No. 300/26

2nd November 2026

DM26 Peak/Christmas Operations - Joint Guidance

Dear Colleagues,

Further to the Joint Statement which was cascaded via LTB 285/26 - Update on DM26 Talks - Government Intervention and the Future of the Company on Monday as a result of the outcome of intense talks between RM and CWU.

The Joint Statement committed both parties to the following regarding DM26 and Peak operations:

Detailed discussions will commence this week, with the aim of finalising Peak 2026 arrangements no later than 30 October 2026. Should these arrangements not be finalised by that date, the matter will be escalated to the signatories of this agreement.

As a result of the above, discussions took place last week on seeking to agree and finalise an overall approach to the design of DM26 through the Peak / Christmas period via Joint Guidance. We have now agreed the attached Joint Guidance, which confirms that all Delivery Offices will need to review their current DM26 operation against the wider guiding principles:

- Review all resourcing / manpower, vehicles and PDAs planning to ensure sufficient staffing and equipment to meet increased delivery volumes during the Peak / Christmas period;
- Review the current DM26 model / design plans alongside all options to accommodate additional workload across all walks / routes - this can be a 4th OPG / Duty to support the POD design in line with the workload demand;
- Review all DOs and ensure that all units have built night opening and / or early morning duties - utilising annual leave reserves, PT to FT and underpinned by SA resource where required;
- Plan parcel deliveries via PDA through pre-starts and deliver from 7-10am, review all DPR operations and ensure supplementary Parcel Deliveries to guarantee that each unit has a plan and align resource to ensure Premium Products are delivered on the same day.

In relation to the POD Design, 50/50 duties and Singleton Duties, the joint guidance confirms that the overarching design principle is that a 4th OPG is added to the POD / PODs aligned to indoor and outdoor workload demand. Shared route pairs continue to operate as a Heavy Call rate/Light Call Rate pairing rather than taking the additional workload in the POD design.

All singleton duties would remain 50/50 and the full duty content reviewed. Where a deployed 50:50 duty currently takes additional outdoor workload across Monday to Friday, consideration must be given to returning resource to the core route and ensuring it is fully resourced/covered.

The joint guidance also gives units the full autonomy to plan when that introduction takes place and how plans are adapted and resourced during w/c 9th November, consider the introduction of a 4th full duty between two PODs to support the delivery operation and then from w/c 23rd November when Annual Leave ceases and support from reserves becomes available.

Where there are insufficient annual leave reserves to provide a 4th person to a POD, it has been agreed that all units can look to cover both indoor and outdoor workload through allocation of overtime, SA via day off cover volunteers or seasonal agency resource.

The joint guidance also seeks to promote that attention needs to be given to Saturday operations via DM26 and that the units which have not deployed DM26 review implementation of the DtS algorithm ahead of the deployment of DM26 structural changes in January 2027 to support the delivery of a successful peak. Likewise, where it has been switched on and is causing operational issues and / or is not already switched on (circa 28 units), RSGs are asked to review how the application of the algorithm can support peak operations.

Finally, the governance process makes it clear every office will need to create a revised operational plan with input and support from ADRs and OPLs as necessary, is signed off by the RPMs / RODs and Divisional Reps and where there are units unable to reach an agreed plan, then this should be escalated to the RSG in the first instance to resolve or if needed the National Delivery JWG to support resolution.

Therefore, the attached Joint Guidance document ensures that CWU Reps will be able to actively review the whole DM26 operations for their offices and adapt the current design to ensure that the units can operate effectively during the peak period and put in place the correct resource needed against the workload both via duties and underpinned by SA/overtime resource as required.

Any enquiries to the content of this LTB should be directed to the Outdoor Department, email address: **pharacz@cwu.org.**

Yours sincerely,

Tony Bouch
Assistant Secretary

DM26 Peak/Christmas Operations - Joint Guidance

Introduction

Both RM & CWU, through ongoing discussions, recognise the need to ensure that all offices that have deployed DM26 require additional guidance and support for the duration of Peak/Christmas period 2026, which will be the first period operating under the revised USO regulations. Each office will review their current DM26 operation in line with the below Guiding Principles for the duration of Peak.

