



NFSP Branch/Regional Secretaries guide

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Foreword

By accepting the role of Branch/Regional Secretary, you have undertaken one of the most valuable roles in our organisation.

Members will seek your advice and guidance on a multiplicity of topics. To the majority of our members, you will be the face and voice of the National Federation of SubPostmasters (NFSP).

While the following notes will provide guidance on being a Branch/Regional Secretary, your individual input is what will make your support of colleagues great.

At times the role will be challenging, so thank you in anticipation of the time, work, and dedication you are prepared to give to our NFSP. Remember, you are part of a network of support, so you are not on your own.

I hope you find being a Branch/Regional Secretary as rewarding as I did.

All the very best and once again, thank you.

GRO

Sue Edgar
Chair of the NFSP Board

GRO

Introduction

If you are reading this guide, it is because you have been elected to the post of Branch/Regional Secretary or you are seriously thinking about allowing your name to go forward for the post, and you are a member of the NFSP.

The NFSP says thank you because in accepting this post, you are agreeing to give some of your free time and energy to ensuring that the interests of subpostmasters across the country are not only protected, but also promoted.

You will find the position rewarding. It will be interesting, social and it will keep you involved in what is happening, both in the NFSP and Post Office Ltd (PO). You will also find it demanding and, at times, extremely frustrating. It is better you know in advance.

This guide is not strictly an instruction manual, because a lot of what you will do and how you do it will be down to you, as a person, but it will lay out the areas of responsibility of a Branch/Regional Secretary; offer best advice, best practice, and show clearly how the role and its responsibilities fit into the overall structure of the NFSP. For detailed matters there are usually specific, instructional documents available, or alternatively, advice can be sought from your Regional Non-Executive Director (NED), Regional Secretary or NFSP Headquarters.

Section one

Where do you fit in?

The NFSP is a national organisation that has developed a regional and branch structure to allow it to represent the interests of subpostmasters most effectively with PO, government and the public. Currently, there are 10 regions sub divided into approximately 50 branches.

Each region has a Regional Committee with a Regional Secretary, who is your first point of contact for help and advice. If your Regional Secretary is unable to help, they will pass you on to your Regional NED.

Each region is entitled to elect one Regional NED who collectively make up the NFSP Board. The Regional NED develops and manages policy on a national level, as well as dealing with PO on national issues.



Section two

Organisation of the Branch

Once the region has established the branch as a fundamental part of its structure, it is important that the branch itself is well organised.

As Branch/Regional Secretary, you are responsible for the management of the branch as well as being the main point of contact for dealing with members' problems, queries and questions.

However, you should avoid trying to do everything yourself. It is just not possible. Therefore, the Branch/Regional Secretary should firstly involve other members of the Branch Committee in the running of the branch. Who these people are and the roles they can perform will be covered shortly. However, the basis of any sound branch organisation are the Articles of Association/ Guidelines by which it operates.

Branch guidelines

Branches can basically formulate any guidelines they wish to meet their own circumstances, provided they do not conflict with Regional or National Guidelines and have been approved by the Regional Committee.

However, to assist branches, A Model set of Guidelines has been compiled and is appended to this guide. Every member of your branch should have a copy of your Branch Guidelines and your Regional Committee should also be supplied with a copy.

Suggested Branch Officers

The following are suggested as posts within your committee which will be made up from members, honorary or associate members and organisational representatives of your branch. If you can fill them all, it would be ideal, but they are presented in an approximate order of importance:-

See Appendix one,
pages 28-30

Chair

To be elected annually at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) after Annual Conference. First responsibility is to chair meetings of the branch and making sure they run smoothly. The Chair also ensures that the agenda and timings are observed. The Chair may exercise a casting vote in the event of an equal number voting for and against on any issue.

It is also advisable to find somebody who is prepared to act as Vice-Chair who should be elected on the same basis as the Chair and can support the Chair by drawing their attention to anyone wanting to speak in any debate. The Vice-Chair should take over the Chair in the event that the Chair is absent through illness, etc, and should be learning the job of Chair during the period of office.

Branch/Regional Secretary

Membership is the lifeblood of the NFSP. It is vital if a branch is to stay healthy, that regular contact is maintained with existing members, and also that somebody from the branch makes early contact with new subpostmasters. There is really no substitute for a personal visit to a new subpostmaster and indeed an occasional visit to members who do not attend branch meetings. Refer to Section three for the responsibilities of the Branch/Regional Secretary.

See Section three,
pages 13-16.

Hub Co-ordinator/s

Hub Co-ordinator/s can also be elected dependent on the size of the branch. It makes sense to have support to share the workload and take over in an emergency, although all matters should be reported back to the Branch/Regional Secretary.

In branches covering a large geographical area, it is sensible, if possible, to have more than one person fulfilling this role. Hub Co-ordinator/s should organise local meetings in their area which could be informal get togethers to discuss local or national issues. Regular meetings would enforce a feeling of inclusion.

Minutes Secretary

Accurate minutes of all meetings are essential. The appointment allows the Branch/Regional Secretary freedom to deal with problems raised during a meeting. The more members are involved in branch activities, the more interest is maintained. Preferably, this would be a separate role, however, this post can often be combined with another role.

Benevolent Fund Officer

It is an important role of the Benevolent Fund to help current and retired subpostmasters, who find themselves in difficult circumstances.

At its AGM, every branch is required to appoint a member to act as a Benevolent Fund Officer for the branch. This does not have to be the Branch/Regional Secretary, but should be an individual with dedicated responsibility for the Benevolent Fund, who would deal with cases and bring the Benevolent Fund to the attention of the membership and who may in addition carry out other duties. Preferably, this would be a separate role, however, this post can be combined with another role.

The Benevolent Fund Officer should be conversant with the objects of the Fund, which can be viewed by logging on to the [NFSP website](#). NFSP Headquarters should then be notified of that person's name, address and telephone number.

Further information on the role of Branch Benevolent Fund Officer can be found in [Appendix four](#) of this guide

www.nfsp.org.uk
or email:
benfund@nfsp.org.uk

GRO

See [Appendix four](#),
pages 36 and 37.

Social Secretary

The NFSP is more than just a representative organisation, and it is not surprising that some of the strongest and healthiest branches also have a full social programme. Therefore, members in branches or regions are encouraged to meet each other socially, whether via evening meals or organised events.

This would be of particular benefit to Honorary Members, whose commitment to members in the past has to be recognised and appreciated. Preferably, this would be a separate role, however, this post can be combined with another role.

Delegates to Annual Conference

In accordance with NFSP Articles of Association/ Guidelines, the delegation is one member per every 40 members or part thereof. These delegates will normally come from those holding Committee appointments in the region and its branches, but not necessarily so. All delegations should endeavour to include the Branch/ Regional Secretary.

Right

Questions from delegates
at the NFSP Annual Conference 2019.



Branch Committee

Having established that the branch is well organised and as many positions as possible are filled, the next item to turn your attention to is the Committee.

