



Address: **Official Correspondence Team**
People, Communication and Capability
Finance Group
Ground Floor, Quarry House
Quarry Hill, LEEDS
LS2 7UA

Email: official.correspondence@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.dwp.gov.uk

Date: 1 June 2015

Alf Denning
Sent via email

Dear Mr Denning

Freedom of Information Act - Request for Information
Our Reference: FOI 1946

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on 11th May 2015. You asked:

“The DWP contracts out the processing, opening, scanning and depositing in a digital repository of correspondence delivered via the Royal Mail (and other mail delivery companies?).

Q1. At what point or points in the process described above does the DWP log correspondence as having been received? If the process describe above does not reflect reality please tell me point(s) within the DWP actual process that correspondence is logged as being “received”.

Q2. What data/metrics does the DWP have access to for the various stages of the processes described above? For the sake of clarity I am trying to find out if the date and /or time is recorded for each piece of correspondence when it passes through the following stages (or similar):

- It arrives at the mail processing office (whether than be DWP or contractor premises).*
- It is opened.*
- It is scanned.*
- It is deposited in the appropriate DWP repository.*
- The relevant member of staff is made aware that the correspondence is available for them to work on.*

If the stages described above do not reflect the stages at which date/time data is recorded please disclose the stages at which it is.

Q3. Please confirm the total number of manual stages (i.e. those that require human action) that correspondence passes through from arriving at a DWP mail processing centre/office to the appropriate DWP employee being notified that it is accessible from the appropriate repository and they can work on it.

Q4. Please tell me the official “received” date/time that DWP Decision Makers must use when making benefit entitlement decisions (including revisions) and what stage of the correspondence handling process this reflects?”

In response to your questions above I can confirm the following:

Q1.

All Recorded Delivery & Signed for Delivery items are entered onto a manifest at point of receipt from Royal Mail. This is in addition to any other recording and the manifest will itemise the contents.

The date of receipt of all scanned mail is automatically logged when the item is scanned and this data is available to benefit processing staff.

Q2

- **Arrival:** As per Q1, Recorded and Signed For items are recorded individually. Other mail is not recorded on an individual basis.
- **Opening:** Mail is put through a slitting machine which also counts the envelopes. This data is sent to the DWP Service Team on a monthly basis.
- **Scanning:** The date is recorded on batch headers during the batch preparation process, along with the date and time the batch was scanned. A time stamped response is also received to confirm the batch has successfully transferred to indexing. Reports on when batches are received for indexing and forwarded to the DWP repository are received by the DWP Service Team on a daily basis. The date & time of scanning cannot be updated once a document has been scanned. There are additional records which show when a batch has been received by the indexing system, when it has been indexed and when it is exported to the DWP Repository.
- **Deposited in DWP Repository:** The report mentioned above also records when an acknowledgement receipt is received to say the batch has been received in the DWP Repository
- **Staff made aware:** Reports are available which show when a task has been created

Q3.

- Upon receipt at the DWP Mail Processing Centre the trays are checked to ensure they have been sorted correctly into the right offices
- The mail is passed through a slitting machine
- The mail is fully opened and prepared for scanning
- The batches are taken to the secure scanning room and scanned
- A validation check is undertaken on 10% of batches
- The mail is indexed with the document type and customer identifier (normally a National Insurance Number)
- A second operative enters the customer identifier (if these don't concur, the batch passes for a further check)
- For valuable items the opening, preparation for scanning and scanning is done as one stage

Q4.

Decision Makers should use the scanning date as the date of receipt of an item of mail.

If you have any queries about this letter please contact us quoting the reference number above.

Yours sincerely

**Official Correspondence Team
People, Communication and Capability**

Your right to complain under the Freedom of Information Act

If you are not happy with this response you may request an internal review by e-mailing freedom-of-information-request@dwpgsi.gov.uk or by writing to DWP, Central FoI Team, Caxton House, 6-12 Tothill Street, London. SW1H 9NA. Any review request should be submitted within two months of the date of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office for a decision. Generally the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted our own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF www.ico.gov.uk