Scam Mail and the need for a coordinated response

14 September 2017

Summary

- Scam mail affects consumers throughout the UK and beyond.

- To address this issue in a meaningful way, we believe we must act in a joined up manner, working with partners from across the United Kingdom and beyond.

- We have introduced an industry wide Code of Practice, to help prevent scam mail entering the postal network.

- We continue to take steps to reduce the volumes of scam mail reaching vulnerable people.

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Scam Mail is not Marketing Mail

- There is a clear distinction between scam mail and marketing mail.

- Marketing mail is not scam mail, although recipients can sometimes find it difficult to distinguish between the two.

- Marketing mail is sent by reputable companies advertising their products and services to householders and businesses.


- Scam Mail is an **illegal** mailing that is in breach of the Fraud Act and/or Consumer protection legislation. Vulnerable members of the public are targeted by mail campaigns which solicit money through dubious schemes e.g. Non-existent lottery wins, eligibility for fictional legacies etc.

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The societal impact of scams

- We know the terrible pain and suffering scam mail causes both to victims and their families.

- Current estimates indicate that between 3.2 and 5 million people in the UK are affected by scams annually.

- The average age of a scam victim is 75, targeted at more vulnerable members of society.

- 53% of people aged 65 plus have been targeted by scammers.

- Once a victim has responded to a scam, their personal details are perpetually shared and sold on to other criminals.

- Postal operators alone can not solve this problem, but we have an important role to play in reducing the impact.

- Royal Mail takes that role very seriously.

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How does scam mail enter the system?

- Scam mail enters the Royal Mail network via several different routes, often from abroad, because of the complex ecosystem that exists.

- This includes cross-border postal operators, Downstream Access Providers and Mail Consolidators.

- We estimate that one third of all scam mail in the UK originates from Australia

- This is a global problem that requires a global solution
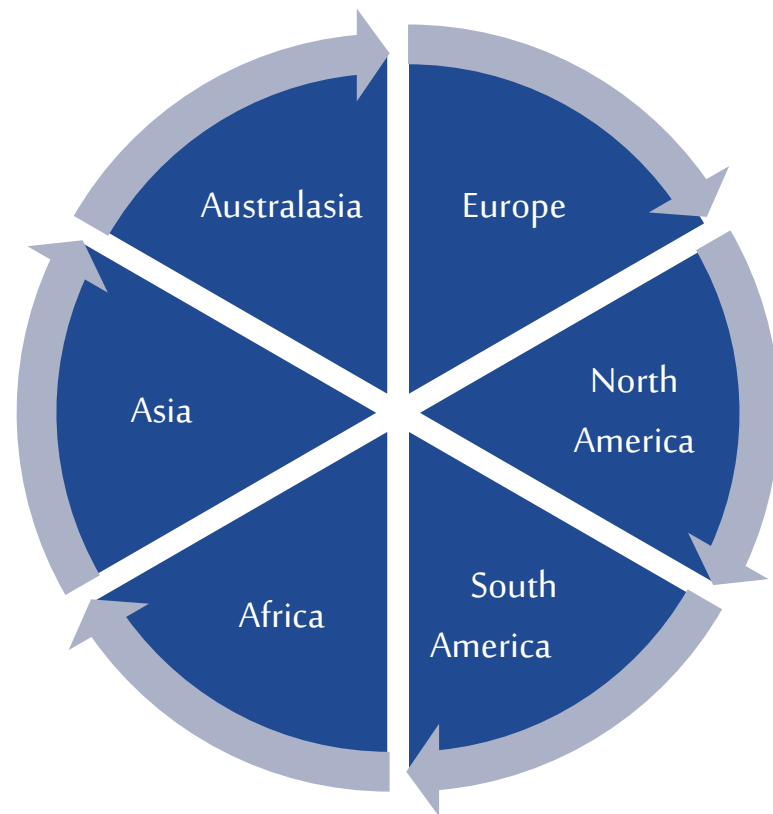
Detecting Scam Mail

- Scam Mail is best tackled at source, before it enters the postal network.

- At this stage bulk mailings are little more than a consignment of letters and envelopes (so they are easier to check).

- Scam mail is very difficult to detect once it has entered the system, due to the vast number of letters being processed, and almost impossible to extract.

- Any scam mail will be buried beneath the vast majority of legitimate mail that is delivered through wholesale access contracts.

- There is a need to work with a number of organisations, across borders, in order to identify this sort of mail.

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Postmen and women can help stem the scourge…

Royal Mail has carried out a thorough review into Scam mail. We are doing a lot to stop these mailings from reaching our customers.

- Our postmen and women are the eyes and the ears for spotting potential scam mail.

- We have a dedicated reporting system to identify and stop scam mail.

- There has been a significant commitment to training, including a series of internal communication programs designed to educate our staff.

National Trading Standards Scams Team important partner in delivery this

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What Royal Mail is doing to tackle scam mail…

- Royal Mail has always taken this issue seriously – legal and moral balance. We devote considerable resources to tackling scam mail - a Senior Executive has responsibility for coordinating our strategy reporting directly to the CEO.

- We work with the enforcement agencies, including the National Trading Standards Scam Team (NTSST), to report all evidence of scam mail.

- An industry-wide code of practice has been developed by Royal Mail supported by firms including Whistl and UK Mail.

- On 27 March we introduced a clause in our bulk mail contracts – this states that we reserve the right to deal with suspected Scam mail and take appropriate action.

- Engaging at a European level with other postal operators – seeking to attack scam mail on a pan European basis by sharing intelligence of known scammers, closing down fraudulent PO Box® addresses.

- We have commissioned dedicated research into postal scams – this will be shared with the industry and law enforcement agencies.

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We are making progress...

Since November 2016, we have successful stopped over 1,900,000 items of scam mail (c6000 items a day)

We have contacted customers who we believe are vulnerable to Scam Mail to advise them that we are blocking suspect mail.

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Postal Sector Code of Practice

- We will actively work together, and with law enforcement agencies, to tackle the scourge of scam mail.

- We will move quickly to proactively share intelligence on scam mailings with each other as well as the details of any suspect mailings.

- We will terminate any mailing identified by law enforcement agencies as being used to attempt to scam the recipients.

- We will ensure that each company's standard terms and conditions contain an appropriate clause, consistent across the industry, to enable us to clamp down even harder on scam mailings.

- We will work with the broader communications community and law enforcement agencies to work to prevent scams perpetrated against the public, whether it is through letters, electronic communications, telephone calls or other means.

- We will actively work together as an industry to mitigate the risk posed by scam mail and to support initiatives to identify people at risk of scammers. We will provide help and support for victims of scams by sharing information received in our enquiries with appropriate partners including: the National Trading Standards Scams Team, law enforcement and other agencies.

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How can we work more closely with you?

- We are interested to learn what other organisations are doing in this space.

- Do you already undertake work in this area and do you believe that there is more that could be done?

- We are interested to understand what else Royal Mail could do, and how we can learn from best practice.

- Is there any work that Royal Mail could do to help support you and your organisation? We are always keen to hear new ideas.

We will continue to review and improve our approach, in order to reduce the levels of scam mail entering the postal system

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Reporting a concern

- Phone 03456 113 413

- Email scam.mail@royalmail.com

- Freepost Scam Mail

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Any questions?