

Royal Mail Group Conduct Policy

This procedure is designed to help and encourage all employees to achieve and maintain standards of conduct including behaviour.

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Getting help

Contact your manager if you have any queries about this guide.

Managers can obtain advice by:

Calling the HR Services Advice Centre on 0845 6060603 / 5456 7100

Managers working for Parcelforce Worldwide should call 0845 6042787 / 5456 4747

For web access go to:
<https://www.psp.royalmailgroup.com>



Royal Mail Group Conduct Policy

- The policy** The Conduct Policy outlines the approach that will be taken if an employee does not meet the expected standards of conduct and behaviour. Resolving issues informally with support and guidance will be used where appropriate to encourage improvement. Only where the issue is potentially more serious will formal conduct action be considered as outlined below.
- Scope** This policy applies to all employees working for Royal Mail Group. This policy does not apply to agency staff, contractors or self-employed workers.
- This policy is effective from 3 August 2015.
- This policy does not form part of contracts of employment. Royal Mail Group reserves the right to amend this policy from time to time.
- Agreement** In the event of any inconsistency between this policy; the conduct guides and the Conduct Agreement, the terms of the Conduct Agreement takes precedence.
- Guiding principles**
- The business will make employees aware of the expected standards of conduct and behaviour
 - Employees should make every effort to meet the business standards of conduct and behaviour
 - Resolving conduct issues informally and with support and guidance will be considered when appropriate to encourage employees to improve behaviour
 - Conduct and behaviour should be managed by providing constructive feedback. All conversations will be consistent with the general requirement that we all treat each other with dignity and respect. At every stage in the procedure the employee will be advised of the full nature of the allegation and the action that might be taken against them and will be given the opportunity to state their case before any decision is made
 - The employee will be made fully aware of the evidence. Copies of all documents will be provided in a timely manner in line with the procedure
 - No conduct action will be taken against an employee until the case has been fully investigated
 - No employee will be dismissed for a first breach of conduct, except in the case of gross misconduct, when the penalty will normally be dismissal without notice or payment in lieu of notice
 - Notification of action in line with the Conduct Policy will only be made when sufficient facts of the case have been determined
 - At all stages of the formal procedure (i.e. excluding informal) the employee will have the right to be represented by their union representative or be accompanied by a work colleague normally from the same work location
 - An employee will be given an explanation for any penalty given and have the right to appeal against any conduct penalty imposed
 - When progressing a case and completely new information regarding a different incident comes to light, then a further conduct notification will be made to the

employee including the specific details

- Where further evidence comes to light regarding the original conduct case e.g. its seriousness, the original case will continue
- Cases will be handled as speedily as possible and where there is significant delay, the employee will be notified of the reason and when a decision is to be made
- Managers may seek advice and guidance from HR Services Advice & Support where appropriate

Employee obligations

Royal Mail Group requires all employees to:

- Take a responsible approach to their work, customers and fellow employees
- To maintain standards of conduct appropriate to their role
- Seek help as soon as they recognise that they are in a situation which could compromise their behaviour or if they have any concerns regarding their job and
- To follow any reasonable instructions of their manager

Employees charged with a criminal offence must notify Royal Mail Group as soon as possible. Employees are not required to let Royal Mail Group know about minor offences e.g. minor traffic offences.

Conduct approach

All conduct cases will be dealt with promptly. Issues can be dealt with informally or formally depending on the nature of the issue.

Informal resolution

Informal resolution can help to resolve many minor conduct or behaviour issues before they become more serious. The right word, at the right time and in the right way may be all that is needed to resolve the situation. Sometimes the employee may not be aware that their conduct or behaviour is unsatisfactory.

Where the right word at the right time has not resulted in an improvement in conduct or behaviour, the manager can arrange to meet with the employee for an informal discussion. The purpose of an informal discussion is for the manager and the employee to resolve the issue without needing to use the formal process. If the employee wishes they can meet with their union rep before meeting with their manager.

Formal conduct process

In more serious cases it will be necessary to proceed straight away to the formal conduct process.

Fact finding

When it is considered that an employee's conduct or behaviour has not met the required standard, the employee's manager will make a prompt and detailed investigation of the facts and may seek a more detailed explanation from the employee. It may include examination of relevant documents and a fact-finding meeting where the employee has a right to be accompanied by their union representative or by a work colleague, normally from the same work location.

