



ACHIEVING ROYAL MAIL STANDARDS

AGREED JOINT STATEMENT BETWEEN
ROYAL MAIL AND THE CWU ON STANDARDS,
CONDUCT AND ATTENDANCE

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ACHIEVING ROYAL MAIL STANDARDS - THE BASIS OF SUCCESS

1. Royal Mail is entering a period of unprecedented change in the face of European postal deregulation and ever increasing domestic competition. The way forward is to create a satisfying working environment where relationships are not adversarial but are based on a culture of co-operation and trust which will help to meet customer need, to respond to changes in the market place, and to protect and secure employment. This means having and maintaining standards: standards covering customers, operations, respecting people, safety and business ethics.

OBJECTIVES

2. Royal Mail and the CWU are committed to the development, communication and implementation of such standards as speedily as possible to meet this objective and to their maintenance thereafter.

a) Customers: Meeting customer expectations and growing the customer base is paramount. That is the sure way to blunt the competitive threat. Everyone has a responsibility to work together to meet that aim.

b) Operational standards: These must be set at a level to meet the competitive challenge. Employees should work at the rate at which qualified workers will naturally work to the method specified provided they are trained and motivated. This means standards will be applied in the recruitment process. Then induction training should ensure standards are fully understood and achieved. For existing employees standards also need to be communicated and maintained to ensure achievement on a day-to-day basis with encouragement and training provided. All offices/units should contribute productively to the overall operation of Royal Mail. Where performance falls below the recognised standards the initial step should be to analyse the work area measures (work plan, scheduling of staff etc.) Where individual poor performances are identified, there will be a process to raise standards using counselling, encouragement, additional training or other processes.

c) Respecting People: Everyone should be treated with courtesy and respect and treat fellow colleagues in the same way. All employees should be open, fair, honest, and supportive towards others. Employees should listen to the views of others, encourage a culture of co-operation at work and challenge inappropriate behaviours and actions such as harassment and bullying

d) Health and Safety: Maintaining and improving health and safety standards will always be of paramount importance for the Business and all employees. Standards should be communicated, fully understood implemented to achieve a secure, safe, and healthy working environment. Everyone has a responsibility for safety and must play their part.

e) Business Ethics: Royal Mail is one of the UK leading companies and employer and has an important role in the community. The preservation of its reputation in all aspects of its commercial activities is in the interests and indeed the responsibility of all. Actions, including conflicts of interest, that have a potential to adversely affect the commercial well-being of Royal Mail must be avoided at all costs. These standards - in the areas of honesty, commercial confidentiality, valuing customers and suppliers, the use of Business property, protection of personal information - should be communicated and observed on a day-to day basis by everyone.

3. APPROACH TO PERSONNEL ISSUES - KEY TO A BETTER PLACE TO WORK

a) Both parties agree that a new approach is required to deal with unacceptable behaviour and attendance if the current lack of trust is to be replaced by a positive environment with people working together. The improved Conduct Code and Attendance agreement will be fully adhered to and completed to prevent disruption to customer service.

b) The revised Conduct and Attendance procedures are based on the principles of supporting improvement and fair treatment with counselling an integral part of a manager's response where that is appropriate. The approach will apply to all employees and managers.

4. CONDUCT CODE

a) Timescales: The process should be completed as quickly as possible consistent with reaching a fair conclusion and timescales have been set at all key stages

b) Counselling: The use of counselling by line managers will enhance the appropriateness and consistency of behaviour particularly for minor cases though there may also be benefit in counselling feedback in cases where a formal disciplinary penalty has been given.

c) Fact finding: Conducting fact-finding is a skilled task, which is significant to the outcome of a case. The new Code clarifies who is appropriate to carry out an investigation and the disclosure of information

d) Penalty: In all cases a view on whether or not the case is proven will be taken before a decision on penalty is made after any mitigating factors have been taken into account. The reasons for any formal award and any improvement required will also be explained.

e) Face-to-face: Decisions being given face-to-face are reinforced in the procedure and this important aspect will be introduced and subject to monitor and review.

f) Appeals: To underline independence, low level appeals will be heard out of line and serious cases will be dealt with by Appeal Managers who are a national resource assigned on a zonal basis.

g) Criminal Acts Outside Employment: Clarification in respect of actions outside of employment has been detailed in line with the ACAS Code of Practice.

h) Wilful Delay: Managers will fully explore the reasons for alleged delay using the normal Conduct Code procedure and will then decide whether the case should be considered as unauthorised or wilful delay to the mail. Separate national guidelines are attached to the agreement.

i) Union Representative Procedure: The aim is that the Conduct Code should apply, with union representatives having the protection set out in the ACAS guidelines. As a transitional step, an interim agreement set out in Appendix 4 of the Conduct Code has been reached which will be reviewed by both parties with ACAS at the end of 12 months to determine the next steps needed to achieve that aim. During the transitional arrangements the current Representative Procedure and the IARB has been suspended.

j) Late Attendance: Lateness will in future be treated as a conduct issue when an employee is unable to meet the basic standard as laid out in the Conduct Code.

5. ATTENDANCE PROCEDURE

The objective is to have a fully integrated approach that provides professional management of short and long-term absence. To achieve this the following has been agreed:

a) An agreement on short-term absence which includes Return to Work discussions, counselling and revised attendance standards will be piloted in half of the Midland and North East Divisions. Success measures have been agreed and in the event that the pilot is successful the new approach will be rolled-out nationally.

b) A few modifications have been made to the existing national Attendance procedure, which will continue to apply to the rest of Royal Mail. These include Return to Work discussions and representation at Stage One of the procedure.

c) A rehabilitation process has been agreed to enable consideration to be given to employees who are on long-term sick to return to work earlier than they might otherwise be able to do.

d) Both sides have agreed to recommend that a review of the terms on which employees leave the business for health reasons should be carried out. The object will be to see whether the current pension costs in respect of medical retirement can be better targeted to individual need.

6. GENERAL POINTS

a) Manager Support / Representation: Professional support from Personnel and the Line will be available to advise managers on the revised procedures. This support will also be available to individuals and representatives for procedural issues. It is also accepted that the formal procedures will include trade union representation so that individuals have the ability to have their case presented in a professional way. As part of the new approach, it is expected that union representatives will take a responsible position in respect of unacceptable behaviour or attendance.

b) Measurement: Key indicators have been drawn up to monitor and measure the success of the new procedures so that trends can be identified early at all levels of the Business by Joint Strategic Forums.

c) Training: Effective training of the decision-making managers and union representatives is crucial for implementation. Prescribed levels of joint training will take place to accreditation standards to ensure understanding and competence.

7. REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS

The JWP Group identified that continuous Measurement and Review was fundamental to the ongoing success of the changed procedures.

It is recommended that joint quarterly review arrangements of the whole Programme of change are carried out at national, Divisional and Area level. This process should take input from staff and managers operating the system.

A separate detailed review process will be established for the Attendance Pilot.

8. CONCLUSION

We believe the clarity of standards and the revised procedures will provide a framework for a more constructive relationship between Royal Mail and the CWU and the employees which is fully in accord with the need to build a better Employee Relations /Industrial Relations environment for the benefit of everyone. Both parties believe the attached agreements are the base on which to build sound relationships between Royal Mail, its employees, and the CWU. No single element will achieve that objective and that is why the agreed measures must be implemented in their entirety if the shared aspirations of an improved IR/ER climate are to be achieved, avoiding industrial action until procedures have been concluded.