



How far should free delivery go?

A customer from the Isle of Wight is complaining about my delivery charges, because my 'Free UK delivery' offer doesn't include remote locations like his and this isn't clear on my website.

Question: A customer from the Isle of Wight is complaining about my delivery charges, because my 'Free UK delivery' offer doesn't include remote locations like his and this isn't clear on my website. I am a small company and offer Free UK delivery but exclude island locations and the Highlands of Scotland in this. I state under terms and conditions on my website that this is our policy. Surely this covers me?

Answer: As a general rule, you cannot impose different delivery charges unless they can be justified by objective criteria. However, he has a point in that it is against the law not to make that information clear early on in the transaction process. If you advertise 'Free UK delivery' this is likely to be a misleading action unless you clearly qualify it to show the exceptions.

Delivery hubs

A client of ours isn't happy. When delivering to remote locations I send items to delivery hubs in local towns, but now this client is asking for the shoes he ordered to be delivered to his home.

Question: A client of ours isn't happy. When delivering to remote locations I send items to delivery hubs in local towns, but now this client is asking for the shoes he ordered to be delivered to his home. Customers in general have been very happy with my delivery policy until now. What is my position?

Answer: You should be aware of the potential extra distances that customers are required to travel to pick up items and the potential extra cost to customers of arranging transportation from a hub to their home especially if they are based on an island. Remember, you should not offer different standards or conditions of service on the basis of place of residence unless this is justified by objective criteria.



Royal Mail

A customer has ordered a lamp shade and has specifically asked us to deliver by Royal Mail. In fact, she insists on it.

Question: A customer has ordered a lamp shade and has specifically asked us to deliver by Royal Mail. In fact, she insists on it. I am tied into an exclusive contract with another carrier. Do I have to go along with this or can I deliver in my usual way?

Answer: You don't have to send items by Royal Mail but this can make it easier for consumers in remote communities to pick up parcels from their local post offices and can reduce delivery charges for consumers.

Losing out on returns

A customer from the Isle of Man ordered sports goods which he now says he doesn't want. Trouble is, it's now going to cost me to refund the delivery costs.

Question: A customer from the Isle of Man ordered sports goods which he now says he doesn't want. Trouble is, it's now going to cost me to refund the delivery costs. As a small business it's expensive for me to refund original delivery costs when someone living on an island / remote location returns unwanted items. I put it in my Ts & Cs that I will charge delivery so can't I pass this on to them?

Answer: If a customer cancels within the cancellation period the Distance Selling Regulations (DSRs) require you to refund money paid by or on behalf of your customer in relation to the contract. This means the full price of the goods, deposit or prepayment and the cost of delivery, so we suggest you amend your existing contracts in light of this.

If you provided additional services such as express delivery, that a customer specifically requested you may withhold the additional charges incurred by the customer for these services, only if: **A)** The additional services were provided under a separate contract. **B)** You started the additional services within the cancellation period with the customer's agreement. **C)** You provided the customer with the required written information before you started the additional services, including information that the cancellation rights would end as soon as you started to carry out the additional services.



Being better informed about delivery charges

A customer from Penzance ordered a coat from our website but wasn't happy about the way delivery charges were displayed. She said if she'd known how much delivery would cost before filling her online basket, she wouldn't have made the purchase.

Question: A customer from Penzance ordered a coat from our website but wasn't happy about the way delivery charges were displayed. She said if she'd known how much delivery would cost before filling her online basket, she wouldn't have made the purchase. The system I use calculates the delivery charges at the final stage of the process once it knows the total purchase price and location of the delivery. Is this OK?

Answer: Yes, however she is right in saying that your scale of delivery charges should also be displayed clearly and early on in the purchasing process. You must give your customers certain information, clearly and comprehensibly, before they agree to buy from you so that they can make an informed choice about whether or not they want to buy.

A fridge too far

A customer from the Isle of Mull has presented me with a big delivery headache. She wants to order a fridge but is demanding I honour my commitment to deliver next day.

Question: A customer from the Isle of Mull has presented me with a big delivery headache. She wants to order a fridge but is demanding I honour my commitment to deliver next day. I do offer next day delivery in mainland UK but she claims I have to honour her delivery too. Is this correct?

Answer: If there are good reasons why you cannot provide next day delivery to some addresses you must give this lady and other customers the information, clearly and comprehensibly at an early stage before they decide to buy from you so that they can make an informed choice about whether or not they want to buy. Remember, you should not offer different standards or conditions of service on the basis of place of residence unless this is justified by objective criteria.



Not a remote chance of delivery

A customer who lives three miles from Land's End wants me to deliver a table tennis table, but this is not worth my while as it's well outside our usual delivery run.

Question: A customer who lives three miles from Land's End wants me to deliver a table tennis table, but this is not worth my while as its well outside our usual delivery run. I have a small company and can't afford to deliver to remote locations. Am I within my rights to simply state on my website that I don't deliver to certain areas?

Answer: You cannot offer different terms and conditions, provide a different standard of service or refuse to offer a service such as delivery to a remote area such as Land's End on the sole basis of place of residence, unless this is justified by objective criteria e.g. additional costs incurred because of the distance *or* the limit to the scope of the Royal Mail's Universal Services as regards parcels which is 20kg. These would have to be displayed clearly and early on in the purchasing process. Royal Mail's Universal Services wider exemptions can be found here:

(<http://www.royalmail.com/customer-service/universal-service>).

Highly accessible Highlands

A couple with an IV postcode want to purchase a television. I will automatically charge them extra as with a Highlands postcode, I presume they must live somewhere remote.

Question: A couple with an IV postcode want to purchase a television. I will automatically charge them extra as with a Highlands postcode, I presume they must live somewhere remote. They are objecting as they actually live on the outskirts of Inverness, but I thought everywhere with an IV postcode was automatically classed as an island location and should therefore incur higher delivery costs?

Answer: Addresses in the Highland Council area, in which many postcodes include the prefix IV or HS, are regularly described as being in an island location. In reality, only 7.5 per cent is actually offshore. Highland Council also contains Inverness City which is the fifth largest city in Scotland with a population of over 56,000.