

Coronavirus Guidance - Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

This is a 'live' document that will be updated as and when circumstances, policies or processes need to be changed.

Click here to visit the [Royal Mail Coronavirus Information page](#)

1. Health

Any employee with concerns should visit the NHS 111 Website - <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>. This site provides a portal for those who think they have symptoms, or may have been exposed to the virus and are unsure what to do. It covers England, Scotland and Wales.

The advice for Northern Ireland is to call 111.

Q1 What is the key preventative advice to reduce the risk of coronavirus?

The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus.

You can access the latest NHS guidance to help avoid catching or spreading coronavirus [here](#).

Please [click link](#) to access a poster for more information about promoting good hygiene.

Q2 What is defined as “close contact” with someone with a confirmed case of coronavirus mean?

NHS guidance on what “close contact” with someone with a confirmed case of coronavirus means is available on their Q&A site: [click here](#).

Q3 How should a manager record that an employee is self-isolating?

Should an employee be self-isolating, or are responsible for looking after a child who has been advised to self-isolate, this must be reported by line managers on to the [self-isolation recording portal](#).

To access: [click here](#).

Please refer to the Policy questions and answers below for further absence management support.

Q4 What is the latest government advice re self-isolation for employees

You can access up to date guidance on what steps to take whilst self-isolating on the NHS website, available [here](#).

Managers should keep in contact with employees who are self-isolating.

Q5 What should I do if an employee receives a positive coronavirus test result?

Should an employee receive a positive test result then the manager will immediately notify Central Postal Control (as usual for a notifiable infectious disease) and the Safety, Health and Environment Business Partner who will immediately notify the Health & Wellbeing Team. The Safety, Health and Environment Business Partner will support and guide the manager through required processes in line with Public Health guidelines.

The Local Public Health Protection Teams, are responsible for controlling infectious diseases. They will trace contacts, instruct, advise and provide communications on what action needs to be taken to prevent further spread. RMG will need to follow the instructions provided by the Local Public Health Protection Team in the same way as we would if there was an employee who had been affected by another notifiable infectious disease like TB.

If we have an employee who tests positive but has *not* been into work for some time (Public Health would advise re timescales) and not been in contact with any colleagues there would not be a risk of infection and so no action would need to be taken and we would not hear from the infection control teams.

Q6 What do we do if an employee has attended work after returning from a high risk affected areas?

If an employee has been advised to self-isolate for any reason, colleagues in the workplace should continue with business as usual, maintaining good hand hygiene.

Should anyone have concerns they should visit the NHS 111 website - <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>. The advice for Northern Ireland is to call 111.

Q7 A manager is concerned whether an employee should be self-isolating, what should the manager advise the employee to do?

Any employee with concerns should visit the NHS 111 Website - <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>. Employees can and answer a set of questions to help them determine if they should self-isolate or not. The advice for Northern Ireland is to call 111.

Please do not contact the Health and Wellbeing team as it is for NHS to provide this advice.

Q8 If an employee is on immune suppression drugs what should we do?

New advice for the public and those who may be more at risk than others is being shared regularly. Look out for changes to advice that may affect you.

Current guidance on the NHS website, available [here](#)

Employees should continue to be disciplined with hand hygiene advice and contact their own GP with concerns. An employee's GP will have the medical information on which to advise the employee on any recommendations specific to them.

Q9 What is the current advice for returning travellers?

Please see [Advice for returning travellers](#)

Q10 How can I order gloves and antiseptic wipes?

Disposable gloves are available to order, please speak to you line manager.

Royal Mail procurement have advised that demand for antiseptic wipes has outstripped supply and following a period of increased buying we have now exhausted all our supplier's stocks of wipes. This remains a priority for us and our expert procurement team are working on ways to remedy this.

As Royal Mail suppliers are no longer able to fulfil orders, existing supplies of antiseptic wipes should be used only where essential.

Regular hand washing is the most effective way to reduce the chance of contracting and spreading any virus. There are practical solutions to handwashing on delivery and collection which should be considered:

- Washing hands before leaving the office to start your duty and on return
- Request to use facilities of a business customer (they are legally required to provide toilet facilities)
- Make use of any public toilets
- If there is an urgent requirement to wash hands e.g. first aid incident, consider stopping your delivery/collection and visit the nearest public convenience or drive back to your office.

