

03/04/2020

## COVID – 19 Response from Postal Administrations and Trade Unions around the World

### Introduction

The following document sets out an overview of the response by postal administrations and trade unions around the world to the coronavirus crisis. Trade unions across the globe been pushing for the introduction of robust health and safety measures, including personal protective equipment and social distancing in the workplace. They have also called for a reduction in non-essential delivery and greater involvement in the provision of emergency services such as the delivery of food and medicines.

UNI Global Union and the Universal Postal Union - the UN agency for the postal sector – have issued a joint statement urging postal operators and postal unions to put key measures in place to protect the health and safety of postal workers around the world as they continue to serve during the coronavirus health pandemic.<sup>1</sup>

Many postal operators have responded positively, with **France** reducing delivery services to three days a week, and **Spain** scaling back over the counter services to mornings only. The **United States** Postal Service has promised to make surgical masks and gloves available on demand following criticism that it was not doing enough. **China** Post has disinfected entire post offices, processing centres and vehicles. **Uruguay** Post reduced staff numbers at postal facilities and introduced teleworking where possible. The operator also reduced physical contact, closed post offices with large numbers of customers and created special collection points. In **Argentina**, the postal authorities and the postal unions have agreed to establish an "Epidemic Emergency Committee" which has introduced a long list of safety measures including the cleaning of workplaces and the supply of face masks and latex gloves. The **Italian** postal operator has introduced a detailed sanitation plan across the entire post office network, as well as vehicles and post offices. Safety equipment was also distributed to staff to protect all staff in their daily work and to ensure that customers could safely enter the country's post offices.<sup>2</sup>

### CWU and Royal Mail

At the present time Royal Mail has said it will maintain normal operations, as have the incumbent postal operators in the US, Germany, Australia. However, it is clear that this decision to continue with business as usual is out of step with many operators who have chosen to put people's health and safety before profit.

It is also worth noting that even some UK courier companies in the gig economy have committed to providing their workers with personal protective equipment (PPE). Some of this goes beyond

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<sup>11</sup> See Annex 1 for joint UNI/UPU joint statement

<sup>2</sup> <https://postandparcel.info/120238/features/post-features/postal-operators-across-the-globe-make-operational-changes/>

Royal Mail's reported approach of focusing on hand washing and providing disposable latex gloves on request.<sup>3</sup> For example, E-cargo bikes have issued face masks to all workers. Whilst workers for the Doctors Laboratory are in a particularly high risk category, it is useful to note that they have reportedly now been issued new PPE following the threat of legal action by the Independent Workers of Great Britain (IWGB).

The CWU has raised serious concerns about Royal Mail's casual and inconsistent approach to health and safety. We have written to the company calling for emergency changes to protect workers.<sup>4</sup> However, Royal Mail has refused to properly address these.<sup>5</sup> The union has said that if PPE or social distancing measures are not in place, that workplace should be closed until this is rectified.<sup>6</sup> At this stage, staff have walked out in both Scotland and Kent, saying they have been forced to violate the government's social distancing guidelines, while protective equipment still hasn't been supplied.<sup>7</sup>

### **CWU and Post Office**

The Post Office has issued a statement saying that Post Offices have been designated as an essential service by the government. The vast majority of Post Offices are open. Customers are able to get cash, deposit cheques, pay bills as well as send and collect parcels. These are vital services, particularly for many vulnerable customers. Many Post Offices have floor markers and other information on posters to help customers stay two metres apart. Additional protective equipment is being sourced for postmasters. Where a Post Office has to close, posters should be displayed showing the nearest branch.<sup>8</sup>

The CWU has written to the Post Office Limited calling for a number of measures to protect staff, including the provision of PPE must in every workplace, transactions & services reduced to absolute essential items only which support communities and the vulnerable/disadvantaged, and all Post Offices should close at 1pm Monday to Friday and 12.30pm on Saturday.<sup>9</sup>

