

No. 209/26

27th July 2026

Dear Colleague

Royal Mail Group: Hybrid Working Policy - Decision to Impose Four Day Working in the Workplace – Exceptions Process and Appeals

Further to LTB 200/26 dated 13th July. Branches will be aware that Royal Mail, at the highest level of the company, recently introduced a policy to increase the number of office days from three to four for hybrid workers, with a targeted date of 1st August.

As Branches and members would expect, we robustly challenged management and in doing so strongly objected to the changes, which we consider to be unnecessary, and also disruptive for our members. Indeed, we have received reports that some members have additional costs to travel to work, which is putting more burden on them during the ongoing cost of living crisis.

Royal Mail management have now formally advised us that they have initiated a centrally managed exceptions process. In this regard, attached to this LTB is a detailed guidance document produced by management. This process should be followed in all cases where members wish to make an application for either a long-term or short-term exception. Crucially, the process will be taken out of the hands of line managers with a central review team to assess applications and “*ensure fairness and consistency*”.

In essence, the following descriptions (in no particular order) are when exceptions can be applied for and will warrant serious consideration by the central team:

- Where a reasonable adjustment has previously been agreed for an employee related to a disability.
- Where there are carer or childcare responsibilities, a flexible working request needs to be formally submitted.
- Field based roles, where the job can't be performed in an office four days per week.
- An employee's contract specifically outlines different working arrangements such as an employee having an agreement in writing that they can work in a different way when they took on the role.
- Where there is an agreed flexible working approach already in place.
- Where there are limitations due to office capacity levels or because the office building is deemed unsuitable or in need of significant repair.

- Unavailability or unsuitability of office equipment or DSE such as desks, screens, ergonomic screens.

Temporary Exemptions (up to Four Months) - Applications can also be made for temporary exceptions for childcare or carer responsibilities where the 1st August date cannot be met, but a later date can be, enabling the employee to put in place adequate measures in time. If the employee needs longer than four months they can complete a formal flexible working request.

We can now report that at the close of the application process for exceptions, around 230 requests had been formally lodged by CWU represented grades, and the largest categories were temporary and role-type exceptions. This was followed by formal statutory requests for flexible working and workplace adjustments relating to disabilities and caring responsibilities.

As Branches and Reps will understand, the applications in the main will be based upon sensitive personal information and have been submitted in confidence, due to health, disability and caring circumstances. This means the union is not directly involved in the assessment of applications for exceptions, as this sits within an HR Steering group, in accordance with the attachment. There is, however, the ability for individuals to challenge an outcome via formal appeals route and where this occurs, members are full entitled to guidance and support from Reps in these circumstances.

The exceptions progress appears to be comprehensive, and provides members with the ability to submit applications for both short-term (up to four months) and long-term arrangements. If any member has missed the deadline for making an application for an exception, they need to, as a matter of urgency, submit a late claim. If any problems are encountered in this regard, please email snicholas@cwu.org with details.

Exception Outcomes - Management have undertaken to share with me an aggregate picture with anonymised data covering numbers, categories, distribution of function and site, and completion and outcome rates. Also, management have committed to an ongoing engagement process whereby information relating to the temporary exceptions process will also be provided.

Summary - The union fully appreciates the upheaval associated with the move from three days to four days in the office which is challenging and potentially distressing for some members, who have worked in this fashion for many years now, since the pandemic. Branches are urged to bring this LTB to the attention of all admin members that currently work part of their hours from home, so that they are aware of the terms of the exceptions process and the right to lodge an appeal, where an application has been refused by the central team.

Yours sincerely

Andy Furey
Assistant Secretary

Managing Exceptional Circumstances Guidance

(to go within the manager toolkit as a link)

Centrally Managed Exceptional Circumstances Process

We will be gathering information on exceptional circumstances to manage ongoing compliance to the changes in ways of working

Details will follow shortly of where managers can capture the exceptions within their teams. This is a necessary requirement to ensure we can monitor and review consistency of application.

