



John O'Sullivan

1 December 2023

[request-1043314-
e14fa765@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:request-1043314-e14fa765@whatdotheyknow.com)

Post Office
100 Wood Street
London EC2V 9ER

Your Ref:

Classification:
Public

Dear John O'Sullivan,

Freedom of Information Request – FOI2023/00635

We are writing in response to your email received by Post Office Limited ("**Post Office**") on 2 November, 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 in bold below:

"Of the 800 or so SPM prosecuted by POL between 200 and 2014 how many had their contracts terminated? How many were allowed to still work in branch as either SPM or counter clerk?"

Between 2000 and 2022 how many SPM who you recovered "losses" from were permitted to still work in branch? How many SPM thus allowed had losses greater than those prosecuted in 2000-2014?"

What was the trigger figure to pursue a civil claim, £1k, £2k or £3k?"

How many SPM asking for help balancing with minor shortfalls were encouraged to keep trading, roll over and then prosecuted or taken to court for larger "losses"?"

What policy document show who could owe money as a criminal and be allowed to carry on working and who had to have the contract terminated?"

We can confirm that Post Office may hold some information within the scope of your request. However, your request is very complex and broad, and covers information relating to Postmasters, going back 23 years. We have no central repository where such information would be routinely collated, and stored. Carrying out work to find the information would involve a significant cost and diversion of resources from Post Office's other work.

It may be helpful to explain why your request would involve a significant cost. Even if it took an hour to search through one Postmaster's records, it would take hundreds, possibly thousands, of hours to go through all the records for all Postmasters. We would then have to do the necessary cross-referencing, analysis, organisation and tallying of facts and figures to provide the information you are seeking.

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 far exceed this limit and, as such, we are refusing your request.

Whilst Post Office has a duty to provide advice and assistance under section 16 of the FOIA, given the nature of your request, including its complexity and volume, we are unable to advise on how you could reduce the scope regarding the information you require about Postmasters, to bring it within the appropriate limit. If you were to limit your request to naming specific Postmaster policies as per the last part of your request, we may be able to assist further.

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, although we cannot guarantee that this will be the case.

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.

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