



ADVERTISEMENT

WHAT'S ON

# The Call Centre: Why annoying has never been so moving

Look past the sexist banter and unique management style of boss Nev Wilshire, and what you've got in BBC Three's The Call Centre is a real sense of community. Or so says media expert Dr John Jewell, who looks forward to series two



By **WalesOnline**

12:00, 7 APR 2014 | UPDATED 15:36, 8 APR 2014

► See news near you

In YourArea

Enter your postcode Go





[JOBS](#) [MENTAL HEALTH](#) [VOUCHER CODES](#) [DIRECTORY](#) [FUNERAL NOTICES](#) [TRAVEL](#) [DATING](#) [BOOK AN](#)



## Nev and co are back on the phone in The Call Centre

### Get the biggest Swansea stories by email

Enter your email

Subscribe

See our [privacy notice](#)

[More newsletters](#)

Firstly, interests to declare: Lord, I am from the lovely, lovely town that is Swansea.

Secondly, I worked, albeit over 10 years ago, in a call centre.

This I feel places me in an ideal position to comment upon and assess BBC Three's attempt to hold the working classes up to a distorted mirror.

I want to talk about the return of the docu-soap set in the Save Britain Money call centre, Swansea.

Based around the larger than life uber boss, Nev Wilshire, the Call Centre first aired as a five episode series in the summer of 2013.

The show's energy came principally from the David Brent-like Nev, but also under the visual microscope were the lives and aspirations of his workforce – the majority of whom were under 26 and jaw-droppingly candid.

Series one was coarse, exhilarating, frequently touching and often hilarious.

Indeed, episode four illustrated all of the above points with regularity.



[JOBS](#) [MENTAL HEALTH](#) [VOUCHER CODES](#) [DIRECTORY](#) [FUNERAL NOTICES](#) [TRAVEL](#) [DATING](#) [BOOK AN](#)

Yes, somebody had a number two in a bin.

This, only mildly mark you, disconcerted Nev who reasonably enough pointed out that there was no company policy on someone doing such a thing.

As he put it: "It's something we'll have to rectum - fy."

So this is the office environment as evidenced in the Call Centre.

Week after week we saw Nev roam his kingdom dispensing his particular brand of wisdom, cajoling and shouting, matchmaking and arm wrestling, but above all seeking to create an atmosphere where people were relaxed and happy enough to 'cold call' all day.

'Happy people sell' is the mantra he goes by - and, by God, if people aren't happy, he tries to make sure they get happy.

So what to make of Nev?

Completely unreconstructed, his management style appeared to be modelled on Gene Hunt from Life on Mars crossed with Cilla Black circa the Blind Date years.

The evident sexism, border line bullying and general inappropriate behaviour ranging from enforced singing to the abuse of office furniture, would lead one to think that his methods could not possibly succeed and even if they did, he would be loathed by his underlings.

Not a bit of it.

He said it: Nev's best bits of banter

**VIEW GALLERY** 

He was clearly adored by his staff - male and female - and beneath the bluster there were numerous incidents of kindness and compassion.

A clearly intelligent man, Nev acted (and you did sense so much acting going on) as a father figure to a particularly cheeky group of young monkeys.



**JOB** **MENTAL HEALTH** **VOUCHER CODES** **DIRECTORY** **FUNERAL NOTICES** **TRAVEL** **DATING** **BOOK AN**

Who'd have thought it? The audience, I'll bet anyway, looked on aghast, with self-righteous horror as one unnamed agent said: "I wanted to be small with big boobs....what girl doesn't? It's just something everyone wants I suppose."

Actually, she may have had a point there, as 19 year old Corey, the (male) body builder illustrated whilst in the gym.

He was adamant that his girlfriend, Chloe, 21, had smaller breasts than he did. Of this fact he was clearly very proud.

So there was much to ridicule, much to titillate the superior twitterati as they salivated over their iPhones eager to pounce on the latest, cringe worthy truisms uttered by an inveterate group of people for whom the sexual revolution is a nightclub in Ibiza.

This is, of course, what the programme makers wanted.

We have a curious attitude in this country to...entertainment style programmes.

We expect them to tell us the truth.

We imagine an honesty of purpose and tend to forget that the material is organised in such a way as to lead us to form certain perceptions and attitudes.

From episode four of the Call Centre we could be forgiven for thinking that the entire workforce smoked like beagles whilst preening themselves in front of a giant imaginary mirror.

But subtext is important.

Modern day telesales is an unforgiving environment where every movement of the agent is tracked, where targets must be met, where the often vitriolic abuse meted out by an outraged public can take its toll very quickly indeed.

This working atmosphere is relentless and the need to rack up sale after sale leads many of the workers to end their shifts drenched in sweat with the pressures of it all.

At least the film makers acknowledged the precariousness of the job.



[JOBS](#) [MENTAL HEALTH](#) [VOUCHER CODES](#) [DIRECTORY](#) [FUNERAL NOTICES](#) [TRAVEL](#) [DATING](#) [BOOK AN](#)

---

In the words of the genuinely charming tea lady, Hayley: "I didn't have the chance to say goodbye to them and that is sad. I did lose a few mates.....mates that I looked forward to seeing on a Monday morning."

That for me was the key to the series – there was, amongst the staggering sexism, heavy air of forced banter and a real fear of losing one's job, a sense of community evident.

The collective experience and camaraderie seemed to sustain them.

They really were all in the same boat.

And these were young people working (let's not forget that fact: they were doing just that – working) in a job most of us simply could not do.

Why they said things to the camera that would make a docker weep requires further analysis of course.

But that's for another time.

Maybe after the second series has finished.

