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**To: All Branches**

Dear Colleagues,

## **Handheld Body Temperature Scanners For Pandemic Fever Detection and Screening:**

CWU/HQ continues to receive enquiries and requests for information regarding the provision of 'Temperature Scanners'. We have also been made aware of proposals discussed locally regarding the acquisition of this equipment in order that it can be provided for use in various Mail Centres, Delivery Offices, RDCs, Hubs and Depots during the current pandemic where there are current Coronavirus/Covid-19 outbreaks/clusters of cases amongst the workforce and especially in light of the high level of agency workers (33,000) being taken on by Royal Mail over the Christmas peak pressure period.

With the current Coronavirus/Covid-19 second wave, regional restrictions and the imminent national lockdown, the concerns to find aids and solutions to the problem are obviously understandable.

As you may suspect, the issue of 'Temperature Scanners' has been subject to discussion previously with Royal Mail Group, following similar requests from a number of large offices.

The current position and policy of the Royal Mail Group Central HQ Safety, Health & Environment Team and Occupational Health Team is not to introduce the use of temperature scanners and the CWU supports that position.

The question of RMG employees having temperature checks is featured in the RMG Coronavirus Q&A document which is regularly updated and is circulated additionally via CWU Letters to Branches.

RMG state that they continue to follow the Government/Public Health/DHSC/NHS guidelines and temperature checks have not been mandated or recommended by Government or their official agencies.

If the situation regarding Royal Mail Group changes following a review, Branches will be notified.

The Health, Safety & Environment Department has additionally examined all available information and considered a number of reports from Government as well as medical and scientific sources on the effectiveness of the technology itself which I summarise below.

The companies marketing this equipment claim not surprisingly that their 'body temperature scanning systems' provide an effective method and tool in the battle to further prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus among workers and the wider public.

It's also worth adding that a number of airports decided to trial or deploy 'Thermal Scanners' as a solution to help them identify passengers who may have Coronavirus/Covid-19 by detecting people with an elevated temperature as they walk through the airport.

This may be reassuring to people, however, it's not supported by science or UK Government advice to the airline industry. Nevertheless, a number of airports and airlines use this equipment despite science making it clear that thermal screening for temperatures is not effective at diagnosing infections.

The most recent UK Government guidance for airlines and airports found that "there is no scientific support for the thermal temperature scanner technology as an effective method to screen people for Coronavirus."

Multiple scientific studies have found thermal scanners or cameras are ineffective at preventing the spread of Covid-19 and other infections. Experts have concluded that "Temperature is a bad proxy for having the disease and the measuring scanner devices is not very accurate."

A study by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) concluded that thermal scanning at airports detects less than 1 in 5 passengers, arriving on flights, who are infected with the Coronavirus/Covid-19 virus.

A review by the US Communicable Disease Centre, for example, found 268,000 passenger checks at selected US airports led to the discovery of only 14 positive Covid-19 cases.

A study by epidemiologists found that because of the incubation period of Covid-19, thermal scanners were "unlikely to prevent passage of infected travellers into new countries or regions where they may seed local transmission".

According to the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), between 1% and 20% of passengers with a fever will be missed by thermal screening equipment, and between 1% and 25% of passengers could be wrongly reported as having a temperature when they are all clear.

The European Union Aviation Safety Agency and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control are advising airports and airlines that thermal screening of passengers has many limitations and that there is little evidence of its effectiveness in detecting Covid-19 cases.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) warned that "temperature screening alone may not be very effective".

The Centre for the Mathematical Modelling of Infectious Diseases nCoV Working Group found that thermal scanning at airports was of a limited value for preventing the spread of Covid-19.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control said in a technical report for public health authorities in May 2020 that thermal screening is a "high-cost, low-efficiency measure that has many limitations and little evidence of effectiveness in detecting Covid-19 cases".

The International Air Transport Association (IATA)'s medical advisory group found that temperature screening would miss many of those with early-stage Covid-19 illness, those who are infected but have no symptoms, or have taken medication such as paracetamol to lower their temperature.

This information is being published for the information and assistance of Branches and Reps who may be considering lending their support to the call for introducing the equipment.

Clearly, the CWU needs to be sure that any equipment brought in to use at Royal Mail offices really works and isn't just there to give the workforce a false sense of security and be nothing other than 'cosmetic'.

We have expressed our concerns about the increased risk of Covid-19 transmission brought about by an over-reliance of the business on large numbers of casual/agency staff and is something the business needs to think very carefully about in relation to how they maintain 'Covid Secure' workplaces when these workers, who the business has no knowledge or background history of, enter the workplace.

Yours sincerely



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**National Health, Safety & Environment Officer**