

The universal postal service

The universal postal service means anyone in the UK can post letters and parcels to any other part of the country at the same affordable rate. It also guarantees one delivery and one collection of mail for every UK household and business, each working day.

Postcomm's most important job is to protect the universal service. We assess the impact of every Postcomm policy against the ability to maintain the universal postal service across the UK.

Postcomm is responsible for defining the universal service, and recognises that the service may need to change over time as postal users' requirements change. Our most recent review, in June 2004, listed five areas of service provided by Royal Mail that the company will be required to provide as universal services, at an affordable flat rate.

The five service areas are:

- **priority and non-priority mail services (letters and packets)** – Royal Mail's first and second class services
- **a non-priority service for parcels weighing up to 20 kilos** – Royal Mail's standard parcel service
- **a registered and insured service** – Royal Mail's Special Delivery (next day) product
- **a range of support services to ensure the safety and integrity of the mail** – Royal Mail's redirection (up to 12 months). Keepsafe, Poste Restante, certificate of posting and business collections, and
- **international outbound service** – Royal Mail's international public tariff and international signed-for products. The UK is also subject to the Universal Postal Union's requirement to deliver mail coming from abroad.

It was also decided that Royal Mail's universal service obligation should include its Recorded (signed for) product and at least one **bulk mail** product. In June 2005 Postcomm announced it had decided to include the following bulk products in the universal service:

- **Mailsort 1400 (first and second class)**, which covers mail of all formats up to 2kg in weight and pre-sorted according to the location of the 1,400 delivery offices, and
- **Cleanmail (first and second class)**, which does not require users to have sorting machines and is the “entry level” bulk mail product most often used by smaller businesses.

Useful links

- **www.psc.gov.uk** – Postcomm’s website, for further information on all aspects of the UK mail market
- **www.consumerfocus.org.uk** –the new statutory organisation campaigning for consumers in England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.
- **www.royalmail.com** – Royal Mail’s website
- **www.upu.int** – website for the Universal Postal Union, which is the primary forum for co-operation between international postal services

Please contact Postcomm for a full list of titles available in this series.

October 2008

Postcomm is the independent regulator for postal services in the UK. This is one of a series of fact sheets designed to provide background information on key issues in the postal services sector. Contact us at 6 Hercules Road, London, SE1 7DB.
Tel 020 7593 2100, **Email** info@psc.gov.uk

A large print version is available.
Please telephone: 020 7593 2100 or
Email: info@psc.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2006

The text in this document may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium providing that it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the document specified.

Postcomm takes no responsibility for external websites listed on these fact sheets.