The Post Office responded by saying they have been focusing on ensuring that a critical service can be delivered to their most vulnerable customers whilst ensuring the risk to their people and customers is kept to a minimum. They argue that in Supply Chain there is widespread access to gloves, hand sanitiser and masks. They are delivering hand sanitiser to all Directly Managed PO Branches (DMBs). There is access to gloves in all branches and they have purchased a number of Perspex screens to create fortress positions and limit the risk of exposure in open plan areas. They have offered paid special leave to their own vulnerable people and those who have vulnerable dependents. Anyone needing to self-isolate will do so immediately on full pay. They are committed to the guidance on social distancing. They said there needs to be further analysis that supports any further reduction of opening hours to ensure that they still offer the necessary critical service at this time. They don't agree right now that to close all branches at 1pm Monday to Friday is the right decision.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://uk.style.yahoo.com/coronavirus-royal-mail-services-impacted-132108705.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/cwu-calls-royal-mail-bring-emergency-coronavirus-changes> . See Annex 2 for the CWU's letter to Royal Mail of 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.cwu.org/press\\_release/royal-mail-refuse-to-address-the-safety-concerns-of-cwu-members/](https://www.cwu.org/press_release/royal-mail-refuse-to-address-the-safety-concerns-of-cwu-members/) See Annex 3 for Royal Mail's response to CWU of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.cwu.org/press\\_release/royal-mail-refuse-to-address-the-safety-concerns-of-cwu-members/](https://www.cwu.org/press_release/royal-mail-refuse-to-address-the-safety-concerns-of-cwu-members/)

<sup>7</sup> <https://scramnews.com/royal-mail-staff-walkout-coronavirus/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.postoffice.co.uk/coronavirus>

<sup>9</sup> See Annex 4 for CWU letter to Post Office Ltd

## **Action taken by postal operators and unions around the world**

### **FRANCE**

In France, mail deliveries are considered an essential service so will continue during the lockdown. However La Poste has announced it is **reducing deliveries to three days a week**. The three days for delivery are reportedly Wednesday to Friday.<sup>10</sup>

In areas where La Poste staff do deliveries of essentials such as meals or medicines for the elderly or ill, these will continue as normal. La Poste is asking its customers to concentrate their orders and shipments on what is strictly necessary for them.

Delivery and sorting office staff will continue to be paid a full wage as their hours are cut. In the case of parcels and registered post that requires a signature, these will still be delivered by postal workers who are taking measures to respect social distancing. Parcels will be left in a customer's mailbox if possible. Anything that requires a signature will instead result in a text message asking the customer to accept delivery.

Missed deliveries will result in parcels being sent to a collection point and there are social distancing measures associated with registered or signed for items.

**Only one in ten post offices are open.** Many, especially the smaller ones, are closed during the lockdown and most are closed on Saturdays.<sup>11</sup> Post offices are prioritising maintaining local banking services and they are reviewing whether or not to continue offering parcel collection. This is in view of the fact that more people are now at home to receive parcels.

Unions are also in dialogue with La Poste and Government that is focused on health and safety and **prioritising essential items such as medical equipment, food and medicine** over advertising and other commercial mail.

### **SPAIN**

Spain has scaled back over-the-counter services to mornings only Monday to Friday, with minimal staffing.<sup>12</sup>

### **URUGUAY**

Correo Uruguayo in Uruguay announced that it was minimizing the spread of the disease by reducing staff numbers at postal facilities and introducing telecommuting where possible. The postal operator also reduced physical contact, closed post offices with large numbers of customers and created special collection points.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.connexionfrance.com/French-news/French-post-office-closes-branches-reduces-deliveries-due-to-Covid-19>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.thelocal.fr/20200319/are-french-post-offices-and-banks-open-during-coronavirus-lockdown>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/03/can-i-send-mail-postal-services-coronavirus-covid19/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://postandparcel.info/120238/features/post-features/postal-operators-across-the-globe-make-operational-changes/>

## **ARGENTINA**

It has been agreed between the postal authorities and the postal unions to establish an "Epidemic Emergency Committee" to exercise permanent monitoring of the situation and to take future necessary measures.

It was also agreed to limit the provision of the workers to a minimum in combination with the following guidelines:

### Retail

Prior to opening, work places should be cleaned and disinfected.

The branches will operate with strictly essential personnel and with a focus on cash lines. Only one person will be attended at the window per operation.

The number of people waiting to be served must be equal to or less than the number of counters enabled, and in case of exceeding that number, they must wait their turn outside the post office. Children will not be allowed in the post office.

