

Reference: 01730024

Information Requests
information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

19 December 2023

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information concerning Royal Mail. Your request was received on 4 December 2023 and we have considered it under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the "FOI Act").

Your request & our response

Your recent report states that "no evidence was found that the company were prioritising parcels over letters".

I should first explain that the quotation (above) that you included before your three questions is not part of any report or other document published by Ofcom. However, in order to be helpful, we have provided some information below on the findings of our recent investigation into Royal Mail's quality of service performance in 2022/23, which may be of interest to you.

As part of that investigation, we considered concerns about how parcels and letters might be prioritised for delivery. These concerns were raised in complaints made to us, including through formal whistleblowing disclosures, and by the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Committee in their report of 17 March 2023 on Royal Mail. In our review of the information we gathered from Royal Mail, we did not find evidence of a general organisation-wide policy directed by Royal Mail's senior management relating to prioritisation of parcels over letters in business-as-usual periods. We did find, in line with Royal Mail's public statements at the time, that it had an organisation-wide policy during contingency periods, such as during the pandemic and the industrial action in 2022/23, that would have resulted in some prioritisation of parcels over letters.

There was also evidence that issues at local delivery offices, such as absence and vacancies, might have led to frequent "on the day" prioritisation decisions. While this may not have resulted from a general organisation-wide policy, it nevertheless is the responsibility of Royal Mail's senior management to make sure that such decisions are made in a way that is consistent with the company's obligations. We therefore raised our concern that there is insufficient control, visibility and oversight over this local decision-making at delivery offices.

Can you please inform me of the efforts you made to obtain such evidence?

In order to consider the issue outlined above, we used our statutory information gathering powers to demand contemporaneous internal information and documents from Royal Mail on its approach to prioritisation. That included all organisation-wide policies and procedures relating to prioritisation and any Board papers where changes to such policies and procedures were considered.

Was the CWU (union) asked for evidence that they may have on the matter?

We did not separately request evidence from the CWU, however, we did correspond with the CWU setting out our approach to the investigation.

To what extent was the postal delivery workforce requested to give evidence on the matter?

While we did not separately request evidence from the postal delivery workforce, as set out above, our decision to examine the issue of prioritisation was informed by formal whistleblowing disclosures that we received directly from postal workers in writing. Our investigation was informed by these disclosures as well as the information we gathered using our formal powers.

If you have any further queries, then please send them to information.requests@ofcom.org.uk quoting the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

Information Requests

If you are unhappy with the response you have received in relation to your request for information and/or consider that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you ask us for an internal review of our decision, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom.

The following outcomes are possible:

- the original decision is upheld; or
- the original decision is reversed or modified.

Timing

If you wish to exercise your right to an internal review **you should contact us within two months of the date of this letter**. There is no statutory deadline for responding to internal reviews and it will depend upon the complexity of the case. However, we aim to conclude all such reviews within 20 working days, and up to 40 working days in exceptional cases. We will keep you informed of the progress of any such review. If you wish to request an internal review, you should contact information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Further information about this, and the internal review process can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office [here](#). Alternatively, the Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF