

In its response, Google referred to its Supplier Code of Conduct. We have also paid particular attention to this code, especially to points “E” and “F” under the section “Labour and Human Rights”.

Point “E” refers to “fair treatment, non-discrimination, diversity and inclusion” and specifies, “Suppliers will not discriminate in screening, hiring or employment practices based on [...] union membership” (among a list of other protected characteristics). Additionally, suppliers are required to “demonstrate a commitment to identify, measure and improve a culture of diversity and inclusion through all aspects of workplace management”.

Point “F” refers directly to “Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining”, stating that workers must be “permitted to associate freely, bargain collectively and seek representation in accordance with local laws. Suppliers are expected to permit workers to openly communicate and share grievances with management and working conditions without fear of reprisal or harassment”.

Not only does the removal of elected union representatives on the eve of agreed negotiations seem to directly contradict the right of free association and freedom from discrimination, Principle themselves state in their response that “Principle Cleaning Services Limited does not recognise any trade union and does not have any collective bargaining arrangements in place with any trade union”.

While subcontractors at Google (in London, at least) are managed through another company, we would hope that Google would hold all involved accountable to this Code of Conduct.

To respond to Principle’s claim that it has invited CAIWU to meetings and been refused, this is not true. We are still in direct communication with Principle to attempt to reach a meeting, and it is the dismissal and building ban on the two elected representatives that has obstructed this process.

Prior to these dismissals, the two representatives were both removed from Google’s London HQ, despite not yet being dismissed. At the time, CAIWU was in dialogue with Principle Cleaning in an attempt to settle relations without having to use industrial action or public protests. CAIWU was left with no choice but to pull out of discussions at ACAS (the Government-backed Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service), because the elected representatives

We were in extensive email contact with individuals at Principle Cleaning, trying to resolve issues. the issues due to be discussed at the cancelled ACAS meeting include ever-increasing workloads due to cuts in the number of cleaners, and Principle’s failure to provide adequate cover for absences due to sickness or annual leave. Workers are also unhappy about Principle’s refusal to offer cleaners a contractual sick pay scheme, its refusal to allow them to take more than two consecutive weeks of annual leave, and its failure to match the terms of bonus schemes offered by other Google service providers.

As we said in our initial statement, CAIWU elected representatives were due to meet with Principle Cleaning when they were told they could no longer attend their workplace at the Google headquarters. For Principle to claim that CAIWU has refused to meet, when we have tried repeatedly to do so and finally had our representatives removed from the building is extremely inaccurate. We are sure they understand that by refusing to engage with our representatives, they have made it impossible to engage in dialogue.

Since our first statement to the BHRRC both cleaners have been dismissed. They have appealed against the dismissals, and CAIWU awaits the outcome of these appeals.

In email correspondence on the dates 3 September, 10 September, 19 September and 23 September, CAIWU have sent messages to contact points at Principle to accept invitations to meet, offering to coordinate this process through ACAS to ensure impartial facilitation, agreeing on mutually convenient dates and to refrain from posting about the publicly,

Finally our email, received by Principle Cleaning, of 23 September 2019 explained that in light of the removal of two of our members from google, we were unable to go ahead with the meeting, due on 24 September, at ACAS. This message expressed “every intention of rearranging this meeting once we've had a chance to consider the implications of the events to which I refer, and to satisfy ourselves that we can negotiate with your organisation in good faith.”

Subsequently, on 26 September 2019, we communicated that the removal of two workers, despite not being on suspension, led our members to feel unable to participate in dialogue due to mistrust in the process.

In November, Principle and CAIWU have remained in contact, with CAIWU explaining once again that workers have the right to be represented by their elected representatives, and that since those representatives have been dismissed and since we, and – more importantly – our members employed by Principle at Google, presently have little confidence that the same situation does not await any newly selected representative, it is currently difficult to see on what basis talks might be able to resume. We have committed to remaining in contact when we know the outcome of the representatives’ appeal.

Other CAIWU members working for Principle at Google have reported coming under sustained pressure to incriminate their colleagues, and have discussed their concerns about the possibility of facing victimisation themselves, having refused to do so.