A strong and active Committee is necessary for the branch to really be alive. All the Officers elected at the AGM should be members of the Committee automatically, and additional members should be elected at the AGM to represent the membership.

Having appointed a Committee, it is then important to establish a regular meeting habit. Try and meet on a

fixed day, i.e. the second Monday of every quarter, and then make sure that the meeting is held whatever happens. If a room is available free of charge, that is ideal. The Committee meeting should be chaired by the Chair and the names of those attending recorded.

The Committee should discuss matters raised at all levels, matters referred to by the Branch/Regional Secretary, and those encountered by the Committee members themselves. Any problems that come to light that cannot be dealt with by the Branch/Regional Secretary should be referred to the Regional NED.

Branch meetings

Branches are required to hold a minimum of two meetings a year, ideally in addition to, but may include the AGM. Perhaps also consider circulating a regular newsletter which the **NFSP Communications Department** can help with. Ideally, every meeting should have a focal point which will attract the interest of the members and encourage them to attend. A sensible schedule of meetings will also align itself with high points in the NFSP's year:

- A meeting early in the year to consider any issues members experienced over Christmas and for branch members to be considered for Annual Conference delegates.
- After Annual Conference has taken place, a meeting can be arranged so that the branch delegates to Annual Conference can report back to branch members.
- Some branches also find that this is a convenient meeting to double as the AGM. If that is the case with your branch, make sure that the correct period of notice is given to members as is set out in your Branch Guidelines. The agenda for the AGM should include the Election of Officers and Committee for the year together with known nominations.

communications GRO

Branches should invite guests to meetings each year. These could include Regional NEDs, outside speakers or a representative from PO.

The National Chair, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Chair of NET may be invited to address a Joint Meeting of branches or attend a rally organised by two or more branches.

General notes on meetings

- The interest of the members will only be sustained if they are kept informed. Regular meetings of the branch are a vital part of that process. It is important that the branch members have the chance to put forward their point of view and ask questions.
- All members need to be notified of meetings, including associate and honorary members.
- Give the correct amount of notice for a meeting in line with your Branch Guidelines.
- If your branch covers a wide area, remember some people will have a good distance to travel; try to provide tea/coffee and other refreshments.
- Try to choose a venue which is as bright, attractive and easy to get to as possible so that members will wish to return. Make sure the venue has Wi-Fi and has availability of a screen for presentations. Also ensure that there is adequate parking available.
- At least 50% of meetings should be virtual meetings, this could be the winter meetings where travelling could be difficult.
- If your branch is geographically large, consider using different venues.
- Every meeting should have a focal point which will attract the interest of members and encourage them to attend. Guest speakers should be invited to meetings each time.

Section two
Organisation of the Branch

communications **GRO**

- NFSP Mail Support Advisors are available to attend meetings.
- Every meeting of the branch should have an agenda which should be incorporated in the notice of the meeting.
- The **NFSP Communications Department** at NFSP Headquarters can help with sending out invitations to meetings. They can send these through email and WhatsApp to all members in the branch.
- NFSP Headquarters can also, if required by Branch/Regional Secretaries, distribute invites, minutes of meetings, reports and circular letters by post.
- Inform **NFSP Headquarters** well in advance of any planned meetings so that these can be included in The SubPostmaster magazine.
- Do not forget that all meetings must be minuted. Those minutes, after having been agreed with any amendments made, should then be signed by the Branch/Regional Chair. It is not required but it is advised to send an electronic copy of meeting minutes to NFSP Headquarters for storage and corporate memory.
- A list of all attendees should be recorded, along with post office name, member name, FAD code and email address.
- Encourage collections, like raffles, at meetings to support the NFSP's Benevolent Fund.

admin **GRO**

Right
Members of the North West region at one of their social events.



Section three

Responsibilities of the Branch/Regional Secretary

The Branch/Regional Secretary is the first channel of communication between members and the NFSP; and members and PO.

Local security problems

Branch Support Centre (BSC) should be asked to notify the NFSP, who in turn will notify the Branch/Regional Secretary and Regional NED of any robbery or burglary at any of the offices within the branch. Branch/Regional Secretaries should immediately contact the subpostmaster to find out if NFSP assistance is required. The NFSP have approval from PO to do this. Please remember, this may be a difficult time for the subpostmaster so tact and decorum is essential. Ensure that colleagues are aware of trauma support available via PO and guide them through what processes PO will go through at this point. Please refer to the PO Security manual for guidance.

Branch/Regional Secretaries representing members
Part of a Branch/Regional Secretary's work is dealing with members' individual problems. Tact, patience, firmness and fairness are necessary when intervening in disputes between a member and PO.

The following are some examples of particular items where a member may seek the assistance of the Branch/Regional Secretary:-

- Dismissal – report to suitably trained NFSP Advocacy Representative.
- Contributions to losses, either after a robbery at their office or losses through negligence at the counter, i.e. frauds etc. subpostmasters are responsible for all losses through carelessness, negligence or error, either by themselves or their staff.

- Concessionary closing (e.g. family bereavement, serious illness).
- Public complaints against an individual office.
- Mailwork items (to be forwarded to the NFSP Regional Representative on the Mailwork Advisory Group).
- Security.
- Attending disciplinary hearings with members, as long as they are suitably trained.
- Liaising with regional officials of PO such as Area Managers or Security Managers etc.

NOTE. If you are unable, for whatever reason, to deal with any issue, you must seek help and support from your Regional Secretary, Regional NED or NFSP Advocacy Representative.

As a Branch/Regional Secretary you may support a member in branch with the Area Manager.

If you attend the post office to support the member in a discussion with the Area Manager your input is usually required to represent the member's case. It is recommended to keep notes for reference should the case proceed further; also to hand to a NFSP Advocacy Representative should the case go to a more serious level of suspension, termination or appeal. Listen carefully to both sides and make precise notes. Make sure that you meet with the member prior to the discussion to give some guidance. Usually PO representatives abide by the regulations, but your presence should ensure that this is so. At the conclusion of the discussion, the subpostmaster concerned should be advised that a copy of the statement or record of the discussion should be asked for. You are advised, as a Branch/Regional Secretary, to complete and submit the [Regional forms link](#). A brief report of the case must be given to the Regional NED and stored in central records.

Provided by your NFSP Regional Representative. If you have not received it please contact:
admin [REDACTED] GRO

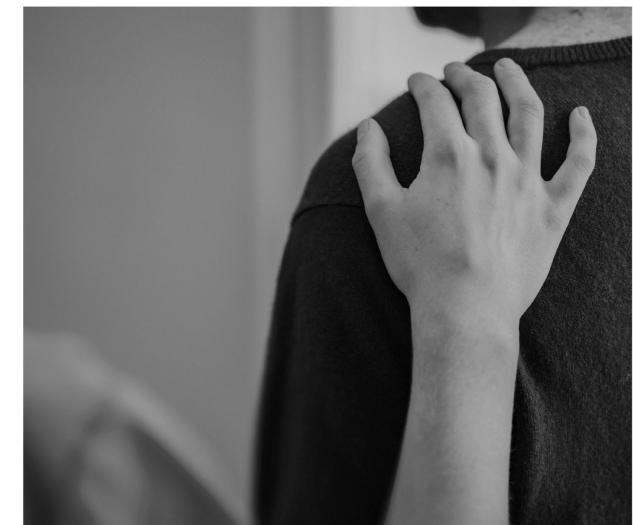
For most incidents that require the input from the Branch/Regional Secretary, it will involve supporting the member in relation to their contract or the procedures that are to be followed whilst operating their post office. This may involve, as examples, but not limited to, cash declarations, continuous discrepancies, balance or trading period non-compliance or issues around the standard of the premises of the subpostmaster.

