

Postmaster Complaint Handling Policy

Regional & Area Managers
May 2023





The image shows a close-up of a document with the word 'Policy' highlighted in a dark, textured box. A hand is pointing at the word with a finger. Below 'Policy', the words 'written contract' are visible. The background is a light, textured surface.

Policy

written contract
or p

Aims for this session

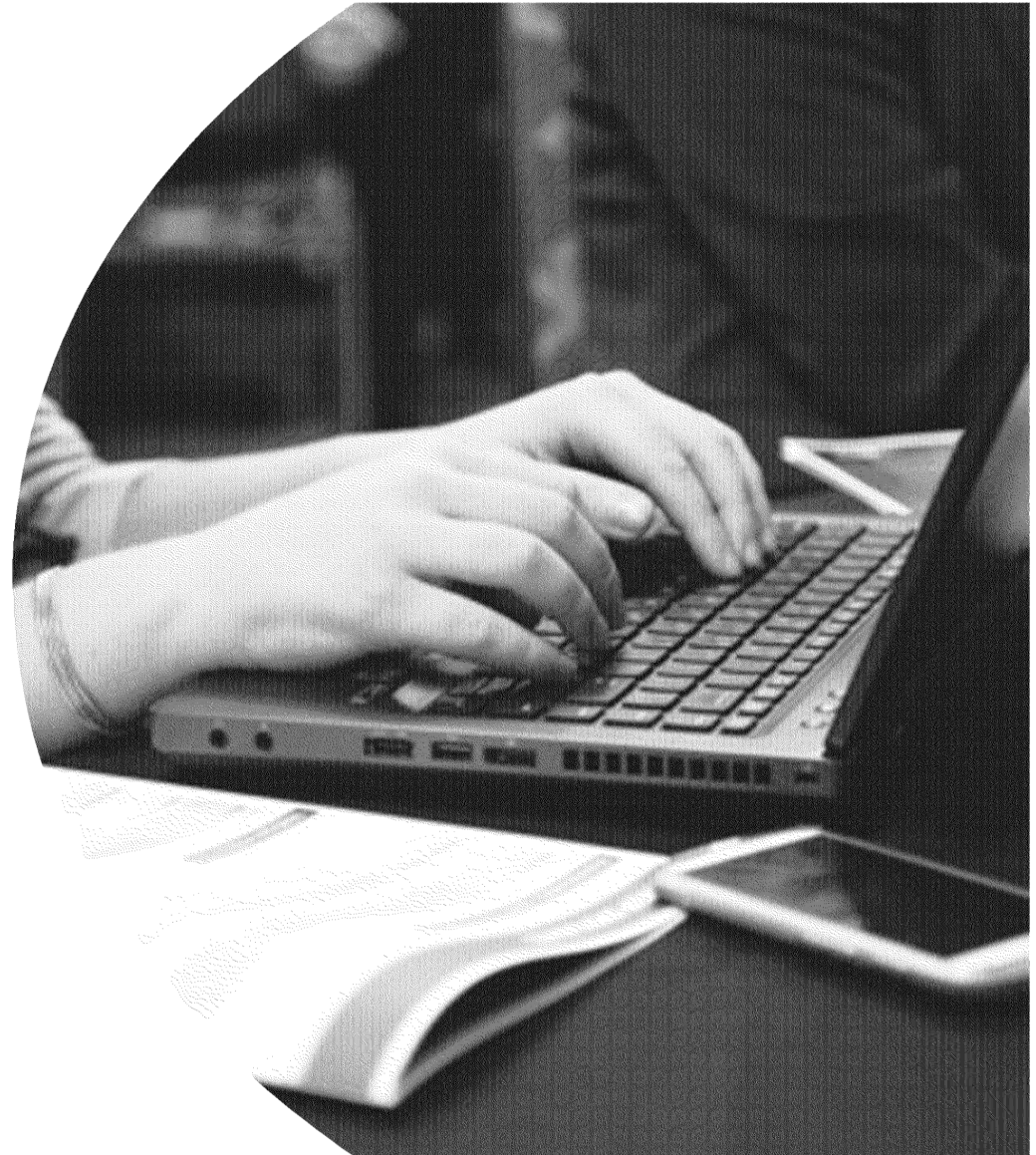
This training will take you
through the key parts of the
policy and cover:

- Core principles and application
- Risks and minimum control standards
- Roles and responsibilities
- General procedures
- How to raise a concern