Q11 The hand wash in our dispensers does not contain alcohol, will it be powerful enough to kill any virus? If not, can we get hand sanitiser gel?

The hand soap that we provide is effective for hand washing and good hand hygiene. We are not currently providing hand sanitiser or gel through our stores order system.

Q12 Will Royal Mail be providing face masks?

We would not be issuing masks as PPE against coronavirus. The World Health Organization guidance on when to use a mask says states that it is only beneficial to stop the spread of the virus for:

- People who are ill, coughing and sneezing to reduce them from spreading the virus to others.
- People who are caring for, or in close contact with someone who is infected. People who are healthy only need to wear a mask if they are taking care of a person with suspected 2019-nCoV infection.

Further information on the use of face masks can be found on the [WHO website](#).

Q13 if I have any questions relating to an employee absence, leave or other policy question where do I go for advice?

Please contact Advice and Support on 0345 604 2787.

Q14 Where do managers or employees go for First Class Support?

We understand there is concern and anxiety about coronavirus. If you or a member of your team would like to speak to a counsellor they can contact First Class Support available 24/7 to provide emotional (not medical) support on 0800 6888 777.

Any enquiries relating to self-isolation and absence should contact Advice and Support on 0345 604 2787.

Click here to visit the [Royal Mail Coronavirus Information page](#) for latest information and guidance.

Q15 What advice is available for first aider's who may need to respond to a patient with coronavirus symptoms?

As advice may change based on increasing experience in the care of patients with coronavirus, first aiders should consult the [latest Public Health England guidance](#) for support when responding to first aid incidents related to the coronavirus.

Q16 What new cleaning processes have Royal Mail put in place?

RMG PFS have enhanced the normal cleaning regimes through increased frequencies and additional cleaning of high contact touchpoints. Two new cleaning responsive standards on top of the normal workplace cleans have also been implemented:-

- a) Precautionary Clean – this is a responsive disinfection standard that is carried out at the request of the CPC Team and is an enhanced service to the normal standard clean.
- b) Intense Clean – this is a further enhanced and intense disinfection standard that is carried out at the request of the CPC Team

Q17 Are we likely to run out of cleaning products e.g. soap, toilet rolls etc?

Cleaning stock (soap, toilet rolls, cleaning chemicals etc) is in high demand not just in the UK but across the World by Governments and Industry. PFS FM Teams have taken some supportive measures to try and ensure cleaning standards are maintained:-

- a) Local Cleaning Stock – all local FM Cleaning Managers have been requested to order two months of stock at a time to ensure there is always a supply of stock held on site. This stock may well be locked away in a secure location on site. If additional stock is required to replenish specific areas, the Site Manager can contact the PFS Cleaning Manager for replenishment
- b) National Cleaning Stock – in addition to the above local site stock provisions PFS have managed to secure two months of bulk stock from the RMG national supplier. This is being delivered to specific locations in the UK and a logistics plan is being developed to support distribution to local sites.

** Please note that cleaning stock levels at sites may be below normal levels due to increased hygiene controls implemented at sites. If stock has run out please contact the local site manager who can organise for secured stock to be released.

Q18 Will our normal cleaning routine continue as usual?

In the event of reduced internal cleaning staff levels our management team will update site managers with local contingency plans. These may include cleaning at different times to the normal clean, cleaners attending from other sites, relief cleaner attendance and focusing on key areas/tasks. Priorities will be discussed and agreed with the PIC/Mgrs. on site.

Q19 Can we get head thermometers to units?

No, these are used by clinically trained people who can then advise and signpost the person accordingly.

Q20 Do we need to take any different approaches to the Public Health England advice in [Scotland / Wales / Northern Ireland]?

No, we will continue to be led by the Government and Public Health England.

2. POLICY

Managers with any enquiries relating to self-isolation and absence should contact Advice and Support on 0345 604 2787

Q1. A colleague has a child whose school is closed and needs to be at home to look after them – how do I support the individual?

Where a colleague has to look after a dependant, such as a child, our normal approach applies. Colleagues can take holiday, unpaid time off or work flexibly. They should agree this with their line manager.

