

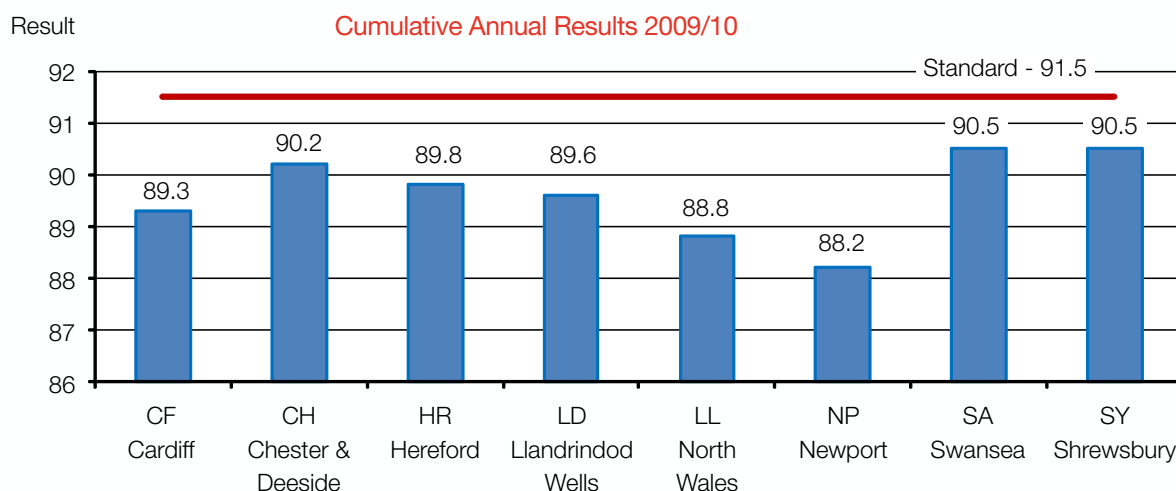
Post report

Royal Mail and the Post Office in Wales

July 2010

Royal Mail

Consumer Focus has a statutory responsibility to represent consumers of postal services. We receive information from Royal Mail on the quality of service it provides in key areas of its business. Royal Mail reports against targets agreed with Consumer Focus and Postcomm. Every quarter we will publish Royal Mail's performance in delivering first class post the next day for retail consumers, a key indicator for performance as a whole, but also available at Wales postcode area level.



(Some postcode areas cover England and Wales. It is not currently possible to provide a split in these areas.)

Royal Mail misses targets

Latest annual figures (see graph above) show that Royal Mail failed to meet its target to deliver 91.5 per cent of first class stamped and metered mail by the next working day in every Post Code Area (PCA). This was due to industrial action that took place during quarters two and three (July – December) and adverse weather during Quarter 4 (January – March). Consumer Focus will be talking to Royal Mail about these results to challenge it to at least meet its PCA targets with immediate effect. We will be continuing to monitor their performance closely this year, but believe the results should improve following the agreement that was signed between Royal Mail and the CWU in March.

We have also carried out research¹ to explore the issues of importance to consumers in postal services. We found that 84 per cent of people didn't know the correct price of a standard first class stamp.

Only 42 per cent of people were satisfied with the system of paying for letters or packets based on their size as well as their weight. This shows Royal Mail still has some way to go to ensure consumers feel comfortable with these arrangements and understand the prices of stamps for different sizes of standard packages. It is important to ensure that consumers don't lose out by delays to the delivery of their mail or the recipient having to pay a surcharge where the wrong postage has been paid.

The Post Office

Consumer Focus Wales has a statutory responsibility in this area which includes monitoring the number and location of post offices in Wales. In addition, we campaign to ensure the Post Office gives consumers a fair deal and the quality of service provided meets their needs. Each quarterly report will let you know about the work that we are doing and to tell you about people's views of the Post Office network in Wales.

Playing an important role in local communities

Consumer Focus Wales recently conducted research² to gather consumer views and opinions on the Post Office network. It showed that 96 per cent of people in Wales use the post office, with 53 per cent of these using the post office at least once a week. Within these figures, a tenth of post office users interviewed (10 per cent) said that they visited the post office three or more times a week. People who use the post office tend to use the one closest to where they live most often (78 per cent).



We found that as well as choosing to use the post office for a range of financial, travel, driving, mailing and other services, consumers in Wales also thought that the post office fulfilled an important community function. In fact, 79 per cent of people felt that the post office provided important extra services to help the local community and people who are more vulnerable, while over two thirds of people (70 per cent) felt that the post office was an important place for them to get information. Three-quarters (75 per cent) also believed that the post office was a focal point for their community.

Advice

If you are a consumer and wish to receive advice and information regarding consumer complaints about postal services please contact the relevant part of the Royal Mail Group, or the relevant licensed postal provider. For more information on this see: <http://consumerfocus.org.uk/g/4ll>

¹ The research was conducted by Beaufort Reserch Ltd. A total of 1,005 interviews were completed with a representative sample of the Welsh population between 5 and 22 March 2010.

² The research was conducted by Beaufort Research Ltd. A total of 1,561 interviews were undertaken with a representative sample of the Welsh population between 17 February and 11 March 2010.

Consumer Focus Wales is Wales' consumer champion. In addition to our work on post, we also empower and represent consumers of energy and financial services, as well as wider consumer issues. More details can be seen at www.consumerfocus-wales.org.uk

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