

9. Making a post complaint

Customers often tell companies when they have a problem. Some customers might think of this as 'a complaint', others might think of it as 'giving feedback'. There's lots of ways for customers to contact companies - for example, social media, phone, online and by post.

Complaints help companies identify what's causing problems for their customers. They can use this information to improve their service. A complaints procedure tells customers:

- who to contact
- the information the company needs to help them understand the problem
- when to expect a reply.

Some customers need help to navigate through the complaints process. Not all complaints get sorted out to a customer's satisfaction even if they follow the company's complaints procedure. The consumer service helps people understand:

- what their rights are
- if there's any extra help available
- what their next step is
- if there's an alternative dispute resolution scheme they can use.

9.1 What is a post complaint

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9.1 What is a post complaint

The consumer advocacy bodies explain a complaint as being:

‘any contact with the operator in which the consumer is attempting to resolve an issue with the service, or express dissatisfaction at the service they have received’.




‘We estimate that UK consumers have lost at least £85 million because of parcel problems in the last year’ (Citizens Advice, December 2019)

Ofcom define a complaint as:

‘any expression of dissatisfaction made to a postal operator, related to one or more of its products or services or the manner in which the postal operator has dealt with any such expression of dissatisfaction, where a response is explicitly or implicitly required or expected to be provided’

There are lots of reasons why people might want to complain about post issues. Reasons include:

- a compensation claim decision
- the location or condition of a post box
- problems with the collection or delivery of mail
- behaviour of the postal company’s staff
- a company continuing to send mail when the client has asked them to stop
- advice from post office staff
- post office accessibility, opening hours and closures
- having to pay extra charges
- lost, damaged or delayed mail
- poor customer service from the postal company.

Complainants need to know	
	who to contact
	any process they need to follow
	if there's a deadline to complain by
	what evidence or information they need to provide
	if there's any help available for them

Ofcom rules on complaints handling and redress are in consumer protection condition 3. The Postal Redress Service (POSTRS) is the Ofcom-approved alternative dispute resolution (ADR) scheme for post complaints about eligible Royal Mail services.


The consumer service has a referral pathway with Royal Mail. The Extra Help Unit helps vulnerable clients with post complaints.

9.2 Consumer protection condition 3: complaints and redress handling

Ofcom rules say all postal operators must have a complaints procedure that's:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • easy to use • helps sort out problems quickly and fairly.
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The rules for Royal Mail are more detailed. For example:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allow phone and written complaints • explain how they deal with complaints • give contact details for Citizens Advice consumer service • must be a member of an ADR scheme for complaints about USO services • review their complaints procedure every 3 years
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- publish a consumer complaints report every year.

Royal Mail's complaints procedure is the same for USO and non-USO services until the ADR stage.

Ofcom guidance - effective from 1 April 2023 - sets out their expectations of the steps Royal Mail and all postal operators should take when they deal with customer complaints. Ofcom expect postal customers to be:

- told who to contact, and what channels they can use to make a complaint
- told what the complaint process will be, and how long it will take to resolve
- dealt with by staff who have received appropriate training

To address these expectations, the guidance is split into 2 sections:

1. how to ensure clear and easily accessible complaints channels for customers
2. how to resolve consumer's complaints through fair, transparent and effective processes

1. Clear and easily accessible complaints channels for consumers

<p>Who to contact</p>	<p>Clear information for both senders and addressees about who to contact to make a complaint. Postal operators who get complaints from consumers that need to be dealt with by a retailer, should signpost the consumer to the retailer's contact and complaints channel.</p> <p>Contact information must be set out clearly and prominently for consumers - for example, on postal operator websites and in any emails or messages sent to consumers.</p>
<p>Easily accessible contact channels for all</p>	<p>Postal operators expected to include some of the following contact methods for consumers to make a complaint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • phone number • email • chat function • dedicated online form <p>Method(s) available must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prominently displayed on the website and consumer communications • easy for consumers to access and use • fully accessible to disabled consumers with

	additional accessibility needs - for example, hearing or sight impairments
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2. Fair, transparent and effective processes for managing complaints

<p>Active steps to handle and investigate a complaint</p>	<p>Postal operators should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aim to resolve complaints to the customer's reasonable satisfaction in a prompt and timely manner • have procedures in place to facilitate the fair settlement of disputes - for example, internal review, escalation, customer concerns/dissatisfaction
<p>Clear, timely and appropriately responsive communication with customers</p>	<p>If a postal operator receives a complaint it can't resolve immediately, Ofcom consider it reasonable to expect the postal operator to promptly tell the complainant the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • process it will follow to investigate the complaint • timeframe for handling the complaint • outcome of their investigation and where necessary, what compensation or redress will be provided <p>If a postal operator resolves a complaint immediately (for example, over the phone) Ofcom expects the postal operator to make it clear to the customer that it considers the complaint closed.</p>
<p>Staff training on complaints handling</p>	<p>All postal operator staff who communicate with customers should be trained on how to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify a complaint • effectively manage the complaints process • communicate appropriately with customers
<p>Monitoring outcomes and retaining records</p>	<p>Ofcom expects postal operators to have systems in place to record and monitor customers' satisfaction with the resolution to their complaint. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • internal records of the number of complaints received, resolved and unresolved (or escalated) over a specific period • the time taken to resolve or settle complaints • evidence that individual complaints are being dealt with appropriately and in accordance with the operator's complaint procedure - date an individual complaint is received, date

	resolved/settled, complainant details, description of complaint issue, resolution provided and any further complainant communications.
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9.2.1 Making a complaint

