

When to Consider Precautionary Suspension

Guide for employees

This guide explains what is precautionary suspension, the circumstances under which a manager may consider using this approach and the steps that should be followed when an employee is precautionary suspended.

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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>



When to Consider Precautionary Suspension

Guide for employees

Overview

This guide explains precautionary suspension, the circumstances under which a manager may consider using this approach and the steps that should be followed when an employee is placed on precautionary suspension.

This should be read in conjunction with the Conduct Policy and the Conduct Agreement.

Definition of mail

For the purposes of this guide, the term "mail" includes all items which individuals are entrusted to collect, process, convey, deliver or otherwise handle or have access to. This includes letters, parcels and unaddressed items.

When it may be necessary to consider 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, where 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
- There is a reasonable belief that that the investigation may be hampered if the employee remains at work

Where a serious incident occurs or is reported to a manager the manager should ask for an explanation and check the facts of the case before reflecting on the information available. There are a number of potential outcomes:

- The manager concludes that no action is required
- The manager concludes that further investigation is required, low risk of repetition and low risk to people, property, mail or to the good image of Royal Mail Group. The manager decides that the employee can remain working during the investigation
- The manager concludes 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. In these cases the manager arranges to meet the employee on the following working day or shift and the employee is sent home. Keys should be returned by key holders before they are sent home

Where an employee has been sent home, the manager must contact HR Services Advice and Support to discuss the facts of the case.

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 the employee to return to work following a suspension. This ensures that the incident is handled appropriately and that all relevant factors are considered.

The manager then decides what action is appropriate taking into account the seriousness of the case, risk of repetition and the consequences to the business.

Where there is a need for further action, the manager needs to follow the steps outlined in the diagram below:



The manager meets with the employee to discuss the alleged incident and the action they intend to take at this stage.

There are four potential outcomes following the meeting with the employee:

- No action required and employee returns to normal duty
- Further investigation required; however the employee can continue to work in their normal duty
- Further investigation required: the employee should not work in their current role; however they can undertake alternative work
- Further investigation required and given the potential seriousness of the case, the employee should be precautionary suspended. This applies where, there is a high risk of repetition and/or a serious risk to people, property, mail or the good image of Royal Mail Group if the employee returns to work

The manager should explain to the employee their decision and advise them in writing. Importantly, if the case requires further investigation they should know what the next steps will be and when they will find out more details.

Cooling off

Where the employee has refused to carry out a reasonable instruction, they should be given 10 minutes “cooling off” time to reconsider their actions before the manager considers following the process outlined above.

The employee should be encouraged to see their local representative during this period where possible. However decisions cannot be delayed where no representative is available.

Employees who are not fit and able to do their work

For employees who are not fit and able to do their work or it is unsafe for them to continue in the workplace, for example being under the influence of alcohol or non-prescribed drugs, the manager should send the employee home and take all necessary steps to ensure the safety of the employee and others. The manager should arrange a meeting with the employee the following day

The manager should refer to the Alcohol and Drugs Guide where appropriate. In cases where the employee's behaviour is extreme and the manager has a concern for the wellbeing of the employee and the safety of others, the manager should send the employee home taking the necessary steps to ensure the safety of the employee. The manager should meet with the employee the following day and if the employee's behaviour has not improved, precautionary suspension of the employee should be considered.

The manager has a duty of care to the employee and should consider a referral to Occupational Health Service.

Further investigation

The manager must keep the facts under review during an investigation. If it becomes clear that the seriousness of the incident or risk of repetition is different than first thought, the manager must review the outcome. In some cases this will result in an employee returning to work on their normal duty or to an alternative role and in other cases this may result in the employee being precautionary suspended. In all cases, the manager must meet with the employee and let them know why that decision is being taken.

Where further investigation is required, managers should follow the Conduct Policy and appropriate Conduct Policy guides.

Prejudging the case

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

In cases where an employee is either precautionary suspended or other precautionary action taken, the employee will be made aware that it is not a formal penalty and it does not suggest any prejudice.

Procedure for precautionary suspension

Managers should record details of the precautionary suspension via Managing My Team on PSP, Guides on how to record the details can be found on PSP by clicking on the Advice and Help tab on PSP.

The suspension with pay should be confirmed in writing within one day (24 hours) by the suspending manager.

The letter should make clear that the employee is precautionary suspended; the reasons why they have been precautionary suspended, what their rights and obligations are during their suspension. The letter should also make clear that the employee is not to attend Royal Mail Group premises without the prior written permission of their manager, approach witnesses or discuss the details of the case with work colleagues. However they are able to get support and discuss the case with their union representative and this includes sharing the content of letters.

The "Confirmation of precautionary suspension" letter should be used for this purpose.

The suspending manager must produce a report of the reasons for the suspension. The report should include an outline of the reason why the suspension has taken place. The manager must keep a file copy of the report locally. This will be provided to the employee with the letter.

Fact finding must start at the earliest opportunity, ideally within the first week. The manager will receive prompts from PSP.