The hours of opening to the public will be reduced to 6 hours daily from 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

### Distribution

The focus will be mainly on priority services. Hygiene will be maintained and strengthened in all areas.

To avoid delivery of the shipment by hand, the distributor will place it on the threshold of the house. They will knock on the door and wait to be attended at a safe distance. The signature of the recipient, mobile devices, photos and geolocation data will be used as proof of delivery.

In cases where there is a transport service, they will be used to support the distribution service.

### Operations

A scheme will be established depending on need, based on the services determined as priority. Among the preventive measures adopted, it is important to prioritise the needs of all staff over 60 years and risk groups, as well as pregnant women and parents with school children up to 13 years old when both work in the postal service.

Teleworking has also been arranged in those possible activities and the acquisition has been enabled of security supplies in all the distributions, in addition to the centralized purchase of hygiene equipment (face masks, latex gloves, gel alcohol and others) to ensure their supply.

## **USA - UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE**

### Overview

No service reductions to date for mail handlers. Agreement to provide masks and gloves to all working inside and outside. A temporary provision to ensure all mail handlers will get paid for 8 hours work if they finish rounds in 7 hours due to decreased mail volumes.

### Service Changes

Postmaster General Megan Brennan said that **USPS does not expect significant disruptions in delivery service**, but acknowledged cases where there may be "temporary, localized impacts" to service where the agency will "quickly recover" to resume normal operations.

The New York Post reported disruptions in USPS delivery in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of New York City because of the number of postal employees taking sick leave.

“We are aggressively monitoring all aspects of our business operations and functions, and we are confident in our ability to process and deliver the nation’s mail and packages throughout this emergency.

“The Postal Service is focused on our service mission, processing and delivering the nation’s mail and packages and meeting the immediate and evolving needs of American citizens and businesses,” Brennan said. “We will get through this and the Postal Service will help lead the way.”

#### Protection for USPS workers

“We are continuing to work to overcome gaps in the supply chain to ensure that our employees have access to **hand sanitizer, masks and gloves**, and other **personal protective equipment**,” Brennan said.

Meanwhile, the Postal Service has reached agreements with postal unions on a liberal leave policy that would provide **additional paid leave time** for career employees and non-career city carrier assistants.

“We are promoting healthy behaviors and protocols and encouraging any employee who feels sick to stay home,” Brennan said.

To minimize the risk to customers and employees, USPS management has implemented **social distancing protocols** at post offices and changed work practices to limit contact when postal employees receive outgoing packages from customers and when they get signatures after making deliveries.

The Postal Service, Brennan said, has issued a “daily cadence” of memos on mandatory stand-up talks, articles, videos and other communications to ensure employees have the latest information and guidance from federal health officials.

However, **post offices are reportedly facing critical shortages of essential products** to protect them from the coronavirus outbreak. Postal unions have heard thousands of concerns from their members related to coronavirus. Reports have popped up across the country where postal workers say they don't have hand sanitizer, gloves or masks, and are being told to work despite illnesses and are looking to community donations to address supply shortfalls.

Democratic Rep. Gerry Connolly, who oversees the US Postal Service in his role as chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform's government operations subcommittee, said he has heard directly from the mail carriers that they are **not getting the protection they need** while on the job.<sup>14</sup>

#### APWU statement on coronavirus

The APWU (American Postal Workers Union) has said that if the Postal Service is to meet the challenge of the times, two immediate issues need to be resolved:

*“First, postal workers must have safe workplaces. We have already secured important changes to leave, staffing and post office policies. **We remain concerned that the distribution of personal protective equipment and sanitizers has been uneven across the country.** Every member from*

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<sup>14</sup> <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/03/28/politics/usps-working-coronavirus/index.html>

*the shop floor to the national office must continue our demand that we have safe workplaces, safe staffing and the necessary equipment and supplies to fulfil our mission.*

*“Second, Congress must act immediately to ensure the financial viability of the Postal Service. We were deeply disappointed that stimulus legislation nearing passage Wednesday does not include vital relief for the Postal Service. The economic fallout of the pandemic calls for measures far beyond the prefunding repeal we’ve long sought.”*

