



**Environmental Guidance  
Royal Mail Network Access**

**Version: 1.2**

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## Introduction

The Mail Materials and Recyclability Guidance in this document is applicable to Advertising, Business Mail and Subscription Mail products for both sorted, and unsorted where applicable, options.

### Please note:

Machineable specifications take precedence over any permitted designs or pack construction.

This will supersede the existing Responsible (Sustainable) mail specification.

Unwrapped or naked mailings are permitted and must meet the published specification.

## Index

The Requirements are noted by Product: Business Mail [B], Advertising Mail [A] including Partially Addressed, and Publishing including Subscription Mail [P]. Suppression files advice is included to cover unsolicited mailings sent using Business Mail

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Requirements	B	A	P
<p><b>1. Improving targeting</b> For Business Mail mailings, the requirements in this section (1) are mandatory for unsolicited mailings and optional for standard mailings.</p> <p><b>1.1 Suppression Files</b></p> <p>1.1.1. Where data is not from a consent-based file you should maintain a documented procedure for suppressing customer and prospect data against the Mail Preference Service (MPS) and the MPS deceased file.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For Partially Addressed mailings our recommendation is to use 2 years' worth of recent registrations.</li> <li>The process for suppressing customer and prospect data should be in place and files checked thirty days or less before the item that uses the data is posted with Royal Mail.</li> <li>For mail produced overseas where the transit time to the UK is greater than thirty days, mailing files should be checked for recency thirty days or less before the items are despatched to Royal Mail and transit time to the UK should be no longer than ninety days.</li> </ol> <p>All applicable for unwrapped</p>	B	A	P
<p>1.1.2. The data for each mailing should be validated against at least two of the DMA accredited suppression files<sup>1</sup>.</p> <p>Applicable for unwrapped</p>	B	A	
<p><b>1.2 Address Quality</b></p> <p>1.2.1. All items must be addressed in accordance with Royal Mail's Postcode Address File™ (PAF™). A minimum of at least 90% of all items must be fully and accurately addressed and postcoded.</p> <p>Applicable for unwrapped</p>	B	A	P
<p>1.2.2 Recommended a minimum of a least 95% postcode and address quality<sup>2</sup></p> <p>Applicable for unwrapped</p>	B	A	P
<p><b>2. Sustainable resources and materials</b></p> <p><b>2.1 PAPER Outer</b></p> <p>2.1.1. Recycling All paper products used in your posting;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>must not be made from greaseproof or silicone paper or components and,</li> <li>must be sourced from paper mills that operate an environmental management system conforming to BS EN ISO 14001 and/or the Eco- Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS)<sup>3</sup> and,</li> <li>must contain recycled fibre from recovered waste paper and/or,</li> <li>be virgin fibre<sup>4</sup> sourced under a certified chain of custody conforming to a certification scheme approved by the Defra funded Central Point of Expertise on Timber Procurement (CPET) and,</li> </ol>	B	A	P

<sup>1</sup> In order to be recognised as an accredited data suppression provider a company must be a DMA member. To be a DMA member the data suppression providers must pass the independent audit specified by the DMA. The audit assesses the accuracy and quality of the data and current data protection compliance regulations.

<sup>2</sup> Premium level



<sup>3</sup> Most Western European paper mills confirm to these standards and paper suppliers should be able to provide supporting documentation upon request. The specification will be updated to reflect any changes in standards published by DEFRA after leaving the EU.