Interview under PACE

If you attend an interview and it is then advised that the interview will be done under PACE conditions (the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984), you should request a suspension of the interview until an NFSP Advocacy Representative can be present.

It has to be remembered that on these occasions the NFSP Advocacy Representative attends as a 'friend' and is only there as a witness and may not contribute to the proceedings unless specifically invited to do so.

Right
NFSP Advocacy Representatives
can offer support



Section three Responsibilities of the Branch/Regional Secretary

Prepare your case well in advance. Do not be afraid to take notes into any meeting; facts can easily be forgotten.

- Collate all the facts on the [Regional forms link](#).
- Make sure that the facts you have are correct. Inform the member that it will not help their case to have matters brought out at the meeting that you are not aware of.
- Try to obtain the facts from PO's side as well, in advance.
- Obtain all correspondence that may have been written on the subject.
- Avoid assumptions.
- Emphasise strong points; ignore any weaknesses.
- Prepare to defend the member.
- Avoid a dogmatic approach.
- Be firm but never close the door on compromise.
- Remember that anybody can call a break at any point during the proceedings.

NOTE: The PO representative will probably be preparing their case with similar thoroughness along the above lines.

Provided by your NFSP
Regional Representative.
If you have not received it
please contact:
admin

GRO

Section four

The NFSP year

The NFSP operates on a calendar year, i.e. 1 January to 31 December, democratically and 1 October to 30 September financially, within which, dates and high points are clearly defined. Each branch needs to organise its own year so that it can play its part in the democratic process of the NFSP.

The democratic year

The routine in a normal year revolves around the publication of the Annual Review, and Annual Conference. To ensure they play a full part in the democratic process, branches need to arrange the timetable for their meetings to coincide with the national process. Additionally, every third year, there are elections for the NFSP Board.

Annual Review

The Annual Review gives both a resume of the NFSP's initiatives over the previous calendar year, and crucially how policy might be taken forward in the coming year. It is distributed ahead of Annual Conference each year. This is then supplemented by a verbal report at Annual Conference.

Annual Conference

Annual Conference coincides with the AGM of the NFSP. Each region has the right to be represented. The strength of any region's representation is directly related to its membership levels. Financial assistance, from the Region, is also available to each delegate, to cover the cost of attendance.

The purpose of Annual Conference is to discuss the Annual Review and debate strategic actions and plans on future direction from regions, making it the ultimate policy making body of the NFSP. The format of Annual Conference is not rigid but is reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure it is relevant and modern.

Debate and discussion at Annual Conference

Annual Conference provides delegates with the opportunity to question, debate and to engage with NFSP on its strategic actions and plans.

This is achieved by discussing the contents of the Annual Review, by debating strategic actions and plans, and by providing the opportunity for open discussion and debate on day-to-day issues that concern members.

Any branch is able to put forward written questions on the Annual Review to its region. These will be answered at Annual Conference. Queries on the verbal presentation are allowed on the day at the National Chair's discretion.

Less formal open debates, generally headlined under one topic, may be scheduled to allow delegates to air matters of general concern and to impart useful information to both Annual Conference and to PO observers. These debates are important and encourage more delegates to contribute to the debate who may not otherwise do so. All of the issues raised during an open debate are addressed with PO by the NFSP Board.

Guest speakers are featured as appropriate and may give a different perspective to inform debate and discussion.

The Members' Editor

The Members' Editor is elected annually by members assembled at Annual Conference. Nominations for the Members' Editor are made by members providing that all nominations are in writing and proposed and seconded by members of the NFSP. All nominations should be received by the CEO not less than eight weeks before the Annual Conference. In the event of there being more than one nomination an election will take place at Annual Conference.

The Members' Editor and the Director of Communications shall be jointly responsible for the layout and content of the letters page of the NFSP magazine, The SubPostmaster.

Section five

Help from NFSP Headquarters

NFSP Headquarters, based in Shoreham-by-Sea, is open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

The main function of NFSP Headquarters is as an administrative centre for the NFSP and also provides support and advice.

NFSP Headquarters has limited resources, so remember to first contact your Regional Secretary or Regional NED.

Many issues can be more easily resolved, both in terms of time and effort, at a local level where people know each other, rather than involving a national dimension as would be the case if NFSP Headquarters became involved.

If, however, you are unable to contact your Regional Secretary or Regional NED, then you should not hesitate to call **NFSP Headquarters** to get the advice or information you seek.

Remember to update the **Regional forms** link on all activity involving a member.

Contact
NFSP Headquarters
on: **GRO**
or admin: **GRO**

Provided by your NFSP
Regional Representative.
If you have not received it
please contact:
admin: **GRO**

Right
NFSP Headquarters,
Shoreham-by-Sea.



Section six

Useful information

This section is intended to provide useful background information on subjects regularly enquired about by members.

Membership benefits

Membership benefits are what potential new members always ask about, but it is advisable to regularly remind existing members of what they receive by being a member, and in doing so, you need to be sure to cover the three main areas of NFSP activity:

Representation

The NFSP is the only organisation recognised by PO to represent the interests of subpostmasters. Representation covers, but is not limited to; remuneration, contract, methods of working and disciplinary matters.

The promotion of subpostmasters and their role

This is an area that is often forgotten or simply not recognised as a benefit. It is, however, very important to the future of every subpostmaster. The NFSP regularly presents the case for subpostmasters and post offices to government; parliamentary select committees; and political parties generally, as well as other organisations throughout the United Kingdom.

The success of this type of approach is not always obvious but a point to emphasise is that the NFSP is politically neutral and is prepared to talk to all responsible parties without prejudice.

Support for subpostmasters and their families

It is this section that most potential members see as answering the question about what they receive by being a member but even here, the support the NFSP can offer subpostmasters is greater than the list of products and services at the end of this section.

The support is about being there to discuss problems and listen to complaints. A branch meeting is an ideal forum for fellow subpostmasters to meet and talk.

The social life of your branch should also be highlighted especially to new subpostmasters as they can quite often be new to the area and not only will they be struggling with a new business but could also be looking to create a new social life.