How the policies help you

Having policies in place is important to both us and our postmasters. They:

- give you **clear guidance** and **set out principles** to guide you on how you should support our postmasters
- **highlight risks** that might exist so you can be aware of them and reduce the chances of them happening
- document the **roles and responsibilities** of you and your colleagues
- summarise the **main procedures** related to your area (policies should not contain detailed processes)
- **All of which will....help us to make sure we support our postmasters effectively**

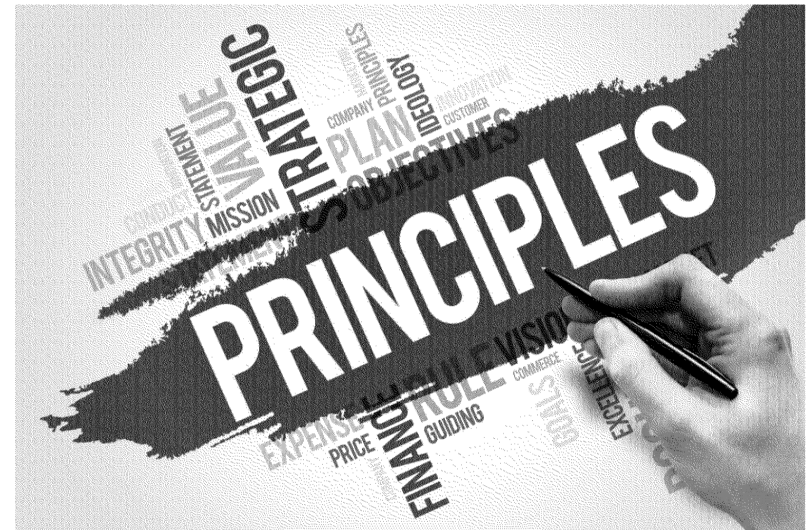


Core principles and application

Post Office will seek to resolve all Postmaster Complaints with fairness, transparency, and professionalism (being the underpinning behaviours of Post Office).

We are committed to quality service and supporting postmasters when they have a complaint. This policy sets out clear guidelines and encourages postmasters to raise issues, making sure:

- A standard and consistent process is followed for all complaints
- Reporting of concerns is encouraged and we will treat each complaint seriously, investigating as appropriate and keeping the postmaster informed on progress
- Post Office will analyse complaints data and postmaster feedback to identify common and recurring issues to constantly improve the postmaster experience
- Post Office will regularly produce and review complaints data and our performance against service levels



The policy will apply to all Post Office colleagues when carrying out a procedure in the policy and compliance is mandatory.

Risks

Complaints from postmasters must always be taken seriously and managed effectively. They're an excellent source of feedback on how we are doing and where we need to improve. The risks of not following the complaint handling policy are:

- Postmasters will be discouraged from complaining. Their concerns will remain unknown to Post Office, so can't be fixed. This means postmasters will continue to experience the same issues.
- If colleagues don't know the complaints process, postmasters will get an inconsistent service and complaints will not be resolved within reasonable timescales.
- The most serious issues don't get recognised. This could mean concerns that would be classed as whistleblowing don't get raised to the Speak Up team. As a result, the postmaster could lose the protections offered by the Whistleblowing Policy.



Complaints that are not raised, addressed and resolved can lead to:

- postmaster dissatisfaction
- the inability of a postmaster to operate effectively
- Post Office failure in meeting legal and regulatory requirements.

Risks and minimum control standards

To control the risks we have identified, we have a set of minimum control standards that must be followed. You can find out more about these in the policy, but they cover:

- **Postmaster ease in raising a complaint** - taking reasonable steps to identify postmaster dissatisfaction, encouraging postmasters to raise complaints and offering them channels to do this.
- **Training** the policy and complaint handling procedures to teams and colleagues who could receive a complaint.
- **Speak Up**- Making sure complaint handlers complete the Speak Up training and are aware of the Whistleblowing Policy and procedures. We will carry out regular case reviews to check whistleblowing has been identified, where appropriate, and the correct action taken.
- **Quality of investigation** – Have the correct processes been followed to fully investigate, escalate and resolve complaints.
- **Reporting and insights** – Using complaints data and postmaster feedback to identify systemic and common issues. Using dashboards to understand service levels, complaint volumes, postmaster issues and complaint resolutions.
- **Policy** – Reviewing and updating the policy, providing policy training to the relevant colleagues and checking colleagues follow the policy.



