

11 January 2013

**Royal Mail Group**

Mrs T Begum

By email: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx.xxx

Information Rights Team  
(Freedom of Information Act)  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Royal Mail Sheffield  
Pond Street  
SHEFFIELD  
S98 6HR

Tel: 0114 2414215  
foi@royalmail.com  
www.royalmail.com

Dear Mrs Begum

**Re: Freedom of Information Act Request (Our Reference: KFEN-92WFQX)**

I am writing in response to your recent request for information dated 12 December 2012 which has been considered under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. You requested the following information:

- 1. Can you summarise the Royal Mail guidelines, in place after Registered Mail has been collected by collection staff and brought back to their respective offices?*
- 2. Does the Royal Mail guidelines stipulate, for the mail to be held in a secure area/room under lock and key, restricted from unauthorised staff?*
- 3. Does the Royal Mail guidelines stipulate, when the area/room is left unattended, no unauthorised persons should be able to access the secure area/room?*
- 4. Can you tell me, is collected Registered Mail held in a secure area/room under lock and key at Whitechapel Delivery Office, 206 Whitechapel Road, Whitechapel, London, E1 1AA?*
- 5. Can you tell me between 01/08/2012 and 10/12/2012, how many times have unauthorised Royal Mail staff and non Royal Mail contracted staff, gained unsupervised access to the secure area/room at, Whitechapel Delivery Office, 206 Whitechapel Road, Whitechapel, London, E1 1AA? If no records exist, please can you explain why not?*
- 6. If your unable to provide an exact number of occasions the security has been breached, have unauthorised person gained access to this area between 01/08/2012 and 10/12/2012? (a simple yes or no answer will suffice)*

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*7. Can you describe the secure area/room, and how the Registered Mail is secure when the secure area/room is left unattended?*

*8. How many Registered Mail items, have been lost; posted in the E1, E2, E5, E8 and E9 areas (London) that had been processed at Whitechapel Delivery Office, 206 Whitechapel Road, Whitechapel, London, E1 1AA, between 01/08/2012 and 10/12/2012?*

Royal Mail does not have a product called Registered Mail, however where the term Registered Mail is stated we have assumed this to refer to the Special Delivery product which uses our track and trace services.

In response to point 1 I can confirm information is held by Royal Mail in relation to guidelines and requirements in place for dealing with 'Special Delivery' items which we consider to be the equivalent of 'Registered Mail'. This information however is considered to be exempt from disclosure under section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Commercial Interests. We believe that to disclose information in regards to our operational processes would be advantageous to competitors as it would inform them of Royal Mail's business operation in terms of our Special Delivery product. This would be likely to be used to inform the business operations of competitors which would place Royal Mail at a significant disadvantage to competitors who are not required to disclose equivalent information.

Section 43(2) of the Act is a qualified exemption; as such we are required to consider the 'public interest test' when applying this exemption. Royal Mail Group is a publicly owned company and there is a real and direct public interest in its financial well being and ability to provide the universal service. The public interest would not be served by placing Royal Mail at a commercial disadvantage or by providing any company with an unfair advantage over competitors through access to their own business information. Royal Mail recognises that there is public interest in the provision of public mail services but believe that this is largely satisfied by the role of the regulator Ofcom and the publication of information under the terms of our licence. Therefore we believe that the balance of public interest is best served by maintaining the exemption and withholding this information.

Points 2, 3, 4 and 7 of your request concern Royal Mail's processes in regards to the security of registered mail. We consider that to release the information requested would prejudice the prevention and detection of crime as release of information in regards to out security procedures could increase the risk of mail being targeted by thieves. As such the information held in regards to these points of your request is exempt from disclosure under section 31(1)(a) of the Act – Law Enforcement, Under section 31(1), information is exempt from disclosure if its release would, or would be likely to, prejudice any of the law enforcement activities referred to within this section.

Section 31 of the Act is a qualified exemption; therefore we are required to consider the 'public interest test'. As we have acknowledged previously there is an interest in the general

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transparency and accountability of Royal Mail which we consider to be met by the information published under the terms of our licence. Any interest in disclosure must be balanced against the strong public interest in ensuring that Royal Mail is able to maintain security and do everything possible to protect the integrity of mail services; and in the effective prevention and detection of crime. It would clearly not serve the interests of the public to increase the possibility of theft of mail. On balance therefore, we believe that the overriding public interest lies in maintaining the exemption and withholding this information.

In response to points 5 and 6 of your request I can advise that a search has been conducted with the most appropriate areas and we have been unable to locate any records of individuals gaining unsupervised access to secure rooms at Whitechapel. However to categorically confirm this we believe a thorough search would need to be conducted of records held by a number of other departments. We consider this would exceed Royal Mail's obligations under section 12 of the Act – where cost of compliance would exceed the appropriate limit. The appropriate limit for Royal Mail is £450 which is equivalent to one person spending 18 hours locating, retrieving and gathering the requested information.

Finally point 8 of your request asks how many items have been lost; posted in the E1, E2, E5, E8 and E9 areas (London) that had been processed at Whitechapel Delivery Office between 01/08/2012 and 10/12/2012. Royal Mail does not record the number of items which have been lost during the course of mail. We only get to know that an item is lost if a customer informs our Customer Experience department of this. I can confirm national complaints information is published each quarter on our website, [www.royalmailgroup.com](http://www.royalmailgroup.com). Information is broken down according to category of complaint including 'Loss'. If you wish to request information regarding complaints for a specific postcode area we would of course consider this under the terms of the Act. It should be noted however some complaints information may be considered to be commercially sensitive.

I am sorry we are unable to answer your request in full on this occasion however hopefully our reasons for this have been suitably explained. If for any reason you are not satisfied with this response, you do have the right to request a review. If you wish to do so please set out in writing your grounds of appeal and send to the Head of Information Governance, Royal Mail Group, Company Secretary's Office, 100 Victoria Embankment, LONDON, EC4Y 0HQ. An internal panel will then review the request, and you will be advised of the outcome.

If you decide to appeal and are still not satisfied with our response you also have a right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow

Cont...

Cheshire  
SK9 5AF  
Telephone: 01625 545 700  
[www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk)

Yours sincerely

Kate Fearn  
Information Rights Officer  
Company Secretary's Office