

No. 547/2020

16TH November 2020

TO: ALL BRANCHES WITH ROYAL MAIL GROUP MEMBERS

Dear Colleagues,

COVID-19: Sick Pay - Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) Members

Since the Government announced that England would go into a second lockdown and members who are in the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) category have been instructed to shield, the CWU have been pressing Royal Mail to amend the Sick Pay Policy to take into account the exceptional circumstances of Coronavirus Covid-19. Earlier today Royal Mail communicated their latest policy and it is attached to this LTB as APP1.

During our meetings we have been expressing the view many of our members, especially our CEV members will potentially be suffering severe financial difficulties due to the result of the previous lockdown situation and will be more likely to be moving towards half or nil pay. Our CEV members will by now have received a communication from the NHS/Government advising them not to attend work and stay at home 'shielding' unless they can work from home.

The latest policy decision means Royal Mail sick pay will be extended to those CEV members who are due to move onto half or nil pay, including those with less than 12 months service until the 2nd December 2020. Whilst this policy change from Royal Mail will be very welcome news to CEV members, it is disappointing Royal Mail continue with policies which are divisive and look at cost rather than the health of our members/their employees, as this policy does not flow through to any member who is not in the CEV category. Therefore, if you are contacted by track and trace or another means and are told to self-isolate for a period of time, you will not continue to get full pay should you fall into the half or nil pay category, due to exhausting your period of full pay.

No matter what category of health you are in, members will have to face a very difficult decision and may have to choose between attending work in defiance of the Government request or accepting half pay or nil pay if they stay at home.

We do not believe this decision is easier for anyone who is not in the CEV category and therefore believe the policy should apply to anyone who is contacted by Government to shield or self-isolate.

Representatives and branches should also note the conditions this policy change has to annual leave. The new policy insists any pre-booked annual leave has to be taken and if there are any further lockdowns, any remaining annual leave has to be taken by 31st March 2021, whether it overlaps with shielding or not, not even being allowed to carry over the normal 5 days.

This policy decision only applies to CEV employees in England as Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have their own devolved governments. When members are told to shield going forward we will be discussing this with Royal Mail.

Whilst we want to acknowledge the positive moves for members who are in the Critically Extremely Vulnerable category who are shielding, for members who have to self isolate as a result of CV19 this will be seen as divisive and unfair. Many of these members will be faced with the dilemma of having to choose between risking coming into work or suffering a financial detriment through no fault of their own. The CWU will continue to push for these members to be supported further by Royal Mail as we believe short term cost savings on sick pay are not the right way to support employees through this pandemic in exchange for the potential health risks involved.

We will continue our discussions with Royal Mail as we believe there will be further lockdowns and this is only a short term fix. We want to agree a strategy with Royal Mail which is fair to everyone and where members do not have to make the unenviable decision of putting themselves, their families and their fellow colleagues at risk through not being able to afford to stay away from work.

All enquiries regarding the content of this LTB should be addressed to the **PTCS** Department, quoting reference 404. Email address: **khay@cwu.org**.

Yours sincerely,

Carl Maden
Assistant Secretary (Acting) PTCS Department