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27 January 2021

Our Ref: E1/21

**To: All Branches**

Dear Colleagues,

## **Royal Mail Group, CWU and Unite/CMA Communication on the Protection of Employees During the Coronavirus Pandemic Through Mandatory Face Coverings in Indoor Workplaces**

### **Introduction**

This update LTB is being issued further to LTBs 544/20 RMG CWU Joint Statement Dealing with Coronavirus Covid-19 - Protecting and Putting Employees First and Introduction of Mandatory Face Masks, 562/20 TUC - Face Coverings in the Workplace Guide, 582/20 Royal Mail Group, Message From Dr Shaun Davis Global Director Compliance & Sustainability (02.12. 20) - 'Covid-Secure' Compliance & Managers Actions, 583/20 Royal Mail Group - Mandatory Face Coverings and Masks - Frequently Asked Questions and Answers (Version 3 and Addendums) and 603/20 Royal Mail Group - Mandatory Mask Wearing - CWU Compliance Survey (Dec 2020).

### **Background**

The introduction of 'Mandatory Face Coverings' in Royal Mail Group came into force with the full support of CWU/HQ on the strong recommendation of the Health, Safety & Environment Department with the full support of the DGS(P), Postal Department Officers and PEC. A Joint Statement to that effect was signed on 9 November 2020. Strong representations have been made repeatedly through a number of letters and face to face meetings (the weekly RM/CWU National Joint Coronavirus Operational Group Skype Meetings) with Royal Mail's senior Directors to clamp down on managers failing to enforce the 'Mandatory Mask Policy' that the Union had signed up to.

On 15 January 2021 a letter was sent to Ricky McAulay Royal Mail National Field Services Director calling for a **'Strategy for Tackling Covid-19 in Royal Mail and Reducing the Risks as follows:**

1. Roll out weekly workforce Covid-19 testing of all RMG staff at the earliest opportunity.
2. Press Government/DHSC for priority Covid-19 vaccinations for all RMG staff.
3. Return to 2m social distancing as standard, removing 1m+ without any further delay, in line with 'SAGE' recommendations.
4. Reduce the number of people permitted in a space/room at any one time, assessing space and safe maximum occupancy levels.
5. Improve ventilation. (CIBSE recommends at least 10 litres of outside air in offices/rooms per second per person).

6. Improve cleaning, cleaning standards, routines and frequency.
7. Reinforce 'compliance' with the RMG 'Mandatory Face Masks Policy' in all indoor workplaces, except for those workers who are exempt. (Masks to meet WHO Standard).
8. Require any work activity that can be completed safely outside to be conducted outside.
9. Maintain high levels of PPE supply.
10. Review the use/introduction of fixed or movable partitions to divide workstations.
11. Reduce reliance on agency staff and screen those taken on.
12. Launch a jointly designed communications plan to get the critical messages to the workforce around 'Hands-Face-Space-Cleaning' to the workforce.

On 19 January without any consultation with CWU/HQ a 'unilateral' unagreed communication was issued by Shaun Davis RMG Global Director of Compliance & Sustainability which breached the terms of the nationally agreed RMG/CWU Joint Statement of 9 November 2020. This was immediately challenged with strong representations in writing and at last Friday's weekly RM/CWU National Joint Coronavirus Operational Group Skype Meeting on 22 January 2021. All CWU ASRs and the Postal Officers were updated on the development.

The outcome of the discussions with Ricky McAulay Royal Mail National Field Services Director and other senior Directors was to resolve the matter on the basis of a new 'Joint Communication' replacing the one issued on 19 January 2021.

### **Joint Communication Issued 26 January 2021**

Following discussions with Shaun Davis RMG Global Director of Compliance & Sustainability, Rachel Boon RMG Head of Occupational Health and others, the wording of a Joint Communication, signed by the Health and Safety Leads for RMG, CWU and Unite CMA has been produced and that Joint Communication is attached.

