

No. 186/20

6th April 2020

Dear Colleagues,

UN-AGREED RECRUITMENT OF AGENCY/CASUALS - UPDATE

Branches will be aware that prior to the COVID19 outbreak and recent announcements, the Postal Department had received many enquiries in relation to the un-agreed recruitment of agency and casual workers.

Branches will recall that at the time the National Ballot(s) for strike action were still in progress and a response was received from Mark Rush, Head of ER/IR Operations, stating that the recruitment of agency was needed in order to help the business with the recovery of service - to minimise the effect on service quality around strike days and the Easter period.

Given the extremely fast escalation of the COVID19 virus and the fact that postal workers have been given 'key worker' status, the union has not announced national strike action to date but has requested an extension to the period during which this can now be taken. As a result, the terms of the previous correspondence from the business are no longer applicable.

However, over the past two weeks the Postal Department has been inundated with enquiries about the un-agreed recruitment of additional agency workers in Delivery Offices, Mail Centres and Regional Distribution Centres. This has centred on concerns about the vetting process that is being used, whether agency workers have been briefed about social distancing, whether the self-isolation procedures for these workers will result in them attending work if they should be self-isolating and other health and safety matters.

The purpose of this LTB is to therefore make Branches aware that all of these issues are being raised with Royal Mail Group nationally and that both operational Officers with responsibility for indoor and outdoor functions have written to the business formally in relation to the un-agreed recruitment of agency and casual workers.

On behalf of the Outdoor Department, Postal Executive member Tony Bouch wrote to the business on 3rd April 2020 to raise a number of operational issues, including whether part-time OPGs have been given the chance to increase their hours, when agency/casual workers would be stood down and requesting confirmation that the IR Framework will continue to apply. A copy of this correspondence is attached and a response has not yet been received.

In relation to the generic concerns regarding use of agency workers in Mail Centre/RDCs and Delivery Units, a number of discussions have taken place with the business on introducing effective resourcing processes during the crisis, with proper controls to prioritise workload and limit the requirement for agency staff. On 30th March 2020 the Postal Department sent a proposed Joint Statement to management that included criteria for an agreed process to govern any agreed utilisation of agency workers in all functions. This matter was also discussed during a conference

call on 3rd April 2020, during which management indicated that they would formally respond to the proposal. However at the time of preparing this LTB a formal response is still awaited.

The proposed Joint Statement was based on the following principles which should guide any local discussions:

- All resourcing activity during the crisis will prioritise the use of Royal Mail employees.
- Agency staff will only be utilised where essential workload cannot be covered internally by offering additional hours and enacting requests to defer or realign annual leave to maximise the availability of internal resource.
- Where agency staff are required, Angard and other suppliers will dedicate agency staff to Royal Mail, reducing the number of individuals entering the workplace.
- The use of agency staff will at no time compromise the social distancing arrangements in place to reduce risk.

Branches should note that the union nationally continues to pursue the issue of the un-agreed recruitment of agency and casual workers and address the concerns that have been highlighted by our members.

Further updates will be provided as developments occur.

Any enquiries in relation to the content of this LTB should be addressed to the DGS(P) Department.

Yours sincerely,



Terry Pullinger
Deputy General Secretary (Postal)

Yours sincerely,



Andy Furey
Assistant Secretary

Yours sincerely,



Mark Baulch
Assistant Secretary

Yours sincerely,



Davie Robertson
Assistant Secretary

Yours sincerely,



Carl Maden
Acting Assistant Secretary