**[Dr John Jewell](#) is Director of Undergraduate Studies at the School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, Cardiff University. The Call Centre returns to BBC Three on Tuesday at 9pm**

ADVERTISEMENT



JOB S MENTAL HEALTH VOUCHER CODES DIRECTORY FUNERAL NOTICES TRAVEL DATING BOOK AN

**Meet Nev's 'number two' son Phil**

Like 566K WalesOnline

Follow @WOWalesOnline

Subscribe to our Swansea newsletter Privacy notice

Enter email

PROMOTED STORIES

**Change your surroundings. Work on t' love.**

FASTHOSTS

SPONSORED

Sponsored Links

**Pensioners Are Snapping Up New High Tech Hearing Aids**

COMPARE HEARING AIDS

**45 Amazing World Maps**

FAR & WIDE

**Homeowner Without A Will? Don't Leave The Future To Chance**

RESPONSIBLE ESTATE PLANNING

SPONSORED

Sponsored Links

**Over 50's Are Snapping-up Brilliant Funeral Plans From Just 50p per Day**

BRIGHT LIGHT COVER



[JOBS](#) [MENTAL HEALTH](#) [VOUCHER CODES](#) [DIRECTORY](#) [FUNERAL NOTICES](#) [TRAVEL](#) [DATING](#) [BOOK AN](#)

---

## RECOMMENDED

### Man in middle of 'stressful' Wales v England tunnel feud breaks silence

WALES ONLINE

### Leeds face £15m Wolves battle, Swans keen on free agent Williams

WALES ONLINE

Sponsored Links

### Choose a fighter jet and play this Game for 1 Minute to see why everyone is addicted

DELTA WARS

### Avoid NHS Queues with Private Medical Insurance from £14.64 Per Month!

HEALTH WINDOW - PMI

### Couple sees crying man forced to throw package in airport trash. Then they secretly fish it out

EASYVOYAGE

SPONSORED

## RECOMMENDED

### Father killed falling asleep at the wheel while driving son home from university

WALES ONLINE

### Liverpool table £71m star bid as Utd to announce £72m signing date

WALES ONLINE

Sponsored Links

### How Much Do Solar Panels Actually Cost?



JOB S MENTAL HEALTH VOUCHER CODES DIRECTORY FUNERAL NOTICES TRAVEL DATING BOOK AN

## born between 1950-1959? You might be eligible for revolutionary new Laser Eye Surgery

OPTICAL EXPRESS

## Anne Hegerty is So Skinny Now and Looks Gorgeous! (Photos)

CARS&YACHTS

SPONSORED

## You'll Never Want To Leave Your Bedroom With This Mattress

THE OTTY MATTRESS

SPONSORED

 MORE ON

The Call Centre

BBC

Cardiff University

nsea

### PROMOTED STORIES

#### After Her Weight Loss, Celine Dion Confirm What we Knew All along

Car Novels

#### These Online Dating Sites Are for Serious Relationships

TOP UK Dating Sites

#### Meet single people near Cardiff !

Match

#### Why an electric car should be your main car

DrivingElectric

Sponsored Links by Taboola





JOB S MENTAL HEALTH VOUCHER CODES DIRECTORY FUNERAL NOTICES TRAVEL DATING BOOK AN

## TOP STORIES

CARDIFF COUNCIL

**Another massive student flat block in Cardiff can't fill its rooms and wants to get non-students in**

WALES NEWS

**Live updates as sacked minister Carl Sargeant's inquest resumes in Ruthin**

CARDIFF

**The Cardiff boy who went from paper round to selling bespoke cars for £1.6 million**



SWANSEA

**This man has had so many scooters stolen he can't get theft insurance any more**



GARETH BALE

**Gareth Bale secretly marries his sweetheart in hush-hush wedding on tiny Spanish island**



[JOBS](#) [MENTAL HEALTH](#) [VOUCHER CODES](#) [DIRECTORY](#) [FUNERAL NOTICES](#) [TRAVEL](#) [DATING](#) [BOOK AN](#)

---

FORD

**Live updates as Ford bosses tell MPs about their decision to close Bridgend engine plant**

TRANSPORT FOR WALES

**What passengers really think of Transport for Wales since it took over Welsh trains**

CARDIFF

**'My body will be frozen when I die so I can live again in the future'**



BANGOR UNIVERSITY

**'I was supposed to be doing my GCSEs, instead I was having treatment for a brain tumour in America'**

TRAFFIC AND TRAVEL



[JOBS](#) [MENTAL HEALTH](#) [VOUCHER CODES](#) [DIRECTORY](#) [FUNERAL NOTICES](#) [TRAVEL](#) [DATING](#) [BOOK AN](#)

---

WELSH RUGBY UNION

**The man who managed Oasis and ran a Welsh rugby club at the same time**

POLITICS

**Wild animals set to be banned from circus performances in Wales**



ADVERTISEMENT

[NEWS](#)

[WHAT'S ON](#)

[SPORT](#)

[BUSINESS](#)

---

FOLLOW US



**JOB** **MENTAL HEALTH** **VOUCHER CODES** **DIRECTORY** **FUNERAL NOTICES** **TRAVEL** **DATING** **BOOK AN**

---

---

[InYourArea](#) | [Discount Codes](#) | [Marketplace](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [About Us](#) | [Work for us](#) | [Download our e-editions](#) |  
[Letters To The Editor](#) | [Echo Home Delivery](#) | [Magazines](#) | [Advertise with Us](#) | [Our Audience](#) | [Bingo](#) |  
[Buy a photo](#) | [How to Complain](#) | [Corrections and Clarifications](#) | [Google Survey](#) | [Reader Panel](#) | [Public Notices](#) |  
[Terms & Conditions](#) | [Privacy Notice](#) | [Cookie Notice](#) | [RSS Feeds](#) | © 2019 Media Wales Ltd |