Guiding Principles

- **Scale Up Resources:** Review all resourcing/manpower plans to ensure sufficient staffing to meet increased delivery volumes during the peak/Christmas period
- **Adapt DM26 Design Planning across PODs:** Review the current DM26 model/design plans alongside all options below to accommodate additional workload across all walks/routes. This can be a 4th OPG/Duty to support the POD design in line with the workload demand.
- **Delivery Office Flow:** to support the increase in workload, review all DOs and ensure that all units have built night opening and/or early morning duties. Utilising annual leave reserves, PT to FT and underpinned by SA resource where required.
- **Enable Ad-Hoc Parcel Delivery:** Consider scanning, confirming parcel deliveries via PDA through pre-starts and deliver from 7am-10am, where indoor and vehicle capacity constraints will impact the smooth running of the Delivery Office, for example the ability to safely accept wave 2 volumes into the office.
- **Supplementary Tracked Parcel Delivery Services (LAT/Parcel Hubs):** A number of Delivery Offices will introduce Supplementary Parcel Deliveries to support our year-round dedicated parcel hub operation. Each unit will need to plan and align resource dependent upon the traffic forecasts, to ensure Premium Products are delivered on the same day as received at the Delivery Offices.

Preparatory Work

Both local parties jointly review the units Manpower Plan / Equipment / and available resource:

1. **Clarify TM1 / Agreed Number of Deliveries / Duties** (include DPRs/LATs and Night Duties)
2. **Clarify Staff in Post** – PT and FT (additional scope of PT to increase hours up to FT)
3. **Update Unit skills matrix** (identify gaps and measures to address this, but ensure that support for new starters is not compromised)
4. **Clarify A/L plan and Reserves levels** (identify the number of Reserves available in the unit during peak, but account for sick leave)
5. **Clarify forthcoming Attrition** known or expected based on current trend data.
6. **Clarify Other Absence**
7. **Confirm Agency /Casuals** arrangements once all existing PT staff have been offered uplifts and FT staff have been offered OT/SA/work rest day to cover known resourcing gaps Monday - Sunday. Once these are exhausted confirm number required.
8. **Ascertain Overtime Volunteers,** and how they could be used
9. **Identify pre-planned overtime arrangements and agreed S/A commitments** to **support Day Off cover,** throughout the whole Peak period and ensuring resourcing gaps are covered across the whole week.
10. **Parcel Support Duties** – 7am-10am. Seek to utilise the 4th OPG working within the POD/PODs to perform AM parcel support duties. Ensuring the 4th OPG returns to the Delivery Office to connect with the core delivery route.
11. **Confirm Vehicles/PDAs availability** to cover the AM/PM and Evening (Hire Van needs/arrangements)

12. **Review the above against Traffic Forecast** (account for any current and known inaccuracies and shortfalls of forecasted traffic) including any D2D contracts and plan to manage the product.

DM26 Design Options for Peak/Christmas

The following operating models include POD working, 50:50 and core routes, along with Saturday guidance. These resourcing models are available to support the Peak Operation up to 3rd January 2027 and will not prejudice any ongoing formal reviews taking place for DM26 and are intended as guidance for units to operate effectively during the peak period.

POD Design:

- Overarching design principle is that a **4th OPG** is added to the POD/PODs aligned to indoor and outdoor workload demand.
- **Shared route pairs** continue to operate as a **Heavy Call rate/Light Call Rate,** pairing rather than taking the additional workload in the POD design. Maintain the original delivery order and rotate each day.
- From w/c 9th November consider the introduction of a 4th full duty between two PODs to support the delivery operation.
- From w/c 23rd November allocate a 4th person per POD utilising annual leave reserves. The 4th route will work with the singleton route within the POD as a shared pair. The 4 routes within a POD will operate as 2 shared pairs partnerships with two vans and operate as a Heavy Call rate/Light Call Rate pairing across the 4 walks.
- Where there are insufficient annual leave reserves to provide a 4th person to a POD, look to cover both indoor and outdoor workload through allocation of overtime, SA via day off cover volunteers or seasonal agency resource. As a contingency where a 4th person cannot be allocated to a POD seek to introduce a 4th duty between 2 PODs to support the delivery of mail and parcels.

Where additional support duties are required, outdoor workload should consist of all due mail and parcels belonging to the selected delivery points being served by the support duty. This reduces multiple visits to the same area and delivery points.

Non-POD Singleton Duty Design– All singleton duties would remain 50/50 and the full duty content reviewed. Where a deployed 50:50 duty currently takes additional outdoor workload across Monday to Friday, consideration must be given to returning resource to the core route and ensuring it is fully resourced/covered, this could include allocation of a leave reserve, pre-agreed overtime, SA or a seasonal agency worker. The remaining 50:50 duties would then deliver within their own geographical catchment rather than taking delivery points.

Saturday Duty Design - will be reviewed with additional indoor and outdoor support put in place via scheduled attendance to support the increased workload/traffic. Delivery Offices to pay special attention to Saturday resourcing plans as in current workload forecasts week 35 an additional person is required in every 2 PODs and from week 36 onwards a third person is required in a POD.