<sup>4</sup> Virgin fibre is wood fibre that has not been used before.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e. All paper elements of your posting, including padded envelopes, must be recyclable. This means all paper elements must be able to be captured and separated from a waste stream for conversion or reuse and be recovered by the majority of local authorities at household level and,</li> <li>f. contain recycled wood fibre is that recovered from pre-consumer wastepaper and post-consumer wastepaper</li> </ul> <p>and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>g. adhere to these five certification schemes that have been approved as satisfying the UK Government’s requirements for sustainable and legal timber:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®)</li> <li>2. Canadian Standards Association (CSA)</li> <li>3. Malaysian Timber Certification Council (MTCC)</li> <li>4. Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification™ (PEFC™)</li> <li>5. Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)</li> </ol> </li> </ul> <p>All applicable for unwrapped</p>			
<p><b>2.1.2. Windows</b></p> <p>If the mailpiece has a window;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Windows are permitted, if less than 5% of the full pack weight, as they can be recycled</li> <li>b. Glassine<sup>5</sup> windows, if untreated i.e. pure and not siliconised, are recyclable</li> <li>c. No silicone or greaseproof window material</li> </ul> <p>Not applicable for unwrapped</p>	B	A	P
<p><b>2.1.3. Outer Message to be clearly visible to the recipient</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The outer logo must provide clear guidance to the recipient that the mail piece should and can be recycled. The recommendation is to use the commonly used logo shown on The On-pack Recycling Label Ltd <a href="http://www.oprl.org.uk">www.oprl.org.uk</a> (Recycle) or indicate the item is paper. Please note OPRL labels can only be used by members of the scheme</li> </ul> <div style="text-align: center;"> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. The same ‘recycle’<sup>6</sup> logo can be used on both window and non-window paper envelopes</li> </ul> <p>All applicable to unwrapped</p>	B	A	P
<p><b>2.1.4. Construction and production</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. No glitter</li> <li>b. Minimal metallic foil is permitted i.e. a foil seal</li> <li>c. No waxed or wax coated papers</li> </ul>	B	A	P

<sup>5</sup> Glassine is considered to be tracing paper by the Confederation of Paper Industries (CPI) but is ‘pulpable’ so is permitted

<sup>6</sup> The On-pack Recycling Label (OPRL) give a 2-year window to change the recycling print/logo. [www.oprl.org.uk](http://www.oprl.org.uk)

<p>d. No laminate finishes in the posting. This requirement means that laminate finishes must not be used in any part of the posting i.e. it is not just the outer elements of the posting but the contents as well</p> <p>e. All paper products in your posting must be produced using non-chlorinating bleaching methods. For clarity;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Non- chlorinating bleaching methods include Elemental Chlorine Free, Processed Chlorine Free and Total Chlorine Free including oxidizing and reductive bleaching</li> <li>o Chlorinating bleaching methods are those that use elemental chlorine.</li> </ul> <p>Applicable to unwrapped</p>			
<p><b>2.2. POLY Outer</b></p> <p><b>2.2.1 What are acceptable?</b></p> <p>The key requirements are that the plastic can be identified as recyclable and recycled by citizens through normal kerbside waste collections.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Non-biodegradable plastics<sup>7</sup></li> <li>b. Conventional plastics whether fossil fuel or bio- derived<sup>8</sup> These can be recycled and re-processed</li> </ul> <p>Not applicable to unwrapped</p>	B	A	P
<p><b>2.2.2 What are not acceptable?</b></p> <p>All plastics whether fossil or bio based which are designed to bio-degrade or be compostable are excluded because of the restricted opportunity for citizens to recycle and propensity for these plastics to enter, and contaminate, standard plastic recycling streams.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Biodegradable<sup>9</sup> plastic (including oxo-degradable plastics)</li> <li>b. Non-biodegradable compostable<sup>10</sup> plastics</li> <li>c. Bioplastics<sup>11</sup> or fossil fuel plastics designed to biodegrade</li> </ul> <p>Not applicable to unwrapped</p>	B	A	P
<p><b>2.2.3 Outer message</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The outer logo must provide clear guidance to the recipient that the outer should and can be recycled. The recommendation is to use the commonly used logo shown on The On-pack Recycling Label Ltd <a href="http://www.oprl.org.uk">www.oprl.org.uk</a> (Recycle) Please note OPRL labels can only be used by members of the scheme</li> </ul> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">   </div>	B	A	P
<p><b>2.2.4 Construction and production</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. No glitter</li> <li>b. Minimal metallic foil is permitted i.e. a foil seal</li> <li>c. No silicone, greaseproof or glassine</li> <li>d. No polylactic acid (PLA) liners</li> </ul>	B	A	P

<sup>7</sup> Non-biodegradable cannot be broken down by natural organisms. This poly is durable and lasts for years but can be recycled in current plastic and packaging recycling streams. These plastics are not source specific

<sup>8</sup> Fossil fuel based plastics (also called petro based polymers) are derived from petroleum or natural gas

<sup>9</sup> Can be broken down by microorganisms into water, natural gases (e.g. CO<sub>2</sub>) and methane and biomass. Biodegradability depends strongly on the environmental conditions. No standard facilities for citizens to access for recycling.

