

# Your views on Royal Mail's postal service

Personal user version

**We'd like to ask you to think a bit about how you use Royal Mail's postal service and what you value about it by asking you a few questions**



1. What do you use the postal service for? What do you tend to send or receive? (e.g., packages, letters, postcards, etc.)
2. How often do you send mail?
3. Is there anything you particularly like about the postal service?
4. Or anything you don't like?
5. What do you want from the postal service, in terms of service? What's the most important thing for it to do?

Finally please can you **keep track over the course of the seven days leading up to the workshop of what you personally sent or received by mail**, and record it on the next two pages. If you didn't post or receive anything last week, please could you think about the last time you sent and received mail.

Please bring this with you to the workshop you are attending to help us with our discussion about Royal Mail. We look forward to hearing your views!

## Sending mail

Day (please write in day, e.g., Monday)	Item sent	Where did you post it? (e.g., post box, Post Office, at work etc.)	Why did it need to go by post?	How did you send it? (e.g. 1 <sup>st</sup> or 2 <sup>nd</sup> class, special delivery, etc.)	When did you want the mail to arrive?	Any comments on the service?
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						

### Receiving mail

Day (please write in day, e.g., Monday)	Item received	When did you open the item?		How urgent was it?	If the item was a letter, did the information it contained have to be posted, or could it have been received another way (e.g., email)?	Any comments on the service you received?
		Day	Time			
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						

## Postal User Needs FINAL VERSION

### Research objectives:

- Assessing spontaneous usage of, and views on, the postal service and knowledge of current services and exploring spontaneous suggestions of areas for improvement
- Informing participants about what is included in Royal Mail's service, its Universal Service Obligation (USO), and exploring whether this **fits people's needs**. In particular, identifying any **gaps** or **over-fulfilment** in what is currently provided compared to what is required for the service to meet the needs not just of postal users but of **everyone in society**
- Identifying the comparative importance of each aspect of Royal Mail's service, and where the public are happy to make trade-offs to achieve the right level of service

### Approach:

- We are using a deliberative approach in order to explore participants' preferences informed by the realities of the declining use of postal services and the budgetary challenge facing Royal Mail
- We want to find out how strongly people feel on these issues; moderators should continually check that participants opinions, particularly around how much they value certain services, are not just knee-jerk reactions
- Throughout, encourage participants to think from the point of view of **senders** and **receivers of letters and packets**. We will repeatedly ask which, if any, changes are best for **you**, for **other groups in society**, and for the **benefit of society as a whole**. We will return to these key questions after showing a range of different stimuli so that we can track what people say through the session and which arguments and different services might change their minds.

Activities	Timing
<p><b><u>1. Welcome and Introduction</u></b>  <b>Ipsos MORI to introduce themselves and explain the format of the day and that we will be discussing what kind of postal service people need in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Each topic will be introduced in more detail as we go along.</b></p> <p><b>Introduce Ofcom; regulator of Royal Mail, who operate the postal service. Distinguish from Post Office.</b></p> <p><b><u>In small groups:</u></b> divided by heavy / light users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions from participants and brief summary of what they've used Royal Mail for recently –can use pre-task</li> </ul>	10 (10)
<p><b><u>2. Usage and preferences</u></b></p> <p><i>Note to moderators: throughout, draw out differences between small business &amp; individual users' needs and responses. Draw out differences between letters and packets. Ensure we focus on RM services (e.g. delivery) and not others (make it clear which people are discussing)</i></p> <p><b><u>More detail on current usage</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sending... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- On recent occasions, did you use a first class or second class stamp? Why? In what situations do you use each?</li> <li>- Why (or what for) do you use first class? Does your item need to arrive next day?</li> <li>- How regularly do you post things? <i>Letters and parcels and other</i></li> <li>- why did you use post and not other methods? e.g. email/phone...?</li> <li>- Is post still used for urgent matters? What kind of post, if any do you send, which requires urgent attention? Why was it urgent – posted it late/ needed to respond immediately?</li> <li>- Is there anything for which you wouldn't use RM for – e.g. courier parcel rather than RM? How do you decide what to use?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Receiving... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When do you tend to check your mail, what time of day, same day as delivered? Why?</li> <li>- Does all your post get delivered to your home address? Why not? What type of mail gets delivered elsewhere/where/why?</li> <li>- What happens when you are out and items that won't fit through your letterbox are delivered? Does the current service meet your needs why/why not? What would you change? What about delivering parcels to an alternative location for collection e.g. supermarket, other examples? Why, why not?</li> <li>- Do you receive anything that needs urgent attention, what?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	30 (40)

