

No. 501/2020

14th October 2020

TO: ALL BRANCHES WITH POSTAL MEMBERS

Dear Colleagues,

RE: ROYAL MAIL RE INTRODUCTION OF VAN SHARE POLICY - SICK PAY WHILST VOLUNTARY VAN SHARING

Further to LTB 489/20 dated 6th October 2020 in relation to the above and due to a number of enquiries into both departments, the purpose of this Letter to Branches is to inform members of the current situation with regard to sick pay whilst carrying out van sharing.

As Branches and members will know, Royal Mail has taken the decision to arbitrarily reintroduce van sharing on a voluntary basis for individuals from Monday of this week. Whilst fully recognising the operational difficulties the single person only vehicle policy has led to since its introduction during the National Lockdown period, it has without doubt played a significant part in ensuring our member's safety. Therefore, as the number of confirmed Covid-19 cases along with the numbers of local & regional lockdowns currently increases right throughout the UK, the CWU were not and are not in a position to agree to or support the change to the previous single vehicle policy, as it is simply the wrong time. In our view this could potentially increase the risk to members of exposure to the virus.

Information issued by Government today included the following advice "It is difficult to socially distance during car journeys. You should avoid sharing a car with someone from outside your household or your support bubble unless you can practice social distancing."

Having heard directly from the company that they were reintroducing van sharing, albeit on a voluntary basis, at a meeting on Friday 9th October 2020, we requested from senior Royal Mail management that they commit to paying full sick pay to any member who volunteers to van share, in the event they have to self-isolate. Despite the meeting being attended by 5 directors / senior managers, they would not give the commitment

and guarantee we sought. We have asked Royal Mail to publish a communication stating full sick pay will be paid in the circumstances where a member who volunteers to van share has to self-isolate and also clearly stipulate any circumstances where sick pay will not be paid.

This is important as a few weeks ago, Royal Mail sent a communication to their managers which included the following "... ***We know most of our people continue to follow the guidelines and behave in a responsible way. This is why Royal Mail has adopted a supportive approach for employees who are required to self-isolate due to Covid-19 by applying our normal sick pay policy. In most cases this provides support above the statutory sick pay recommended by government.***

However, providing enhanced sick pay is dependent on the absence not being caused by or aggravated by the employee. Where, in the reasonable view of the company, there is evidence of an employee's disregard for public health guidance which then leads to them needing to self-isolate, Royal Mail Sick Pay will not be paid...."

Clearly we want to ensure, despite our advice to the contrary, any individual who does volunteer to van share will not fall into the category of "being caused or aggravated by", which is why we have requested Royal Mail make it clear full sick pay will be paid and to be also clear, just as importantly, when sick pay will not be paid. This will allow individuals to make an informed decision as to whether they want to van share or not.

At the meeting last Friday, we were informed we will have confirmation and the communication will be published by Monday 12th October 2020. Neither has happened, therefore we wanted to let you know the latest position and we will be writing to Royal Mail calling on them to issue a communication stating full sick pay will be paid to anyone who volunteers to van share, plus any absence of self isolation will not count towards the attendance agreement.

We will also be requesting extra measures are put in place to ensure Fleet members are also protected and ensure measures are put in place for you to enforce your legal right to see and read the safe systems of work and risk assessment to ensure you fully understand what you need to do, and what PPE you should be wearing should you agree to van share.

Although feedback from branches is showing that volunteer numbers overall are low, for absolute clarity our advice remains that members should not volunteer to van share, as we believe given the current situation with the crisis that this is the wrong time to go back to sharing vehicles. This advice does not change, even if we were to receive the assurances as above in relation to sick pay at this current moment in time.

We will be writing to Royal Mail and will keep you updated on any progress.

All enquiries regarding the content of this LTB should be addressed to the **PTCS** Department, quoting reference 401. Email address: khay@cwu.org and Outdoor Department quoting reference 600. Email address: outdoorsecretary@cwu.org.

Yours sincerely,

Yours sincerely,

Carl Maden
Acting Assistant Secretary

Mark Baulch
Assistant Secretary