Process

- Meeting to take place between the manager and their team member to explain the changes and expectations.
- Be clear that the team member is expected to attend four days a week in the office unless there is an agreed exception. The FAQs will be a helpful resource for this meeting.
- Where an exception is proposed the manager is to complete the electronic form capturing this.
- Where you have not recorded an exception, there is an understanding that the employee complies with four days in the office.
- Your exception will be centrally reviewed to ensure fairness and consistency and your business leader will be responsible for sharing the final outcome with you

Escalating Complex Cases

- If a team member is unable to comply with the new working arrangements or their reason is not part of the agreed exceptional circumstances reasons, this will be treated as a 'complex case'.
- If their case requires a more detail review, this should also be treated as a 'complex case'.
- You will be expected to capture this in the form with an explanation of the circumstance which will be picked up by the central team who will provide support and guidance on next steps.

Outputs

The following are the exception reasons that can be recorded. If there are reasons that are not covered below send a question to the central team. [Hybrid Working Approach – Fill in form](#)

Recorded output	Description	Comments
Exception – role type	• The nature of the employees role can't be performed in the office four days a week e.g. field-based roles	• These role types should be shared with and agreed by the central team

Recorded output	Description	Comments
		• Exceptions for role type will only be agreed for a limited number of examples
Exception – contract	• Employee’s contract outlines a different working arrangement • Employee has an agreement in writing that they can work in a different way when they took the role	• Evidence must be available
Exception – existing reasonable adjustment	• Employee has an agreed reasonable adjustment already in place related to a disability • This will be recorded in People Case Manager (PCM) or in writing with their manager	• Evidence must be available • Manager must check that reasonable adjustment is still required
Exception – existing flexible working	• Employee has an agreed flexible working approach in place • This will be recorded in PCM or in writing with their manager	• Evidence must be available • Manager must check that flexible working arrangement is still required
Exception – no capacity in office	• Employee is not able to work in their contracted location because there is no office capacity	• Evidence must be available that there isn’t capacity
Exception – office environment-building	• Employee is not able to work in the office because the building is deemed unsuitable or in need of significant repair	• Evidence must be available that the environment is not suitable e.g. photographs
Exception – Office environment-equipment	• Employee is not able to work in the office because the office equipment or DSE such as desks, screens, ergonomic chairs is unsuitable	• Evidence must be available that the environment is unsuitable
Temporary Exception – childcare Temporary Exception – carer Temporary Exception - other	• Employee is unable to work four days a week in the office from 1 August; however they can comply once they have put in place adequate measures	• Manager should record the most relevant description • Temporary exceptions can only be in place for up to four months • If this arrangement is needed for longer, then a formal flexible working request needs to be submitted

Recorded output	Description	Comments
Formal Request – workplace adjustment disability	Employee has requested a longer-term change to their working arrangements due to disability	- You should be clear with the employee what the expectation is for the business to decide, and we may not be able to agree to a longer-term change. - Manager to complete the workplace adjustments process and record through People Case Manager (PCM). PCM will guide you through the steps in terms of considering if the workplace adjustment can be agreed or not. - Exception reason to be to be updated if exception is agreed
Formal Request – workplace adjustment carer	Employee has requested a longer-term change to their working arrangements due to being a carer (note not parental care)	- You should be clear with the employee what the expectation is for the business to decide, and we may not be able to agree to a longer-term change - Manager to complete the workplace adjustments process and record through People Case Manager (PCM). PCM will guide you through the steps in terms of considering if the workplace adjustment can be agreed or not. - Exception reason to be updated if exception is agreed
Formal Request – flexible working	Employee has requested a longer-term change to their working arrangements due to childcare, other needs	- You should be clear with the employee what the expectation is for the business to decide, and we may not be able to agree to a longer-term change - Employee to make a formal flexible working request through People Case Manager (PCM). PCM will guide you through the steps in terms of considering if

Recorded output	Description	Comments
		the flexible working request can be agreed or not. • Exception reason to be updated if exception is agreed
Complex Case	• Employee is unable to comply with the new working arrangements and their reason is not part of the centrally agreed reasons • OR, employee's case requires a more detailed review i.e. contractual review	• Manager to select this reason within the electronic form and this will be escalated to the central team will make contact with you and guide you through the next steps.