

No: 203/2020

16th April 2020

For the Immediate Attention of All:

Postal Branches with RMSS/Relay members
Parcelforce Regional Organisers
Parcelforce Regional Safety Representatives
Area Health and Safety Representatives
Area Distribution Representatives
RMSS/Relay Representatives

RMSS/Relay - Creation of a Discrete Network For Covid 19 Drive Through NHS Testing Stations

Royal Mail Specialist Services/Relay contacted the union on Thursday 9th April 2020 and informed us that the business were in advanced discussions with the Government on the provision of a discrete network for the collection of Covid 19 Test kits from Drive Through NHS Testing Stations and onward delivery to designated Testing Laboratories. We understood that the expectation from Government was that the service would commence on the 15th April 2020 and that discussions would continue over the Easter weekend to ensure that arrangements were in place to meet that deadline.

We were informed that while the full operational details had not been established, the service would be based on the collection and delivery of lockable Tote Boxes and would not involve our members directly handling test materials. The business committed to share the full details of the proposed operation once they were finalised and that immediate discussions would be progressed with the CWU Health & Safety Department, to ensure that all relevant safety documentation and Safe System of Works were concluded to ensure the safety of our members.

Despite a number of requests for an update since last week other than verbal updates no further detail on the operational arrangements had been presented by the business, although it was confirmed yesterday afternoon that the Health & Safety compliance documents and SSOW are now agreed and in place.

Unfortunately, we were also made aware yesterday afternoon that management had been briefing details to our Relay members that had not been shared with the union Nationally, which led to some confusion. We contacted the business seeking an urgent update and after close of business yesterday evening finally received an update in relation to the operational aspects of the initiative. We have been informed that some elements of the detail with regard to full deployment are still being worked through but the current status is as follows:

- The contract commenced on Wednesday 15th April 2020 with a trial at 8 NHS Testing Stations, rising to 18 and then 26 Stations over the coming days. It is anticipated that the final number of Testing Stations may reach 48.
- Items will be collected in lockable Tote Boxes, containing a maximum of 50 test kits in each box. Members will not need to handle the test kits.
- Collections will take place between 17.00 and 18.00, 7 days a week and boxes will be conveyed to one of four Test Laboratories based in Antrim, Glasgow, Manchester and Milton Keynes to arrive by 08.00. It is anticipated that at full capacity the number of tests performed at each site will range between 200 and 1000 per day, so our members will collect between 4 and 20 items. Empty boxes will be repatriated from the Laboratories.
- SSOW have been concluded to ensure the safe hand over of items, maintaining social distancing at the Testing Stations and Laboratories at all times during the collection and delivery of the Tote Boxes. For the information of Branches the SSOW and SAC 1 documents are attached to this LTB.

While we understand that the business has had to move at pace to secure this contract and that detailed solutions have taken time to develop, it is regrettable that information share from the business in respect of the operational aspects associated to what is an extremely important initiative has been poor.

Discussions are continuing and further updates will be issued as the contract develops. Branches are assured that the safety of our members remains the absolute priority.

Any enquiries in relation to this LTB should be addressed to Davie Robertson, Assistant Secretary, email: dwiyatt@cwu.org quoting reference 014.14

Or

Ray Ellis, National Health and Safety Officer, email rellis@cwu.org quoting reference E 1/20

Yours sincerely

Davie Robertson
Assistant Secretary

Ray Ellis
National Health and Safety Officer (Acting)