

## Questions and Answers.

### **A. What absences will I be paid for and what pay will I receive?**

Sick Pay will be paid in the following circumstances.

- Self-Isolation due to YOU having symptoms.
- YOU having the Coronavirus.
- If YOU are in a vulnerable group and have to self-isolate for up to 12 weeks.

Royal Mail sick pay is 6 months at full pay and 6 months at half pay over a rolling 4 year period. After this you will receive Statutory Sick Pay (SSP). RMPFS will pay sick pay in line with their policy.

### **B. What is the key preventative advice for 'vulnerable' Members and who is included in the Vulnerable Groups?**

Guidance to protect extremely vulnerable people has been issued by the NHS who are writing, emailing or texting people that are extremely vulnerable due to certain medical conditions or the treatment they are undergoing. Members who receive this contact from the NHS should fully comply with the instructions in the letter and keep their line manager informed.

A vulnerable person may be a person who is 70 years of age or older, and/or people who have a serious underlying health problem, including:

- Chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis
- Chronic heart disease, such as heart failure
- Chronic kidney disease
- Chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis
- Chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), a learning disability or cerebral palsy
- Diabetes
- Problems with your spleen - for example, sickle cell disease or if you have had your spleen removed
- A weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as HIV and AIDS, or medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy
- Being seriously overweight (a BMI of 40 or above)
- Those who are pregnant

Around 1.5m people have received a letter from HM Government. People in this category includes those who have:

- Specific cancers:
- Cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
- Cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy or radical radiotherapy for lung cancer
- Treatment for immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
- Other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
- Had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
- Solid organ transplant recipients.
- Severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe COPD.
- Rare diseases and inborn errors of metabolism that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell).
- Immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection.
- Women who are pregnant with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired.

**Anyone who has received the Government letter will be strongly advised to self-isolate for 12 weeks.**

**C. What is the latest government advice re self-isolation for Members with Symptoms?**

The situation is constantly changing and you should check this guidance for the latest advice on this area.

Our understanding of the current position is that Members who do not fall into the vulnerable categories could be self-isolating for between 7 and 14 days and this could be extended by around a week if they develop symptoms during self-isolation.

All absences should be treated as sickness absence.

**D. Someone in my household is in the vulnerable category, will I get paid if I take time off to look after them?**

Royal Mail's Policy is they will not pay for looking after vulnerable dependents. They have said members can take annual leave, unpaid leave and/or work flexibly. We have suggested checking with the Government to see whether the Furlough arrangements can be used.

**E. I want to cancel my Annual Leave and take it another time what should I do?**

Royal Mail have not given a blanket policy on this. If due to operational reasons the local manager need members to attend work, then in exceptional circumstances they can agree for members to return to work earlier and take their holiday at another time.

**F. I need to change my shift times to be able to accommodate the care of a dependent.**

Royal Mail guidance is to have a discussion with your manager as flexible working should be accommodated. You can also look at taking annual leave or special leave unpaid.

**G. I have less than 12 month's service, will I be paid if I need to go sick?**

Following representation from the Union, where the absence is related to coronavirus, Royal Mail has temporarily changed the sick pay for employees with less than a year's service. You will receive the same sick pay as employees with over a year's service for Coronavirus absence.

**H. Will my absence be counted under the attendance agreement?**

Following representation from the Union we expect the vast majority of coronavirus absences to be discounted from the attendance procedure. However, in the event coronavirus absences are for an excessive duration or repeat in nature further investigation may be required. If Royal Mail attempt to count any absences and members feel unfairly treated the Union will support members in the usual way.

**I. I am pregnant and want to socially distance myself following the latest Public Health England (PHE) advice.**

You should provide evidence of your pregnancy to your line manager. This could be a MAT B1 form or a medical letter/certificate from your GP or Midwife. If you are not able to provide this immediately you will be given time to provide this at a later date.

If you are able to, you can work from home following the advice and guidance on working from home. If you are not able to work from home the absence will be treated as a pregnancy related sickness absence.

If you are absent from work due to pregnancy (including as a result of social distancing due to being pregnant) after the beginning of the fourth week before your Expected Week of Childbirth then your maternity leave will begin automatically on the first day of the absence.

**J. I am over 70 and want to socially distance myself following the latest Public Health England (PHE) advice.**

Your Manager will check you are over 70. They can do this through PSP. If you can work from home following the advice and guidance on working from home. If you are not able to work from home the absence will be treated as a sickness absence.

**K. I have an underlying health condition and want to socially distance myself following the latest Public Health England (PHE) advice.**

You should contact your line manager and provide the NHS letter/text/ email or a medical certificate to cover the absence. If you are not able to provide this immediately you will be given time to provide this at a later date.

You can work from home following the advice and guidance on working from home.

If you are not able to work from home the absence will be treated as a sickness absence. Pay in line with the sick pay policy will apply.

**L. I am in one of the vulnerable groups and I want to come to work?**

Currently the advice from PHE is to social distance if you are pregnant, over 70 or with an underlying health condition.

**M. I have had a lot of absence in the last year and if I am absent again will be on half/No pay. Will there be any different arrangements for me if I have to self-isolate?**

Royal Mail's Policy is to follow the current sick pay policy. The union are in discussion with Royal Mail to change this policy as we think members may be forced to come to work if they cannot stay off.