Royal Mail customer service contact details

Telephone: 03457 740 740

Textphone: 03456 000 606

Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm

Saturday, 8am to 1pm

Twitter: @RoyalMailHelp

Address: FREEPOST Royal Mail Customer Services

Online: Using the [form](#) on their website

Receiving mail: who to contact if there's a problem

	Delivered by Royal Mail		Delivered by other postal operator	
Mail from	a trader	a private individual	a trader	a private individual
Complain to	trader	Royal Mail		trader
		non-uso	uso	postal operator
ADR	ADR options	POSTRS for uso and some non-uso ADR options for other non-uso		ADR options

Sending a mail item: who to contact if there's a problem

	Sent with Royal Mail		Sent with another postal operator	
Sending as	a trader	a private individual	a trader	a private individual
Rights	t&c	non-uso	uso	t&c

		t&c	schemes	
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Evidence requirements and timescale for making a complaint

Royal Mail's evidence requirements and time limits for compensation claims are explained in section:

- 6.1.1 - evidence
- 6.1.2 - loss
- 6.1.3 - damage and part loss
- 6.1.4 - delay
- 6.2 - loss, damage and part loss for items coming sent from the UK to abroad
- 6.3 items sent to the UK from abroad
- 6.4 items sent using BFPO.

Find evidence requirements and time limits for non-uso Royal Mail services and other postal operator services in the terms and conditions.

Services arranged through a parcel comparison site might ask complainants to follow the comparison site or the delivery company's complaints procedure. The comparison site's terms and conditions should explain what to do.

Appealing against a Royal Mail collection or delivery exception

Follow the appeal process explained in:

- section 3.1.10 for collection exceptions
- Section 5.2 for delivery exceptions

Principles of Community Engagement Code of Practice complaint

Consumers can make a code of practice complaint if they don't think Post Office Ltd has followed the Principles of Community Engagement process. The code of practice complaints procedure is explained in section 8.2.4.

Complainants can contact Citizens Advice at stage 3. The post and telecoms team deals with these cases.

Postcode Address File complaints

Consumers can contact Ofcom if they don't think Royal Mail has followed the Postcode Address File change consultation process. The change consultation process is explained in section 3.3. Ofcom's contact details are:

Riverside House
2a Southwark Bridge Road
LONDON
SE1 9HA
0300 123 3333 or 020 7981 3040

9.3 Help for Royal Mail complainants

9.3.1 Company referral

The consumer service can refer a complaint to Royal Mail if:

- the client has complained to Royal Mail
- Royal Mail hasn't resolved the problem after a reasonable period of time.

9.3.2 The Extra Help Unit (EHU)

The EHU helps vulnerable clients who've got a Royal Mail complaint if they:

- can't understand the complaints process or act on the advice they get
- rely on medication or medical equipment getting delivered and there's a delivery problem
- rely on their post important information - for example, from DWP or about medical appointments, and Royal Mail has suspended deliveries to their property.

9.3.3 Postal Review Panel

Royal Mail's complaint procedure has 3 stages:

- Stage 1 - customer services
- Stage 2 - escalated customer resolution team
- Stage 3 - postal review panel.

The postal review panel is part of Royal Mail. Consumers can contact the panel at any stage of their complaint. The panel encourages consumers to work with customer services to resolve the complaint at stage 1 or 2.

The panel look at complaints impartially and:

- try to find a mutually acceptable solution

- issue Royal Mail's 'final response'.

Consumers can contact the panel by completing an online form or writing to FREEPOST Postal Review Panel.

9.4 ADR for dissatisfied complainants

Royal Mail - Postal Redress Service

POSTRS is independent and free to use. They'll look at the case from both sides to reach a decision they think is fair. They don't deal with all Royal Mail services - check [Royal Mail's list of eligible services](#).

Consumers can go to POSTRS if:

- their complaint is eligible and they've got a final response letter from Royal Mail
- it's taken Royal Mail over 90 days to solve the complaint
- Royal Mail hasn't followed their complaints process.

Consumers can go to POSTRS within 12 months of getting a final response letter. POSTRS decisions are:

- final - there's no appeal or review
- binding on Royal Mail - providing the consumer tells POSTRS they accept the decision in full within 20 working days.

Decisions aren't binding on either party if the consumer:

- rejects the decision
- doesn't accept the decision in full
- doesn't contact POSTRS within 20 working days.

POSTRS contact details are:

70 Fleet Street
London
EC47 1EU
020 7520 3766
postrs@cedr.com or use their [online dispute resolution portal](#)

Other operator complaints - check ADR options

Ofcom only requires Royal Mail to be part of an ADR scheme. Other postal operators must comply with the rules that apply to traders. This means they must tell complainants:

- if they're a member of an ADR scheme - and give contact details
- they're not part of a scheme - and if they're willing to use ADR.

The Financial Ombudsman Service might be an ADR option for clients with complaints against other postal operators.