



Eleanor Shaikh

Date  
24 October 2024

[request-1182972-](#)  
[b70e4fe8@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:b70e4fe8@whatdotheyknow.com)

Post Office  
100 Wood Street  
London EC2V 9ER

Your Ref:

**Classification:**  
Public

Dear Eleanor Shaikh,

## **Freedom of Information Request – FOI2024/01324**

We are writing in response to your email received by Post Office Limited (“**Post Office**”) on 3 October, which has been dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“**FOIA**”).

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

**“Dear Information Rights Team,**

**Please can you disclose:**

**i) How much money was recovered by the Post Office from SPMs for alleged losses in their branch accounts, per month, between December 2019 and December 2022?**

**ii) How much money representing alleged shortfalls in branch accounts has been written off by the Post Office, per month, between December 2019 and the present?**

**iii) What is the current total figure of unreconciled shortfalls which remain in dispute between the Post Office and its SPMs which has yet to be repaid or written off?”**

We want to be as open as possible in answering requests for information. The FOIA itself also requires us to provide reasonable advice and assistance to those seeking to make such a request. Unfortunately, your request is very broad and could cover a breadth of information, potentially going back many years. Gathering it together would therefore involve a significant cost and diversion of resources from the organisation's other work.

It may be helpful to explain why your request would involve a significant cost. This is due to the way information is held in our finance system, it is very difficult to identify activity directly related to shortfalls / losses 'unexplained shortfalls' and, therefore, the information that you have requested falls under section 12(1) of the FOIA relating to cost of compliance.

Section 12(1) of the FOIA allows Post Office to refuse a request for information if we estimate that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate fees limit, which currently stands at £450. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 18 hours in determining whether we hold the information, and in locating, retrieving and extracting the information. On the basis of our estimates, we consider that the cost would exceed this limit and, as such, we are refusing your request.

Section 12(2) provides that we are not required to confirm whether Post Office holds the information requested if by doing so we would exceed the appropriate cost limit of £450. This is the case for the information that you have requested, and so please note that this response should not be taken as confirmation that the information is held by Post Office.

However, if you were to make a new request for a narrower category of information, it may be that we could comply with that request within the appropriate limit. The best way we can help you is to ask you to consider narrowing down your request to focus more clearly on the precise information you are seeking. You could, for example *just ask one of the questions and we can see if that can be within cost limit.*

Please note that if you modify your request, we will handle it as a new request and so the 20-working-day deadline for responding to requests would then commence from the date that we receive the modified request and may also be subject to the cost limit or other FOI exemptions.

Information that Post Office publishes can be found on the Post Office website at:

<http://www.postoffice.co.uk/our-publication-scheme>

In addition, there is published information about the way in which Post Office now addresses branch discrepancies which may provide helpful background and context for you. A diagram showing the process can be found on our website here:

<https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/horizon-scandal-pages/improving-our-systems-and-processes/>

There has also recently been evidence published by the current statutory Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry on this subject matter and this can be found on their website at:

<https://www.postofficehorizoninquiry.org.uk/>

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](mailto: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](http://www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints)

Yours sincerely,

Information Rights Team

[information.rights@postoffice.co.uk](mailto: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](http://www.postoffice.co.uk/privacy)**