<p><b><u>The future</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you think your use of postal services has changed over time? If so, why is this?</li> <li>• How do you think postal trends are changing generally?</li> </ul> <p><i>Moderator to probe – with recent technological advances, how important is the postal service to people? Why? Will it continue to be important?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What will be different about the way you use Royal Mail in 5 years' time?</li> </ul> <p>FOR PILOT &amp; LONDON, WALES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think about the price of stamps? Has it been rising?</li> </ul> <p>Yes it has – if this trend continues, how will it affect your use? <i>e.g. changing from 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> class, sending e-cards how to save money generally and where the threshold is).</i></p> <p>FOR NI, NORWICH AND SCOTLAND WORKSHOPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you aware of the recent increase in the price of stamps? What do you think about this? Will it impact on your future use of postal services? How?]</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Spontaneous views on Royal Mail's service</u></b></p> <p><i>Moderators to ensure that they are talking about their own experiences at this stage, rather than the whole of society</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think of the service offered by the Royal Mail at the moment? Why? When is your post generally delivered? How long do you think it takes to arrive after posting – 1c vs 2c? What do you think about this?</li> <li>• Has anyone had any particularly good or bad service from Royal Mail? What happened? Any experience of post not arriving/arriving late/arriving sooner than expected?</li> <li>• Thinking generally, what do you want from a postal service? What do you need? What could you <b>not</b> live without? What could you live without?</li> <li>• How well does the postal service currently meet your needs?</li> <li>• What, if anything, would you change about the postal service?</li> <li>• Overall, what do you value most about the postal service? What do you value least?</li> </ul>	
<p><b><u>3. The elements of the USO</u></b></p> <p>Now I'd like us to think about the different services provided by Royal Mail. So, off the top of your head, what are the different services currently provided by Royal Mail? <i>NB ensure they don't get confused between Royal Mail and Post Office</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>First and second class</b> – what exactly is the difference between first and second class? <i>Probe on speed, timing, frequency, cost</i></li> <li>- <b>Special delivery/Recorded delivery</b> – what does this mean?</li> </ul>	<p><b>60 min (1h 40)</b></p>

Okay, now we're going to show you all the services that are provided by Royal Mail as part of its obligation to you.

*Moderator: note this is not an exhaustive list if participants ask*

**PRESENT EACH OF THE CORE USO HANDOUTS TO PARTICIPANTS**

• **For each:**

- How much do you use this – when was the last time?
- How valuable is this to you?
- Do you need this, do you need all aspects/elements of this service?  
Which bits could you lose, what's missing? If it wasn't here would you lose anything?
  
- *Participants to amend on the cards, using highlighters*

*Looking at all together – please put them in 2 groups: **ESSENTIAL** services, **NICE TO HAVE***

**Comparing the different 2 groups**

- Comparing the groups—why is this service here etc?
- How about for others – who do you think uses this most, how important / valuable is it to them?
- How about society as a whole – which are required, which not?
- What would you ADD – for example, are any of the essential services not comprehensive enough?
- For premium/ additional services; **are there other services you are willing to pay for which are not included?** e.g. specified delivery times? *Note on registered, insured and guaranteed by 1pm – need to split out the elements to make sure we know which aspects are of value.*

**Now consider the 2 groups in the light of different users:**

Would you change any of the cards / groups? Thinking about...

- Users in rural areas
- Older people
- Small businesses which rely on mail
- People who aren't online at home
- People who don't have much money (e.g. can't use other more expensive sending methods)
- People with disabilities (i.e. how easily can they access services)

**Ranking the aspects relative to each other: each sub group sticks the services on the wall on a spectrum from Essential to Nice to Have**

