



[Redacted]

Date
24 September 2024

Post Office
100 Wood Street
London EC2V 9ER

Your Ref:

Classification:
Public

Dear [Redacted],

Freedom of Information Request – FOI2024/00912

We are writing in response to your email received by Post Office Limited (“**Post Office**”) on 10 June 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 your request.

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

“I write in relation to my previous request FOI2024/00735 (please find attached). You wrote to say you did not hold the information requested because the Post Office does not investigate the selling of counterfeit stamps.

I would therefore like to adjust my request to ask how many complaints relating to the selling of potentially counterfeit stamps at Post Offices have been directed to Royal Mail since 2021. Please provide a short summary of the complaint.

Additionally, how many times has Post Office assisted with a Royal Mail investigation into counterfeit stamps since 2021 and a short summary of what was being investigated?

Please can you provide the date for each of these complaints and/or investigation as well as any correspondence between Post Office and Royal Mail in relation to this matter.”

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

Royal Mail Group (“**Royal Mail**”) are the sole supplier of stamps to Post Office branches, and as such, Royal Mail investigate the selling of counterfeit stamps. Post Office has not assisted Royal Mail in investigating complaints of counterfeit stamps, and only direct complainants to Royal Mail, or forward any complaints they receive.

For information, before the 6 April 2024, Post Office Customer Support Centre (“**CSC**”), who are responsible for looking into customer complaints for Post Office, operated their own procedure, separate from Royal Mail, which has been incorrectly named as “*counterfeit stamp investigation agreement*” on page 20 of the attached document. The correct name should have been the ‘Counterfeit stamps process Customer Care’. After 6 April 2024, the procedure changed, and all complainants regarding alleged counterfeit stamps were advised to contact Royal Mail to investigate in line with their process.

Please find an attachment containing enquiries received since 2021 by Post Office Customer Support Centre in relation to potential counterfeit stamps, which includes the date of the complaint and a brief summary of the issue.

We have also provided a document of the email correspondence between Post Office and Royal Mail, relating to counterfeit stamps.

However, we have decided that the names and other personal data should be withheld under sections 40(2) and 40(3A) of the FOIA as the emails contain personal data relating to other persons. These sections exempt personal information from disclosure if that information relates to someone other than the applicant, and if disclosure of that information would breach any of the data protection principles in Article 5(1) of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

We consider that disclosure of this information is likely to breach the first data protection principle, which provides that personal data must be processed lawfully, fairly, and in a transparent manner. Disclosure would not constitute 'fair' processing of the personal data because it relates to junior employees of both Post Office and Royal Mail who would not reasonably expect their names, roles and contact details to be disclosed in relation to this request for information.

We have also withheld data which falls under the exemption at section 31(1)(a) of the FOIA, which relates to the prevention or detection of crime. This exemption is engaged because providing the information will prejudice the prevention of crime by facilitating the possibility of a criminal offence being carried out. We have removed details of any potential crimes that may have been committed, along with any data and contact details for areas of the business used to facilitate investigations.

In applying this exemption, we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosure. We recognise that there is a public interest in disclosure of information relating to counterfeit stamps, as this enhances transparency about the ways of working within Post Office.

On the other hand, there is a strong public interest in withholding information which either prevents crime or is used to detect crime, as this information could be used to undermine investigations undertaken by Royal Mail into potential criminal activity. Disclosure of details around these investigations would also enable those who have attempted to commit criminal activity, to understand whether these attempts have been successful or not.

Although Royal Mail are not subject to the FOIA, if you would like more information about counterfeit stamps, please contact them directly. You can call Royal Mail Customer Services on 08457 740 740 or visit them online at:

<https://personal.help.royalmail.com/app/webforms/contact/c/310>.

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