

7. Scams and post

'Scams are fraud and fraud is a crime'

Crime involving post appears in lots of different forms including:

- scam mail
- theft of mail
- assault on post delivery people
- fake stamps.

Lots of organisations give advice and support to consumers and take reports of suspected fraud.

7.1 Types of scams involving post

7.2 Key organisations and initiatives to help scam victims

7.3 Royal Mail - scam mail and stamp fraud

7.1 Types of scams involving post

A postal scam is a letter sent with the sole intention of gaining money through deception. Scam mail is:

- mass produced
- made to look like a personal letter or important document
- designed to trick the recipient into sending money or disclosing personal information.

Scam mail is a type of unwanted mail. Mail sent by legitimate companies to promote what they sell isn't scam mail.

Mail scams aren't the only way scams and post intersect. Other ways include:

- an uninvited text or email about a postal company
- mail gets intercepted before delivery
- the sender realises they're a scam victim after they've posted an item
- a fraudulent redirection gets set up
- mail starts getting delivered for someone else
- a postal company won't deliver to an address because they suspect fraud.

Type of scam	Example	Generic advice
Scam text about a postal company	Your [postal company name] parcel is waiting for delivery. Please confirm the settlement of 2,99 (GBP) on the following link: https://postalcompanyname.xx	Reporting options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postal company • Phone provider • Information Commissioner (nuisance text)
Scam email about a postal company	[Postal company name] Notification: Your parcel has arrived at January 6, 2021. Courier was unable to deliver the parcel to you. Please confirm your parcel from 2.95£ Confirm Now http://postalcompanyname.xx	Reporting options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postal company • National Cyber Security Centre: phishing@gov.uk
Scam letter asking recipient to reply by email	Letter delivered by Royal Mail with a China address Letter invites recipient to send an email to claim a large amount of money	Report to postal company Preventative advice to reduce amount of unwanted mail (covered in section 5.8)
Mail gets intercepted before delivery	Client sent a postal order Postal order hasn't got to destination but has been cashed	Check postal company terms to see what's covered Check postal order terms to see if eligible for a refund
Sender realises they're a scam victim after they've posted an item	Client sells an item online Client gets email confirming payment so posts item Client finds payment email was false	Report false payment email to payment provider that was impersonated Check if the online selling platform used has a dispute resolution process

Type of scam	Example	Generic advice
A fraudulent redirection gets set up	Client gets an email to say they've not completed their mail redirection Client has not tried to set up mail redirection	Report to Royal Mail
Mail starts to get delivered for someone else	Client gets several tracked parcels addressed to someone else	Report to seller(s) using information from the packaging Check name on item before accepting deliveries and decline if addressed to someone else
A postal company won't deliver to an address because they suspect fraud	Client says postal company won't deliver to their address because of fraud but won't give explain why	Complain to postal company and ask them to explain why they won't deliver to client's address Client can use a PUDO point as an alternative to home delivery
Fake stamps	Client buys a stamp and then realises the white border is wonky and the colour is unusual	Report suspected fake stamps and details of seller to Royal Mail and Trading Standards

7.2 Key organisations and initiatives to help scam victims

	advice	report	support	learn
Consumer service	✓	✓		✓
Scams Action	✓	✓		✓
Local Citizens Advice	✓		✓	✓
Action Fraud		✓		
Police		✓		✓
Local trading standards		✓	✓	
Postal company		✓		
National trading standards			✓	✓
Scams awareness campaign	✓			✓
National consumer week	✓			
Email alerts				✓
Victim support			✓	
National Cyber Security Centre		✓		✓
Advertising Standards Authority		✓		
Information Commissioner		✓		
Royal Mail		✓		

Citizens Advice consumer service

- advice for scam victims
- report scams to trading standards

Citizens Advice Scams Action service

- advice and information to help identify, stop, report and get support with scams
- report scams to trading standards

local Citizens Advice

- advice for scam victims
- take referrals from Scams Action where a scam victim needs support

Action Fraud

- the police national fraud reporting centre
- share details of fraud reports with local police forces

Police

- 101 if the client transferred money to the scammer in the last 24 hours
- Metropolitan police produce the Little Book of Big Scams

Local trading standards

- investigate potential scams in the local area using reports from the consumer service and national trading standards
- support mail scams victims in partnership with national trading standards

Postal company

- letting a postal company know about a potential scam means they can warn other people about it
- for example, Royal Mail's [details of typical scams to look out for](#) and [DPD's information about 'phishing'](#)
- Ofcom rules say Royal Mail and companies who access Royal Mail's network must keep mail safe and investigate reports of staff interfering with mail
- all companies who handle postal items have an obligation not to delay or open items.

National trading standards

- scams team investigate scams and run Friends Against Scams and Scam Marshal schemes
- e-crime team investigate online fraud
- raise awareness of scams to help protect consumers

Scams awareness campaign

- yearly campaign to raise awareness of scams

National consumer week

- yearly campaign to raise awareness of different consumer issues

Email alerts

- clients can sign up to get emails to tell them about current scams
- Trading Standards, Action Fraud,

Victim support

- help scam victims recover from the impact it's had on their life

National cyber security centre

- report suspicious emails to phishing@gov.uk

Advertising Standards Authority

- investigate misleading adverts

Information Commissioner

- investigate spam texts

7.3 Royal Mail - reporting scams and stamp fraud

7.3.1 Reporting scams


Royal Mail asks customers to send post they think might be a scam to 'Freepost Scam Mail'. Clients should include the envelope the scam post came in and a completed mail report. They can [download a scam mail report from Royal Mail](#) or leave their details on 0800 011 3466 to ask for a form and pre-paid envelope.

Clients can also use [Royal Mail's online scam reporting form](#) to report emails, texts, phone calls and items of mail.

The terms and conditions for some Royal Mail services allow them to take action if they suspect a scam. The action might be to open, delay, refuse delivery and/or return the item at the sender's expense.

7.3.2 Stamp fraud

It's a criminal offence to reuse stamps or use fake stamps. It means the sender isn't paying Royal Mail for the service they provide. The recipient will have to pay a charge for underpaid postage before they can get the item.

Genuine stamps have anti-fraud features	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'Royal Mail' printed in a special ink across the surface• die cuts within the body of the stamp

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • oval perforations along both sides, close to the base of the stamp • books and sheets of stamps have a secure laminate underprint that says 'Royal Mail'
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How to spot fake stamps	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cost less than official Royal Mail prices • missing or uneven oval security seals • unusual colour, border or shiny surface • stamps stuck to what looks like greaseproof paper • sold in books of anything other than 6 or 12

Clients can report suspected stamp fraud to Royal Mail using an [online form](#). To combat stamp fraud, Royal Mail started introducing barcoded stamps in 2021.

7.4 Crimes against Royal Mail

Clients who suspect or witness a crime against Royal Mail can [report it using an online form](#)¹. For example:

- a postman or postwoman being assaulted
- a postbox or Royal Mail trolley or van stolen or vandalised
- fraud against Royal Mail
- if someone might be stealing mail
- if someone has found some mail.

Reporting allows Royal Mail to gather intelligence and investigate potential offences.

¹ <https://www.royalmail.com/report-a-crime>