<sup>10</sup> Although durable and long lasting these need undergo biodegradation under industrial composting conditions but cannot biodegrade naturally.

<sup>11</sup> Starch blends (waste or native unprocessed starch is compounded with polymers and, or, compatibilisers, plasticisers, processing aids and fillers) which are essentially a bio-based plastic, those made from polymers derived from plant based sources e.g. starch cellulose, oils, lignin and fossil-based plastics designed to biodegrade

<p>e. No bagasse, palm fibre, rice straw, wheat straw, barley straw, oats straw and other plant fibres</p> <p>f. No mixed plastics</p> <p>g. No laminate finishes in the posting<sup>3</sup>. This provision means that laminate finishes must not be used in any part of the posting i.e. it is not just the outer elements of the posting but the contents as well</p> <p>h. If using black plastic, 'Carbon Black' pigment is not permitted</p> <p>i. Any plastic envelopes (including polywrap if within permitted spec below) used are only permitted if they are composite multi-layer laminate with European quality standard BS EN643, or plastic content up to 5% or less of pack weight on single sided laminates</p> <p>Not applicable to unwrapped</p>			
<p><b>3. Contents/inserts - solicited<sup>12</sup> and unsolicited<sup>13</sup> mail</b></p> <p>These apply to both paper and poly wrapped items and are separated into 'solicited' and 'unsolicited' mailings.</p> <p><b>3.1 Solicited mailings</b></p> <p>a. All paper elements must meet the paper outer specification above</p> <p>b. All plastic elements must meet the poly outer specification above</p> <p>c. No household samples due to machine constraints</p> <p>d. No glass is permitted</p> <p>e. No textiles</p> <p>f. No foil or aluminum</p> <p>g. Single composite items are permitted i.e. paperclip, coins</p> <p><b>3.2 Unsolicited mailings</b></p> <p>a. All paper elements must meet the paper outer specification above (both)</p> <p>b. All plastic elements must meet the poly outer specification above (both)</p> <p>c. No mixed composite item i.e. a pen which has both metal and plastic components on the basis that the addressee may not open an unsolicited pack and therefore recycle correctly</p> <p>d. No household samples due to machine constraints</p> <p>e. No glass is permitted</p> <p>f. No textiles</p> <p>g. No foil or aluminum</p> <p>h. Single composite items are permitted i.e. paperclip, coins</p> <p>Not applicable to unwrapped</p>	B	A	P
<p><b>4. Tab seals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plastic: permitted if, combined with other plastic components excluding the window, takes up less than 5% of the total pack weight</li> <li>Paper: permitted if meets the paper and ink requirements in this document</li> </ul> <p>Applicable to unwrapped</p>	B	A	P
<p><b>5. Ink<sup>14</sup></b></p> <p>a. Water soluble varnishes are permitted as are de-inkable<sup>15</sup></p> <p>b. Other readily de-inkable<sup>16</sup> inks are permitted</p>	B	A	P

<sup>12</sup> Solicited mail is an item which has been selected and paid for by the recipient e.g. a magazine subscription

<sup>13</sup> Unsolicited mail would include mailings which have not specifically been selected and paid for by the recipient, this would include partially addressed mailings or those which contain unexpected (by the client) gifts or tokens

<sup>14</sup> Most literature produced in Europe is litho printed, deinking plants were designed for deinking litho. This process works well for gravure print. Magazines are fine, even with digitally printed address label or paper wrap and inserts, in the deinking system. There are some water-based inkjet inks and UV cured that can be deinked in standard deinking plants and have been tested and certified as such.