As to the more obvious support package, the nature of what is available is liable to change, but the following represents some of the most attractive **benefits of membership**:

- Recommended new products to try, plus exclusive deals for members with NFSP retail partners. Log in to the NFSP website www.nfsp.org.uk for full details on all our current **NFSP retail partners**.
- Independent commercial and general insurance brokers, dedicated to providing cost-effective **insurance solutions**.
- **NFSP+** a benefit scheme offering savings and discounts on everyday purchases and activities such as Health and Wellbeing support services which includes a 24-hour helpline with qualified counsellors, bereavement support and medical information, shopping, motoring, travel and experiences, advice, work and business, as well as a Legal helpline. **Confidential Trauma Counselling Helpline**, is also available on **GRO** - quote reference NFSP.
- A dedicated **HR Helpline** (HR:4UK) to assist with employment issues.
- A **relief scheme**, to give subpostmasters the chance to take a well-earned holiday, via HR:4UK.
- **Free personal injury insurance** for subpostmasters and their staff in the event of an attack.

www.nfsp.org.uk

Log in to www.nfsp.org.uk
to find out more.

- **Free tax and VAT investigation insurance** for business and/or personal tax affairs.
- Individual subpostmasters requiring guidance on tax and finance issues should be referred to their personal tax advisors.
- A **Benevolent Fund** to help current and former subpostmasters and their families in times of difficulty.
- Support to help understand and correctly implement **mails segregation** from a team of experts.
- Access to **specialist retail advice**.
- **The SubPostmaster magazine**, to keep you up to date on the latest industry news and business opportunities.
- A **NFSP website** with a dedicated members-only section to share the latest news from the NFSP.
- **Local and Regional WhatsApp groups**, keeping members in touch with the NFSP and subpostmasters in your area.
- A **private Facebook group** exclusive to NFSP members for peer to peer support.
- **Regular email updates**, news and information from the NFSP to help you run your post office and retail business.

To sign up for the NFSP WhatsApp or Facebook groups please contact:
communications GRO

To sign up for NFSP emails please contact:
communications GRO

Benevolent Fund

The Benevolent Fund provides temporary support for current and retired subpostmasters and their families who fall on hard times, in cases of severe illness, bereavement or other domestic distress.

Support can be given as a one-off grant to help with specific requirements, such as the installation of specialist equipment to allow individuals with a disability to remain in their own home. In other circumstances the Benevolent Fund can provide ongoing financial support through the regular payment of grants.

The Fund is administered by the Board of Benevolence, comprised of NFSP Non-Executive Directors from each region of the NFSP.

Applications are via an [application form](#).

To find out more or request an application form contact www.nfsp.org.uk,
email: benevolentfund@nfsp.org.uk
or call GRO



Section seven

Most regular questions

This section differs from Section six in that it deals with specific questions and provides the information to answer them. However, if you have any doubts about the advice you are giving, check with your Regional Secretary, Regional NED or NFSP Headquarters.

Remuneration

Remuneration is a very complex topic, which may be amended throughout the course of the year through the introduction of new products. If you receive a detailed question on remuneration, pass it on to your Regional NED in writing or via email.

Holiday substitution

The first thing to note is that subpostmasters, on a traditional contract, are not entitled to annual leave as such, but they can claim some reimbursement for the cost of a substitute when taking a holiday. Full details can be found in **Section four** of the subpostmasters' traditional contract.

The main points, however, are:-

- The allowance is spread over a two-year period. The subpostmaster must give 18 hours personal service each week to qualify. The period begins on April 1 every odd year.
- To request how many days you have left available, contact:

Branch Support Centre
Atria, Spa Road
Bolton, BL1 4AG
Tel: **GRO**

- For a subpostmaster with less than 10 years' service, there is an allowance of seven weeks.

- PO must be notified before any holiday is booked. Approval must be given beforehand.
- A claim for substitution for any period must be made in advance of the absence.
- Only one allowance is available, regardless of the number of appointments the subpostmaster holds.
- The subpostmaster must be absent from their private business and all of their post office appointments.
- The subpostmaster must have incurred additional expenditure in respect of a paid substitute.
- Payments will not be made with respect to family members who regularly work in the post office.
- To claim for holiday substitution, the subpostmaster should fill in form P2593 prior to taking their holiday and send this back to PO.
- After the holiday, the subpostmaster should complete both forms P2340 and P2340(A) and return them to the Branch Support Centre (BSC). The substitute would need to sign form P2340(A).



Sickness substitution

A subpostmaster, on a traditional contract, is not required to give personal service and is therefore not entitled to sick leave as such. However, under certain circumstances, they can claim some reimbursement for the cost of a substitute when they are absent from their post office through illness. Full details of the scheme can be found in Section seven of the Subpostmasters' traditional contract, the main points of which are as follows:-

- Payment is limited to 13 weeks in any consecutive period of 12 months.
- A subpostmaster becomes eligible for the allowance from the fourth day after sickness absence. The allowance can then be applied retrospectively for all but the first week.
- To be eligible, a subpostmaster must normally provide a minimum of 18 hours personal service a week.
- Payments will only be made in relation to one appointment regardless of how many are held.

Claims should be made via the Branch Support Centre:

Branch Support Centre
Atria, Spa Road
Bolton, BL1 4AG
Tel: **GRO**



Opening hours

The standard core hours of opening are:-

Monday to Friday 9am - 5.30pm
Saturday 9am - 12.30pm

Depending on what contract the subpostmaster is on they may be required to be open the same hours as their business. Please refer to the relevant contract for clarification. Any change from these hours, such as lunch hours and an extra half day, is a concession agreed between the subpostmaster and their Contract Manager. There is greater flexibility now from PO but the first priority should always be customer service.

Resignation on total closure - depending on contract

A subpostmaster who wishes to resign their traditional appointment must give three calendar months' notice in writing. If they do not give such notice, PO may require them to pay any expense which it incurs in providing temporary arrangements to cater for the business which would normally be expected to be transacted at the post office during any part of the notice period.

A subpostmaster who has a Mains contract should give twelve calendar months' notice and if on a Local contract should give six calendar months' notice.

It should be noted that there is no specific age limit for the retirement of a subpostmaster. Unless indicated otherwise by the Contract Manager, a vacancy will be advertised at the existing post office premises.

Resignation on sale or transfer

Any subpostmaster contemplating resignation from their office on sale or transfer is entitled to, and strongly advised, to seek a pre-resignation interview from their Area Manager (AM). They will then be informed of their future plans for the office should they resign. The plan will be confirmed in writing.

Depending on the outcome of the pre-resignation interview you may wish to pass further queries onto your Regional NED.

Appendix one

Model set of guidelines for branches

(NOTE - These guidelines may be altered to suit the requirements of any particular branch, provided that, as altered, they do not conflict with or infringe the Article of Association/Guidelines of the NFSP. Branch guidelines or amendments to Branch guidelines must be submitted to the Regional Council within 14 days of adoption).

1) Title

This branch shall be called " _____ Branch of the National Federation of SubPostmasters".

2) Status

This branch shall be affiliated to the National Federation of SubPostmasters (therein after called 'The NFSP') and shall be subject to the guidelines of the NFSP.

