

No 174/26

17th June 2026

Dear Colleague

ROYAL MAIL GROUP: DRUGS AND ALCOHOL NATIONAL COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT - SUPPORT & REHABILITATION SERVICE AND FOR-CAUSE TESTING FOR DRIVERS

Branches will be aware via the seven LTBs issued last year on this subject matter, that the Postal Executive previously endorsed a number of extensions to the original For-Cause testing Pilot for Drugs & Alcohol, which has been in operation since January 2025, initially in Wales and then across a further six ROD areas.

Following what was evidently a very successful Pilot, both in terms of duration and scale from a monitoring perspective, the Postal Executive agreed the principle of negotiating a For-Cause Testing National Collective Agreement for roll-out across RMG for Drivers only.

We would like to thank our Reps in the seven ROD areas for their assistance in helping to make sure the Pilot ran smoothly. Where problems have been identified (which have been very few in number), the important factor to bear in mind is that people voluntarily entered the S&R programme to enable them to address any issues they feel they may have in respect of dependency on drugs or alcohol. Indeed, the statistics provided to us by RMG indicate that the supportive nature of the S&R programme has encouraged individuals to sign-up to receive the help they need. This in turn has resulted in a significant number of members who entered the programme successfully completing it.

Since our Postal Conference in May, extensive negotiations have taken place with RMG and we can now report that we have reached a National Collective Agreement - **Support & Rehabilitation Service and For-Cause Testing for Drivers**, which is attached to this LTB. The Agreement, which has been endorsed by the Postal Executive, includes the following key features:

- **Drivers Only** - the For-Cause testing section of the Agreement reached applies to Drivers only, the definition of which has been clearly defined in the Agreement. Drivers includes van share pairings as the van share partner is expected to be able to drive at any point during the duty if the driver is incapacitated in any way. It also includes managers, which was a recurring theme raised by Branches at the various Briefings for the Pilot. The exact definition, as contained in the Agreement, is as follows:

Drivers, for the purposes of this agreement, refers to all employees, including managers, who are: contractually obligated to drive as part of their role for Royal Mail, or are scheduled or agree to drive on a particular day or are working in van share pairings whether they are the primary driver or not

- **Wellbeing of Employees** - the National Agreement centres around the Support & Rehabilitation (S&R) programme and heavily focuses on the wellbeing of employees. The following sentence has been included in the Agreement under the section in relation to monitoring following S&R:

*In all situations where disciplinary action is being considered managers must seek support and guidance from the ER Advisory Services team. and ensure **the employee's wellbeing is fully considered as the primary position when determining next steps.***

- **Six-Month Amnesty** from the introduction of the Agreement. There will be no use of discipline following a positive test, providing the member agrees to enter the S&R programme – in other words, the same principle that has applied throughout the Pilot. This effectively means we have secured in total a two year “soft landing” as the Pilot commenced in January 2025. There is, however, the inclusion of an extra caveat to be applied during the six-month amnesty. This relates to a driver testing positive having already driven a RMG vehicle on the day of testing.
- **After the Six-Month amnesty** – there is strong wording around the consideration of **alternatives to disciplinary action** where someone has a positive test as follows:

*Where disciplinary action is considered, the manager will fully take into account any mitigation and the outcome will be dependent on the individual circumstances of the case, **including the employee's wellbeing.** The manager should seek advice and support from the ER Advisory Services Team where it will also be considered if a referral to the Support and Rehabilitation Programme is appropriate.*

The above is designed to give the managers a real alternative to discipline, especially in cases where the member's wellbeing is a genuine concern. A referral back to S&R could well be appropriate in these circumstances and it gives managers the opportunity to take a more sympathetic approach.

- **Leaving the Business due to Ill Health:** Under S&R, if the member does not successfully complete the programme, the National Agreement includes the following words:

" In some cases, consideration of the Leaving the Business due to Ill Health process may be appropriate".

This gives the managers a genuine alternative option to discipline and is something that our Reps can pursue on behalf of members where appropriate.

