



# PAF<sup>®</sup> Code of Practice

This document is the Code of Practice for the Postcode Address File (PAF<sup>®</sup>), which was agreed between Royal Mail and the Postal Regulator in May 2010

# PAF<sup>®</sup> Code of Practice

## Changing Postal Addresses and Postcodes

### Introduction

This Postcode Address File (PAF<sup>®</sup>) Code of Practice explains why and how postal addresses may change and how the changed addresses will be introduced.

Changes can be made for one of two reasons:

1. To maintain or improve the service offered by Royal Mail Limited (called in this document "Royal Mail")
2. To reflect customer demand

In each case, specific criteria will need to be met before a change is made. By way of background

- **Section 1** explains what Postal Addresses are and why it may be necessary to change them to maintain or improve service.  
**Section 2** details the criteria that must be met before a change will be made in response to customer demand
- **Section 3** explains how the changes will be introduced in each case
- **Sections 4-6** provide additional information on where you can obtain help with the Code, how we involve users of PAF<sup>®</sup> data and the contact details of our Regulator.

### Section One - Changing for a better service

Every house and business in the UK falling under Royal Mail's [Universal Service Obligation](#) has been given a postal address by Royal Mail. Its use enables Royal Mail to deliver items quickly and accurately. The postal address is a sorting and routing instruction to Royal Mail's staff and not always a geographically accurate description of where a property is located. As mail is circulated via Post towns it may, for example, include the name of that town which could be several miles away, as that is where your mail is processed.

The table below identifies the elements that can make up an address and states whether each is required for the delivery of mail

<b>DATA</b>	<b>POSTALLY REQUIRED</b>	<b>EXAMPLE</b>
Name of addressee (title, initials, surname)	Not if building name or number present	Mr A Smith
Company/Organisation	Not if building name or number present	Acme Plc
Building name	Not if building number present	Acme House
Number of building & name of street or road	Yes	3 High Street
Additional Locality/Townland * Information	Where similar road names exist within a Post Town area or there is another operational requirement	Hedle End
Post Town (capital letters)	Yes	SOUTHAMPTON
County	No	Hampshire
Postcode (capital letters)	Yes	SO31 4NG

\*A Townland is a small geographical area of land used in Ireland

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Whenever possible we try not to change addresses and Postcodes. Changes are, however, sometimes necessary to ensure that mail is delivered as quickly and efficiently as possible.

For example, occasionally we need to change the way we route mail to provide a better service if a new delivery office is built, and sometimes we run out of Postcodes to allocate to new homes and businesses in a developing area. It is also possible for a local council to prompt a change by re-numbering buildings or re-naming roads.

In any of the above circumstances, we may need to change existing Postcodes or addresses to ensure that mail is handled efficiently and delivered without delay. If we have to recode as a result of running out of Postcodes for a particular area, Royal Mail will notify addressees of any change following the process set out in Section Three. This process will also be followed when changes are made for other Royal Mail operational or efficiency purposes.

All changes, once implemented, will be posted on the Royal Mail website [www.royalmail.com/postcodeupdates](http://www.royalmail.com/postcodeupdates)

## **Section Two - When will we change an address in response to customer demand?**

Our first priority is to ensure that we can deliver mail efficiently to our customers. We will consider making changes which do not materially impact on the efficiency of our operation. However, we will not make any changes to postal addresses which could lead to a deterioration in the service we provide.

With this overriding proviso, we have detailed below the changes that may be made to a postal address subject to the stated criteria being met. We will be pleased to provide an explanation for our decision on request.

Any request to amend an address must come from an individual or individuals living in the area affected by the change either directly or via the relevant Local Authority or Parish Council. Where the proposed change affects more than one address, it must be accompanied by clear information about the boundary of the area affected and by evidence to demonstrate that the change would be supported, as set out below.

### **Name of Addressee**

The name of an addressee only forms part of a postal address if there is no other way of identifying the correct delivery point. If the name of the addressee changes, we will amend the postal address to reflect this. This will not require consultation.

### **Company / Organisation**

We will amend our records to reflect the name of the company or organisation occupying the premises. This will not require consultation.

### **Building Name and / or Number**

The naming and numbering of thoroughfares is the responsibility of local authorities and not Royal Mail. The postal address reflects the details provided by the local authority.

Where a house is numbered by the local authority and has also been given a name by the occupant, Royal Mail will include only the number in the postal address. This is because the use of the number rather than a name enables the property to be located easily.