Duration of precautionary suspension

It is important that all cases of precautionary suspension only last as long as necessary. All suspensions must be reviewed after 48 hours and then weekly. The individual circumstances and therefore considerations of each case will be

different but the key consideration should be whether the suspension needs to continue. During each review the manager should consider the following:

- Is the case less serious than previously thought?
- Is there a risk of the employee repeating the offence?
- Is there a risk to people, property or mail?
- Is there a risk to the good image of Royal Mail Group?
- Is there a risk to the integrity of any investigation?

Following the precautionary suspension review, the manager may decide:

- That no further action is required and the employee can return to work.
- Even if action under the Conduct Policy is required, the employee may return to work to their normal role or to an alternative role
- An unacceptable level of risk still exists so the employee remains on precautionary suspension

Where the suspension continues, the manager must record the reason in the case file. In cases where there is no conduct notification after four weeks, the third line manager will receive a prompt from PSP to review the case. This review is to explore the reasons for the delay, the continued need for suspension and not the details of the case. With the agreement of the employee, the review will include the union representative.

Where the employee returns to work, they should be advised in writing of the decision to end the precautionary suspension using the 'Precautionary suspension outcome' letter. The manager must also update PSP via Managing My Team.

Maintaining contact

While an employee is suspended from work, it is important that weekly contact is maintained. Where the case is passed to the second line manager; the first line manager or another manager must maintain contact.

This contact should cover the wellbeing of the employee and importantly keep them up to date with planned office events. The employee and the manager should agree arrangements for maintaining contact during suspension. The contact should be weekly and can be by telephone, email or letter.

The employee should be reminded of the Feeling First Class: Support on 0800 6888 777.

We recognise that an employee whilst on precautionary suspension may meet colleagues from their office and understand that the suspension may be talked about. Where the employee on precautionary suspension wants colleagues to provide information on the case, they should ask the manager dealing with the case or their union representative to talk to the colleagues on their behalf.

Throughout the investigation, the employee can discuss, share documents and obtain support from their union representative or the work colleague they have asked to support them at conduct meetings.

Authority to precautionary suspend

In most cases suspensions will be carried out by a unit manager, such as a Delivery Office Manager or an Operations Manager. In larger units by the Shift Manager or an appropriate manager. Royal Mail Group Security can suspend employees on the authority of an appropriate manager. In all cases suspension must be reported immediately to a senior manager. The

suspending manager must also inform the appropriate union representative if agreed by the employee. As outlined above managers must phone HR Services Advice and Support before suspending the employee.

Where an employee is precautionary suspended and is subsequently dismissed with notice, the employee must be informed that precautionary suspension will continue until their last day of service.

Precautionary suspension involving union representatives

If the case involves a CWU union representative, refer to the Conduct Policy – Approach for Union Representatives Guide and the suspending manager should notify the Divisional Representative before the suspension.

Information on the approach to Unite\CMA representatives can be found in Appendix 4 of the CMA IR Framework.

Criminal actions outside employment

Criminal actions outside employment should not be treated as automatic reasons for suspension, formal conduct notification or contemplation of dismissal.

When a manager become aware of criminal actions involving an employee, suspension is only appropriate where there is a serious risk to people, property, mail or the good image of Royal Mail Group.

Managers must contact HR Services Advice and Support when they are made aware of an employee being involved in criminal action outside work before taking precautionary action.

Right to be accompanied

Where a union representative is readily available, employees can be accompanied at the meeting where the decision to send home is made. However this decision cannot be delayed where the representative is not available.

The employee can also be accompanied at the meeting with the manager the following day. Their companion may be:

- A work colleague normally from the same work location
- A trade union representative
- An accredited employee of a trade union

For further information see the Right to be Accompanied Guide.

Annual holiday during precautionary suspension

If annual holiday was booked before the precautionary suspension, it should be taken during the period of the suspension. If it has not been booked the employee will accrue annual holiday which can be taken on their return. If the employee wishes to cancel any planned holiday, they should contact their manager and let them know confirming that they are contactable and will be available for meetings. They can also request holiday whilst on suspension, and this may be granted subject to local arrangements. If the employee is dismissed, any outstanding accrued holiday will be paid as appropriate.

Sick absence during precautionary suspension

Where an employee is suspended and then goes sick, the employee will remain suspended but sick pay rules and sick pay limits will apply. The employee should notify their manager when they are no longer sick to enable the manager to return them from sick pay to basic pay.

Where to go for further 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.

Letters and forms

The following letters can be found on the Policy & Information Intranet Site:

- Advising of precautionary suspension
- Update on precautionary suspension
- Precautionary suspension outcome

Related documents

You may find it useful to read the following documents (located on the Policy and Information Site on PSP and HR pages on the intranet (for non-PSP users)) in conjunction with this policy:

- Conduct Agreement
- Conduct Policy
- Right to be Accompanied Guide
- Conduct Policy - Approach for Union Representatives Guide
- Alcohol and Drugs Guide