

No. 001/2020

2nd January 2020

Dear Colleagues

POST OFFICE: NATIONAL AGREEMENT FOR TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE TRIAL OF BODY ARMOUR VESTS (NON-BALLISTIC)

I am pleased to report that the Postal Executive has unanimously endorsed the attached Terms of Reference for the trialling of Body Armour (in the form of vests) to be worn by our Crew members in Supply Chain, in the course of their duties when delivering and collecting money to and from the c.11,500 Post Offices spread across the UK.

Protecting our Crew Members

Our paramount aim must be to provide our members with the best possible protection. Our Crew members are seen as the primary professionals in this industry and consequently Loomis and G4S report considerably more attacks proportionate to their operation than the Post Office. Whilst obviously one attack on our members is one too many, thankfully we do not experience large numbers of attacks. We believe this is mainly due to the fact our members do not cut corners and leave themselves exposed and vulnerable to attacks, although where we do have attacks, these are concentrated in traditionally high risk areas.

It is unfortunately a regrettable fact that knife crime is on the increase in the UK and due to the nature of Crew members' work there is no doubt an increased vulnerability. Therefore, the initiative of trialling Body Armour is welcomed.

The Postal Executive supports the main purposes of the trial which are as follows:

- act as a visual deterrent to criminals
- give added protection to Crew members when facing a knife attack

The Post Office's 2018/19 Annual Report confirms our members' safety is constantly monitored and investments in security are made where appropriate.

"We undertake a dynamic risk assessment, work closely with industry experts and bodies and have invested heavily in security related interventions to reduce the risk of attack and assault across the Network and Supply Chain."

Terms of Reference – Key Features

The trial will commence in January and will last for two months. Crucially, the wearing of Body Armour during the trial will be restricted to volunteers only.

Trial objectives are to determine the suitability in respect of:

- Comfort
- Ease to wear whilst driving
- Manoeuvrability
- Durability
- Ease of putting on

The Depots involved are:

- London
- Manchester
- Sheffield
- Swansea

The trial will involve a maximum of seven vests from three different suppliers with the aim of identifying which vest is best in terms of the criteria described above. Our Unit Rep in the London Depot, has indicated his willingness to participate in the trial which will also include a woman Crew member from Swansea.

Dave Joyce, National Health, Safety & Environment Officer will be working closely with Martin Hopcroft, Post Office Head of Health & Safety on the following key aspects regarding the wearing of Body Armour:

- A fit for purpose Risk Assessment
- Safe System of Work
- Standard Operating Procedures
- Plus the legally required Health and Safety information, instruction, supervision and training

Joint Review and Monitoring

Post Office and CWU will jointly monitor and review the trial and the success criteria will include all factors described above. We will naturally require good feedback from all volunteers as it is vitally important to gather as much information as possible arising from the experience of wearing the vests.

We have also raised directly with Nick Trowler, Head of Supply Chain Operations, a concern around wearing Body Armour vests during very hot weather. Clearly, trialling this equipment in January and February is not going to provide us with the experience of wearing the vest at times of acute heat. Nick Trowler is fully empathetic to this position and acknowledges and understands this area requires further joint consideration. He has therefore agreed this issue will remain under examination and discussion going forward.

To assist further deliberations, Nick has also proposed that we seek specific feedback and opinion about this issue from the volunteers involved in the trial. This position

confirms the Post Office is willing to consider our representations on this matter. Without looking to pre-judge the trial outcome, I believe we should address the issue of hot weather as an integral part of any final Agreement for the use of Body Armour.

Next Steps & Communications

Mole Meade, Postal Executive member, has agreed to oversee the trial and will engage with management as appropriate. Mole will also liaise with Dave Joyce on H&S aspects and where necessary will be supported by our two full-time Supply Chain Representatives, both of whom regularly perform Health & Safety duties.

A Joint Statement, which is being published today, is attached to this LTB for your information.

The outcome of the trial will be reported to the Postal Executive. Additionally, in the event the Post Office proposes an extension to the trial or wider roll-out to high risk areas, this will also be subject to further decisions of the Postal Executive.