- **Owner / Agency Drivers** – whilst this area is not covered directly in the Agreement, we have agreed a way forward and this is contained within the attached side letter, which Branches will recognise the importance of. It should be noted that drivers in Parcelforce were not included in the extended Pilot as this area hadn't been resolved to our satisfaction. The side letter is vital as it provides a strong message that non-employees will be held to account through the same standards as those who are directly employed.

Briefing of Representatives (not involved in the extended Pilot) – Tuesday 30th June 11.30am – 2.30pm

Branches are advised that we will be holding a Briefing of Branches & Reps that were not involved in the extended Pilot. For clarity, this applies to the following five ROD areas, as well as Fleet and Parcelforce.

- ROD – Greater London
- ROD – Midlands
- ROD – North-West
- ROD – South Midlands
- ROD – Yorkshire

The following Reps are invited to this Briefing:

- Senior Field Officials including Regional Parcel Organisers, Fleet Territorial Reps, and Divisional Reps
- Branch Secretaries
- Area Reps
- Area Safety Reps

The Briefing will take place from 11.30am-2.30pm on Tuesday 30th June at:

**Birmingham District Amal Office
47 Summer Lane
Hockley
Birmingham B19 3TH**

Deployment of National Agreement

We are still in discussions with RMG regarding the exact date for introduction, as there will need to be briefings for managers as well as our Reps, and joint communications are being considered for launching the National Agreement.

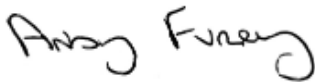
Conclusion

The Postal Executive has endorsed the Collective Agreement on the basis that the extended Pilot, which ultimately has operated across seven ROD areas was deemed to be highly successful in regard to how the Terms of Reference for the Pilot were operated, coupled with the fact we don't have any Conference policy around these matters.

The Agreement also fully recognises that the Equality Act 2010 (and the equivalent in Northern Ireland) needs to be followed in all circumstances, and crucially, in line with our policies, the Agreement has been equality-proofed by Kate Hudson, Head of Equality, Education & Development, who proposed a number of important additions into the draft Agreement, which RMG accepted.

Last, but not least, the Postal Executive endorsed this new National Agreement as it is confident we have built into the Agreement a number of key safeguards and protections for our members going forward. The Agreement should be viewed primarily from a perspective of wellbeing and Health & Safety for our members whilst performing driving duties. The Agreement is not designed to be punitive as it has been constructed on the basis of wanting to help people that may have a problem. It is on that basis that we would ask Reps to encourage members join the S&R programme where there is knowledge of a potential underlying condition that may be described as a dependency.

Yours sincerely,



Andy Furey
Assistant Secretary



Davie Robertson
Assistant Secretary



Tony Bouch
Assistant Secretary



PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

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17 June 2026

Dear Andy Furey

Further to the ongoing discussions and the development of the national agreement in respect of “for-cause” Drug and Alcohol (D&A) testing, we are writing to set out Royal Mail Group’s position regarding the application of these principles to individuals who are not directly employed but who undertake driving duties on our behalf.

While we recognise that the formal national agreement applies solely to employees and cannot extend to agency workers, contractors, and owner drivers, we share a fundamental commitment to maintaining the highest standards of safety across all operations. Accordingly, we confirm our intent that all individuals performing driving duties on behalf of Royal Mail Group, whether employees or non-employees, should be held to consistent standards of safety and accountability, particularly in relation to drug and alcohol compliance.

In line with this principle, the following approach will be applied to agency workers, contractors, and owner drivers engaged in driving duties:

- Where a manager has a reasonable belief that an individual may be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, the manager will follow the established decision-making process (decision tree) as set out in the national agreement.
- Should the outcome of this process support testing, the individual will be requested to undergo a Drug & Alcohol test.
- If the individual agrees to testing and returns a negative result, they will be permitted to continue undertaking duties, subject to no other safety concerns.
- If the individual returns a positive test result, Royal Mail Group will cease to engage or utilise their services subject to the appropriate processes being followed in line with the resourcing model and disciplinary arrangements.

Cont...

- If the individual refuses to undertake the test, this will be treated in the same way as a positive result, and we will cease to engage or utilise their services, again subject to the applicable process requirements.

