

4. ANNUAL LEAVE

Introduction

This agreement on Annual Leave covers the new operational and operational support grades from 3 April 2000, and will deliver a further reduction in working time for many employees. It replaces all existing national and local agreements on leave from 3 April 2000, and local agreements reached after that date must confirm in full with these provisions.

Leave Entitlements

This agreement delivers improved leave opportunities, principally by providing front-line employees for the first time with the maximum six weeks annual holiday. The agreement also incorporates former “privilege days” (Post Office Holidays) into standard entitlements, giving more flexibility over how and when these may be taken, and offers all employees the chance to opt for the maximum six weeks’ leave, in lieu of pay, even before 20 years’ service is achieved. The new leave entitlements, which include and replace the days previously taken separately as “Post Office privilege days”, will be as follows:

On entry =	Four and a half weeks
After 15 years =	Five weeks 1 day
After 5 years =	Four weeks 3.5 days
After 20 years =	Six weeks

These entitlements are expressed in weeks and days, with a week’s leave being a whole week irrespective of how many attendances are due. A half week’s leave is a number of odd days equal to half the average number of weekly attendances due. Any balance of entitlement to odd days represents that number of daily attendances, except where a (full- or part-time) job requires three or fewer attendances per week, in week case the balance of odd days entitlement is reduced pro-rata to a five day week, rounded to the nearest half day (e.g. the entitlement for a three-day week employee with 5 years’ service is 4 weeks 2 days).

All periods of service on a temporary or permanent contract (with periods of casual service included only if they run continuously into a temporary or permanent contract), except for those on unpaid leave, SPPR, or with HM Forces exceeding 15 days, will count towards calculating leave due. Previous periods of PO service may be counted for this purpose.

For part-years worked, or where the entitlement changes mid-year, the entitlement will be calculated pro-rata to the proportion(s) of the year worked, rounded to the nearest half day.

Leave purchase option

Over and above standard entitlements, employees with less than 20 years' service will have the chance to increase their holiday entitlement to (or towards) 6 weeks per year, by foregoing an element of basic pay. This will offer those employees who might find it attractive to take more time off from work, earlier in their career, additional annual holidays in lieu of pay. This choice must be exercised for at least one whole leave year, and for each whole week of additional leave the basic pay will be adjusted by 2%. The maximum holiday entitlement that may be gained in this way is six weeks per year. Obviously once the higher level of leave becomes an entitlement through service, or if the employee opts to return to their standard entitlement, pay is then adjusted back upwards. There will therefore be the following options for the new operational grade (at national rates, with similar proportionate options for Inner and Outer London and for the support grade, and pro-rata options for part-time employees) for full-time employees with less than 20 years' service:

Standard on entry = basic pay £218.48 pw with four and a half weeks' holiday

Option 1= basic pay £216.30 pw with five weeks' holiday

Option 2= basic pay £211.93 pw with six weeks' holiday

Standard at max = basic pay £242.76 pw with four and a half weeks' holiday

Option 1= basic pay £240.33 pw with five weeks' holiday

Option 2= basic pay £235.48 pw with six weeks' holiday

Standard after 5 years = basic pay £242.76 pw with four weeks 3.5 days' holiday

Option= basic pay £236.45 pw with six weeks' holiday

Standard after 15 years = basic pay £242.76 pw with five weeks 1 day holiday

Option= basic pay £238.87 pw with six weeks' holiday

These options are provided entirely as a choice for the individual employee, and this is agreed without prejudice to any future discussions on enhancing national entitlements generally. In no circumstances may leave from the standard national entitlements be reduced, neither may un-taken leave or other time off in lieu be "sold" or converted into pay. Exceptionally for the first year only, any employees opting for additional leave in this way will have their basic pay adjusted from Monday 8 May 2000.

Calculating leave

For the purposes of calculating leave, each attendance during a week will be classified as either a whole or a half day. Thus most operational duties will be classified as either a four-, a five-, a five and a half-, or a six-day week attendance.

If a whole week's leave is broken into odd days, it will be equivalent to the number of days attendance to which the employee is conditioned during that week.

A half day's leave requires attendance for half of the net hours of the day.

Selection of annual leave

The objective will be as far as possible to maximise leave opportunities for employees, whilst ensuring that operational needs and the customer specification are met at all times. This agreement covers selection of full week leave and part week e.g. holidays starting mid-week. Single days leave will be agreed locally through the Staff Resourcing Manager in Mail Centres or the line manager in other operational units.

The leave year will be April to March. The Christmas pressure period, determined by the operational unit, will be a closed period for leave. The selection process should be complete by the end of the preceding October each year.

The granting of leave must always be subject to operational requirements and fairness of allocation. Employees who wish to exchange between themselves periods of leave already signed for will be able to do so, with the agreement of the Staff Resourcing Manager in Mail Centres or the line manager in other operational units.

Prior to annual leave signing, the Staff Resourcing Manager in Mail Centres and the line manager in other operational units, will have discretion to grant specific requests for particular periods of leave from individual employees based on their exceptional and unavoidable personal circumstances. This will include meeting the commitments of employees new to the unit where they join with holidays already arranged, without disadvantaging existing staff with agreed leave already allocated.

Assigned allowances are paid during annual leave but not non-assigned or intermittent allowances. Where assigned shift allowances are averaged across a rotation, employees may not take more than three weeks of their leave from the most unsocial shift (i.e. that which attracts the highest payment) of the rotation.

