



Date
18 July 2024

Post Office
100 Wood Street
London EC2V 9ER

Your Ref:

Classification:
Public

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information Request – FOI2024/00243

We are writing in response to your email received by Post Office Limited (**"Post Office"**) on 31 January, which has been dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (**"FOIA"**). We sincerely apologise for the delay in responding to your request.

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

"[REDACTED]"

It was reported in [REDACTED] in two local newspapers, the [REDACTED] [REDACTED], that the above Post Office was closed suddenly in [REDACTED] following a routine audit. The Post Office made a 'precautionary suspension' of the postmaster [REDACTED], refusing to reveal why it had closed and was 'currently investigating' the matter.

Given the recent revelations about the flawed Horizon accounting system and the questionable investigations by the Post Office into postmasters' actions, could you please state whether or not information from the flawed Horizon system played a part in [REDACTED] suspension. Could you also please provide a copy of the Post Office's investigation which would have been carried out in 2009, if necessary under the Freedom of Information Act."

In usual circumstances, Post Office would respond to an FOI request by setting out whether or not it holds the information sought and either disclose the information held or apply an appropriate exemption if it would in some way be harmful to disclose the information. Sometimes, however, simply confirming whether or not Post Office holds the information sought would cause the same kind of harm as disclosing the information itself. In those circumstances, Post Office is not required to state confirm or deny whether or not we hold the information sought.

In this case, you have asked for information relating to a former postmaster whom you state was suspended. We can neither confirm nor deny whether we hold any information surrounding the suspension of a postmaster. The reason for this is that the fact of whether or not a postmaster has been suspended constitutes personal data and to confirm or deny if this has happened in this case would breach the first data protection principle, which provides that personal data must be processed lawfully, fairly, and in a transparent manner. Confirmation or denial would not constitute 'fair' processing of the personal data because postmasters or Post Office staff would not reasonably expect us to reveal to the public, information relating to their contractual or employment matters.

It is important to remember that our stance of neither confirming nor denying whether we hold such information should not be taken as an indication that the information you requested is held by Post Office.

On a broader note, you may be interested in information about the redress arrangements for postmasters affected by Post Office's past failings related to the 2019 High Court findings that previous versions of the Horizon system had bugs, errors and defects that could have caused shortfalls in postmasters' branch accounts. The priority of today's Post Office is to ensure that postmasters affected receive redress as swiftly as possible. Details can be found on our website here: <https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/the-horizon-it-scandal/>

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