#### USPS statement on coronavirus

*“The United States Postal Service has a dedicated COVID-19 Command Response leadership team that is focusing on employee, operational, business, and customer continuity during this unprecedented epidemic.*

*“On the employee front, we are sharing the latest information throughout our organization via video, e-mail, internal newsletters, employee conversations and through our Operations and HR functions – and we will continue to do so. **We are encouraging healthy behaviors and protocols including frequent hand washing, use of sanitizers, and additional cleaning of work spaces, and are encouraging any employee who feels they are sick to stay home. We are offering liberal leave and have worked with our postal unions to temporarily expand leave options for our employees.***

*“To reduce health risks, we also are temporarily modifying customer signature capture procedures. While maintaining a safe, appropriate distance, employees will request the customer’s first initial and last name so that the employee can enter the information on the electronic screen or hard copy items.”<sup>15</sup>*

#### **LATVIA**

The LSAB and Latvian Post signed a Health and Safety protection plan including prevention actions and special provisions regarding prevention COVID10 (hand washing, masks, gloves, reducing dust). It is possible to take paid sickness leave in case of suspected illness. At the moment we have 17 COVID19 cases in Latvia.

#### **GERMANY**

Deutsche Post DHL announced their goal was to ensure full-coverage of the post, while implementing recommendations to slow the spread of the pandemic.

Mail and Parcels delivery continues nationwide without restrictions with the majority of Paketshops (collection points) remaining open. 90% of letters and 85% of parcels are being delivered one day after arrival at the sorting centre and this is roughly the same as normal.

Social distancing measures have been introduced in relation to signed for items in both Deutsche Post and DHL Parcels. Following similar decisions in Australia, the Netherlands and elsewhere there is now a waiver of the requirement for a signature upon receipt of parcels and registered mail with personal delivery. The new approach seeks to curtail contact between customers and postal workers and to prevent the spread of the virus through the held hand scanners and pens.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> <https://about.usps.com/newsroom/statements/usps-statement-on-coronavirus.htm>

<sup>16</sup> <https://postandparcel.info/120238/features/post-features/postal-operators-across-the-globe-make-operational-changes/>

Deutsche Post and DHL Parcels are also piloting a parcel project in the Heinsberg region in collaboration with food retailers, to deliver food and other household products to higher-risk households.

As of 30 March a two shift system has been introduced in sorting and distribution to reduce contact. There is no demand around PPE or disinfectant as this is not available. Volumes have collapsed so ver.di is negotiating a kurzarbeit (short work week) and the aim of the Union is 80-90% of income - (beyond the basic 60%).

#### **IRELAND<sup>17</sup>**

AN Post and the CWU agreed a new community initiative that will see AN workers checking in on older and vulnerable customers at least once a week on delivery. AN post will support the delivery of such essential supplies back to these customers.

Mail minder and redirections have been suspended. In the Post Office social distancing has been upgraded through earlier opening hours on pension payment days. Customer details are also captured directly and warnings about Covid19 are prominently displayed as is floor spacing.

The delivery of a further 3 million free postage laid postcards to include all pro Visions, nursing homes and homeless accommodation (2 million already delivered) for people to send to family and friends.

#### **JAPAN**

Workers are required to wear masks when face to face contact is involved and customers have a choice to receive a package without interaction.

#### **ISRAEL**

Mail to houses as often as twice a week. Service of Branches in the scope of 50%. Low services are operated in the Postal bank but continue to provide a full service of secure money transfers. Referral centre for civilians. 10% of employees allowed to work from home.

#### **CANADA**

No more signatures required on signed for items and these have to be safe dropped at the door. Social distancing has been implemented in the retail operation and the Union is aggressively seeking the installation of plexiglass dividers. Parcels left at Post Offices are not returned to sender.

#### **SWITZERLAND**

Delivery is delayed nationwide. Mail carrier completes signatures where required. Plexiglass has been installed in retail and some franchises are closed.

#### **ITALY - POSTE ITALIANE**

Poste Italiane is the largest employer in Italy and their website refers to reducing opening hours for Branches and reorganising shifts for postal workers to avoid having several together inside mail and parcel dispatching centres.

As of 16 March postatarget (direct mailing) is no longer accepted.