Q2. A colleague has less than a year's service and is worried about losing pay if they go off with symptoms of coronavirus.

Exceptionally, to support employees who should not be attending work, Royal Mail has temporarily changed the sick pay for employees with less than a year's service.

Where the absence is related to coronavirus, these employees will receive the same sick pay as employees with over a year's service. This will be in place until the end of March 2020, although we will continue to monitor the situation and may change this.

Q3. Will absences due to coronavirus be counted within the attendance procedure?

We would expect the vast majority of coronavirus absences to be discounted from the normal attendance procedure. However, in the event coronavirus absences are for an excessive duration or repeat in nature further investigation may be required.

3. POST & PARCELS

Q1 Is it safe to deliver a package from China or any other place where the virus has been Identified?

The Public Health Authorities have advised people delivering or receiving packages are not at risk of contracting the new coronavirus. From experience with other coronaviruses, we know that these types of viruses don't survive long on objects, such as letters or packages.

Q2 If a colleague is in self-isolation should we request a deep clean of the colleague's vehicle?

The Public Health Authorities have not currently issued advice for a deep clean of the work area of someone who is in isolation awaiting test results. Although the risk needs to be taken seriously to prevent spread of the disease the likelihood of a positive test is currently low.

In addition to good hygiene promotion we have been reminding colleagues of the use of antiseptic wipes for shared equipment and if the unit have wipes then this can be completed locally. A wipe down with soap and water would be an alternative good practice and remember to not touch your face (mouth, nose and eyes) or eat before washing your hands.

Q4 My delivery/collection colleagues have made a delivery/collection from premises which has since been temporarily closed as a coronavirus precaution. What should I do?

The Local Health Protection Teams are responsible for controlling infectious diseases and will advise local business and organisations of any necessary steps to take should they be necessary. There is no immediate need for colleagues to self-isolate. Managers should continue to remind colleagues about good hygiene standards.

Q5 Are colleagues required to sign health declarations when collecting or delivering mail to an address?

No. Royal Mail is closely following Public Health Authority advice and good hand hygiene and we are not asking our colleagues to sign health declarations.

We can remind customers Royal Mail is taking this illness seriously and following both Public Health and World Health Organisation guidance. We have briefed all colleagues who are aware of the guidance and prevention through good hygiene and hand washing.

We will not expect our drivers to have to complete a questionnaire and if this is unsatisfactory the customer can post at the appropriate access point, box or Post Office counter. If however anyone asked to sign a declaration which asks for personal information which is normally provided (e.g. signing of security visitor books to enter a building) the colleague should sign.

Q6. If a customer has had to close their own premises due to an outbreak, what would colleagues do with the customer's mail?

We would aim to keep customers mail safe until they're able to collect it, have it redelivered or redirected/diverted to an alternative address. We will deal with these requests on a case by case basis.

Q7. A customer is blocking their letterbox until the threat is over. What is the guidance on delivering mail?

Where we are physically unable to access a customer's property and/or they have blocked up their letterbox to prevent delivery then this should be treated as a Delivery USO suspension. In this circumstance, the Delivery Office Manager should create a case for the addressee(s) on the USO Sharepoint to request the suspension. The manager can then download the standard letter from the Sharepoint site that explains that we will hold all mail (for up to 18 days) for someone to collect (with the appropriate identification) or we can deliver to an alternative address in the Delivery Office catchment area. If this letter cannot be handed to the customer and there are no other contact details available for the customer (e.g. telephone number, email address) then the letter should be left on the customer premises in a place where the occupier can clearly see it.

Once the Manager has logged the address point as a Delivery USO suspension then they are not required to report this as either a workplan or delivery USO part walk failure in DODR.

Use this link to access the USO Sharepoint Site: [USO Delivery Exceptions SharePoint site](#)

Q8. Contractor is due on site, should they still be allowed on site.

We are in touch with our contractors and ensuring they are following Public Health Authority advice too, on this basis contractors should be allowed to continue working on Royal Mail sites.

Q9. Royal Mail is changing Operational Delivery processes for the delivery of any parcels which cannot be posted through a letter box or that requires a signature, what do I need to do differently?