3) Objects

The objects of this branch shall be

- (a) similar in all respects to those of the NFSP within the area of this branch and
- (b) generally to promote and defend the interests of subpostmasters and to cooperate with other organisations having similar objects and interests.

4) Membership

Refer to NFSP Articles of Association/Guidelines for eligibility criteria for membership.

5) Officers and Committee

(a) The Officers should ideally consist of a Secretary, Chair, Vice-Chair, Hub co-ordinator/s, Benevolent Fund Officer, and a Committee of members all of whom shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and shall take office immediately on their election, following the AGM. They shall all retire at the next following AGM but shall be eligible for re-election.

(b) If any of the above-mentioned offices or a seat on the Committee shall fall vacant from whatsoever cause between AGMs the vacancy may be filled (until the next AGM) at any Special General or Ordinary Branch Meeting providing 14 days' notice of the vacancy shall first have been given to every branch member.

(c) The Branch Committee, Secretary and/or Chair may be removed from office at a meeting of the branch called for that purpose and such meeting may fill the vacancy or vacancies.

(d) Where a vacancy for a Secretary has not been filled, the branch may appoint a Hub Co-ordinator/s. They shall arrange branch meetings in liaison with the Regional Secretary.

6) Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting shall be held as soon as possible after Annual Conference each year.

7) Special General Meeting

A Special General Meeting of the branch shall be called within seven days upon the requisition of any seven members by stating their object and giving notice in writing to the Secretary, or at any time on the authority of the Chair and the Secretary/Hub Co-ordinator/s.

8) Ordinary Branch Meetings

These shall be held at least twice a year.

9) Notice of Branch Meetings

Conduct of Branch Meetings and voting.

(a) The Secretary/Hub Co-ordinator/s shall give the following written notice of meetings to all members

- i) Annual General Meetings: 14 days.
- ii) Special General Meeting and Ordinary Branch meetings: seven days.

(b) The Chair or Vice-Chair shall normally preside at all such meetings and _____ shall form a quorum (five to form a quorum). Voting shall be by show of hands and the Chair shall have a casting vote.

11) The Secretary/Hub Co-ordinator/s

They shall keep records of minutes of all the proceedings of the branch. The Secretary/Hub Co-ordinator/s shall present the report at the AGM.

12) Miscellaneous

A copy of the Guidelines of the branch should be kept by the Secretary/Hub Co-ordinator/s and open to inspection by members.

13) Alteration of Guidelines

No Guideline shall be altered or rescinded and no new Guideline shall be adopted except by a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting at an AGM or at a Special General Meeting convened for that purpose. Not less than 21 days' notice of any proposed alteration, rescindment or new Guideline must be given to the Secretary/Hub Co-ordinator/s who shall lay it before the Committee and give seven days' notice with full particulars to all members. The Regional Committee will have full power to set aside any amendments which are in conflict with either the Regional Guidelines or the Articles of Association and these Guidelines.

14) Dissolution

The branch may be dissolved at any time by a two-thirds majority vote of branch members present and voting passed at any Annual or Special General Meeting provided that at least 14 days' previous notice of such resolution shall be given to each branch member and provided further that the approval of the Regional Committee shall first have been obtained. On such dissolution, any assets held by the branch shall be transferred to the Region.

Expenses claim form

Please find an example of a NFSP model branch/ regional expenses claim form overleaf.



Model branch/region expenses claim form

Expenses incurred by: _____
in attending _____ on _____

I confirm that payment from Time Away from Business will be disclosed to HMRC.

Claimant's Certificate

1. Certified that the above expenses were incurred solely on official branch/region business
2. Documentary evidence of expenditure is attached where applicable.

Date _____ Signature of claimant _____

Regional Treasurer's certificate

The meeting for which expenses have been claimed is authorised within the guidelines of the region. All amounts claimed have been examined and are considered to be fair and reasonable.

Date _____ Signature of Regional Treasurer _____

Appendix three

Guide for Regional Treasurers

Regional Treasurer's guidance notes

This guide outlines the basic responsibilities and obligations of the Regional Treasurer and details the relationship between the NFSP and the Regional Treasurer.

Point of contact

The Regional Treasurer shall be the primary contact for the NFSP in relation to financial matters.

The Regional Treasurer will be responsible for reporting to the Regional Committee and to NFSP Headquarters.

The Regional Treasurer will be responsible for the management of the region's funds and for paying invoices for venues for meetings.

Responsibilities of the Regional Treasurer

Management of expenses claims

It is the responsibility of the Regional Treasurer to ensure that no expenses are paid or incurred which are not in accordance with the guidelines of the region and the NFSP, and are for the furtherance of the objectives of the region.

Expenses of undertaking regional activities

The Regional Treasurer should ensure all payments made for costs incurred on branch/regional activities are in accordance with the guidelines of the region. You can find a template **Expenses claim form** in Appendix two which should be completed in support of all expenditure payments.

The Regional Treasurer should ensure that all expenses are also supported by receipts or other documentary proof, other than the payment of standard allowances for travel and substitution for time away from the counter.

Payment of approved expenses should be made promptly.

Payments to branch/regional officials (submitted as an invoice by the official)

Payments to officers and anyone on official branch/regional business are:

- Regional Secretary - £1,200 per annum plus expenses for attending meetings.
- Branch/Regional Secretary - £600 per annum plus expenses for attending meetings.
- Regional Treasurer - £1,200 per annum plus expenses for attending meetings.
- Regional Committee - Expenses for attending meetings.

Regional banking

Each region shall maintain a current account with a recognised bank, which will be used to facilitate the day-to-day operations of the Region and the payment of "Out of Pocket" expenses.

All payments, including transfers, from the regions bank accounts shall be approved, and signed either physically or digitally by at least two officers, or approved bank signatories.

When available funds fall below £3,000 the Regional Treasurer may request further funds, the "Top Up", from NFSP Headquarters. At the time the request is made, the Regional Treasurer shall submit to NFSP Headquarters, Vouchers and Expenses claim forms in support of the payments made by the region, since the last "Top Up" request.

The "Top Up" will be calculated to restore the bank balance to £10,000.

On special occasions, such as the payment of expenses for attending conference, the Regional Treasurer may make a request for an advance "Top Up" to ensure adequate funds are available to defray such cost.

Insurance

The Regional Treasurer should ensure that all assets of the region are adequately insured.

Accounting matters

Each region will be provided with access to the Online Accounting Package Xero®. It is the responsibility of the Regional Treasurer to ensure that the accounting records are maintained up to date and that the Xero® link to the bank account is maintained.

Xero® will provide online visibility to transactions, allowing review by NFSP Headquarters and for the preparation of accounts, and approval of "Top Up" payments.

If the accounting records are not maintained on a timely basis, any request for "Top Up" may be delayed or refused until such time as the accounting records are brought up to date.

Assistance and guidance will be provided to aid with the maintenance of the records and can be requested via NFSP Headquarters.

