



Date
18 November 2024

Post Office
100 Wood Street
London EC2V 9ER

Your Ref:

Classification:
Public

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information Request – FOI2024/01195

We are writing in response to your email received by Post Office Limited (**"Post Office"**) on 26 August, 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:

"Please disclose the total number of applicants (that is, successful and unsuccessful) for the position of Subpostmaster (SPM) across the entire Post Office network from the years 1999 to 2023 inclusive.

I do not require a break down of the applicants who were successful and unsuccessful, simply the total number for each of those years. This could be the number of completed applications received by The Post Office Agent Application Team in that time.

If not all years since 1999 are known, please provide those you are able to report on."

We can confirm that Post Office does hold some of the information you have requested.

For context, Post office no longer uses the term "subpostmaster(s)", they are now referred to as "postmaster(s)". The application data for the position of postmaster

across the Post Office network is available as far back as 2019, the data prior is not held in the format you have requested.

Post Office considers that the information held falls under the exemption in section 43(2) of the FOIA, which relates to information which would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it) and should therefore not be disclosed.

In applying this exemption, we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosure.

Whilst we recognise that there is a public interest in disclosure of information concerning details of applications for the position of Postmaster as this helps promote transparency in Post Office business and reassurance about the way public money is being spent and how business is conducted.

There is however a strong public interest in withholding the information as it would, if disclosed, prejudice the commercial interests of Post Office. This is because disclosing information around the number of applicants would indicate how the network is performing and operating, potentially influencing future applications. It would not be in the public interest to disclose information if Post Office would be unable to operate in a fair marketplace regarding the competitive dialogue procedure and are commercially damaged by the release of the information.

Additionally, disclosure, alongside other commercially sensitive information would allow competitors to build an overall picture of Post office and its current state of affairs potentially weakening Post Office's position within this competitive market.

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/>

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