Roles and responsibilities

You can find more details of the roles of responsibilities of colleagues in Section 3.4 of the policy. An overview of your responsibilities when resolving a complaint are*:

- Be familiar with the Postmaster Complaint Handling policy and any linked policies
- Acknowledge a complaint when received, take reasonable steps, through open and transparent dialogue, to get all the complaint details, keep postmasters updated with progress on the investigation and to resolve the complaint within agreed timescales
- Own and monitor the progress of any investigation carried out by internal departments or third parties
- Record and log all details of the complaint promptly and accurately, keep records of any material discussion with the postmaster or internal departments and detail complaint resolutions when the complaint is closed
- Identify Speak Up concerns and pass to the Speak Up team, in line with Whistleblowing Policy and procedure
- Act with integrity at all times

*You can find more information on the Area Manager complaint handling process and what you must do when you receive a complaint in the FP Toolkit. The next slide will also give an overview of the complaint process should you receive a complaint.

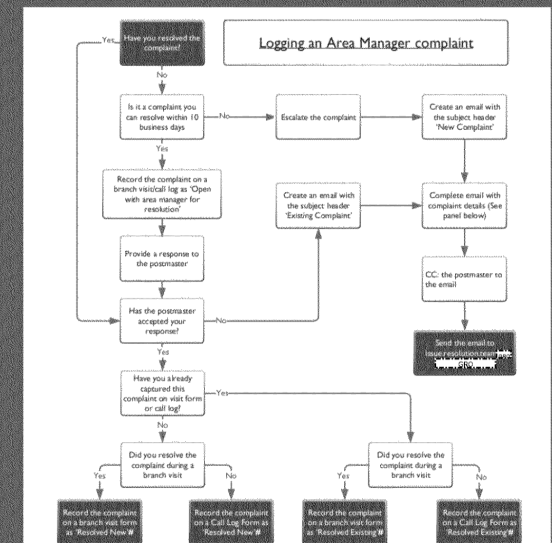
Roles and responsibilities – what should you do if you receive a complaint

As area managers you are vital in helping us to resolve postmaster complaints and helping us to understand what is causing issues with in the network. This data allows us to identify the key themes and trends affecting postmasters, so we can look at how we can fix these.

So what should you do if you get a postmaster complaint?

- Wherever possible, resolve at the first point of contact
- **Is it a complaint you can resolve?**
 - if it is a complaint you can resolve, you have 10 working days to do so.
 - If it isn't a complaint you can resolve you should refer it to the Issue Resolution Team (IRT) as soon as possible for investigation and resolution – ideally within 24 hours.
- If you keep a complaint for longer than 24 hours after receipt, you have taken ownership of the complaint and you should resolve it. If you do need help to get an answer to the postmaster's concerns, you can contact the IRT for support.
- **If the postmaster disagrees** - If you provide a response to the postmaster and they do not accept it, you must escalate it to the IRT who will review the complaint. You will be copied in to any responses the IRT send to the postmaster, so that you know the outcome.

Logging the complaint with the IRT - However you choose to resolve the complaint, either by taking ownership or escalating it, you need to let the IRT know as soon as possible. To support you through the process, a complaint logging guide has been produced that details where complaint should be logged. A copy will be sent to you and you can find this, and a more detailed guide to the process, in the FP Toolkit.



General Procedures*

The procedures covered in section 4 of the policy are:

4.1 How to report a complaint

The preferred channels for postmasters to raise complaints are:

- Branch Hub
- Branch Support Centre
- Area Managers

4.2 Escalating a complaint

- referring complaints to the Issue Resolution Team Manager for support, or where the postmaster disputes the decision
- referring issues to the relevant policy owner where the risk threshold is met

4.3 Speak Up

- What is the difference between a complaint and Speak Up

4.4 The control framework

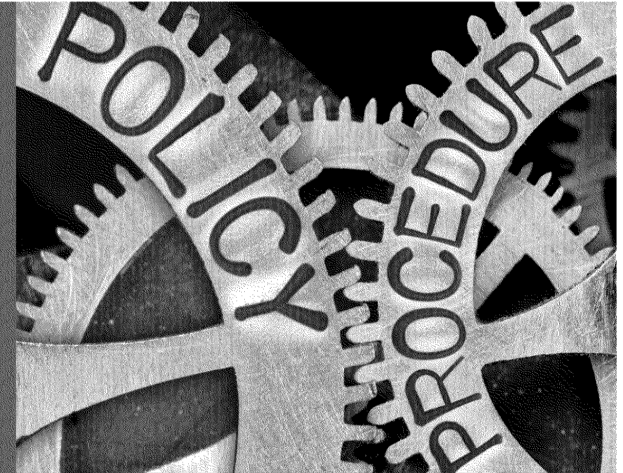
- Self-assessment controls are in place around the risk descriptions and these must be adhered to