### **The 26 January 2021 Joint Communication:**

- Strengthens and reinforces our joint commitment and support of 'Mandatory Face Coverings' in the indoor workplace as part a 'joint approach' and not a 'unilateral' one.
- Maintains 'Mandatory Masks' as part of, and one component of, the holistic policy of 'Hands-Face-Space-Better Cleaning' etc., approach.
- Re-asserts and defends the 9 November 2020 Joint Statement.
- Deals with non-compliance and introduces checks on 'exemption claims'.
- Provides clarification for all concerned and removes previous dubiety and confusion.
- Protects 'vulnerable' workers and those with hidden disabilities.
- Ensures and maintains the full involvement of local/area CWU Reps.
- Retains the important '3-Step' compliance process, controls the application of the conduct code, maintaining fairness and consistency.
- Strongly supports 'Mandatory Masks'.

### **Previous Important Message To Managers From Shaun Davis issued on 2 December 2020**

This communication was an "Important reminder to all managers to monitor and encourage employees to comply with Covid-19 preventative controls and all managers to continue high compliance" as follows:

- Face Masks are mandatory indoors and must be worn correctly over the nose and the mouth.
- Hands should be washed regularly, at least every two hours and more if you are about to eat or following use of the toilet facilities.
- Hand sanitiser should be used in between hand washing.
- Comply to social distancing (2M).
- Don't attend work if unwell with Covid-19 symptoms (temperature, cough, smell & taste loss).

- Wearing a face covering does *not* replace good hygiene standards and social distancing, it is an additional measure.
- Managers must continue to use weekly SMATs and monthly inspections to monitor compliance to coronavirus control measures.
- Managers to ensure adequate monitoring and supervision in place and identify any shortcomings in social distancing or hygiene and act without delay.
- Managers to regularly remind staff of the 'Covid-Secure' rules.
- Managers to walk the floor and challenge non-compliance.
- Managers to update risk assessments.
- The cleaning of touch points is important to help reduce the risk of virus transmission.
- Regularly sanitise common touch points in the workplace.

## Conclusion

As agreed between RMG, CWU and Unite/CMA, the wearing of a face covering has been mandatory in **ALL** Royal Mail Group units and offices since 9 November 2020. Since then the situation has worsened. With the new, more infectious virus strains spreading across the UK, we must work together to ensure that we are all doing everything we can to reduce infection risks through suitable Covid-19 control measures. We need to now be fully aware of the magnitude of the pandemic second wave, in order to defend CWU members in Royal Mail's workforce from the new Covid-19 virus strains which are 70% more infectious and transmittable than the original strain, causing new cases to soar to 60,000 a day prior to lockdown 2 and daily deaths up to 1,600 a day. This has forced the United Kingdom back into lockdown. 3.5 million people have been infected in the UK and 100,000 have died. 40,000 are in hospital. Don't under estimate the threat is a key message to members not wanting to wear a mask!

## Supply Of Face Coverings And Visors

Face coverings and visors are available for all employees from their manager. Employees may also choose to wear their own personal face coverings but these must not have an exhalation valve. Improved, branded, washable, face coverings will be provided to all operational staff. These masks can be more comfortable for the wearer and are better for the environment (See LTB 025/21).

**Increasing the wearing of face coverings in our indoor workplaces is IMPORTANT – we all have a responsibility to protect ourselves, our workmates, each other and our families.**

## Attachments:

- Royal Mail Group, CWU and Unite/CMA Communication on the Protection of Employees During the Coronavirus Pandemic Through Mandatory Face Coverings in Indoor Workplaces (26 January 2021)
- Royal Mail Group and CWU Joint Statement on the Protection of Employees During the Coronavirus Pandemic Through the Mandating of Face Coverings in Indoor Workplaces (9 November 2020)
- RMG/CWU PPE National Agreement '3-Step Compliance Process'
- RMG Mandatory Face Mask Poster
- Royal Mail Group New Branded Reusable/Washable Cotton Face Masks Image (See LTB 025/21)

Yours sincerely



**Dave Joyce**

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