- In terms of which is most important
  - To you
  - To society as a whole

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain why you say this – and any differences – moderator to amend on the spectrum</li> <li>• Try to reach consensus in the group</li> </ul> <p><i>Moderator to prompt on other services which are not in the USO – e.g. <b>special delivery 9am, Saturday special delivery, sameday, Royal Mail tracked for businesses.</b></i></p> <p><i>Moderator to follow up on any mention of broader societal benefits, as distinct from benefits to different user groups</i></p> <p><i>If time- compare differences across the 2 groups and explain reason behind any differences.</i></p>	
<p><b><u>Presentation on future of postal service (plenary)</u></b></p>	<p>15 (1h 55)</p>
<p><b><u>4. The ideal service for the future</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowing these challenges, would you change anything about the services you have put on the ‘essential’ part of the spectrum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What do you need</li> <li>○ What would you do differently if those services weren’t there</li> <li>○ Who would lose out if you changed them</li> <li>○ What new services would you add, to meet the needs of the future?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Overall what is the benefit of having these services as <b>a requirement – a USO?</b> What would happen if we didn’t have it? To you? To others? To society as a whole?</p>	<p>15 (2h 10)</p>
<p><b><u>Short break</u></b></p>	<p>15 (2h 25)</p>
<p><b><u>5. Testing out scenarios</u></b></p> <p>SHOW EACH SCENARIO</p> <p>Moderator to make it clear – <b>“Some of the questions include descriptions of future scenarios. These scenarios are purely hypothetical and they do not represent changes that are currently proposed by Ofcom or the government. Certain features of the postal service can only be changed by the government.”</b></p> <p>As such - these are <u>not</u> concrete plans for the postal service, they are ideas we/others have come up with that might work to create a postal service that is right for all postal users in future; especially as we have to make sure, as we just heard, that the service has to cope with falling volumes of mail and perhaps less money in the system. We need to make sure we spend money on what people need, but don’t spend money unnecessarily.</p>	<p>40 mins (3h 05)</p>

<p>MODERATOR TO NOTE WHICH ARE POPULAR AND UNPOPULAR OPTIONS, ASKING FOR EACH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the advantages/disadvantages?</li> <li>• Would you use this service?</li> <li>• Would it meet your needs?</li> <li>• What would you use instead, if this service didn't meet your needs?</li> <li>• Which kinds of people or communities will be negatively impacted upon by this change? <i>Probing on older, disabled, business, not online, etc.</i></li> <li>• Will society as a whole be affected? How?</li> <li>• How will this affect the trends of how people use Royal Mail?</li> <li>• Would you prefer to pay to keep this element of the postal service the same as it is now?</li> <li>• Do you have any suggested changes which we haven't mentioned here? <i>Refer back to earlier suggestions participants made themselves</i></li> </ul> <p>Looking back at the services you discussed earlier and comparing them to these scenarios – anything you'd add to these scenarios from the services you designed earlier?</p> <p><b>Plenary comparison</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stick popular scenarios to the chart on the wall</li> <li>• Compare across both groups if time</li> </ul>	
<p><b><u>6. Social benefits and the needs of society</u></b></p> <p>The benefit of having a postal service – what benefits to the whole of society do you see?</p> <p>ENCOURAGE PARTICIPANT TO THINK OF AS MANY AS THEY CAN</p> <p>Here are some other benefits suggested by different people – these are arguments for 'why Royal Mail's universal postal service might benefit society' – your job is to see whether you agree or disagree with this, and why.</p> <p>SHOW 5- 6 DIFFERENT BENEFITS , EACH ON CARD</p> <p>For each:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is this true? How far do you agree?</li> <li>• If Royal Mail's universal postal service provides this benefit, how important is this? To you, to others, to society as a whole?</li> <li>• How much do you think the postal service contributes to this good thing (e.g. social cohesion)?</li> <li>• What else in society contributes to this? Do we really need the postal service in order to have this social benefit? (i.e. could the postal service do <b>less</b>)</li> <li>• Do we need the postal service to do more, to give us this benefit? Should the postal service offer us <b>more</b> than it does now?</li> <li>• Which is the most important of all these social benefits</li> <li>• Which of the elements of the postal service you have noted (your essential</li> </ul>	<p><b>20min (3h 25)</b></p>

<p>services) contribute the most to these benefits?</p> <p>Can probe on different areas of the societal benefits, including...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety and security: in crime prevention and a means to contact population in an emergency/emergency aftermath?</li> <li>• Environmental benefits: economies of scale in delivery (although over provision could also be an environmental cost)?</li> <li>• Information exchange: including magazine distribution?</li> <li>• Civic pride – is the Royal Mail something we rely on for our sense of Britishness?</li> </ul> <p>Taking into account these social benefits we have just considered:</p> <p>Look at your ESSENTIAL group again. Do the services here make the <b><u>ideal postal service</u></b> which meet the needs of users and helps us keep the social benefits we have talked about?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What's missing? Note – this does not necessarily have to be something they have on their cards, it could be something else entirely (add in)</i></li> <li>• What do we have in here that we don't really strictly need? What could we leave out and still have a service that meets our needs?</li> <li>• Group changes their ranking, add and take away elements, make changes to individual elements, until they reach a consensus on the ideal service</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Quick check in plenary</u></b> – Feedback to the rest of the room.</p>	
<p><b><u>6. Summary</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Thank you</u></b></p> <p>This has been about reviewing the needs of users and will help inform Ofcom's thinking about the future postal service. We will report to Ofcom and they will use the findings to make recommendations.</p> <p>The scenarios you have just been discussing were there to aid discussions and stimulate debate - and may or may not be actual changes considered in the future</p> <p>Government has stated that it will not be reducing the number of delivery and/or collection days in this current Parliament.</p> <p><b><u>Plenary</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderator or member of the group to feedback on their final recommendations on future changes / no changes to postal service</li> <li>• Comments on differences</li> <li>• Final advice for Ofcom</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Thanks and close</i></b></p>	<p><b>5 (3 h 30 )</b></p>

