

## Managing Mailing Charges and Costs in Research Studies

In research studies we use mail outs in different formats and scales.

Some mailings, requiring contact with or responses from the public/patients, are small scale and done manually, in-house and cost-effectively, using sae envelopes.

Others are larger tasks, include much bigger numbers of contacts and may require a set-up of Royal Mail licences for Freepost returns, for example, and/or the use of a mailing house who might work with data providers, like GP practices for example, to mail out on your behalf.

It's always a good idea to work with your study administrator to do some costings at study design stage to work out how you will manage your mailing and how much budget you will need to cover your mailing costs across the life of the study.

You'll need to consider costs for the following:

- Purchase of stamps, if required
- Printing, if done off-site or in large numbers
- Royal Mail Licence set up and annual charge, if required
- Response/freepost estimated charges for returns
- Buying in of envelopes
- Mailing house charges (DocMail for example) if required

### Buying Stamps

You can purchase large numbers of stamps through 'Royal Mail Collectibles and Stamps' through OPeRA. P&P is free if you buy 100 or more, but they can only be purchased in multiples of 50 from this vendor. You don't need a PO number to make the purchase. At present second class stamps are 68p. If you need to send small numbers of SAEs in mailing packs this is the cheapest option.

### Printing

Small scale printing for material required for mailing out information packs or surveys can be done in house, but our preferred supplier for large scale printing is [Warwick Print](#). They will provide you with a quote at anytime, particularly useful when costing up for budgeting purposes. They can also print envelopes for freepost returns if you're requesting responses from participants and decide to use a Royal Mail business reply licence.

### Royal Mail Licence

You will need one of these if you want to send freepost envelopes out in mailing packs, and plan to absorb the cost of the postage for each return you receive. [Royal Mail](#) will bill you for the setup of the licence, and an annual charge for using the licence number. The annual licence is around £100 plus VAT at the time of writing. You will also be billed monthly for the numbers of freepost returns you receive. The postage charges are cheaper than standard rate, so 48p at present for each return for a standard DL envelope.

Royal Mail licences are only cost-effective if you need to send, and hope to receive back, larger numbers of responses.

You will set up a Royal Mail account on-line to manage this and this also allows you to view and download invoices for attaching to reducing POs.

Royal Mail will have to approve the format and layout of the address you want to include on the return envelope you plan to use. This format is then shared as a .pdf by you with whoever is printing the envelopes on your behalf.

If you have more than one study requiring freepost returns you need to set up a separate, unique licence number in each case so you can differentiate the project costs between studies.

### **Freepost Returns**

When you set up a Royal Mail licence you can request first or second-class responses, second class obviously being most cost effective. You will be billed monthly for the numbers of returns you receive, and invoices can be picked up through your Royal Mail account, on-line. Payments are dealt with using the reducing PO model.

### **Buying envelopes**

Your administrator can purchase envelopes through OPeRA. Currently Banner, our preferred stationery supplier only accepts orders valued at £20 or over. If you need small amounts of envelopes it may be cheaper for the researcher to buy locally and claim back on Concur, with a receipt, using the project cost-code/budget line.

### **Third Party Mailing Houses**

A third-party mailing house is often used to send letters to others on your behalf, for example, when the research study is using personal, non-anonymised data from GP practices or hospital departments to contact potential study participants.

WMS have a record of using [CFH DocMail](#) as a preferred, specialist supplier for this as their electronic systems can 'speak' to NHS patient record systems. They can sometimes be hidden as a supplier in OPeRA and you may need a business case to get them unlocked so you can work with them. A business case would need to include a justification of why CFH would be your preferred supplier for your specific study and would focus on their unique ability to securely handle personal data. Companies like Warwick Print can't do this, so wouldn't be an appropriate supplier in cases where the study required the handling of non-anonymised data.

You can request a quote from CFH Docmail – they will cost up the price of the number of sheets of paper you want to send, the printing up of the return envelope, and their 'per pack' price will also include the printing of personalised letters and the mail out cost. Remember to make allowances for VAT.

CFH Docmail will invoice you on a monthly basis, so a reducing PO would be set up at the beginning of the work to take account of the numbers of packs you know you plan to send over the life of the study.

*If you have any queries about mailing, Royal Mail licences or working with third-party mailing houses do get in touch with your unit co-ordinator or project administrator.*