<sup>15</sup> Not every water based varnish is deinkable

<sup>16</sup> De-inkable and recyclable are not interchangeable. Something might be recyclable but not suitable for de-inking

<p>c. We are aware that certain types of printing inks may produce products which are more challenging to recover or recycle than standard grades used by the paper industry and where these can be identified they should be avoided. To check if your paper and ink can be recycled without specialist processes and in a sustainable way, the industry standard for measuring deinkability is INGEDE Method 11, that is applicable to virtually any printed paper. There are many factors that influence paper recyclability in the UK and we advise that customers also undertake their own research to determine the best paper products and printing methods to enable optimal recyclability.</p> <p>d. Inks which cause ‘red sock syndrome’ cannot be used for example; water based flexo inks, inkjet inks and inks using water soluble dyes or pigments unless evidence can be provided that they can be de-inked in standard de-inking plants.</p> <p>All applicable to unwrapped</p>			
<p><b>6. Adhesives</b></p> <p>It is important to understand which recycling processes could potentially be involved. The following guidance can only be general because each adhesive system will have its own advantages and disadvantages depending on the particular recycling processes involved.</p> <p>a. Hot melt glue<sup>17</sup> has two types; pressure sensitive and non-pressure sensitive. Non pressure sensitive adhesives are permitted. Pressure sensitive adhesives are not permitted.</p> <p>b. PUR (Polyurethane reactive) adhesives are permitted</p> <p>c. Adhesives which do not plasticise at temperatures below 68° C are permitted</p> <p>d. Water soluble <sup>18</sup>adhesives are not permitted</p> <p>All applicable to unwrapped</p>	B	A	P
<p><b>7. Finishes</b></p> <p>a. No PVC coating or components (Polyvinyl Chloride)</p> <p>b. Foil block printing with no more than 30% of the external surface is permitted</p> <p>c. Only one side of a sheet of paper can be laminated, preference is no lamination</p> <p>d. No varnish unless water soluble</p> <p>Applicable to unwrapped</p>	B	A	P
<p><b>8. Provenance and validation</b></p> <p>a. DMA data validation against the published ‘DMA accredited data standard’ demonstrating that the client or producer has accessed at least 2 of the hygiene databases<sup>19</sup>.</p> <p>b. ISO 14001 specifies the actual requirements for an environmental management system. It applies to those environmental aspects over which an organisation has control and over which it can be expected to have an influence. Further information regarding ISO 14001 can be found at <a href="http://www.bsigroup.com">www.bsigroup.com</a> or <a href="mailto:standards.international@bsigroup.com">standards.international@bsigroup.com</a>.</p> <p>c. ISO 14021 compliant approach - specifies requirements for self-declared environmental claims, including statements, symbols and graphics, regarding products.</p> <p>d. All parts of the Supply Chain must adhere to this specification for all components of the mailing.</p>	B	A	P

<sup>17</sup> Both types of hot melt are insoluble in water so dispersal during the pulping process can be problematical. Pressure sensitive can soften in the pulper to form ‘stickies’ that, if not removed, can travel through the mill filter system and stick to the finished paper product. Non pressure sensitive adhesives have previously demonstrated dispersal as larger particles during processing that are easier to remove during screening.

<sup>18</sup> Water soluble adhesives will build up in concentration in the recycling pulping process over time.

<sup>19</sup> Within Royal Mail our hygiene products are National Change of Address files and we have Suppress that is used to remove records where people have moved home and then Update which provides peoples new address where we’ve captured the appropriate permissions.

## Change Control Log

### 12 January 2022 change to v1.1

Provisional removal of [5c] (Electroinks/HP Indigo inks are not permitted)

### 28 July 2022 -changes to v.12

**Section 5c.** Inclusion of further clarity around inks

**Section 5c.** Reference to industry standard method for testing de-inkability of paper

**Section 7d.** Clarification on the use of varnish in the finish, it is permitted if water soluble

### 28 July 2022 -no change<sup>20</sup>

**Section 2.1** – advice remains as current.

**Section 2.2.1** – advice remains as current. More beneficial to environment and the economy, can be re-used and recycled back into useful packaging.

**Section 2.2.2** – advice remains as current. Bio-plastics (plastic is either compostable or recyclable, not both), biodegradable and compostable plastics (under specific levels of heat and oxygen) don't degrade properly in residential composting or landfill.

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<sup>20</sup> Wrap recycling guidelines v2.1 amended October 2021 and UK Plastics Pact Annual Report 2020-21