

No. 228/2020

29<sup>th</sup> April 2020

**TO: ALL BRANCHES WITH ROYAL MAIL GROUP MEMBERS**

Dear Colleagues,

**RE: Royal Mail Sick Pay Policy – Furlough**

When the Coronavirus Covid-19 epidemic broke within the UK I wrote to Royal Mail requesting to engage on the potential impact and to discuss measures which could be put in place to ensure we could protect our members, Royal Mail employees.

The measures I requested to be put in place included any absence which was Coronavirus Covid-19 related to be discounted from the Attendance Procedure and any member who has to take absence to have full pay, even if they have exhausted sick pay previously. This included members with less than 12 months service.

Whilst Royal Mail agreed to pay members with less than 12 months service, full sick pay, they were not consistent flowing this through to members with more than 12 months service who had exhausted sick pay provision, some who have battled life threatening illnesses in the past e.g. Cancer, Heart Attack etc. They have agreed to discount most absences from the attendance procedure, with prolonged or very frequent absences, requiring further investigation.

As part of the Coronavirus Covid-19 crisis, during March 2020, the Government announced the Government Job Retention Scheme. As part of this scheme companies can apply to furlough employees. Whilst information was scarce in the beginning and this was initially set up for employers who would have normally had to lay off or make employees redundant, this has been reviewed and updated many times. Part of the reviews included employees who had caring / shielding responsibilities can be furloughed.

Again, we wrote to Royal Mail on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020 requesting they either pay members FULL sick pay who have to self-isolate/shield or as a fall-back position apply for the furlough scheme for these employees who had previously exhausted sick pay. Royal Mail disagreed with our assessment of furlough, however we believed we were correct and continued to pursue the policy through discussion and letters challenging Royal Mail's stance.

On April 27<sup>th</sup> 2020, Royal Mail stated they had reviewed their policy and taken into account representation made by the union. Whilst Royal Mail are not going to pay extremely vulnerable members who are on half pay, no pay or unpaid leave, they accepted we were correct and agreed furlough for a number of employees. Whilst this is welcomed, we believe Royal Mail has a responsibility to pay everyone who has to be off with Coronavirus Covid-19 absence and not rely on the Government Retention Scheme. There are still a number of members who are not able to apply and we are continuing to press Royal Mail to either pay these members or ensure they can apply for the furlough scheme as this is better than half or no pay. You will be receiving a letter from Royal Mail where you can apply for furlough online to [coronavirus.advice@royalmail.com](mailto:coronavirus.advice@royalmail.com)

There are still a number of questions around the scheme, which Royal Mail could not answer at the time, however we are awaiting responses to the questions.

There are qualifications for furlough, which I have outlined below.

- Members who are unable to work from home can apply.
- Members will have to apply to be placed on furlough. They will be sent a letter which will give them an email address to apply. The email address is [coronavirus.advice@royalmail.com](mailto:coronavirus.advice@royalmail.com)
- Members can apply who are in the extremely vulnerable category or shielding i.e. they have received a letter from the NHS for themselves who are on half or no pay, or they have a letter stating a member of their household is in the vulnerable category.
- Members who have Coronavirus Covid-19 related absence and move onto half pay whilst on Royal Mail sick pay, can apply for furlough at the point of moving from full pay.
- Members have to take at least two weeks annual leave as part of the furlough and must not have carried over any leave from last year.
- Members placed on furlough will have this reviewed every three weeks.
- The date of payment for furlough to start will be from 20<sup>th</sup> April 2020.
- Only Coronavirus Covid-19 absences count for application for furlough.

Royal Mail have said they will be topping up the furlough payment. Monthly paid members will receive a maximum of £3,125 per month. This is made up of the maximum furlough payment of £2,500 plus a top up from Royal Mail of a quarter of this sum £625.

The maximum total sum for weekly paid members will be £721.15p.

Any member who applies for furlough, is unsuccessful and believes the decision is wrong should speak to their CWU Rep.

The calculation of the start date for payment could be different for individuals. Members should have received the NHS letters by no later than week commencing 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020. However, self-isolation/shielding could have started at different times depending on when the letter was received and it was supplied to Royal Mail.

If members have taken 2 weeks annual leave or unpaid leave between 30<sup>th</sup> March and 20<sup>th</sup> April 2020, this period will 'qualify' as the period of annual leave you are expected to take. If members have taken unpaid leave instead of annual leave during this, they will have the option of converting 2 weeks of the unpaid leave to annual leave.

Assuming members have taken 2 weeks annual leave by 20<sup>th</sup> April 2020 and you are successful in the application, the payment will be backdated to 20<sup>th</sup> April 2020. If you have not, Members will have to take a total of 2 weeks annual leave / unpaid leave before receiving payment. This is a Royal Mail stipulation and not part of the furlough process.

In my opinion, Royal Mail could have engaged with the furlough scheme on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020, however chose not to as by delaying it for a number of weeks, they could then make members take an amount of annual leave as part of the qualifying period by only back dating it to April 20<sup>th</sup> 2020.

We have got Royal Mail to this stage as we have fought for it. Royal Mail is abrogating their responsibility to their employees by not paying full pay whilst members have to take time away from work during this extraordinary Coronavirus Covid-19 crisis. Every decision made seems to be based on finance and not always keeping members safe. We will keep pressing Royal Mail for ALL members who have to take absence to protect themselves or their loved ones during this awful pandemic to receive full pay.

The progress made will please a large number of our members as they will now receive pay when they were on half or no pay. However, we have members who have to make the decision of taking unpaid leave or risk catching the Coronavirus Covid-19 virus to feed their family. This is an absolute disgrace. Members who do not receive paid leave, only have the other option of applying to the Rowland Hill Fund. Royal Mail are refusing to make the application to this fund transparent, therefore we are pressing for information as to how this works, what is the qualification etc.

We will keep you updated on any further progress.

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**