If a building is not numbered and the occupant wishes to change its name, they should first advise their local authority of their intentions. The postal address will be amended to reflect the change provided the new name will not lead to confusion or cause offence. This will not require consultation.

### **Name of Street or Road**

Local authorities have the responsibility for the naming of roads. The postal address reflects the details provided by the local authority. Where a change is made by a Local Authority, Royal Mail is obliged to alter the address held on PAF<sup>®</sup>. In these circumstances it will do so without the need to consult but will write to affected addresses advising them of the changes made.

In certain circumstances, the name of both the road in which a property is located and the one leading to it are present in a postal address.

If the road on which the property is located appears on street plans of the area, then the name of the road leading to it may be removed from the postal address.

This is subject to:

- the provision of written evidence that all addresses affected are either in favour of the change or do not oppose it; and
- the change being supported by the customer representatives identified in section three.

This information must be provided by the person requesting the change.

### **Additional Locality Information**

Royal Mail will not make changes to locality information if the quality of service we provide or the efficiency of our operation would be compromised. Locality information may otherwise be added to, or deleted from, a postal address subject to the following:

- The change being supported by the customer representatives identified in Section Three, with this information provided by the person(s) requesting the change; and
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- The availability of an acceptable and clearly defined set of geographical boundary data, with this information provided by the person(s) requesting the change; and
- There being no significant objection raised by those affected by the proposed change of address. This will be established by Royal Mail writing to all those addresses affected by the change to advise them of the proposed inclusion or deletion of locality information, thereby giving them the opportunity to register any objection. Should 20% or more of those affected by the change indicate that they do object to the proposed change Royal Mail will instigate the following:

- A poll of all addresses affected by the change, with not less than 50% of those polled responding and a simple majority of addresses voting being in favour of the change; Royal Mail will aim to conclude such a poll and implement any address changes within two months of the ballot being initiated and advise customers of any changes to these timescales. Royal Mail will advise Ofcom of the feedback obtained on the occasions that a ballot is required.

### **Post town**

Royal Mail circulates mail by way of a Post town (usually the main town in an area) and recognizes that changes to Post towns affect a large number of addresses and therefore have implications for many householders and businesses. Such changes can also have a significant impact on Royal Mail's distribution network.

For these reasons changes will only be made for postal operational and efficiency reasons and will follow the process set out in Section Three.

### **County**

The county does not form part of any postal address and changes to it are not therefore covered by this Code of Practice.

### **Postcode Changes**

The Postcode forms the basis of Royal Mail's distribution network. Changes to Postcodes could therefore compromise the service we provide. We will, however, make changes to the last two characters of an individual Postcode in exceptional circumstances. To do this, we will require evidence that all those affected by the change are in favour of the change and it is for the person requesting the change to provide this information.

Additionally, and as mentioned above, it is sometimes necessary for Royal Mail to recode an area for operational reasons or where it has run out of Postcodes. In these circumstances the process set out in Section Three will be followed.

For customers wishing to introduce or remove additional locality information, the support of those bodies/individuals set out in Section Three, paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2, as appropriate, must be obtained. The process for changes to a Postcode are covered separately above.

## **Section Three - How will the changes be introduced?**

### **1. Consultation Process**

Royal Mail will adhere to the following when it is introducing postal address changes for operational or efficiency reasons, i.e. the introduction of a new Post town or new Postcodes.

1.1 For a small change (by which we mean changes affecting more than one Postcode but fewer than two hundred addresses), we consult the following customer representatives:

- the principal local authority and the parish / district councils where they exist
- the local Chamber of Commerce where appropriate.

We will write to all companies at addresses affected by the change inviting their views. Whilst we will consider the responses we receive, it will not be possible to enter into correspondence. We will include in this letter the approximate date of implementation of the proposed change and inform all affected addresses that there will be a transitional period of 12 months from that date during which their old postal address will continue to be valid alongside their new postal address.

We will write in a similar manner to all other postal addresses affected by the change.

One full month is allowed for consultation and comment.

We will write again to affected addresses once the changes have been introduced, providing details of their new address, a summary of the feedback we received and our reasons for implementing the change.

We will place notice of the decided change in Post Offices within the affected area if requested by one of the customer representatives detailed above.

1.2 For a large change (by which we mean changes affecting two hundred addresses or more), we consult with the following in addition to those identified above:

- The Member(s) of Parliament concerned (and member of the Scottish Parliament, National Assembly Member for Wales or Northern Ireland where applicable).