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<sup>17</sup> postandparcelinfo; 25 March 2020

asendia.com; reports that eight unions representing Poste workers had asked utilities to delay bill payments to reduce the workload for Post Offices and cut number of staff working.

All processes are now slower and limits placed on respecting delivery standards. Workers have to respect a minimum of 1 metre between them. There has been a 35% drop in the amount of mail to process and a temporary reduction of 25% in the number of Postmen / Postwomen. A sharp fall is also expected in the number of people visiting a Post Office. Staff in Post Offices (c55k) have had their hours cut in half.

To ensure the safety of workers in Post Offices and Logistics centres minimum distance measures between customers are applied. Those dealing with the public are provided with hand gel, masks and gloves. Arrival and exit times are being staggered and workplaces are being sanitised meaning they may be closed temporarily.

There is also a shared protocol after tripartite dialogue on the measures adopted for combatting and containing the spread of coronavirus in the workplace, but this is not just relating to Postal Workers.

### **BELGIUM**

Not sending letters or parcels outside of Europe due to suspension of commercial flights.

### **NETHERLANDS**

Cancelled signatures on scanner. Mail delivery window increased due to lack of childcare for delivery employees.

### **AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND**

Both have suspended requirement for a signature. New Zealand have implemented a two meter step back rule when knocking on the door of a customer.

### **VENEZUELA**

As of 24 March work suspended but jobs guaranteed with 100% salary payment and benefits maintained.

### **INDIA**

Masks and sanitisation kit has been supplied to all delivery and counter staff.

### **HONDURAS**

Empresa de Correos de Honduras (Honducor) has advised that the entire territory of Honduras is under quarantine until at least March 21 or later. As a result, Honducor has significantly reduced its workforce across the logistics chain. The distribution of international mail will be subject to major delays until the situation returns to normal.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.linns.com/news/us-stamps-postal-history/international-mail-disruptions-multiply-with-covid-19-impact>



## Annex 1

### **UNI and UPU call for united action to protect postal workers during COVID-19 pandemic**

In a joint statement, UNI Global Union and the Universal Postal Union - the UN agency for the postal sector - are urging postal operators and postal unions to put key measures in place to protect the health and safety of postal workers around the world as they continue to serve during the coronavirus health pandemic.

Christy Hoffman, General Secretary of UNI Global Union, said:

*"In a time of social distancing, postal workers are delivering necessary provisions and connecting us to each other. The safety of these frontline employees is our first priority, and the proper implementation of these international standards will protect workers as they deliver an essential, universal service to our communities."*

Bishar A. Hussein, Director General of the Universal Postal Union, stated:

*"There can be no doubt that we are facing one of the most profound challenges to the integrity of the international postal network. I urge postal operators in these difficult days to continue to do everything possible to protect the health of workers and customers."*

See the joint statement below:

### **UPU and UNI Global Union on postal operations during the COVID-19 pandemic**

Berne, 27 March, 2020 – In times of lockdowns and reduced social and economic activity, postal services remain running as one of the pillars of society. The postal network ensures daily communication and the delivery of goods to all, even during a crisis.

The current COVID-19 pandemic illustrates why the universal postal service must be regarded as essential. When communication options available to the public are limited and free movement is restricted, the postal network reliably serves every household and provides access to a range of services, from the delivery of household items to payment solutions.

These crucial functions are kept running by dedicated postal workers across the globe.

The Universal Postal Union (UPU), as the primary forum for cooperation between postal sector players, and UNI Global Union, as the global representative for postal workers worldwide, are dedicated to ensuring that the world's postal infrastructure benefits society as a whole, while safeguarding and protecting the well-being of postal workers.

The Universal Postal Union and UNI Global Union are making every effort to support postal operators and postal unions so that they may take an informed and pro-active approach to safeguarding the health of postal workers and customers.

We urge postal operators and postal unions to:

- **Inform** all postal workers about the risks of infection, the importance of the use of personal protective equipment, and maintaining hygiene standards.
- **Provide** postal workers with personal protective equipment, to disinfect workplaces, work tools and vehicles regularly, and to adapt workplaces to achieve the recommended social distancing needed to prevent virus transmission at all postal facilities.
- **Act** to lower the risks of community infections by providing postal workers with the opportunity and time to follow hygiene procedures, to self-isolate as required and take compensated sick leave as may be provided for by applicable work place rules.
- **Adopt** processing and delivery methods tailored to mitigating the risks of infection.

