

National Agreement between Post Office Ltd and Communication Workers Union Crown Cost Challenge – Reduction in Management Roles and CWU Grades Cover

Introduction

The National Agreement: Working Towards a Prosperous and Long Term Crown Office Network noted that “cost savings initiatives will be shared on a proportional basis between CWU represented grades saving £7.5m and management grades who will contribute £2.5m.”

Reduction in Management Roles

As part of the management grades contribution to savings there is to be an overall reduction of 167 Assistant Branch Managers (ABMs). This reduction is broken down as follows:

- 21 ABMs removed from flagship offices that currently have 3 managers
- 146 ABMs removed from Crowns that currently have a Branch Manager(BM) and an ABM leaving one manager in these Crowns

A list of Crown Offices and their revised management template can be found at appendix A. In order to facilitate these changes, a VR preferencing exercise has been undertaken amongst all managers in Crowns. These changes will come into effect on an office by office basis when the Assistant Branch Manager leaves or moves into another templated role in the branch.

This leaves the Crown Office management as:

- 22 Crowns with 3 managers
- 206 Crowns with 2 managers
- 146 Crowns with 1 manager

Resulting Changes to Crown Office Templates

In 2007, when the Deputy Branch Manager (DBM) role (CWU grade) was ceased and replaced with the ABM, 23 hours were added to the template of all of these 146 Crowns.

It is now agreed to increase the template at each of these branches by 12 hours per week to mitigate against any potential service risk due to the withdrawal of the ABM grade and to provide resource for supervisory cover in the BMs absence. It is agreed that the replacement hours in the all day Saturday branch is increased to 14 instead of 12.

The changes outlined apply only to the 146 offices that will have only 1 manager. The templates for the flagship offices that are reducing their management complement will be adjusted through the normal processes but with no compensating hours.

Resourcing to the Revised Template

The current staff in post status will be factored into final template, e.g. if the template is 300 hours but staff in post is already 308, the revised template would be 312 with 4 hours being offered to existing part timers. If the staff in post is less than template then the deficit in hours will be added to the 12 and either offered to existing part timers or recruited to depending on the hours available being greater than 16 and part timers' willingness/capability to increase hours.

Covering Management Absence

When the Branch Manager is on annual leave or sick leave for a period of up to no more than 3 weeks, a further 29 hours per week (in addition to the template increase of 12 hours) will be allocated to the Crown Office.

This will enable a counter colleague to cover the required managerial duties, although it is anticipated that they would still be able to work on the counter at least part of the time. The opportunity to cover the BM in this way should be seen as a positive move for colleagues interested in temporary or permanent promotion either within their branch or at nearby branches.

The full responsibilities associated with the BM role will need to be in place where absences exceed 3 weeks, e.g. when covering vacancies, maternity leave and long term sick absence, therefore, in such cases temporary promotion terms would apply, although Area Managers may, at their discretion, choose to cover such absence with a Manager or Assistant Manager from a nearby branch.

Allowance Payable

Where the Branch Manager has authorised absence for over 3.5 hours in any single day and up to a maximum of 3 weeks, an allowance would be payable to the person covering the manager's absence in these 146 single manager branches.

If the person is covering for the manager's day off then the allowance will be paid even if the duty they are working is less than 3 hours, ie Saturday. For other absences, the allowance would only apply if the manager is out of the branch for over ½ day (3.5 hours).

Anyone authorised to cover a Branch Manager's short term absence (3.5hrs+) in these single manager branches will receive an additional non pensionable hourly allowance of £1.20. This allowance will be reviewed annually to ensure an appropriate differential is maintained between the CSC and 2A management salary band.

There is currently no consistency and fairness in the way that substitution is managed across the network. This allowance rate of +£1.20 per hour will be used for all authorised short term substitution across the Crown network from January 2010.

This hourly allowance will be non-pensionable and be paid to an advanced level CSC selected from a pool of volunteer colleagues at the branch. At different times the allowance could be paid to a number of individuals who take turns to cover when the BM is not on the premises. No more than 1 individual will be entitled to claim the allowance at any 1 week and the BM cannot be present on site when the allowance is claimed.

The hourly allowance was calculated as 2/3 of the difference between the minimum of the 2A **manager** pay band and advanced CSC grade. The 2/3 is on the basis that the individual claiming the allowance will only be fulfilling part of the BM role.

The CAM will receive a monthly report showing the allowance paid by individual/branch. The CAM will be responsible for ensuring that the offices are being covered effectively and that the CSCs performing the management cover are provided with the necessary coaching and training to develop their skills. It may also be necessary to add to or remove CSCs from the potential "cover pool" due to promotion or performance issues, such decisions will be taken by the CAM in conjunction with the relevant TCR.

Roles and Responsibilities

Elements of the BM role such as coaching, managing performance and managing conduct issues will not be proactively managed in the short term absence of the BM.

This list is not exhaustive but provides an overview of the areas of responsibility of the allowance holder:

- Takes ownership for the effective running of the branch in the absence of the manager
- Takes on supervisory role when BM not in attendance, this can be carried out when working on the counter, engaged in other customer facing activity or administration work
- Ensures excellent customer service is delivered
- Ensures sales, service and customer models are being deployed
- Local complaint handling
- Organises / delivers support / training to triallists
- Controls security and H&S
- General admin, e-mails, reports, post etc
- Organise / run WTL and sales training
- Escalate any conduct and attendance policy issues to CAM / local BM

Training may be required for the individuals in receipt of the allowance. There may be some formal training e.g. H&S persons in Control training but the majority will take the form of coaching by the BM.

Timescales for Introduction

- Since the announcement of the new management structure, 120 managers have opted to take voluntary redundancy and have now left the Post Office, a number have been transferred or promoted and there will be a small number of managers who remain in post for now. These figures are subject to change so POL will provide updates to CWU and CMA Unite on a regular basis, the intention will be to match manager resource to the revised template.
- If the Assistant Branch Manager remains in the branch none of the above arrangements will apply until they have left / moved into another role.
- In branches where there are surplus ABMs that still have SECs or vacancies the SECs will be ceased / vacancies held and the ABM will be expected to cover these counter duties. Ideally the ABM will be encouraged to revert to a CSC role but this will be individual choice and subject to MTSF terms.
- Surplus ABMs will also be required to move branch to take up suitable alternative roles under MTSF terms including project work such as Horizon Online rollout.
- When the Assistant Branch Manager role and person have left then the branch will receive the additional 12 hours (adjusted depending on current staff in post status).
- To save the management cover costs for the remainder of this financial year opportunities will be kept to a minimum by using surplus ABMs and managers from other branches to cover.

Review of Agreement

The effectiveness of this agreement will be jointly reviewed in early 2011, by which time sufficient experience of the arrangements described in the agreement will be clear to all.

Any disagreements regarding the introduction and interpretation of this agreement will be referred to the signatories of this agreement for resolution.

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