We will also write to all addresses affected by the change and invite them to let us know their views, as detailed above. Whilst we will consider the responses we receive, it will not be possible to enter into correspondence with individuals.

In these circumstances, we allow a minimum of three months for consultation and comment, at the end of which we decide whether or not to proceed with our proposals.

We will place notice of the decided change in local newspapers and Post Offices for display in the affected area.

Once the changes have been introduced, we will write again to affected addresses providing details of their new address, a summary of the feedback we received and our reasons for implementing the change. We will also write to all those consulted to advise them of our decision. All domestic customers are provided with a number of complimentary address labels.

## **2. Implementation of the changes**

Where an address change has been made we would like this to be used straight away but realize that this may not always be possible. We therefore ensure that mail bearing either the outgoing or revised postal address details receives the same quality of service for at least 12 months after the changes have been introduced. This changeover period has been designed to allow our business customers to implement the address changes across their company. It provides time to update vehicle livery, signage and websites, for example, and to use up stocks of both pre-printed stationery and promotional material. It also enables our social customers to pass on details of their new address through the normal course of correspondence.

We will make every effort to deliver mail bearing the superseded address details once the changeover period has expired.

We would strongly encourage all users of address data to regularly update and maintain their address records to ensure accurate information is being used.

## **3. Compensation**

We have designed this process carefully, to make sure that all our customers have at least 12 months to get used to their new postal address, without any unnecessary inconvenience, expenditure or deterioration in the quality of their postal service.

However, if we don't give the requisite notice to customers of an address change, you may be able to claim compensation up to a limit of 2000 times the cost of a basic First Class stamp.



To claim compensation, you must be able to prove you have suffered a financial loss as a direct result of our failure to give customers in the area the requisite notice of the change. In these circumstances, Royal Mail will give consideration to claims for the following costs:

- Reprinting stationery and printed matter
- Reprinting address labels
- Notifying correspondents
- Any other costs incurred which result directly from our failure to give customers 12 months in which to start using their new address. This would be on a pro-rata basis depending upon the length of the shortfall in providing 12 months notice.

Please note that we cannot take responsibility for any costs incurred as a result of the uses made of the Postcode by other companies or individuals.

#### **4. Further Help**

We have designed this process carefully to minimise inconvenience for our customers. If you have any queries relating to changing postal addresses, or require further information about postal address changes, please contact Royal Mail's Address Maintenance team on 08456 01 11 10.

Please also call our Customer Service Centre if you are experiencing problems relating to a change to your address. We will be happy to help.

### **Section Four - Consultation with users of the PAF<sup>®</sup> file**

This section of the PAF<sup>®</sup> Code relates to the users of PAF<sup>®</sup> data and the products based on it.

#### **PAF<sup>®</sup> Advisory Board**

Royal Mail actively participates in and supports the PAF<sup>®</sup> Advisory Board ([www.pafboard.org.uk](http://www.pafboard.org.uk)) an independent body made up of a wide cross-section of PAF<sup>®</sup> users that represents the interests of all PAF<sup>®</sup> customers.

Royal Mail will inform the Advisory Board of any planned developments to the File which may have an impact on their use of it. These will include changes to the structure of the File, data content and supply.

We will consider and reasonably respond to the needs and views expressed at these forums. We will provide reasonable advance notification of the implementation of any changes.

## **Regular Communication**

Royal Mail will write with details of any planned developments and changes affecting PAF<sup>®</sup> to all those to whom it provides PAF<sup>®</sup> data products. This communication will accompany their data supply.

We will consider and reasonably respond to the needs and views expressed by them.

## **Solution Providers**

Solution Providers take PAF<sup>®</sup> data and incorporate this into software solutions that they sell and market independently of Royal Mail. They are represented at the Advisory Board and receive the regular communications detailed above.

In addition to this, Royal Mail participates in forums periodically to enable the Solution Provider community to meet and discuss their needs and those of their customers. We also provide account management support to this channel.

## **Section Five – Next Review**

This next review of this Code will start on 1 September 2014.

## **Section Six – Ofcom**

Ofcom is the independent Regulator for Postal Services and can be contacted at the following address should you be unhappy with any aspects of this Code or the processes undertaken.

Ofcom  
Riverside House  
2a Southwark Bridge Road  
LONDON  
SE1 9HA

Tel: + 44 (0)20 7981 3040  
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If you want to talk to Ofcom in Welsh the number is: + 44 (0)20 7981 3042.  
They can also be contacted on line through the following link:

[www.ofcom.org.uk/contact-us/](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/contact-us/)