This approach ensures clarity and consistency in how safety risks are managed, while recognising the differing arrangements that apply to non-employees.

We believe this position supports our shared objective of protecting employees, the public, and the integrity of our operations, while maintaining a fair and proportionate approach.

This side letter does not form part of the collective agreement but is intended to provide transparency and reassurance on how we intend that these principles will be applied in practice.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Cartwright
HR Service Delivery Director

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL NATIONAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN ROYAL MAIL GROUP AND CWU ON SUPPORT AND REAHLIBITATION SERVICE AND FOR CAUSE TESTING FOR DRIVERS

Both Royal Mail and the CWU reaffirm that the health, safety, and wellbeing of all employees, customers, and the public are of the highest priority. Royal Mail and the CWU therefore commit to working jointly to identify, respond, and mitigate risks in the workplace associated with drugs and alcohol in a fair, supportive, and responsible manner.

This national agreement builds on the successful introduction of the Support & Rehabilitation programme and the for-cause testing pilot undertaken across most regions of Royal Mail over a period of eighteen months from January 2025 and recognises the importance of having a clear and supportive approach.

This national agreement covers our approach to support and rehabilitation that applies to all employees and our approach to for-cause testing that only applies to drivers including those working in van share pairings whether they are the primary driver or not.

Royal Mail, from a perspective of wellbeing, will provide an independent support and rehabilitation service and both parties encourage employees who have a concern with, or dependency on, drugs, Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and/or alcohol to come forward. Employees who voluntarily come forward for support will be treated with dignity and respect and provided with support to overcome any dependency. Where an employee comes forward our focus is on their wellbeing and supporting them to overcome their dependency and be able to continue to work or return to their role.

This Agreement is supported by an accompanying Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document, which provides additional agreed guidance and clarification for employees and managers on the application of the Support and Rehabilitation Programme and For-Cause Testing.

1. Statement of Intent

Both parties recognise the impact the use of drugs or alcohol can have on an employee's overall ability to carry out their duties safely and effectively. This agreement is intended to support a safe working environment, ensuring that all employees can come to work and carry out their duties without risk to themselves or others. Our aim is to prevent incidents and support the health, safety and wellbeing of our employees, our customers and public and to ensure everyone goes home to their families at the end of each day.

Structure of the National Agreement

There are two key components to this national agreement as follows:

- Part one – Support and Rehabilitation programme which is consistent across RMG as a whole and applies to everyone
- Part two – For-cause testing, which is specific to drivers only and van share pairings, including managers that perform driving duties

2. Scope and Commencement Date

This national agreement will be introduced from **XXX** 2026 and applies to all employees in CWU represented grades working for Royal Mail Group (RMG) (including Parcelforce Worldwide).

The Drugs and Alcohol Procedure covers the expectations of RMG of all employees and includes this agreed approach for the support and rehabilitations service and For-cause testing.

You can access the Drugs and Alcohol Procedure and it's supporting documentation [**by...**].

3. Guiding principles

- The health, safety and wellbeing of all employees is central to this agreement and employees are expected to carry out their duties safely without risk to themselves or others
- Employees will be treated fairly and with dignity and respect
- Confidentiality is a fundamental principle and must be maintained and in accordance with data privacy legislation
- Occupational Health will provide access to the support and rehabilitation service and additional support where it is needed and appropriate.
- We encourage employees to come forward if they have a dependency so the necessary support can be provided. Anyone who comes forward prior to an incident or a positive drug and/or alcohol test will be supported on a confidential basis and won't be subject to the disciplinary procedure* as a result of declaring their need for help due to a dependency.
- Employees can seek the support from their union representative, including their H&S union representative, wellbeing ambassador, workplace coach or any other colleague. This support can include attending meetings with the employee.

4. Legal & Equality Duties – Equality Act 2010

Royal Mail fully recognises its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 (or equivalent legislation in Northern Ireland), including protection from discrimination, harassment and victimisation. This National Agreement will be applied fairly and consistently, ensuring no employee is disadvantaged on the basis of any protected characteristic.