Working together with all relevant stakeholders is key to stopping the spread of the virus, saving lives, and building resilient postal operations that provide reliable services during the current crisis and beyond.

The UPU and UNI Global Union are working on a global level to help the postal community face the current challenges together.

The UPU and UNI Global Union thank all postal operators, postal unions and postal workers globally for their dedication and engagement to keeping the postal network running in times of crisis. We firmly believe we will emerge from this pandemic stronger and more resilient, while proudly delivering on our mandates to serve the world's peoples.<sup>19</sup>

## **Annex 2**

### **CWU Letter to Rico Back, Royal Mail CEO, 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

Dear Rico,

The CWU has given further consideration to the fast moving Coronavirus crisis and how this is impacting on frontline workers, the country and the ability of Royal Mail Group to maintain its network operations.

Therefore, we are publishing this letter and the statement below to our members, the Government and to the media. The statement sets out what we believe is the right position for the company and the Government to immediately adopt in relation to Royal Mail Group and the services it provides.

This will ensure Personal Protective Equipment is in place for all employees, minimise the further spread of the virus and save lives, whilst maintaining an emergency network with prioritised services.

#### **Emergency Network**

The company should immediately introduce an emergency network based on the following principles:-

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.uniglobalunion.org/news/uni-and-upu-call-united-action-protect-postal-workers-during-covid-19-pandemic>

- If Personal Protective Equipment is not in place for all employees, or in any workplace, then that office should cease its operations until the equipment has been provided to all employees. This includes gloves and hand sanitisers.
- If social distancing measures are not in place, in line with the Government advice (2 metres apart), then the office should be closed until this is rectified. Additional measures in this statement are designed to support the introduction of strict social distancing in every Royal Mail Group workplace.
- The company should cease acting as a commercial operation and instead operate as a vital national service, in line with the Government giving postal workers key worker status.
- All unaddressed advertising mail should be immediately suspended.
- The Government contracts enabling public testing and the delivery of Government information to the public must be prioritised.
- In conjunction with the Government we should look to maximise the opportunity for Royal Mail's unrivalled infrastructure to be utilised in helping the country deal with the Coronavirus crisis. This could include checking on the elderly and vulnerable to flag up any concerns, collecting and delivering food parcels and likewise with medical prescriptions and equipment.
- As a strictly one-off resolution to the current crisis, Daily deliveries should be reduced to three times a week with only parcels/packets and first class mail being delivered on alternate days.
- Royal Mail should make an immediate public statement on the above mentioned introduction of an emergency network.
- All employees should only be compelled to work alternate days there by cutting in half the amount of people in any operational unit on any one day, this to enable strict social distancing and total equipment cleansing prior to each day.
- Every effort should now be made to secure the testing of RMG employees to identify and respond to high risk in all units.
- Everyone over 65 should only be at work if they are happy to do so and if not should be placed on Special Leave with Full Pay for the duration of the crisis.
- All vulnerable/at risk employees as identified by Public Health England advice should all now be on full pay for absences relating to coronavirus.
- All employees with vulnerable/at risk people at home should be allowed 12wks on full pay.
- Where someone within the work location has been diagnosed with the virus, the workplace should be shut for a deep clean before re-opening for business.
- The use of private cars as a contingency measure should cease.

- Agency workers should only be used in the event that there is a genuine shortfall in the alternative working daily resourcing and the prioritised delivery of 1st & 2nd Class USO Mail and parcels. (all agency must meet strict vetting criteria).

We believe the above emergency service principles should be introduced immediately. We are available to discuss with you any alternative suggestions that protect our members, help minimise the spread of the virus, whilst maximising Royal Mail as an emergency service to help the country.

Yours sincerely

Dave Ward  
GS

Terry Pullinger  
DGSP

### **Annex 3**

#### **Royal Mail's response to CWU's safety concerns, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020**

A meeting with the Royal Mail Group's senior management team took place on 1<sup>st</sup> April when we discussed the union's proposal to create an emergency network in response to the growing Coronavirus pandemic.

