

No. 126/20

16th March 2020

TO: ALL BRANCHES

Dear Colleague

Re: Coronavirus Covid-19 – PDA Use and 'Signed For' Delivery Problems For Members on Royal Mail and Parcelforce Deliveries and Members in Customer Service Points (CSPs - Callers Offices):

LTB 123/20 issued on Friday 13 March 2020 reported to Branches and Regions that CWU/HQ has been inundated with complaints from Branches, Reps and members across both Royal Mail and Parcelforce who were experiencing extreme difficulties in making deliveries as growing numbers of customers were refusing to touch and sign members PDAs. This has been complicated by the UK national shortage of disinfectant wipes which leaves members with nothing to clean the PDAs and which are both passed between staff and between staff and the customers.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has stated that it is safe to receive letters or packages. Previous research has found that coronaviruses don't survive long on objects such as letters and packages based on what the WHO know about similar coronaviruses such as MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV, WHO experts think this new coronavirus likely survives poorly on surfaces. However, although Experts believe this virus perishes fairly quickly on surfaces, they don't know for sure how long the novel coronavirus covid-19 can survive on surfaces such as metal, glass or plastic and there are mixed opinions. Therefore, the advice that the surface is cleaned with appropriate disinfectant wipes is sound advice as an added precaution. Preferably items are not passed around at this time.

As a result of the UK shortage of disinfectant sanitiser wipes and customers currently not wanting to touch the PDA plus other associated problems with keeping hands clean on outdoor work, a letter was sent to the Royal Mail Service Delivery Director along with the Parcelforce Operations Director, the Royal Mail Delivery Director and the Royal Mail Collections and Processing Director, requesting urgent positive action and a firm decision with clear consistent instructions to our outdoor delivery workforce in Royal Mail and Parcelforce, which immediately removes the risks and the indecision, either temporarily withdrawing the PDA signature requirements for the duration of the current pandemic or changing the method of use as some competitors have plus urgently reinstating the supply of disinfectant wipes etc.

Discussions have been taking place with both Royal Mail and Parcelforce over the weekend from Friday through Saturday and Sunday and I'm pleased to report that a satisfactory resolution of the problems has been achieved in which the customer signature requirements have been removed as a temporary/interim arrangement, during the current Coronavirus Pandemic period.

Two Royal Mail 'Managers Updates' (dated 13 March and 14 March - copies attached) have been issued clearly detailing the changed processes and which set out the fact that in light of coronavirus pandemic, Royal Mail have made **temporary changes to Operational Delivery and Customer Service Point processes** for the delivery of any parcels which cannot be posted through a letterbox, or items that require a signature as well the process for when customers visit the CSP - Customer Service Points or Callers Offices to collect their undelivered items. These temporary changes are **effective immediately and remain in place until further notice**.

The Health, Safety & Environment Department welcomes the prompt and decisive action taken by both Royal Mail and Parcelforce Worldwide to change the way in which both Royal Mail and Parcelforce deliveries are made, in order to protect the workforce from the risk of cross infection and confrontation as well to overcome customer concerns about touching the PDA (Postal Digital Assistant - Hand Held Computer).

The requirement to obtain a signature has been removed with immediate effect on Delivery Rounds. Deliveries will be made by dropping off the Parcel or Package (anything which don't go through the letterbox) by placing it by the door on the doorstep knocking/ringing the bell then withdrawing two metres, confirm identity verbally where required, witness the customer taking the item inside then complete the transaction on the Hand Held Computer. If the customer refuses the item it will be recorded as undelivered and retrieved back to the Royal Mail Delivery Office, with a Red (739) 'Something For You Card' left informing the Customer when and where it can be collected or re-delivery arranged. This action taken will minimise contact and risk during doorstep transactions with customers.

Likewise in Customer Service Points (CSPs - Callers Offices) the requirement to obtain a signature has been removed with immediate effect. The CSP staff will check ID as normal when required, scan the barcode on the parcel and follow the Item Collected process on the PDA (and SPS process in an SPS enabled office). When the CSP staff member gets to the relevant screens they will input the customer's name into the PDA as normal but when the signature screen is displayed they will input "XP1" themselves and press Done.

The 13 March Royal Mail Managers Update covers: (copy attached)

- Changes to Operational Delivery Processes For "Non-Signed" for parcels (1C/2C, RM24/48, T24/48)
- Changes For "Signed" parcels including letter formats (Signed For, T24/48 with signature, International)
- Changes For "Special Delivery" parcels, including letter formats
- Changes For "Age Verification" parcels
- Key Point: This applies to all parcels and items requiring a signature to all customers

The 14 March Royal Mail Managers Update covers: (copy attached)

- Changes to collection of items from CSPs
- Handing over “Non- Signed For” Parcels (1c/2c, RM24/48, TR24/48) to customers
- Handing over “Signed For” Parcels (Special Delivery, Recorded, International, T24/48, Age Verification) to customers
- Key Point: This applies to deliveries to all customers

The Parcelforce Worldwide Interim Delivery Process Guide For Deliveries Requiring a Signature: (copy attached)

Clearly sets out with the use of a 'flow chart' how the simplified process works, as follows:

- Locate Delivery Point
- Obtain Customer Response and check name and address are correct - No Response leave 739 Card
- Scan Barcode or tap on job
- Ask recipient to confirm name and input it
- Hand over item
- If the recipient refuses to provide their name then the item is not handed over and a 739 card is left

All processes take place with no direct contact and the PDA is retained by Royal Mail/Parcelforce WW staff member without at any time handing it over to the customer.

With regards to any Customer Conflict Issues on the Doorstep the following form of words has been agreed with Both Royal Mail and Parcelforce:-

Customer Conflict Issues on the Doorstep

*It is important that, if at any stage an OPG feels threatened or in danger, they should walk away from the doorstep (leaving the parcel if unable to take the parcel back) and inform the police (if required), the Security Helpdesk and their manager. **You can contact the Security Helpdesk through your PDA menu or dial (0207 239 6655). Alternately, you can dial 999.***

Royal Mail and Parcelforce have confirmed that they will continue to keep all standard operating procedures under review and take appropriate steps to protect the workforce and the general public. This is a fluid situation, changing by the day and therefore will be monitored closely in order that the Businesses can react where need be.

Yours sincerely

Dave Joyce

National Health, Safety & Environment Office