at the Prudential University, an MBA-style programme, conducted at Warwick Business School and usually available only to senior management.

*Consultation:* The forum is consulted on a wide range of issues including: business and industry policies, employment and customer service. A key

point here is that when introducing an all-employee forum into a partially unionised environment, there needs to be a clear distinction between negotiation, through collective bargaining and consultation; the two being entirely different things. The clarity that this brings reduces overlap and the risk confusion.

*Measurement:* Measuring the satisfaction of the employee representatives with the consultation process represents a major first step in developing a measurement tool to evaluate the effectiveness of the forum. After each consultation the representatives complete an evaluation that invites them to reflect on whether, in hindsight, they were notified early enough, whether sufficient information was provided, that consultation was open, that they influenced the decision making process and received reasoned feedback.

### **The high performance workplace**

This case study forms part of a project entitled 'Adaptable Enterprises'. The project includes educational and networking activities on: high performance working, healthy working and performance, the future of work and organisation, and intellectual capital.

The project is conducted by the UKWON, co-ordinated by the IPA and supported by the European Social Fund. Further information is available from [juliet.webster@ipa-involve.com](mailto:juliet.webster@ipa-involve.com)

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This case study was researched and written by Robert Stevens, Research and Information Manager, IPA. The views in this case study are those of the participants and may not reflect those of the IPA.

## **IPA support**

### **Briefing management:**

Information, examples and contacts to demonstrate the potential from consulting collectively

### **Developing the new forum:**

Workshops with employee and trade union representatives to explore the proposed forum

### **Electing representatives:**

IPA worked in partnership with the Electoral Reform Services, who organised independent nominations and elections of the employee representatives

### **Strengthening the arrangements:**

Initial training for representatives on being effective in their role. On-going access to a range of information and support for both management and employee representatives.



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