

Discrepancies between official and postal addresses

There can be discrepancies between official addresses issued by the local authority and postal addresses used by Royal Mail for the delivery of mail.

Monmouthshire County Council, as the Street Naming and Numbering authority, is the only body with the legal power to create an address within the county. This is done according to British Standard BS7666, the national standard for addressing. Once created, the address is the **official** address.

The council then liaises with Royal Mail as the body responsible for issuing postcodes to facilitate the delivery of mail. Royal Mail allocates a postcode and adds the address to their Postcode Address File (PAF).

However, each organisation has its own way of recording data and governing how this data is managed; because of this, Royal Mail is not always able to match the local authority address exactly. Occasionally, in rural areas, Monmouthshire Council may describe a locality in one way whilst Royal Mail describes it in another. This can account for different localities being referenced in the same address.

Regarding road names, the official address will *always* include the name of the road on which the property is located, provided that the road name is an officially designated one (as opposed to an unofficial, locally used one). Royal Mail, however, will not always include it. For more information, please read the next section on postcodes.

Postcodes

In urban areas, where there are many properties located in close proximity on numbered streets, Royal Mail will issue postcodes relating to the names of the streets. The names of these streets will be included in the postal address. However, in rural areas, there are many isolated properties on stretches of rural roads; rather than allocate a postcode for every road on which properties are located, Royal Mail allocates a postcode for the area. This is known as a locality postcode.

For example, a single, *urban* road may have 80 properties, all of which would have an identical postcode. A single, *rural* road, on the other hand, may encompass just five properties; its three neighbouring roads may have another nine properties. Rather than allocating four postcodes (one for each road involved) for only 14 properties, Royal Mail will allocate a single, geographical postcode for the area. Because these postcodes are attached to an area rather than a road or street, Royal Mail does not include the road name in its postal address.

Is the discrepancy a problem?

It is very rarely a problem. Most people use their postal address and are often unaware of the fact that their official address differs from their postal address.

If you feel it is a problem and your official address includes a road name, you can ask Royal Mail to add the road name to your address; however, they may only do this if the owners of other properties on the road are in agreement.




For example, if you live on Maple Lane along with five other properties, provided that your neighbours are in agreement, Royal Mail will add Maple Lane to your postal address and **issue you with a new postcode**. This postcode will relate to the road name rather than the geographical area. This is likely to be advantageous in the long run, but in the short to medium term, you will need to be patient whilst the new information filters down to various external databases.

Postcode Address File (PAF)

Royal Mail makes requested changes to PAF very promptly; however, external organisations which subscribe to PAF may receive only occasional updates to their data; depending of the type of subscription they've chosen, the updates can range from daily to a year. This causes a delay between your address being officially changed and an organisation's database reflecting this change.

The information will also have to filter down to Ordnance Survey, Google, and other mapping facilities.

Therefore, the implications of a change of address may include:

-  The need to inform all your contacts that your address has changed;
-  Your postcode not being recognised on some databases using Royal Mail's PAF data;
-  Your postcode not being immediately recognised by Google and other online maps or sat nav systems.

These issues can take some time to resolve. Please note that we have no control over external databases or mapping systems.

For further information on PAF, please see our **Royal Mail Postcode Address File information Sheet** or the Royal Mail's **PAF Code of Practice**, both of which can be found on our website: <https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/street-naming-and-numbering/frequently-asked-questions/>