- Where an employee voluntarily discloses a concern or dependency in good faith for the purpose of seeking rehabilitation, then that employee will not be subject to the disciplinary procedure solely on the basis of that disclosure.
- Reasonable adjustments will be made throughout the application of this agreement to support employees with disabilities, as defined by the Equality Act
- Royal Mail will promote consistent and fair application through appropriate manager training, clear guidance, and central oversight of cases. Relevant data will be monitored to identify any disproportionate outcomes
- Relevant data relating to the application of this agreement will be monitored and aggregated, including by protected characteristics, to identify and address any disproportionate impact. Data will be handled in line with data protection requirements and used solely for monitoring and improvement purposes.

5. Part One - Support and Rehabilitation Programme

The Support and Rehabilitation Service is designed to provide confidential, professional assistance if employees are facing a drug or alcohol dependency offering them a pathway with appropriate time to recover. Support is delivered through an independent provider and includes an initial clinical assessment, a tailored treatment plan (typically comprising structured sessions), and ongoing guidance to support sustained recovery and a safe return to work.

- Support and rehabilitation is a voluntary support for employees
- The service is provided by an independent third party with no connection to RMG, at no cost to the employee being referred, and is accessed via an Occupational Health referral.
- Employees are encouraged to let their manager know if they have a concern or need help with a dependency on drugs, Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and/or alcohol
- Employees should normally inform their manager if they wish to be referred to the Support and Rehabilitation Service; however, where an individual feels this is not appropriate, they can in the first instance seek support and guidance from their Wellbeing Ambassador, Workplace coach, union representative, or another colleague if they do not feel comfortable

approaching their manager, however, please note the final referral to support and rehabilitation will need to be completed by the employee's line manager as a risk assessment will need to take place and adjusted duties considered where needed

A. Employee agrees a referral to the Support and Rehabilitation programme

- The manager will meet with the employee in confidence and provide information on the support and rehabilitation service. They will complete an amended/adjusted duties form working with the employee to determine whether the employee can carry out their normal role or, if they need to move to another temporary suitable alternative role
- If the manager is unable to identify temporary suitable alternative work, then the employee will be expected to take a period of sickness absence and arrange to see their GP. The relevant Sick Pay Eligibility and Conditions will apply in this situation
- Where an employee takes sickness absence due to their dependency and has started the Support and Rehabilitation Programme, they should only return to work once they are not under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol
- Once the amended/adjusted duties form is completed the manager will, with the employee's consent, refer the employee to Occupational Health to enable them to access the support and rehabilitation service
- The support and rehabilitation service provider will contact the employee and agree the course of treatment. The length of the rehabilitation plan will depend on the individual circumstances of the employee
- Support will be provided for a maximum of 12 months from the date of the first referral
- Where the employee agrees, their union representative can provide the employee with support throughout the programme
- Employees are expected to cooperate and meet the conditions outlined in their action plan as agreed with the support and rehabilitation provider. If the programme is not completed next steps will be discussed with the employee, for example, the Support & Rehabilitation support being withdrawn.
- Managers will only know that employees have attended their planned sessions and whether they have successfully completed their rehabilitation, they will not be made aware of any confidential information discussed within the treatment sessions.
- Where employees do not successfully complete their support and rehabilitation programme their manager will discuss next steps with them. If employees are unable to remain safely in their role their manager will consider alternative redeployment options as a priority; however, RMG, as a last resort, may need to consider if the employee can remain employed in accordance with the relevant Procedure. In some cases, consideration of the Leaving the Business due to Ill Health process may be appropriate.

B. Support and rehabilitation service – monitoring testing

As part of support and rehabilitation employees will be required to complete drug and alcohol monitoring testing. This would only take place where the employee is in work and after six weeks of commencing their rehabilitation programme. We recognise that recovery is not always linear, and we are committed to supporting employees throughout their rehabilitation. If an employee feels they are at risk of relapse, or experiences a relapse, they are encouraged to speak openly with their manager at the earliest opportunity. In these circumstances, the focus will be on providing support and facilitating access to appropriate help, and disciplinary action will not be considered where the employee proactively seeks support.