Following the fact-finding meeting the manager should consider the information available and decide whether the case can be dealt with informally, formally or closed if there is no case to answer.

Progressing a case formally

If the manager who conducts the fact-finding feels there is a case to answer, they must decide whether, if the allegation is proven, the penalty appropriate would be likely to be within or outside their authority. If they feel a major penalty is a possible outcome, they must at that stage pass it to another manager, normally the second line manager.

The manager progressing the case will invite the employee to attend a formal conduct meeting. The manager must also include copies of any notes or evidence that will be referred to during the meeting. The employee has the right to be accompanied by their union representative or a work colleague normally from the same work location.

Following the formal meeting the manager makes the decision whether the allegation is upheld and what penalty should apply. The manager should let the employee know their decision as soon as possible, normally face to face where practical. They should also notify the employee of their decision in writing.

Authority levels The authority to give warnings and serious warnings lies with the immediate manager. Major penalties will normally be given by an employee's second line manager of at least Royal Mail Executive Manager Level 2 grade, Operations Manager in Parcelforce or equivalent who is in the direct reporting line. Managers in an acting or temporary promoted capacity have the authority of that grade. CWU graded employees whilst on acting duties will not have the authority to deal with conduct cases for managers under their control or to deal with major penalties cases.

Precautionary suspension Precautionary suspension should only be considered when a serious incident occurs or is reported to a manager. It is important that all cases of precautionary suspension only last as long as necessary. The main circumstances when it may be appropriate to consider precautionary suspension are:

- Alleged inappropriate behaviour; for example refusal to carry out a reasonable instruction, violent or threatening behaviour
- Alleged serious breach of conduct for example suspected or admitted theft or fraud, where there is a reasonable belief that the alleged serious breach might be repeated and/or there is a risk to people, property, mail or the good image of Royal Mail Group
- There is a reasonable belief that that the investigation may be hampered if the employee remains at work

The manager should meet with the employee to seek an explanation of the facts of the case. If the manager believes that the incident is serious and there is a reasonable belief that the serious breach might be repeated and/or there is a risk to people, property, mail or the good image of Royal Mail Group then the manager should send the employee home. Where an employee has been sent home the manager must contact HR Services Advice and Support to discuss the facts of the case. The manager then decides what appropriate action to take given the circumstances.

Where the employee has refused to carry out a reasonable instruction they should be given 10 minutes "cooling off" time to reconsider their actions. The employee should be encouraged to see their union representative during this period where possible.

If an employee is suspended then that suspension must be kept under review; initially after 48 hours and then on a weekly basis. The review should take into

account the seriousness and the continued risk to the business. It is important that all cases of precautionary suspension only last as long as necessary.

In all cases, whether the employee is suspended or not, the outcome of the case will not be affected.

If a Royal Mail Group Security criminal investigation is also taking place relating to the case, managers must liaise with Security before making their decision on whether to suspend or allow an employee to return to work following a suspension. This ensures that the incident is handled appropriately and that all relevant factors are considered.

Precautionary suspension will be with pay.

Criminal actions outside of employment

Criminal actions outside employment should not be treated as automatic reasons for formal notification under this policy or contemplation of dismissal.

Employees should not be dismissed solely because a criminal charge against them is pending or because they are absent through having been remanded in custody.

Gross misconduct

Some types of behaviour are so serious and so unacceptable, if proved, as to warrant dismissal without notice (summary dismissal) or pay in lieu of notice. It is not possible to construct a definitive list of what constitutes gross misconduct and in any event all cases will be dealt with on their merits. However, the following examples show some types of behaviour which in certain circumstances could be judged to be gross misconduct:

- Theft
- Violence
- Abusive behaviour to customers or colleagues
- Criminal acts against Royal Mail Group or its employees
- Intentional delay of mail
- Deliberate disregard of health, safety and security procedures or instructions
- Unauthorised entry to computer records
- A serious or persistent breach of the Continuous Disclosure and Communications Policy or the Share Dealing Policy

Conduct penalties

Formal action in line with the Conduct Policy will always be notified in writing. Each case will be treated on its merits with conduct action being taken as appropriate to the seriousness of the issue. The penalties are outlined below:

Authority	Penalty	Timescale
First and second line level	Warning	12 months
	Serious warning	12 to 24 months (up to 36 months for dishonesty)
	Serious warning with transfer within area	12 to 24 months (up to 36 months for dishonesty)
Second line level	Suspended dismissal	12 to 24 months (up to 36 months for dishonesty)
	Suspended dismissal with compulsory transfer within or outside area	12 to 24 months (up to 36 months for dishonesty)
	Dismissal with notice	
	Dismissal without statutory notice (summary dismissal)	

Implementation of penalties

Normally, from the date the decision is announced, or on completion of an appeal if one is made. However, dismissals will take effect from the date specified in the dismissal letter, which will normally include a period of notice.

It is not possible to provide a tariff of penalties. Each case has to be judged on its own merits and in the light of all the circumstances including the employee's record and service and any mitigation with the aim of being corrective. Penalties may be more serious where frequent breaches have occurred.

Repeated breaches of the policy

Where an employee has a number of misconduct cases upheld it may be necessary to take more severe action than a particular breach of conduct calls for by itself. For example, someone who has a number of current serious warnings may face dismissal. In such cases, when the person is invited to the conduct meeting to deal with the latest breach, the invitation letter will make it clear what conduct penalty is being considered and that this is because of the number of previous penalties. However, this is not an automatic reason for more severe action.

Mutually agreed outcome - downgrading

This should be reserved for the most serious cases where dismissal is being considered.

It may also lead to loss of earnings and pension entitlement and full account should be taken of any personal hardship before it is agreed with an employee and takes effect.

Downgrading may only be used where the employee agrees to the new role at a lower level, and managers must contact HR Services Advice and Support when they are considering downgrading.

This is not a conduct penalty. It is a mutually agreed alternative outcome.

Appeal process

Every employee has the right to appeal against a conduct penalty. If the employee wishes to appeal, they should tell the manager who imposed the penalty within three working days of them having received a written explanation of the penalty. Employees will be encouraged to state their grounds for appeal. A hearing will then be arranged and held as soon as possible and within two weeks (up to serious warning) or within four weeks (for major penalties). The employee will be notified in

writing of the time, place and manager dealing with the appeal at least five working days beforehand.

If the employee appeals against a conduct penalty, they can be accompanied by their relevant union representative or a colleague normally from the same work location, that who may assist them to present their case.

The appeal is a hearing at which the appropriate appeal manager will rehear the case. It is the employee's opportunity to state their case why the penalty should be set aside or reduced. The result could be revoking or confirming the decision, or reducing the penalty.

For appeals against warnings or serious warnings the appeal will normally be held out of line (or for geographical reasons at an adjacent unit) at the next level of authority to where the decision was made.

Appeals against major penalties (action short of dismissal or dismissal) will normally be held by an appeals manager.

In the event of a successful appeal and consequential reinstatement, continuity of employment will be preserved.

Trade union representatives

The standards contained within the Conduct Agreement apply to all employees. The business and unions have agreed a different approach to dealing with union representatives through the Conduct Policy. Information on the approach to CWU representatives can be found in the Conduct Policy - Approach for Union Representatives Guide. For Unite/CMA representatives, information can be found in Appendix 4 of the CMA IR Framework.

Where to go for more information

The Getting Help box on the front page tells you where to find further information. Guidance is also available on the Policy and Information Site on PSP and HR pages on the intranet (for non-PSP users).

In the case of any inconsistency between this supporting guide and the Conduct Agreement, the terms of the Agreement takes precedence.

Related documents

You may find it useful to read the following documents located on the Policy and Information site on PSP in conjunction with this policy:

- Conduct Agreement
- Informal Discussions Guide
- Fact Finding Investigations Guide
- Conduct Meetings Guide
- Decision Making and Report Writing Guide
- Right to an Appeal Guide
- When to Consider Precautionary Suspension Guide
- Late Attendance Guide
- Absent Whilst on a Formal Procedure Guide
- Security of Customers Mail and Royal Mail Group Property Guide
- Conduct Policy - Approach for Union Representatives Guide
- Managing Employees who are on Precautionary Suspension due to a Criminal Investigation by Royal Mail Group Security Guide