Yours sincerely

Andy Furey
Assistant Secretary



NATIONALLY AGREED TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE TRIAL OF BODY ARMOUR

Introduction

This National Agreement reflects the joint aims of Post Office and the CWU to improve Crew Members' safety and reduce the risk of criminal robberies.

Background

The Office of National Statistics states the volume of knife and sharp instrument offences has increased by 44% since the year ending March 2011, and a 23% increase in the use of knives for robberiesⁱ.

In order to help protect Crew members from this growing risk to their safety, we have agreed to trial the use of non-ballistic body armour. After evaluating several potential suppliers, three have been chosen to supply the Body Armour for the trial. They are Dimensions; Burlington; and Head to Toe.

Purpose

The purpose of wearing body armour is as follows:-

- To act as a visual deterrent to criminals
- To give added protection to Crew members when facing a knife attack

Objectives of the Trial

The objective of the trial is to determine the suitability of Body Armour for CViT Crews. In particular, we will be seeking feedback from the participants (volunteers) on the following:

Comfort - Determining whether the Body Armour can be comfortably worn whilst the Crew member is carrying out the various activities of their duty in all weathers

Ease to wear whilst driving – Whether the Body Armour impacts on the ability to drive the vehicle at all

Manoeuvring – whether the Body Armour impacts on the ability of the Crew member to get in and out of the vehicle, carry out their delivery/collection and any other aspect of their job

Durability - How well the Body Armour stands up to the rigours of the job

Ease of putting on – Any issues relating to putting on or taking off the Body armour

Effectiveness –We obviously hope there will be no attacks on anyone working in Supply Chain; however should an attack occur, involving a Crew person wearing the Body Armour, we would ensure that all lessons learnt are fed into the joint review of the trial. This would be over and above all normal measures made following an attack.

Depots and Numbers of Volunteers Involved in the Trial

Initially, small numbers of volunteers for the trial will be sought at London, Manchester, Sheffield and Swansea on the basis of one person per depot. A woman volunteer will also be involved. Additional volunteers will be sought

where appropriate and once vests become available. Seven vests in total will be used as part of the trial.

Length of Trial and Implementation Date

The trial from the beginning of January 2020 until the end of February 2020.

Joint Review and Next Steps

Feedback from volunteers will inform a joint review of the Body Armour trial by the Post Office and CWU. For it to be effective, we would encourage users to share as much information as possible about their experiences of wearing Body Armour. The joint review of the trial will take place at the earliest opportunity once all information is available following the conclusion of the trial, and prior to its wider rollout.

Russell Hancock
Supply Chain Director, Post Office

Andy Furey
CWU Assistant Secretary

Date: [insert date]

ⁱ Office of National Statistics website [ons.gov.uk](https://www.ons.gov.uk) accessed on 1th December 2019
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingjune2019#rise-in-offences-involving-knives-or-sharp-instruments-and-firearms-offences>



2 January 2020

Joint Statement – Post Office Supply Chain and CWU

Trial of Body Armour in Supply Chain

Post Office and the CWU have agreed a Terms of Reference for a two month trial of Body Armour involving volunteers from our London, Manchester, Sheffield and Swansea depots (including a woman volunteer). The trial will start early in the New Year.

This trial builds on our shared aim of improving Crew members' safety and reducing the risk of criminal robberies. The use of non-ballistic Body Armour vests should act as a visual deterrent to criminals and also give added protection to Crew members when potentially facing a knife attack.

Three companies have been chosen to supply the Body Armour for the trial and the plan is to gauge suitability as follows:

- **Comfort** - Is the Body Armour comfortable whilst carrying out the various activities?
- **Ease to wear whilst driving** – Does Body Armour impact on driving?
- **Manoeuvring** – Does Body Armour impact on movement whilst performing the job?
- **Durability** – How well the Body Armour stands up to the rigours of the job?
- **Ease of putting on** – Any issues relating to putting on or taking off the Body Armour

To help inform the risk assessment, we will jointly monitor and review the effectiveness of the trial via feedback from all volunteers. In order to determine next steps beyond the trial it is vitally important to gather as much information as possible from the Crew members concerned in respect of their experience of wearing the vests.

Further developments will be reported.

Russell Hancock
Supply Chain Director, Post Office

Andy Furey
CWU Assistant Secretary