



[REDACTED]

Date
14 May 2024

[REDACTED]

Post Office
100 Wood Street
London EC2V 9ER

Your Ref:

Classification:
Public

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information Request – FOI2024/00479

We are writing in response to your emails received by Post Office Limited (“**Post Office**”) on 21 March and 28 March, 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:

“How many meetings (including on the telephone) have there been with subpostmasters / postmasters (former and present) to discuss compensation, where [REDACTED] has been present?”

In any of these meetings, how many legal representatives acting for the Post Office have been present?

On what date was the first such meeting and on what date was the most recent?

Who is the new dispute resolution manager on the HSS?”

For context in relation to the information you have requested, please note that claims in the Horizon Shortfall Scheme (“**HSS**”) are assessed by an independent advisory panel of external experts and there is a full governance process for each and every claim.

We can confirm that we do hold information relevant to your request. However, Post Office believes that the disclosure of the information requested would put at risk the safety of employees. Post Office therefore relies upon the exemption provided in section 38(1) of the Act, concerning the Health and Safety of individuals.

As sections 38(1)(a) of the FOIA is a qualified 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 the HSS, including how claims are processed and the meetings that take place with former and present postmasters. We also recognise the public interest in knowing which individuals are involved in processing HSS claims. We particularly understand the public interest, given the Horizon IT Scandal and the more recent coverage at the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry.

However, Post Office believes that there is a high degree of risk attached to the disclosure of information concerning any individual(s) and is clear that there is a strong public interest in protecting the physical and mental wellbeing of its employees. Given the recent intense public scrutiny of Post Office – including of past and present employees via social media – there is a duty of care required of Post Office as an employer, to ensure that information placed into the public domain under the Act will not have a detrimental impact on the physical and mental health of an individual.

Placing the information, you have requested into the public domain, will increase the likelihood of endangering the physical or mental health of these people, and this is not in the public interest. Given there is a strong public interest in protecting the safety of Post Office employees, in our opinion, the public interest therefore lies in maintaining the exemption and withholding the requested information.

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