**First class stamps –  
with a delivery target  
of 93% being delivered  
the next day**

**Second class stamps  
– with a delivery target  
of 98.5% being  
delivered in three days  
after postage**

**Six delivery days  
(Monday-Saturday) across the  
whole of the UK**

**Six collection days  
(Monday-Saturday) across the  
whole of the UK**

**Royal Mail sets the latest delivery time targets - by 4pm each day in rural areas, by 3pm in urban areas**

**There are no requirements for RM to meet those latest delivery times, but they report on results.**

**Latest results show that between 99-100% of deliveries are made by latest delivery times.**

# USO products - collections

**Post boxes display the time of the last collection.**

**No earlier than 4pm-7.30pm depending on the location and by 1pm on a Saturday**

	<b>Weekdays</b>
<b>Commercial Area</b>	<b>1830-1930</b>
<b>Town / City Area</b>	<b>1730-1830</b>
<b>Rest of UK</b>	<b>1600-1730</b>
<b>Deep Rural</b>	<b>0900-1600</b>
<b>Business Boxes</b>	<b>1730-1930</b>

**There are no requirements for RM to meet these collection times but they report on results. Latest results show minimum service level of 99.8% of business and social collections at or after the final advertised collection time.**

**Re-delivery service  
(including collecting  
from delivery offices,  
requesting re-delivery to  
post-offices/another  
address)**

# Return to sender service

**Keep safe – paid for service where RM keeps mail for a certain addressee/address for a set period of time**

**Redirection – paid for service which allows people to redirect mail to an alternative address for a certain period of time**

**Poste restante – a free service where people who travel can use a participating Post Office in the UK (and some abroad) as their own address; so their mail is delivered there, and they can come and collect it.**

**Recorded delivery – paid for service which provides the sender confirmation that the item was delivered. Tracked in and out. If the item isn't delivered, the sender can get compensation.**

**Certificate of posting – free service which provides the sender confirmation that their letter/parcel was posted**

**Special delivery  
(registered, insured and  
guaranteed by 1pm next  
day, tracked  
throughout)**

**International ‘airmail’.**

**Equivalent to the UK 1<sup>st</sup>  
class service – a faster  
service at a higher cost  
than ‘surface mail’**

**International ‘surface mail’.**

**Equivalent to the UK 2<sup>nd</sup> class service - mail arrives more slowly at a lower cost than ‘airmail’**

**International ‘signed for’. This is similar to the UK recorded delivery service for UK mail.**

**Reduce to 5 collection and delivery days each week.  
All other services remain the same as today.**

***Some facts to consider....***

- **Less mail is sent (collected) on a Saturday largely due to lower volumes of business mail.**
- **Less mail tends to be delivered on a Tuesday – a result of the lower volumes posted on a Saturday.**
- **As such the cost per item to collect and deliver is more expensive on these days.**

**1<sup>st</sup> class service would change, so that local mail is delivered next day, but national mail would take 2 days.**

**Same price as 1<sup>st</sup> class service**

**Same delivery targets (93%) although in reality likely that more than 93% of mail would meet these targets**

**2<sup>nd</sup> class service would still exist in its current form (delivered in 3 days)**

**Same collection times as currently**

### ***Some facts to consider....***

- **A lot of mail is delivered by air to meet the current targets set by RM - increasing the time allowed for national delivery would mean less use of air transport and lower costs**
- **People living in remote areas may be more likely to receive their 1<sup>st</sup> class mail in two days due to the greater distance the mail has to travel**
- **Mail needing to be delivered the next day would need to be sent using a premium service e.g. special delivery**

## Post boxes emptied at same time as mail is delivered in that area

- Post boxes would have details of the final collection time – this would be based on the expected delivery times in that area. The final collection time would vary across locations with boxes being emptied between 9am-4pm depending on the area.
- Post boxes would continue to have details of the nearest post box with a later collection time e.g., 4.30-6.30. These post boxes would be in towns, at post offices, delivery offices (place where you collect your parcels)

### *Some facts to consider....*

- Many post boxes have very little mail posted on a daily basis which means the average cost of collection is rising. Collecting from these post boxes at the same time as delivering in that area would reduce the cost of collection.
- You would only be able to respond to mail on the same day as it is received by posting in town/post offices/using premium services, e.g. special delivery.

