



Information Rights Team
Post Office Limited

GRO

Your reference:
Our reference: FOI2022/00304

Will Powell
request-857047-fd16c621

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17 May 2022

Dear Will Powell,

Freedom of Information Request – FOI2022/00304

I am writing in response to your email received by Post Office Limited (“**Post Office**”) on 26 April, that has been dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“**FOIA**”) in which you requested the following:

Please confirm how many criminal prosecutions took place against Postmasters and Postmistresses for fraud and/or false accounting in the 10 years prior to the introduction of the 'Horizon IT Computer System'?

I can confirm that Post Office holds some information in relation to this. The Horizon IT system was introduced in 1999. For the ten years prior to that (i.e. between 1989 & 1999), Post Office cannot confirm the number of criminal prosecutions that took place. This is because the age and manner in which information was recorded during this period, before widespread use of computerised records, means it is not possible to verify the accuracy of Post Office’s records. The surviving historical records for pre-1999 cases are extremely limited and the information cannot be relied on as definitive.

A search of these records provides information about 57 prosecutions that Post Office appears to have carried out that resulted in convictions. These were initiated after a shortfall was identified in the relevant individual’s branch which, for the purposes of this data, usually relate to cases recorded as theft, fraud, cash loss, audit shortage or false accounting and does not include convictions which appear not to have relied on Horizon data in whole or in part (e.g. burglary or robberies)

I hope however that the information I have provided on this occasion is useful. For further information about historical prosecutions you may be interested in information on our corporate website which can be found here:

<https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/historical-matters/historical-matters-progress/historical-convictions-and-compensation-information-on-progress/>

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 or to

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stating your reasons for your internal review request.

Yours sincerely,

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David Sinclair
Information Rights Team

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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