

No. 182/25

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## Update on USO Negotiations

The purpose of this communication is to give Branches, representatives, and members a full update on the ongoing negotiations with Royal Mail on the future of the USO and a detailed breakdown of the status of each pilot office so we are as open and transparent as possible.

The CWU remain fully committed to agreeing USO reform. Our position is one that has been consistent throughout the negotiations - any agreement must restore confidence in the workplace, quality of service and deliver the platform to rebuild Royal Mail.

In December 2024, Royal Mail and the CWU agreed to deploy 37 pilot sites using Royal Mail's preferred USO option - the Optimised Delivery Model (ODM). The design of the Optimised Delivery Model was based on removing one person from every four duties which were in scope.

35 pilots were deployed commencing from February 2025, with the last pilot going live in early June. We are currently in August, traditionally the lightest traffic period of the year, and the majority of pilot units are not clearing or working successfully with ODM.

We have seen significant numbers of duties and hours being reinstated for some pilots and units. For example, Stockton on Tees DO have had over 50 duties reinstated but the office is still not clearing daily. Far too often it has taken too long to implement fixes, and the vast majority of PIRs are still ongoing.

Attached to this LTB is a report from the reps on the ground for each pilot site. Apart from some small units that are working better, far too many are failing during the lightest period of the year. This is despite the unit having surplus staff and staff from neighbouring units being used.

We understand that it has been a challenging time and would like to thank all our members and representatives at the pilot sites for their hard work thus far. Please be assured that resolving and fixing the pilots remains our top priority.

The evidence from the pilots is crystal clear - the CWU does not believe that the Optimised Delivery Model and its design of four into three duties is an acceptable or realistic proposal, and we have no confidence that it could be deployed successfully in the remaining 1,250 Delivery Units.

We have therefore been engaging with Royal Mail over an alternative model, that is based on a heavy and light option which we expect the pilot units to introduce when we reach an agreement.

The CWU option enables individuals to stay on their duty, helps to resolve non-driver issues, and mitigates fatigue issues associated with the Optimised Delivery Model.

Within the negotiations, we have also been discussing the possibility of a shorter Saturday attendance option of 5 hours and 45 minutes, as well as an alternative option for every other Saturday off with slightly longer attendance.

Additionally, we are in discussions about how the CWU model can assist in moving start and finish times earlier, as 50% of the manual prep workload is in the unit before wave one arrives.

The principle of the heavy and light model is that 50% of your duty each day has all the mail, and 50% is just first class and parcels. This rotates daily, Monday through to Friday. You would also take part of a further duty set at heavy as part of your daily workload Monday to Friday.

We have been discussing an 8 into 7 model for town duties with the seventh duty being reviewed against strict criteria linked to achieving quality and having fair and manageable workload. The impasse on this issue is the CWU want the seventh duty to be designed an actual duty within the 8 walks, whereas Royal Mail want it to be more ad hoc.

The CWU cannot reach an agreement which has the potential to worsen the quality of service under a new USO model. We do not believe that the £300 million saving was ever realistic, especially given the state some units have been in since Royal Mail decided to impose revisions in 2022 and 2023.

Our members across Royal Mail have seen unprecedented growth in tracked products alongside unusually high levels of letters so far this year and which has continued through the normal lighter summer period.

We realise many units are seeing frame changes and colour coding and may believe this is the start of the units being deployed. It is not.

Whilst this activity maybe unsettling for some members we want to be absolutely clear - there will be no introduction or deployment of any changes to the USO in your units until there is a full national agreement in place and subsequently your local rep and office have signed off and voted on how this will impact your office. Given the sheer scale of this change and the political sensitivities around the USO, Royal Mail cannot implement this without agreement. We need you to take confidence from that.

Ahead of any agreement being reached, the agreed reset of and employee and industrial relations will be crucial to ensuring that it creates a platform for genuine engagement and respect in the workplace. We will also require the commitments within the EP / CWU agreement to be agreed and honoured within the timescales set out.

We will keep Divisions and Branches updated on negotiations over the coming days. The role of our Divisions and Branches now is to cascade this information into every office in the UK and we ask that meetings commence with immediate effect to build support for the unions position which we have outlined in this communication.

Finally, we will be issuing further communications early next week following the members ballot result on areas we believe Royal Mail are acting outside of the spirit and intention of the EP Group / CWU agreement and how we plan to handle this.