**Replace current 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> class with a single two-day postal service.**

**This service would cost less than 1<sup>st</sup> class and more than 2<sup>nd</sup> class**

**Delivery targets would be 95% (mid-way between current service levels)**

**In reality, urban mail would be likely to arrive faster than rural mail**

**Collection times would be same as currently**

***Some facts to consider.....***

- This would save on transportation costs as Royal Mail would have more time to transport mail, so could take more by road rather than by air.**
- Mail needing to be delivered the next day would need to be sent using a premium service e.g. special delivery**

**The rules would state that post had to be delivered between 9am and 5pm (an hour or two later than current rules).**

**All other aspects would stay the same (costs, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> class, targets etc)**

**Delivery times in your area would be consistent each day**

***Some facts to consider....***

**This would save on transportation costs as Royal Mail would have more time to transport mail, so could take more by road rather than by air.**

**People in some areas will not receive their mail until 5pm**

**The postal service helps communities feel more connected to each other as everyone can send and receive letters and packets.**

# How Royal Mail's universal postal service benefits society

**The postal service supports a functioning democracy, as everyone is able to communicate with the government or press, no matter where they are. For example writing to their MP or a newspaper, or being contacted by post about upcoming elections**

# How Royal Mail's universal postal service benefits society

**The postal service ensures everyone is able to communicate with vital services, such as utilities companies, banks, lawyers and other services in order to 'run your life'**

**Because the postal service covers the whole of the UK this means business can locate in rural areas and so keep rural areas alive**

**Safety and security:  
postmen can keep  
an eye on  
vulnerable people**

Welcome

Ipsos MORI

# Why have we asked you to this event?



- Our client today is **Ofcom**, the communications market regulator
- Ofcom wants to hear from you about your views on the **kind of postal services people will need now and in future**
- You have an important role to play – your views will be used by Ofcom to help inform its thinking about the future of the postal service.

# What will the discussion be like?

- No right or wrong answers
- Make time for everyone to contribute
- Respect the opinions of others
- Let everyone speak
- Mobiles off please
- Take a break when you need one
- Through the event, we'll ask you to think about your own views (as a consumer) and what you think would work best for everyone in society (a citizen view)

# Agenda

- The different ways we use the postal service
  - Discussing the different services which exist today
  - The challenges facing postal services in the future
  - Deciding which services we will need in future
- 
- Lots of breaks
  - Finish at 10pm!

# How the postal service works



**Royal Mail is responsible for delivering a 'Universal Postal Service'**

Ofcom ensures that Royal Mail is meeting its obligation to provide a postal service that meets users needs



The Post Office provides users an access point for postal products and services.

It also provides and sells its own services and products (e.g. telephone services and insurance) – this is not part of the Postal Service

USO

Ipsos MORI

# What is the Postal Universal Service Obligation?

## The EU and Government require minimum standards

- RM is required to provide everyone living in the UK a postal service (at the same affordable price) that meets users needs and benefits society
- RM is required to meet certain levels of minimum standards for each of the services it is required to offer.
  - RM is required to provide information on the extent to which it is meeting these minimum standards.
- The USO covers mail of up to 20kg and includes both letters and parcels.
- One collection from appropriate access points across the UK 6 days a week (letters) and 5 days a week (packets)
- One delivery to all UK addresses 6 days a week (letters) and 5 days a week (packets)
- A service for registered items and insured items
- A first and second class service to be provided

# Changes to the postal market

# Ipsos MORI

# Volumes of post are falling steadily

Mail volumes  
down



People are  
reading  
magazines  
online



...Businesses  
are sending bills  
& statements by  
email now



People are  
using email for  
important/urgent  
documents...



...and social  
media/SMS/MMS  
instead of personal  
letters

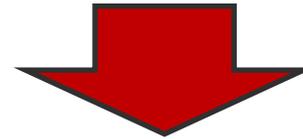


...Consumers  
paying by direct  
debit,  
telephone/online  
banking and fewer  
sending cheques

# So what might happen?



The amount of mail being posted is declining – a trend that is continuing



**If people use the post less and less, it costs more and more to deliver each item...**