107 Delivery Offices not deployed on DM26 duty structures - DtS algorithm

The 107 Delivery Offices who have not deployed DM26 will continue to plan to implement the DtS algorithm ahead of the deployment of DM26 structural changes in January 2027 to support the delivery of a successful peak. The algorithm is intended to support Quality of Service by managing call rates between high and low delivery days, including the deferral of 2C mechanised mail within the Quality-

of-Service window whilst treating Saturday as a non-ageing day. Where the USO algorithm has been switched on and is causing operational issues and/or is not already switched on circa 28 units, RSGs are asked to review how the application of the algorithm can support peak operations.

Tailoring the DM26 Model and planning your office

The following considerations are included to enable sites to maximise the chance of success and tailor DM26 model to their office: -

Ref	Area	Consideration
1	Mail Centre	OPL to liaise with Mail Centre to ensure the mail centre is going to provide the SLA profile of work including night opening offices
2	Overall	Ascertain which people in the office are willing to complete their walk every day
3	Indoor	Invest in the indoor to get people out on deliveries early or at least on time. Consider agreed levels of pre-start S/A across each week - it is easier to manage the indoor plan and ensure all deliveries are out on the scheduled departure time, than it is to fail on the outdoor and recover via extended delivery.
4	Vacancies	If units have a resourcing shortfall, identify a corresponding number of rotations that will work their days off, which in turn would free up day off covers to move onto any vacant walks/duties
5	DPR Support	Consider additional temporary DPR routes in the unit to support Parcel workload across deliveries, utilising Reserves / Agency / Casuals
6	New starters / Unfamiliar staff	Make use of the DPR route planning using ad-hoc route or PRO in instances where an individual has a very low familiarity for a route
7	Seasonal Casuals	Align Seasonal Casuals to best align to the workload
8	Use Delivery Colleagues from other sites	Use of day off overtime from staff from other offices if OPGs willing to support neighbouring units. This can be particularly useful on Saturdays and Sundays.
9	Promote Afternoon / Evening Parcel duties	Incentivise the afternoon / evening delivery of parcels/LAT i.e. 1. Voluntarily move to afternoon / evening routes for peak on Monday to Friday or Tuesday to Saturday attendances up to w/c 21/12/2026. For PT colleagues, seek to include FT paid hours through overtime, to maximise the outdoor delivery span. 2. With w/c 21/12/2026, Monday to Thursday attendance but with day off in w/c 21/12/2026 being Friday 25th December and BH credit applied.
10	Saturday SA	Saturday S/A's options to ensure all units have support for increase in workload/tracked items, ensuring D2D is prepped and all other indoor operations clear ready to start the following week. The level of incremental resource required will depend on the current duty option selected and associated Saturday attendance levels.
11	Managing On the day absence	Where there is 'On the Day Absence', and there is no other contingency, consider the following: 1. Available OPG does High Call Rate route only. Light is performed by O/T, DPR/LAT, or other means
12	Priority order of delivery methods	Priority Order – where Delivery Office are planning their duties and allocation of resources, use the priority list below as a guide to follow. 1. Core delivery

Ref	Area	Consideration
		2. PM parcel routes 3. AM parcel routes
13	Weekend Resourcing	When creating duty patterns for agency and new contracted employees, look at opportunities to maximise weekend attendance with weekends off being managed by rotation.

Prohibited Peak arrangements

The following arrangements **should not** be applied in units: -

Ref	Area	Consideration
1	Switching off DTS	Do not turn off DTS to attempt to equalise call rates, as this will increase calls overall

Governance

- After applying a Peak/Christmas DM26 model and factoring in the considerations, the unit will need to create a plan, with input from CWU Area Delivery Rep/OPL as necessary, and display the plan with frontline staff
- Ensure that any consideration around the redeployment of individuals is addressed sensitively and based on voluntary arrangements
- Regions should continue to make use of existing RSG Governance between OPLs and Area Reps & RODs and Divisional Reps to discuss the arrangements and to prepare for peak/Christmas
- If any unit is unable to reach an agreed plan, then this should be escalated to the RSG in the first instance to resolve and if unresolved to the National Delivery JWG to support resolution. However, both Royal Mail and CWU Nationally will encourage both parties to resolve any issues themselves before escalation is needed
- To support all the above, there will be a National joint launch call with all RODs and Divisional Reps to ensure all parties actively support Area/Local level discussions to commence with enhanced communications across all Regions to proactively promote finalising agreed plans.
- All Offices will have agreed Peak/Christmas plans in line with the above signed off by the RPMs/RODs and Divisional Reps, to be submitted to the National Delivery JWG to understand the offices' arrangements by Tuesday 17th November.



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