



[Redacted]

Date
16 August 2024

[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Post Office
100 Wood Street
London EC2V 9ER

Your Ref:

Classification:
Public

Dear [Redacted],

Freedom of Information Request – FOI2024/00063

We are writing in response to your email received by Post Office Limited (“**Post Office**”) on 10 January 2024, which has been dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“**FOIA**”). We sincerely apologise for the delay in responding to this request.

In your email you have requested the information shown verbatim in bold below:

“How many actual cases of fraud committed by sub-postmasters occurred in each of the 5 years preceding the introduction of Horizon?”

We can confirm that Post Office does hold some information in scope of your request.

As the rollout of the Horizon IT software (“**Horizon**”) in Post Office branches began in 1999, we have interpreted “the 5 years preceding the introduction of Horizon” to mean the period of 1994 to 1998. We have also interpreted “actual cases of fraud committed by sub-postmasters” to mean the number of sub-postmasters (“**postmasters**”) who were convicted for fraud or fraud type offences. Therefore, we take this request to be asking for the yearly number of postmasters convicted for fraud or fraud type offences in the period of 1994 to 1998.

The table below covers all such fraud convictions regardless of which authority prosecuted the case (that is, one of Post Office, Royal Mail Group Limited, Crown

Prosecution Service, Department for Work and Pensions, or the Northern Irish or Scottish prosecuting authorities):

Year	Number of postmaster convictions (including individuals in unknown roles)
1994	3
1995	1
1996	10
1997	21
1998	40
1990s*	3

*The case creation dates are unknown, but they certainly started in the 1990s and, therefore, may have been commenced between 1994 to 1998.

The figures reflect the number of postmasters (as well as individuals whose roles are unknown) who were convicted in each year for fraud or fraud type offences. They exclude other individuals (certainly known to be in non-postmaster roles – for example, assistants, cleaners, and engineers) who were convicted for similar offences in the same period.

As the exact offences for which an individual was convicted is not known for most pre-1999 cases, Post Office has had to rely on casework spreadsheets that categorise each pre-1999 case by reference to a ‘case type’. This has been used to categorise whether a case involved or potentially involved ‘fraud’ or ‘fraud type’ offences. In this regard, please see the Annex at the end of this letter, for a list of a) fraud and fraud-type offences and b) non-fraud and non-fraud offences.

The number of convictions per year is based on the dates that the investigation of individual cases started, although the prosecution or eventual conviction might have occurred in a later year. This is the simplest and most accurate way to identify cases per year since information as to the date of charge or eventual conviction is not always known. Consequently, the figures include cases that were commenced between 1994 and 1998, some of which might have resulted in a conviction post-1998.

Overall, given the historical nature of the data concerned, with some dating back 30 years, we cannot be certain about the accuracy or completeness of the information we have provided, including the specific offences for which postmasters were convicted. Post Office continues to receive material from third parties regarding cases. Consequently, the numbers provided in response to this request may change later and are correct only as of 31 July 2024.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of this response, you do have a right to request an internal review. You can do this by writing to the address above within 40 working days of receipt of this response stating your reasons for your internal review request or alternatively, by emailing information.rights@postoffice.co.uk.

If, having requested an internal review by Post Office, you are still not satisfied with our response you also have a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113
www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints

Yours sincerely,

Information Rights Team
information.rights@postoffice.co.uk
<https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/governance/access-to-information/access-to-information/>

Post Office Limited is committed to protecting your privacy, information about how we do this can be found on our website at www.postoffice.co.uk/privacy

Annex

Fraud and fraud type offences	Non-fraud and non-fraud type offences
compensation fraud	burglary
false accounting	counter snatch
Pensions & Allowance encashment fraud	counterfeit
Pensions & Allowance fraud	LBU discrepancy (usually relates to cash centre / cash van in transit thefts)
Pensions & Allowance overclaims	Motor Vehicle Licence loss
allegations against character*	Pensions & Allowance laundering
audit shortage*	Plastic Bank Note Envelope discrepancies (usually relates to cash centre / cash van in transit thefts)
cash loss*	robbery
cash loss (audit discrepancy)*	theft
DWP overclaims*	theft of official cash
Giro suppression*	
other*	
stock loss*	
suppression*	
bureau theft/fraud**	
postal order theft / fraud**	
theft/false accounting**	

*These could be many other types of offence but as they could also be fraud offences, we have included them in this category.

**These could be solely theft offences but as they are indistinguishable as to whether they were theft or fraud offences (as the description caters for both), they have been included in this analysis.