Appendix four

Guide for Benevolent Fund Officers

Duties of Benevolent Fund Officer

These are two-fold:

To create and foster interest within the branch and the Fund

This is really propaganda work on behalf of the Benevolent Fund – ensuring that members are made fully aware of its existence and aims; keeping alive the interest of those who are already members; making sure that your branch plays its part in collecting funds in order that the work of the Benevolent Fund is not hampered by lack of finance.

Members are asked to contribute under the **Charity Payroll Giving Scheme**. This is a very efficient way of giving as members benefit from tax relief. The Benevolent Fund Officer should occasionally remind members that when the cost of living increases, so do the calls made on the Benevolent Fund. In many branches, social events provide an opportunity of seeking extra donations in the form of raffles, etc. In others, an effective technique can be to encourage members to start or increase their donations at general meetings. Collection boxes are also available from NFSP Headquarters.

If occasional reports are made to meetings of the branch, it is important to remember that reports do not contain anything which would enable recipients of assistance to be identified and embarrassment caused. Remember, the Benevolent Fund is confidential. The Board, although answerable to Annual Conference for the administration of the Benevolent Fund, has sole discretion in dealing with applications for assistance.

To find out how to do this
Contact NFSP Headquarters
on **GRO**
or benfund **GRO**

To investigate cases on behalf of the board within the branch area

As Benevolent Fund Officer, you may be approached to visit a person who is considering making a claim, and perhaps provide help in completing the form. Alternatively, for cases brought to the attention of the Benevolent Fund, you may be asked to make a visit to a potential claimant on the Benevolent Fund's behalf. In addition, you will occasionally hear of cases which, in your opinion, are worthy of assistance from the Benevolent Fund. In these instances you are encouraged to arrange a visit, or to collect more information locally. **NFSP Headquarters** can be contacted for a supply of forms or for help and advice on completing them.

benfund **GRO**

Occasionally you may be asked by the Board of Benevolence to visit a recipient of the Benevolent Fund to check on their circumstances.

Cases can either be serving subpostmasters, retired subpostmasters, or family of former subpostmasters who have fallen on hard times. The Benevolent Fund can help give temporary assistance or one-off grants. In each case, the Benevolent Fund Officer should visit the person concerned and provide them with a claim form. Once this form has been completed by the claimant, then a full report on the circumstances of the case should be submitted. This information should be factual, rather than subjective.

Reports of the Board are strictly confidential and for the use of the Board only.

Under the rules of the Benevolent Fund, any out-of-pocket expenses incurred by the Benevolent Fund Officer whilst carrying out investigations, will be reimbursed by the Board of Benevolence to that Officer.

www.nfsp.org.uk or email
benfund **GRO**

The Benevolent Fund's Objects and constitution are available by logging on to the **NFSP website**.

Appendix five

Key points for Training Manual

Provided by your NFSP Regional Representative. If you have not received it please contact admin

GRO

Key Points for Training Manual Branch and Regional Secretaries

Ensure you complete the NFSP forms link as appropriate.

- This must be completed for every request for help.
- Ensure when you close or pass on the case it is uploaded to central records.
- Inform Regional NED as soon as possible.

Discuss with the subpostmaster the issue or problem.

- Ascertain what the problem is.
- Does it need immediate action to avoid an escalation?
- Are you able and trained to help the subpostmaster?

Speak to the person from PO who is dealing with it, i.e. Area Manager/Regional Manager.

- Ascertain the PO position on the issue.
- Is it fair and reasonable?
- Is it within the contractual obligations of the subpostmaster? (Check summarised contract document for reference on NFSP website).
- Check that PO have followed their policy procedure on NFSP website.

Request all the reports available from PO.

- Reports available will be dependent on the issue. (reference Appendix seven).

What are the options for a resolution to the issue?

- Discuss with the subpostmaster what they would accept.
- Is this in line with their contractual obligations.
- Discuss with PO what they require.
- Can this be enforced within the contract?
- Is the solution fair and reasonable to both sides?
- Can this be resolved to everyone's satisfaction.

Does this need to be escalated to an NFSP Advocacy Representative?

- If there is no agreement or resolution between the subpostmaster and PO.
- Could there be a suspension of the subpostmaster?
- Could the subpostmaster be liable for any potential loss?

NFSP Advocacy Representative

Ensure all documentation has been received from the Branch/Regional Secretary:

- NFSP forms link.
- PO reports.

Discuss with PO the main points in the reports.

- Have PO followed their own policy?
- Are they being reasonable?
- Is this a breach of contract?

Discuss with the subpostmaster what has happened.

- Does this agree with the points made on the Regional log.
- Is the subpostmaster being unreasonable?
- What evidence is available to support the subpostmaster view?

Will this lead to a possible suspension of the subpostmaster?

- Can the subpostmaster be suspended under the terms of his contract?
- Is the suspension justifiable?
- Is there an alternative solution to suspension? (always argue for an alternative solution).

Subpostmaster is suspended

- Has the subpostmaster received in writing his suspension notice?
- Does it give the reason for the suspension?
- Does this need to go to the Decision Review Panel?

Subpostmaster contract terminated

Ensure all documents are passed on:

- NFSP checklist.
- All PO documents supporting the termination.
- Has the subpostmaster been notified in writing?
- Has the rationale for the termination been given by letter?
- Is there a notice period?
- Does this need to go to the Decision Review Panel?

Does the subpostmaster agree with the reasons for the termination?

YES

- What can now be done to minimise the impact of the termination?

NO

- Suggest that an appeal be lodged and then start to look for grounds to appeal.

Appendix six

Guidelines on representing Members

For information only, unless you are a trained NFSP Advocacy Representative.

Meetings

These guidelines should enable you to:

- Understand why it is important for an organisation to have a clear disciplinary procedure that lays down standards of performance or conduct.
- Understand the two different types of action that PO will consider when dealing with subpostmasters who are thought to be in breach of their contract.
- Be aware of the stages of the PO Contract Application procedures and the main issues for consideration at each of those stages.

Interviews

PO approach and policy.

Disciplinary action may take a number of forms depending on the nature of the events that led to PO's decision to begin the process.

In terms of the subpostmasters' contract, the main issues you will need to consider are:

- Poor Performance.
- Poor accounting procedures.
- Misconduct.
- Excess cash held on counter (e.g. during a robbery).
- Suspension (please pass the case to an NFSP Advocacy Representative).

There can be the possibility of up to five interviews:

- PO Security (depending on severity, may require immediate NFSP Advocacy Representative).
- Factfinding.
- Suspension (NFSP Advocacy Representative only).
- Termination (NFSP Advocacy Representative only).
- Appeal (NFSP Advocacy Representative only).

Background

The Contract Application Guidelines were agreed following lengthy negotiations between the NFSP and PO.

The intention of these guidelines is to ensure subpostmasters, NFSP officials and PO managers are all working within the same guidelines, and that subpostmasters should be able to feel that the system is fair and will be implemented in a manner that gives them full opportunity to state their case should there ever be a need.