For non-signature parcels that aren't letterboxable (1C/2C, RM24/48, T24/48, International import)

1. Scan the parcel as delivered but do not press submit.
2. Leave the parcel on the doorstep, knock on the door and step back 2 meters
3. When the customer comes to the door tell them they have a parcel there.
4. Witness the customer taking the parcel inside.
5. If the customer takes the parcel inside the Delivery Officer should press submit.
6. If the Customer refuses to take the parcel inside, then the Delivery Officer should retrieve the parcel, update the PDA status to "Undelivered - No Answer" and leave a "Something For You" card so that the parcel can be collected at a later point. Do not show the parcel as "Refused".

For signature parcels, including letter formats (Signed For, T24/48 with signature, International with signature)

1. Scan the parcel as delivered and press continue but do not enter the customer's name yet.
2. Leave the parcel on the doorstep, knock on the door and step back 2 meters
3. When the customer comes to the door tell them they have a parcel there and inform them that we will not be collecting the usual signature, but we will require the customer's name and must witness the customer taking the parcel in.
4. Input the customer's name as normal and press proceed. When the signature box appears, input "XP1" but do not press done until the customer picks up the parcel.
5. If the customer takes the parcel inside the Delivery Officer should press done.
6. If the Customer refuses to take the parcel inside, then the Delivery Officer should retrieve the parcel, update the PDA status to "Not Delivered - No Answer" and leave a "Something For You" card so that the parcel can be collected at a later point. Do not show the parcel as "Refused".

For Special Delivery Guaranteed parcels, including letter formats

1. Scan the parcel as delivered and press continue but do not enter the customer's name yet.
2. Leave the parcel on the doorstep, knock on the door and step back 2 meters
3. When the customer comes to the door tell them they have a parcel there and inform them that we will not be collecting the usual signature, but we will require the customer's name and must witness the customer taking the parcel in.
4. Input the customer's name as normal and press proceed. When the signature box appears, input "XP1" but do not press done until the customer picks up the parcel.
5. If the customer takes the parcel inside the Delivery Officer should press done.
6. If the Customer refuses to take the parcel inside, then the Delivery Officer should retrieve the parcel, update the PDA status to "Not Delivered - No Answer" and leave a "Something For You" card so that the parcel can be collected at a later point. Do not show the parcel as "Refused".

For Age Verification Tracked parcels

1. Knock on the customers door and walk back 2 meters and scan the parcel
2. Advise the customer that they have an "Age Verification" parcel that we can leave on the doorstep without the usual signature, but must still verify the persons age and witness them taking the parcel inside.
3. Ask the customer to open the door or stand in a window and undertake the "Challenge 25" check.

4. If the customer does not look over 25 the Delivery Officer should ask the customer to provide ID that proves their age. The customer can either show this to the Delivery Officer at a safe but visible distance or as an alternative through a window.
5. If the customer looks over 25 or produces the relevant ID, the Delivery Officer should ask the customer for their name and advise them to step back.
6. They should then input the customer's name into the PDA, when the signature box appears the Delivery Officer should input "XP1" without pressing done and should place the parcel on the doorstep.
7. When the customer takes the parcel indoors the Delivery Officer should press done.

If the customer does not provide the relevant ID/proof of age then the OPG should refuse to deliver the parcel, update the PDA status to "Undelivered – Failure to Produce ID" and leave a "Something For You Card" so that the parcel can be collected at a later point.

Q.10 What about the process for Customer Service Points?

Handing over "Non- Signed For" Parcels (1c/2c, RM24/48, TR24/48) to customers.

1. Ask the customer to show their P739/E739 without the CSP team member having to handle it. If necessary, they should ask the customer for any information that is hard to read.
2. The CSP team member should make a note of the customer's address and any other details that they will need to locate the parcel.
3. Having located the Parcel, they should ask the customer to show the relevant ID without the need for the CSP team member having to handle it (ID requirements remain in line with current procedures – i.e. they should show the ID of the person to whom the parcel is addressed).
4. If the customer has provided the appropriate ID the CSP team member should ask the customer to place their P739 card into the bin (if provided) or if it is not possible to provide a bin, they should ask the customer to dispose of the card when they leave the CSP.
5. The CSP team member should then scan the barcode on the parcel and follow the Item Collected process on the PDA (and SPS process in an SPS enabled office) before placing the parcel onto the service counter for the customer to retrieve.