The monitoring testing is based on advice taken from our independent external service provider and tests used are breathalysers (alcohol) and saliva swabs (drugs). These methods are quick, non-intrusive, and supplied and processed by the external service provider.

- Monitoring testing would take place in the workplace, and not at home:
 - at six weeks; and then
 - an average of once every two weeks for the duration of the treatment plan; and then
 - one month following completion of the plan and a return to full duties
- Where an employee receives a negative monitoring test their manager should review their amended/adjusted duties form and consider whether they can return to normal working duties
- Where an employee receives a positive monitoring test for the first time and they are in work, they will be sent home on sickness absence and there will be no consideration of disciplinary action
- Employees may be suspended from work and disciplinary action considered where:
 - there is a second positive test during the monitoring period (i.e. when the employee is in work); or
 - they have completed their tests as part of their support and rehabilitation programme and then receive a positive monitoring test result at their follow up check; or
 - they refuse to take a monitoring test.

In all situations where disciplinary action is being considered managers must seek support and guidance from the ER Advisory Services team. and ensure the employee's wellbeing is fully considered as the primary position when determining next steps.

C. Successful completion of support and rehabilitation

- The employee should complete their monitoring testing and if successful that would be the end of their support and rehabilitation service and normally return to normal duties
- If the employee has successfully completed the support and rehabilitation programme but is unable to return to normal duties, the manager and employee should discuss any amended/adjusted duties and agree changes. This conversation can include the employee's union representative if the employee consents to this
- Where an employee takes sickness absence due to their dependency during the Support and Rehabilitation Programme and successfully completes the programme, they will be expected to return to work unless a medical condition prevents them from doing so.
- We recognise that recovery is not always a straight path. Where an employee experiences a relapse following completion of the programme, they should speak with their manager at the earliest opportunity so that appropriate further support can be explored and next steps agreed, which may include re-entering the Support and Rehabilitation Programme.

6. Part Two – For-Cause Testing – for drivers only

Royal Mail and CWU recognise that employees who drive as part of their role may place themselves, customers and members of the public at greater risk if they work and are under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. In the United Kingdom all drivers are expected to comply with the law.

The legal limit for drugs is effectively zero for alcohol the drink driving limit for the relevant country will apply.

Drivers, for the purposes of this agreement, refers to all employees, including managers, who are: contractually obligated to drive as part of their role for Royal Mail, or are scheduled or agree to drive on a particular day or are working in van share pairings whether they are the primary driver or not.

- For-cause testing will only take place:
 - where a driver is involved in a work-related driving incident and it is believed the reason for the incident is due to the driver being under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol; or

- where the manager has a reasonable belief, based upon their own observation of the employee, to suspect that a driver is under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.
- Managers must complete the for-cause testing decision tree before arranging a For-Cause test. For transparency the manager will complete the decision tree in conjunction with the employee, so they are aware of the questions being asked. Following completion of the decision tree, the ER Advisory Services team will facilitate sharing the outputs of the form with the employee.
- The ER Advisory Services team are responsible for providing advice and support to managers. The team will monitor the for-cause tests and coach and mentor managers to ensure effective management of cases.
- All testing instigated will be applied fairly, proportionately, and based on objective evidence. Decisions will be subject to oversight to ensure consistency and to prevent discriminatory application.
- Where a for-cause test is appropriate the manager will arrange for the third-party supplier to attend the site to complete the test.
- The manager will support the employee by providing a private room while they wait for the test. The employee can be accompanied by either their union representative or a work colleague providing their chosen companion is available to attend the test when the tester arrives on site. If they are not available, then they can request for another companion to attend. The test will not be delayed if their companion is not available.
- An oral fluid (saliva) test will be completed for drugs and a breathalyser test for alcohol.

A. Negative test results

Where the employee receives a negative test result in most cases the employee would remain at work and continue to perform their role.

There may be some occasions where a manager asks the employee to perform an alternative role for the remainder of their duty, or they are asked to go home. This will be where the manager has concerns about the employee returning to a driving role. If this is the case the manager will explain why with the employee, and to their union representative if the employee wishes.

