POST OFFICE ®

Information Rights Team
Post Office Limited
Ground Floor
Finsbury Dials
20 Finsbury Street
London EC2Y 9AQ

Your reference:
Our reference: FOI2021/00743

John O'Sullivan
request-760212-187f5eec@whatdotheyknow.com

25 August 2021

Dear Mr O'Sullivan,

Freedom of Information Request – FOI2021/00743

I am writing in response to your email received by Post Office Limited ("**Post Office**") on 14 August, which I am dealing with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("**FOIA**").

In your email you have requested the following information:

Thank you for a reply to my request. I have not asked for the names of SPM's just do you have a signed contract for each appointment.

Whilst I understand the cost of providing this information to a FOI request might be costly does POL not consider that this is information you should hold as a matter of course. Do we have a signed contract for each of our SPM's? If you decide at some future date this would be good information to have available (Sir Wynn Williams Inquiry might be interested) please can you share it?

At the very least can you confirm that you hold signed contracts for all of the 736 SPM's you prosecuted.

As we previously explained in our responses to you for FOI2021/00452 and FOI2021/00573, Post Office believes that to determine whether we hold the information that you require would significantly exceed the cost limit set out under Section 12(1) of FOIA. Even though you have limited the scope of your request to 736 individuals prosecuted, Post Office would still have to carry out searches of its records to determine whether a signed copy of the contract is held or not. This is because to even determine whether we held a signed copy of a contract would involve substantial searches of both the physical and electronic files.

The "appropriate cost limit" for Post Office is £450.[1] When estimating costs for the purpose of this limit, the rate of £25 per person per hour is used[2] and so £450 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. Contracts are held both physically and electronically depending on when a postmaster first started.

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[1] See regulation 3(3) of the Fees Regulations.
[2] See regulation 4(4) of the Fees Regulation.

To establish the total number of signed contracts would require searching multiple stores and in the case of physical records, examining each store to determine whether a signed contract was held. Given the number of prosecutions, this would take significantly longer than 18 hours. Consequently, Post Office is not obliged by the FOIA to process the request further.

In accordance with our duty under section 16 of FOIA to provide reasonable advice and assistance, we have considered whether it would be possible to narrow your request in order to bring it within the costs limit, but have been unable to do so based on the reasons provided above.

If you have any queries about this response, please contact me. Do remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

I am sorry I could not provide you with the information you requested on this occasion, however 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 below stating your reasons for your internal review request.

Information Rights Team
Post Office Limited
Ground Floor
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20 Finsbury Street
London EC2Y 9AQ
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
https://ico.org.uk

Yours sincerely,

JA Lawrence

Jackie Lawrence
Information Rights Team
information.rights@postoffice.co.uk
http://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/secure-corporate/about-us/access-to-information/