Annual leave selection process principles:

- Leave will be organised within the existing organisational structure of the office, e.g. work areas for Mail Centres and RDCs, Delivery sections in large Delivery units and across the whole office in other Delivery offices.

- In all cases, the line manager/staff Resourcing manager will need to ensure specialist areas are always adequately covered, e.g. drivers, rurals, VCS, mech.
- All employees will be included on an equal basis, whether full- or part-time.
- Reserves will be allocated to work area and with that, specialist groups where needed, but reserves may be required to work within other work areas for the coverage of unforeseen absence and short-time sick absence.
- Operational requirements within the work area will determine the maximum number of people that may be away at any one time. This will be based on:
 - Forecast variations in workload during the year including event forecasting such as peak traffic periods, Bank Holidays etc;
 - forecast sick absence;
 - training and substitution absence;
 - the resulting leave reserve level and supplementary staffing.

Selection of leave

Royal Mail and CWU, locally, will agree their own annual leave selection procedures. This must conform to all of the principles listed above. If the current selection procedure already conforms, there is no need to change. Where current arrangements do not conform, they will need to be changed. However, if annual leave has already been selected for the year or part-year, this will be honoured and the new procedure will not be introduced until after this leave period.

Two examples of annual leave selection procedures that do not conform have been attached at Annex 1 for consideration, but the local unit is free to come up with its own procedures, always provided that they conform to the principles. All selection of annual leave procedures will be subject to a National Review during their first year of operation.

Taking Leave

Employees may not attend the office whilst on annual or other leave. This means that employees may not attend the office to work overtime or Scheduled Attendance.

Annual leave may not be taken as an alternative to sick leave (except where it runs concurrently with it in the case of extremely long absences in order to satisfy legal requirements). Employees who have been off sick must not start annual leave unless they have recovered, and should notify the office of their recovery before

starting any annual leave. Annual leave cannot be recorded as sick leave if an employee falls sick during it, unless a medical certificate is produced.

Where time or days off in lieu are earned, the way in which this may subsequently be taken as time off work will continue to be determined locally.

Carrying leave into another year

Annual leave should generally be taken in the year that it is due, and the business expects all employees to have at least four weeks away from work every year. However up to one week (or 5 odd days) may be carried over into the next leave year, and up to five days may be anticipated during the last month of the previous leave year. Transfer of leave in excess of these limits requires written permission from the line manager, except that leave that cannot be taken due to sick leave may be allowed in the following year. Where this is granted and would reduce the annual leave taken in a particular leave year to less than four weeks, the individual must also confirm in writing that they are willing to voluntarily forgo their statutory leave entitlement under the Working Time Regulations 1998.

Covering leave

Both Royal Mail and CWU are committed to ensuring that leave and sickness absence is covered as efficiently as possible, since this will both maximise operational performance and therefore bonus earnings, and also enable the widest possible choice of leave to be offered to employees. Indoor jobs where the job holder is absent will only be covered by reserve or overtime where this is an unavoidable operational necessity given the expected workload commitments of the office. During periods when workload commitments tend to reduce, such as the summer, the expectation is that operational performance will be maintained by staffing the operation with a correspondingly reduced level of resource, in line with the Way of Working Agreement, Section 17.

Example one

- Preferences will be met using the following process:
 1. employees will be divided into 3 annual leave groups. These groups will be used only in “tie-break” situations where more people request leave than can be allowed to take it. The order these groups have for priority will be rotated annually. The allocation to groups will be decided locally but could initially be by seniority across the annual leave groups. Where more people from one group request leave than is available, leave is then allocated from top of the group to bottom and again this can be alternated annually;

2. the leave year, with the maximum number of people allowed away each week, is published to employees who are asked to nominate 3 preferences;
3. a reasonable period of time will be given to complete the form and this ought to encourage employees within work areas and/or specialist groups to maximise their opportunity for first choices. Preferences must be returned by a fixed date. After the selection process has closed, any spare remaining weeks can be signed for on a first come, first served basis.
4. the line manager then allocates leave, maximising first choice preference. When first choice preferences cannot be met, the “tie-break” is used.

When vacancies are filled in the work are/specialist area, office, the new entrant is allocated the annual leave slot that the previous jobholder left.

Example 2

Annex 1

This system is based on that which presently exists in a number of offices throughout the country. The period defined for the purpose of Summer Leave is April through to September.

The system operates on each block being listed 1, 3, 5, 2, 4, 6. An example of this year’s blocks would be:

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>
May 17th	June 7th	July 5th	July 26th	Aug 16th	Sep 6th
June 4th	July 2nd	July 23rd	Aug 13th	Sep 3rd	Sep 24th

Numbers of employees off in each particular numbered block would be dependant on operational requirements and the availability of slots within each block. There is also the facility to take two weeks within any of the periods and a week out with the Summer period at other times throughout the year.

The blocks rotate through each other. For example, the first block of employees (which would have May 17 – 4 June for the illustration) would for the following year move to period 3 (which is July 5 – 23 July) and then the following year to period 5, which is Aug 16 – 3 Sept. IN effect, this means all employees rotate through all the blocks and annual leave can be identified at least seven years in advance. The opportunity would also exist for individuals to change leave to maximise preference. This would be done as defined earlier through individuals who are exchanging the undertaking and having it cleared by the Resourcing/Unit Manager.