The CEO, Rico Back, chose not to attend the meeting. However, he subsequently wrote to the union and regrettably he has failed to seriously address our proposal or the safety concerns of our members.

The following will summarise what the company stated at the meeting and the content of their subsequent letter:-

Despite the increasing pressure on our members through growing sick absence/self-isolation, the company do not believe we need to alter national service standards to move to an emergency network.

- Royal Mail will not cease the delivery of D2D/advertising mail.
- Royal Mail will not change their sick absence process which is punishing innocent CWU members, many of whom who have suffered major illness recently.
- Royal Mail said during the meeting it is safe for you to work in your offices without the full provision of Personal Protective Equipment. Royal Mail believe washing hands is the 'gold standard' for safety and enough protection for employees.
- Royal Mail could not provide any information on how many offices have the necessary PPE in place.
- Royal Mail stated the safety concerns of CWU members are not widespread. They said their feedback from managers is much more balanced.
- Royal Mail have declined an offer to jointly approach Government on our proposal.

- The CEO confirmed that he does not wish to meet the union anymore during this pandemic.

#### **Annex 4**

### **Letter from CWU to Post Office Ltd, 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

30<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Nick Read  
Chief Executive  
Post Office Limited  
Finsbury Dials  
20 Finsbury Street  
London  
EC2Y 9AQ

Dear Nick

#### **MAINTAINING AN EMERGENCY POST OFFICE NETWORK WHILST SAVING LIVES**

I am writing to let you know that as a consequence of the COVID-19 crisis and in particular the acute lack of PPE products across the Post Office network and Supply Chain that are so essential in safeguarding lives, the Union's Senior Leadership have made a policy decision on behalf of all of our members working across the Postal industry, both within Royal Mail and Post Office. This policy has been determined in conjunction with our General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary (Postal) and myself.

Due to the inherent and natural synergies between Post Office & Royal Mail, we have come to a decision on what the Union is urging Post Office / Royal Mail to do to support and protect the well-being of our members in these extreme circumstances.

We will be writing to all of our members immediately to let them know the full details of the Union's position with regards to their health, safety and well-being which is necessary due to the increasing death toll (which now stands at 1408). Our members' strongly held view is that both Royal Mail and the Post Office are effectively playing Russian roulette with their lives and this cannot go on. Increasingly members are calling for the Union to protect them from this appalling situation whereby there is inadequate or in most cases no Personal Protective Equipment being supplied.

The following are the major components of our policy decision and we will of course provide you with the Union's communication to members as soon as possible.

- All PPE must be in place in each and every workplace (including the Supply Chain operation and vehicles) or the operation will be suspended where this isn't happening
- Transactions & services performed across the entire Post Office network should be reduced to absolute essential items only which support communities and the vulnerable/disadvantaged, together with the revised Royal Mail operation. The essential items should be jointly determined between Post Office and CWU
- All Post Offices should close at 1pm Monday to Friday and 12.30pm on Saturday
- Anyone over 65 should be attending work only if they are comfortable and confident to do so

- Employees should only have to work alternative days to enable strict social distancing and total equipment / workstation cleansing prior to each day. This means no more than 3 attendances per week by any person
- Social Distancing must operate in each and every Post Office without exception. Where this is not undertaken the service will be closed until this operation can be put in place in order to protect those providing essential Post Office services including Crew and Royal Mail Collection Drivers.

The policies above are generic across the Post Office network and incorporate all Post Office workers including Postmasters.

The Post Office is urged to embrace the Union's policies above with no financial detriment to our members (I have already written to you separately about Postmasters' remuneration).

I am available to discuss with you any alternative suggestions that protect our members, help stop the spread of the virus, whilst maximising the Post Office as an emergency service to help the country. I am also publishing this letter to the media as I believe this is the right position for the Post Office and the Government to immediately adopt in relation to the Post Office network and the public service it provides.

I'm sure you will concur that in the circumstances, the CWU's approach as described in this letter is proportionate and responsible and is designed to maintain an emergency Post Office service across the network whilst fully recognising the absolute and paramount need to save lives.

Yours sincerely



Andy Furey  
**Assistant Secretary**

CC: Paul Scully, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, BEIS

CWU Research  
3<sup>rd</sup> April 2020