4.5 Reporting

- Regular and accurate reporting is required to give information about complaints to both Post Office internal functions and postmasters

4.6 Closing a case

- Post Office will close a complaint case if the postmaster is in agreement. However, in the absence of an agreement, or otherwise, the case can be closed at the discretion of the Post Office.

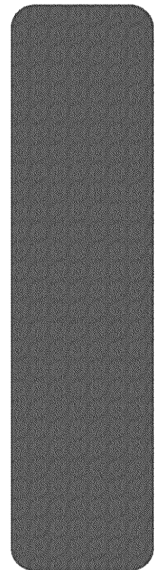


* Processes are designed to support the policy and can be found in the FP toolkit

How to raise a concern

It's important that if we suspect this policy is not being followed, we report it to our line manager. The policy states the other options you can take if you don't want to speak to your line manager – see below:

- Any postmaster, any postmaster's staff or any Post Office employee who suspects that there is a breach of this Policy should report this without any undue delay.
- If a postmaster or any postmaster's staff are unable to raise the matter with the area manager of the relevant branch or if a Post Office employee is unable to speak to her or his line manager, any person can bring it to Post Office's attention independently and can use the Speak Up channels for this purpose. Any person can raise concerns anonymously, although disclosing as much information as possible helps ensure Post Office can conduct a thorough investigation.
- For more details about how and where to raise concerns, please refer to the current [Whistleblowing Policy](#) which can be found on The Hub under Post Office Key Policies or by visiting the [Speak Up homepage](#) on the hub.



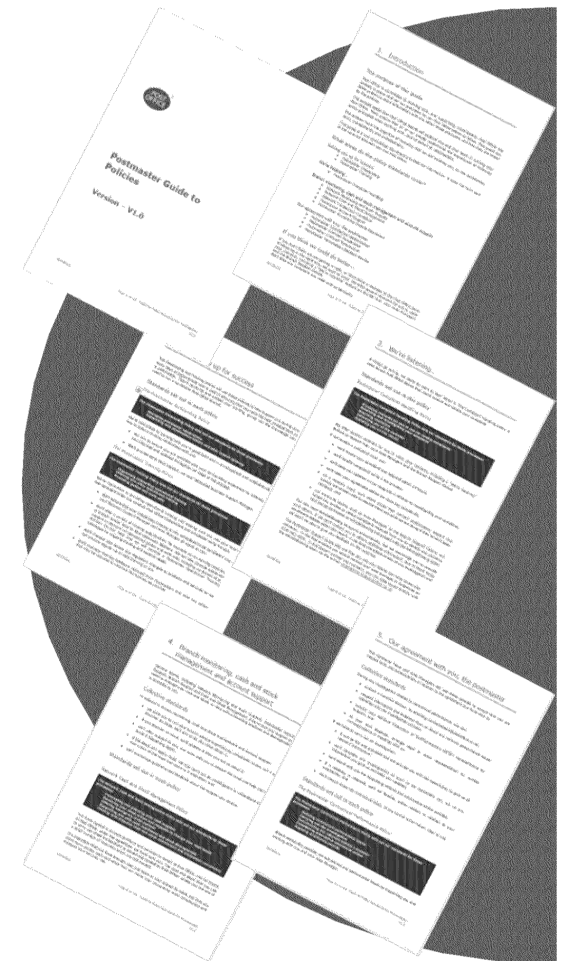
Next steps

Please take this opportunity to access the full Postmaster Support Policy – Complaint handling, which is on [the hub/Post Office key policies/Postmaster Support Policies](#).

You'll see 12 internal Postmaster Support Policies there, as well as a Postmaster Guide to Policies which summarises all 12.

The Postmaster Guide to Policies is also in the Postmaster Support Guide.

If you have any questions about the policies, or this session, please let your line manager know.



Thank you