The guidelines work alongside the Subpostmaster Contract.

Disciplinary procedures

To be able to represent members effectively you need to understand the principles that should underlay any disciplinary procedures.

Disciplinary rules: why have them?

- Clear rules benefit both the PO and the individual.
- Sets standards of conduct and performance at work.
- People know what is expected of them.
- Provides for fairness and consistent treatment.

A procedure can help you deal fairly and consistently with disciplinary action, including those that may involve termination of contract.

Why have disciplinary procedures?

Procedure is the means by which:

- Rules are observed.
- Standards are maintained.
- Short comings are dealt with.
- People do the right thing at the right time.

Rules and procedures

The relevant reference documents are:

- The Subpostmaster Contract.
- Guide to policy standards.
- Branch focus.

These procedures cover:

- Performance standards.
- Action likely to lead to warnings, or a termination notice.
- Misconduct/Gross misconduct.
- Action that will result in summary termination of contract.

Performance issues

The PO Contract Application Guidelines provide for the following steps in cases involving performance issues:

Performance Discussions

To assist the subpostmaster to improve and avoid further action.

Written warnings

- Where oral warnings are not effective.
- Failure to improve operational performance or properly maintain premises right to appeal.

What rights does a subpostmaster have when a written warning is issued regarding their performance?

The Contract Application Guidelines state that the subpostmaster must be given the opportunity to provide an explanation.

The Subpostmasters contract state that subpostmasters should be given the opportunity to provide a written explanation of conduct and allegations. The only time this might not happen is where civil or criminal proceedings are being considered.

The subpostmaster has the right to a meeting with the Contracts Manager, which "will not normally be withheld", as well as the right to be accompanied by an NFSP Advocacy Representative or legal representative.

How many times would you expect PO to issue a written warning?

This will depend on the type and nature of the problems. Any penalty should reflect the individual circumstances. However, given the ultimate outcome could be termination of contract, we would question whether PO has looked at how it is supporting the subpostmaster before considering written warnings or termination. On issues of management of the office, factors that may be taken into consideration could include length of service, previous record, level of training received, other support provided by PO, and any mitigating circumstances. The emphasis here should always be on correcting any shortcomings in performance by training and support. Only when all else fails should termination be considered as a measure of last resort.

Summary termination should not be used in performance cases, only in misconduct cases. Termination in performance cases will vary between three and twelve months notice, depending on contract type, which gives the subpostmaster the time to sell. There is no right of appeal if PO terminates the contract for such performance issues. This option should not therefore be used by PO to avoid summary termination and its associated appeals procedure.

Representing a member at an interview

Your role as the member's representative:

Main aims:

- To ensure the member has a fair hearing.
- To obtain the best outcome for the member, given circumstances of the case – that does not always mean reinstatement, but it might mean time to sell.
- Record details of your representation and outcomes on case logs.

Preparing for an Interview

- Allow adequate time to prepare.
- Has PO investigated promptly and established all the facts?
- Ensure you see all evidence PO is using in supporting its allegations before the interview.
- Make notes on the facts and statements made by any of the parties involved.
- Keep the case confidential.

What should PO tell the subpostmaster?

- State the specific charge.

The subpostmaster should be given adequate notice (e.g., seven working days - see section 16 of Subpostmasters contract for timescales) of any interview being arranged.

- Outcome could be summary termination.

The subpostmaster can request and receive all information relevant to the charge.

As subpostmasters will invariably be employers, a good clear disciplinary procedure enables everyone involved to know where they stand and what is expected of them. As the contract with subpostmasters has been deemed to be 'relation' there is an underlying requirement towards a duty of good faith on both parties. PO cannot act 'irrationally, arbitrarily nor capriciously' in their dealings with subpostmasters. Further, subpostmasters have been deemed to be responsible for all losses either by themselves or their staff in relation to losses due to carelessness, error or negligence.

All Interviews

Identify the issue

- Assess strengths and weaknesses.
- Answer the charge.
- Is the charge appropriate?

Ask yourself:

- Have I considered all the options?
- What are likely outcomes?
- What is the outcome that the member would prefer? Or, at least be prepared to settle for?
- Is there common ground for the most likely option?
- Ask yourself 'What if?' because it gives you the chance to think something through from a different perspective, e.g. What if PO is wrong? What if more evidence emerges?

What should you aim to do in your arguments?

- Establish doubt.
- Have PO carried out a thorough investigation?
- What reports are available?
- When did PO first become aware there was an issue?
- What early support, if any, did PO provide the subpostmaster?
- Develop alternative scenarios.
- Try to obtain a fair agreement.

Presenting the case

- Diary of events.
- Arguments to be used in defence.
- Record all relevant facts.
- Challenge the charge where evidence supports defence.
- What is best practice?
- Was the member following correct procedure?

Decision

- The outcome of the interview is notified to the subpostmaster in writing.
- If the outcome is unsuccessful then the option to appeal is also notified.

The do's and don'ts

Once you are face to face with the Contract Manager, what are the do's and don'ts of an interview?

You need to remember that the Contract Manager or PO Security person you will be making representations to, is the same person you will be dealing with on behalf of others. How should you deal with PO officials?

You need to build a relationship that is based on respecting the other person's view point and establishing with the Contracts Manager that your NFSP input or view is valid.

You need to maintain credibility – therefore accept that a fair outcome may mean that you will not be able to achieve reinstatement. However, you may be able to secure time to sell.

You always need to remember a fair outcome has to be consistent with maintaining the NFSP's profile in the community, integrity, etc.

- Need to retain NFSP credibility.
- Be firm and assertive, but not aggressive.
- Be factual.
- Stay calm – do not allow yourself to lose control of the situation through anger or frustration.
- Follow your prepared notes.

If PO suddenly introduces fresh evidence or, having written one charge into the Interview letter, then starts to discuss other issues that are not relevant to the charge:

- Stop the interview.
- State the reason.
- Ask for the Interview to be reconvened.
- Ask for the fresh charge and supporting evidence to be supplied.
- Tell them you need adequate time to prepare.

During an interview and appeal, the member is the main speaker but usually you are allowed to interject if the need arises.

The appeals procedure

- Appeal may be in writing or through face to face interview.
- The face to face interview is the recommended option and your NFSP Advocacy Representative can further advise the member.
- You have 14 days to appeal from the date of termination.
- The case will be allocated to a PO Appeals Manager within 48 hours.
- Appeal hearing normally within six weeks.
- Outcome advised two weeks later.

Appendix seven

Reports from Post Office Ltd (PO)

Please find a list of Reports from PO overleaf and when they should be received.