Any enquiries in relation to the content of this LTB should be addressed to the DGS(P) Department.

Martin Walsh  
**Deputy General Secretary Postal**

Dave Ward  
**General Secretary**

Unit	Has the unit increased the number of duties since deployment	Is it clearing daily	What other issues are there in the unit	It is failing less than before the pilot	Overtime + above pre deployment levels and – below	H52 L79
Girvan	Increase in duties	Unit is not clearing	Not enough indoor time.	Yes	73+	365 53
Ayr	Increase in 3 combined and 1 DPR and one moving out of scope	Before the investment the unit was not clearing but this has helped but still a problem on Saturdays.	Tracked growth impact on combined.	Yes	365-	208 0
Newton Mearns	One new duty	Unit is clearing	They split core and combined duties in a similar way to a heavy and light model.	Yes	102-	148 25
Cumbernauld	3 new duties put in when deploying and another one due to go in.	The unit clears most days but with staff coming in from other units and. Using the LAT staff.	Delays in deploying the extra duty of 18 hours.	Yes	120-	365 53
Louth	0	No		No	174+	4 0
Hull Malmo	11	No has not cleared since week 2	There have 21-part timers upgraded to full on a temporary basis.	No	723-	0 36
Scunthorpe	5	No		No	584-	52

						0
W1	Number of walks taken out of scope firm duties. Assistants on some van duties.	No		No	138-	189 0
North Finchley	2 Full time 1 RDC	No	HCT issue	Yes	70+	119 53
Stoke Newington	2 Full time van supports 1 RDC 25 hours prestart and 2 nights	No		No	316-	171 0
Romsey	0	Has only cleared on one day since being deployed.	PIR not concluded . No DDS file, fatigue issues, borrowed staff, stress related sick leave high	No	95+  Doubts about this number.	0 0
Salisbury	2 duties	Clears most days.	HCT going to 1 over 1. DDS issues Fatigue levels high. Fixes unrecorded.	Yes	628-  Doubts about this number.	50 0
Winchester	5 duties	Clears most days unless high sick leave.	DDS issues Fatigue levels, fixes unrecorded	No	680-  Doubts about this number.	75 0
Lytham St Annes	3 duties	Clears most days	H51 is wrong should be 305.	Yes	193+	232 0

Preston South	They had issues with DDS	No		Yes	105-	1400
Fleetwood	3 duties	No	H51 is wrong	Yes	26-	1650
Trowbridge	0	Clears	H51 358 H52 54	Yes	183-	3190
Blackwood	1 extra duty	Yes		Yes	109-	2225
Usk	0	Clears most days		Yes	36-	00
Pontypool	Added 3 new duties before deployment but still has not reach agreement on PIR fixes	Clears most days		Yes	205-	890
Southend	34 duties in	Yes, but with the support of 18 casuals per day.		Yes	1420-	01137
Brinklow	Got 5 full time nights 2 part time twilights	Yes, with the support of 6 full time surplus		Yes	591+	24053
Hadleigh	Had 4 of the 8 walks in scope taken out scope	Clears most days.		Yes	20-	60
Tonbridge	30 duties back in	30 part walk failures every day.		Yes	677-	10000
Clifton	0	No		Yes	117+	50
Cheltenham	Yes, increase in duties	No but is improving		Yes but still failing 7K	721-	08
Antrim	PIR unresolved	inconsistent	Overtime issues.	Yes	402-	00
Ballymena	3 FT duties but PIR still unresolved	Not daily	Overtime issues .	Yes	481-	2100
Bulwell	1 shared pairing 2 HCTs	Clearing	Issues with DDS	Yes	246- Overtime levels are	0 0 This is not in

					higher than this.	place in Bulwell.
Melton Mowbray	No agreement on PIR	Relies on individual's being moved from other units	High sick leave	No	193+	1560
Carlton	No PIR agreement 4 duties 1 shared van pair 1 HCT and 1 more delivery subject to PIR.	Clearing but with support of increase indoor time.	Indoor overtime issues. Part time uplift needed. IWT and resourcing issues.	Yes	196+	00
Stockton	26 new duties in addition to the 28 agreed before deployment	No		Yes	1259+	1570
Hexham	Yes	Clearing		Yes	216-	00
Darlington	Yes	Not clearing		Yes	713+	2490
Tenterden	No	Clearing		No	42+	00