



Date
5 September 2024

Post Office
100 Wood Street
London EC2V 9ER

Your Ref:

Classification:
Public

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information Request – FOI2024/00149

We are writing in response to your email received by Post Office Limited (“**Post Office**”) on 19 January, which has been dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“**FOIA**”). We sincerely apologise for the delay in our response.

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

“Can you provide the number of prosecutions made for fraud by the post office (against subpostmasters) during the period 1993 to 1998.”

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

We have interpreted this request as asking us for the number of cases of which Post Office is aware which resulted in a decision to charge sub-postmasters (“**postmasters**”) for fraud in the period of 1993 to 1998. Post Office is aware of 90 such prosecutions, regardless of their outcome, including acquittals, convictions, possible convictions, prosecutions that were discontinued or dropped for other reasons, as well as unknown post-charge outcomes. This figure excludes all cases that did not result in a decision to charge (e.g., investigations that resulted in no further action or that resulted in a caution).

Although you have requested the number of postmasters prosecuted for “fraud”, as the exact offence for which an individual was prosecuted is not known for most pre-1999 cases, Post Office has had to rely on casework spreadsheets that categorise

pre-1999 cases by reference to 'case types'. These have 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) a list of case types that relate or could relate to fraud and fraud-type offences and (b) a list of case types that do not relate or do not appear to relate to fraud and fraud type offences.

Accordingly, the figure above concerns only postmasters (to which we include individuals whose roles are unknown) who were prosecuted for fraud or fraud type offences. It excludes other individuals who prosecuted during the same period, including postmaster assistants, branch managers, postal officers, and cleaners.

We have included all cases known to Post Office that fulfil the criteria above regardless of who prosecuted those cases, that is, one of Post Office / Royal Mail Group, the Department of Work & Pensions, the Crown Prosecution Service, and the Scottish and Northern Irish prosecution services.

The figure above is based on the dates that individual cases were set up, although the eventual prosecution 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 prosecution is not always known. Consequently, the figure includes cases where the investigation started between 1993 and 1998, some of which might have resulted in a prosecution post-1998. Out of an abundance of caution, we have also included cases that were commenced in the 1990s, but where the actual year the cases were set up is unknown, as those cases may have commenced between the period 1993 to 1998. There are six postmaster prosecutions and one non-postmaster prosecution within this category.

Please note that there were other prosecutions that commenced after 1998 which relate to the pre-Horizon installation period, but these have not been included as your requested period is 1993 to 1998. This means that numbers provided above do not accurately reflect the number of prosecutions that were brought by Post Office and other prosecutors relevant to the pre-Horizon era. However, this additional information falls outside of the scope of your request.

Overall, given the historical nature of the data concerned, with some dating back 31 years, we cannot be certain about the accuracy or completeness of the information we have provided, including the specific allegations for which the suspects were prosecuted in every case. Please note that Post Office continues to receive material

from third parties regarding cases. Consequently, the figure provided in response to this request may change in the future and is correct only as of 22 August 2024, based on current information known to Post Office.

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.