B. Positive test results

The following will apply for six months from the effective date of the agreement.

Where an employee receives a positive test for alcohol and/or drugs the manager will ask the employee to participate voluntarily in the support and rehabilitation service. The exceptions to this are as follows:

- A. A positive drug and/or alcohol test on the roadside following an accident/incident where the police are involved
- B. A positive drug and/or alcohol test where an individual has already driven a RMG vehicle on the relevant day
- C. An employee being found in the possession of illegal drugs in the workplace
- D. Refusal to participate in the support and rehabilitation following a positive test

In the event of any of the points 1-4 above, the manager will send the employee home and will consider the appropriate action to take in the circumstances in line with the disciplinary procedure.

As part of this, the manager should firstly consider whether alternative action to suspension could mitigate the risk(s) the employee poses if they remain at work, such as remaining in work on an amended/adjusted duty.

Where an employee has been sent home, the manager, prior to suspending, must:

- contact the ER Advisory Services Team; and
- where the employee agrees, inform the local trade union representative.

Where disciplinary action is considered, the manager will fully take into account any mitigation and the outcome will be dependent on the individual circumstances of the case. The manager should seek advice and support from the ER Advisory Services Team where it will also be considered if a referral to the Support and Rehabilitation Programme is appropriate.

C. After six months from the effective agreement date

Where an employee receives a positive test for alcohol and/or drugs, the manager will send the employee home. Following this, the manager will consider the appropriate action to take in the circumstances in line with the disciplinary procedure.

As part of this, the manager should firstly consider whether alternative action to suspension could mitigate the risk(s) the employee poses if they remain at work, such as remaining in work on an amended/adjusted duty.

Where an employee has been sent home, the manager, prior to suspending, must:

- contact the ER Advisory Services Team; and
- where the employee agrees, inform the local trade union representative.

Where disciplinary action is considered, the manager will fully take into account any mitigation and the outcome will be dependent on the individual circumstances of the case, including the employee's wellbeing. The manager should seek advice and support from the ER Advisory Services Team where it will also be considered if a referral to the Support and Rehabilitation Programme is appropriate.

D. Prescription medication and testing

We recognise some prescribed medications could trigger a positive result. During a test, it is the employee's responsibility to declare any prescribed medication on their testing form and to the collecting officer conducting the test. This will be checked in the laboratory against the test results.

If the test returns as positive, the Chief Medical Review Officer from our third-party supplier will review the outputs of the test against the disclosure of prescribed medication to ascertain if it's within prescribed levels. Where it's found to be within prescribed levels, the result of the test will become negative.

If the test reveals employees are found to be misusing prescribed drugs (e.g., taking them without a prescription or in excessive doses), this will be treated in the same way as a positive test result.

7. Role of the ER Advisory Services Team

The ER Advisory Services Team are responsible for providing advice and support to managers on all Royal Mail Group employee relations policies and procedures including drugs and alcohol.

The team provide advice and guidance to managers on best practice approach to ensure effective resolution of employee relations issues while promoting a healthy and productive workplace. If any action is taken this will be without exception the decision of the relevant manager.

The ER Advisory Services team will monitor all for-cause test requests to ensure they align with the terms of this agreement, and they will provide updates as part of the Joint Review, on the numbers and outcomes.

8. Application of Agreement and Points of Principle

Any issues regarding the interpretation and/or application of this agreement, including Points of Principle should be forwarded to the signatories of the agreement for resolution.

9. Joint Review

The safety of our employees, customers and the public are at the centre of this agreement. We will keep the application of this agreement under joint review. The first review will be completed after six months after its introduction, and thereafter on an annual basis, and any amendments will be jointly agreed. The review will include information on numbers accessing the support and rehabilitation service and the number of for-cause tests requested including location and outcomes.

Andy Furey
Assistant Secretary CWU

Jo Cartwright
HR Service Delivery Director
Royal Mail

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**For the purpose of this agreement, disciplinary terminology has been used to reflect the anticipated updated approach. Any reference to disciplinary should be understood as relating to the Conduct Procedure in force at the time this agreement is introduced.*