Handing over "Signed For" Parcels (Special Delivery, Recorded, International, T24/48, Age Verification) to customers

1. Ask the customer to show their P739/E739 without the CSP team member having to handle it. If necessary they should ask the customer for any information that is hard to read.
2. The CSP team member should make a note of the customer's address and any other details that they will need to locate the parcel.
3. Having located the Parcel, they should ask the customer to show the relevant ID without the need for the CSP team member having to handle it (ID requirements remain in line with current procedures – i.e. they should show the ID of the person to whom the parcel is addressed and, for Age Verification only, also their own ID proving they are over 18 if they fail the Challenge 25 check).
4. If the customer has provided the relevant ID the CSP team member should inform the customer that they will hand over the parcel without collecting the normal signature. In addition, they will ask the customer to place their P739 card into the bin if provided or if it is not possible to provide a bin, they should ask the customer to dispose of the card when they leave the CSP.
5. The CSP team member should then scan the barcode on the parcel and follow the Item Collected process on the PDA (and SPS process in an SPS enabled office). When the CSP team member gets to the relevant screens they should input the customer's name into the PDA as normal but when the signature screen is displayed they should input "XP1" themselves and press Done.

They should then place the customer's parcel onto the service counter so that the customer can then take their parcel.

Q10. A colleague was due off on leave, but is now not able to travel, can they cancel holidays and re-arrange for a future date.

You should try to accommodate colleagues as far as possible, explain that any leave postponed will have to fit in with the resourcing plan for the unit, so while we will try to accommodate their requests, specific alternative dates cannot be guaranteed.

Q11. A colleague went home today mid delivery, colleagues are questioning if it's safe to touch the mail he left, and if they should be using the van the colleague was using.

The Public Health Authorities have advised people delivering or receiving packages are not at risk of contracting the coronavirus from the letters, parcels or vehicle. Remember regular hand washing is the most effective way to reduce the chance of contracting and spreading any virus, and try to not touch your face (mouth, nose and eyes) or eat before washing your hands.

Q12 Staff in my unit are self-isolating which has created a resourcing shortfall and I have failed how should I report this?

- Delivery USO - If as a direct result of staff being unable to attend due to sick/self-isolation the Route Report in DODR should be recorded with "Emergency - Other".
- Delivery Workplan - If as a direct result of staff being unable to attend due to sick/self-isolation the End of Day Report in DODR should be recorded with Code 6B "Emergency".
- Mail Centres - If as a direct result of staff being unable to attend due to sick/self-isolation the End of Shift Report in MCDR should be recorded with Code 10 "Emergency".
- RDCs - If as a direct result of staff being unable to attend due to sick/self-isolation the End of Shift Report in PPMS should be recorded as 'Emergency Other'

Please note that this should only be for the volume failed as a direct result of the self-isolation absence. If there are other failures they should be reported with their appropriate reason.

Q13 A Post Office where P739 items are left for collection is closed, what do we do with P739 items?

Where a Post Office is closed, use the parent delivery office "When You Were Out" cards until the Post Office re-opens. Items should be returned to the main office Customer Service Point for collection.

Q14 If when I got to a collection point such as a Post Offices/Businesses and it is closed upon arrival (many with notices up stating due to Coronavirus), how do I report this on my collection scanner?

Use Code 20 - Emergency for all cases where the premises are advising they are closed due to Coronavirus - for other collections use normal business as usual codes.

Q15 What is the advice on delivering to care homes?

Considerations should be taken for those who are vulnerable and at higher risk. Public Health are advising those who are at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus to be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures. The Delivery office should contact the care home for agreed arrangements.

Q16 What is the advice for delivering to shops and businesses?

There is no current change to advice - the key health preventative messages continue with the changes to process for signatures.

Q17 What is guidance on use of card payment terminals in enquiry offices?

Payment cards are used across all businesses now - there is no current change to advice - the key health preventative messages continue.

4. Advice for customers

You can access the latest advice for customers on the Royal Mail website here:

www.royalmail.com/coronavirus

To check the latest international advice, check here:

https://personal.help.royalmail.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/5317/~/-international-incident-bulletin