Appendix seven

Reports from Post Office Ltd (PO) and when they should be received

DOCUMENT	USE	WHEN	NFSP REPRESENTATIVE TRAINED	WHICH POLICY?
AUDIT				
Audit Rationale Document (ARD)	Shared with subpostmaster as reason for audit	On audit arrival	B/R Secretary	Monitoring and audit support policy
Audit Reporting Tool (ART)	Used during the audit	One copy to be left with subpostmaster	B/R Secretary	
Audit Reporting Tool (ART)	Follow up for checking purposes by PO	Emailed to subpostmaster after 60 days	B/R Secretary	
TRANSACTION CORRECTIONS				
Transaction Correction (T/C) to be issued promptly	Document outlines the reason for the T/C being issued	ASAP but within 60 days	B/R Secretary	Transaction
Transaction acknowledgement	Balances branch accounting	Next working day but if a failure occurs a T/C will be issued	B/R Secretary	Corrections policy
ACCOUNTING DISPUTE				
Branch discrepancy	Subpostmaster to contact Branch Support Centre (BSC) to report and get a ref Number	As soon as it is discovered	B/R Secretary	Accounting Dispute and Resolution policy
Tier 1	Investigation and suggestions will be done on this call to BSC	During the call	B/R Secretary	
Tier 2	Tier 1 will escalate to Tier 2 if a resolution cannot be found	Resolve in 10 working days	B/R Secretary	
Tier 2 checklist	Used to check for errors and discrepancies and then supplied to subpostmaster	On request following investigation by Tier 2	B/R Secretary	
Tier 3	Escalation from Tier 2	Aim to resolve in 10 working days	Advocacy Representative	
Subpostmaster Information Pack	Supplied by Tier 3 and includes all the data reviewed	Following the investigation	Advocacy Representative	
Case Investigation Report	Supplied to subpostmaster	Once a decision is made	Advocacy Representative	
ACCOUNTING SUPPORT				
Trading Period Discrepancy identified	PO will seek an explanation	Weekly following a trading period end	B/R Secretary	Account support policy

DOCUMENT	USE	WHEN	NFSP REPRESENTATIVE TRAINED	WHICH POLICY?
Resignation	PO will contact subpostmaster to minimise risk of discrepancy on last day of service	Regularly	B/R Secretary	Account support policy
Discrepancies	PO will contact subpostmaster to offer support before a settlement is agreed	Weekly and ongoing	B/R Secretary	
Repayments	Only issued when the discrepancy is resolved to the satisfaction of the subpostmaster	ASAP	B/R Secretary	
Repayment option	Issued to subpostmaster when a large discrepancy occurs and could cause hardship to the subpostmaster	ASAP and if spread over longer than 12 months will be reviewed annually	B/R Secretary	
CASH AND STOCK				
PO monitoring of the post office	Expected Cash Holdings not matching Cash Declaration	Telephone call made to discuss issue	B/R Secretary	Network cash and stock management policy
Inward Remittance discrepancy found at post office	Report to BSC and obtain a ref number	Immediately on checking the delivery	B/R Secretary	
Outward Cash discrepancy found by PO	Letter sent to subpostmaster identifying the discrepancy	Day 2 following collection from post office	B/R Secretary	
Outward Stock discrepancy found by PO	Letter sent to subpostmaster identifying the discrepancy	When the pouch is checked at the Stock Centre	B/R Secretary	
Excess Cash Holdings	PO will make a call to the subpostmaster	As soon as it is identified	B/R Secretary	
Delivery failures	Inventory Support Team will call the subpostmaster	On the same day as the failure	B/R Secretary	
SUSPENSION				
Preliminary Investigation	Report sent to subpostmaster	Once report is completed	Advocacy Representative	Subpostmaster suspension policy
Informing of suspension	Contract Advisor will contact the subpostmaster giving the reasons for the suspension	Phone call initially and followed up with a letter	Advocacy Representative	

Appendix seven
Reports from PO and when they should be received

DOCUMENT	USE	WHEN	NFSP REPRESENTATIVE TRAINED	WHICH POLICY?
Suspension period	They will be reviewed regularly and the subpostmaster updated by letter	Initially after 10 working days and every five working days thereafter	Advocacy Representative	Subpostmaster suspension policy
Re-instatement	If appropriate this will be done by letter which will confirm the outcomes of the investigation	ASAP after investigation is completed	Advocacy Representative	
TERMINATION				
Investigation	PO will supply the details and supporting documents to the subpostmaster	Once they are completed	Advocacy Representative	Subpostmaster termination policy
Immediate termination	This can only be given in writing to the subpostmaster	ASAP once the decision has been made	Advocacy Representative	
Notice period	This may be mutually agreed between PO and the subpostmaster but must be documented	Ongoing	Advocacy Representative	
Informing subpostmaster	The Contract Advisor will advise the subpostmaster by letter outlining the rationale for the decision	ASAP once the decision has been made	Advocacy Representative	
APPEALS				
Ease of making an appeal	Right of appeal clearly signposted in all relevant communications sent	Ongoing	Advocacy Representative	Subpostmaster appeals policy
Appeal timescale	This will involve the grounds for appeal and must be sent to PO	Sent to PO within 14 days of termination	Advocacy Representative	
Grounds for appeal	This submission will be reviewed by the Appeals Manager who will make a final decision on next steps	Subpostmaster will be written to within seven days of the decision being made	Advocacy Representative	
Appeal investigation	Supporting records and information	Sent to subpostmaster following outcome of appeal	Advocacy Representative	
Informing of decision	Decision and rationale sent in a letter to the subpostmaster	ASAP once a decision is made	Advocacy Representative	
COMPLAINT HANDLING				
Report a complaint	Complaints can be sent through a number of forums including Branch Hub, Area Managers and the BSC	ASAP	B/R Secretary	Subpostmaster complaint handling policy
Complaint resolution	If a subpostmaster disputes the outcome of a complaint it will be given to the Complaint Handling Manager to resolve	When required	B/R Secretary	

Appendix eight

Compliance and contractual issues

Please find a list of compliance and contractual issues overleaf.

Compliance and contractual issues

PO	SUBPOSTMASTER	PO	SUBPOSTMASTER	NFSP
STAGE 1	STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 2	STAGE 2
Area Manager (AM) visits to discuss issue and should advise the subpostmaster to contact the NFSP for help.	Contact NFSP to advise of issue	AM escalates due to further non-compliance	Gather evidence to challenge. Horizon receipts. BSC reference numbers etc.	NFSP Representative to gain a better understanding of the issue by discussing with subpostmaster. Ask for evidence reports from PO.
Who is the AM dealing with the issue?	Does the subpostmaster acknowledge the issue and has adequate training been provided.	Can further training be provided, would it resolve the issue.		Who is the NFSP Representative? Only those trained and authorised by the NFSP should be involved. Central recording is a key priority.
1) Subpostmaster provided with NFSP Headquarters contact details who will provide local trained and authorised support. This will be recorded on the central register. 2) When PO contacts NFSP, we need to understand if this is a stage 1-4 situation and direct accordingly. NFSP Headquarters need to question proforma guide when a call is received to triage.	NFSP have provided on the website information on PO policies and cross organisation issues for those involved in representing colleagues.			NFSP representative to follow NFSP policy guidelines in gathering supporting evidence. NFSP representative can request any evidence that PO have to substantiate their issue prior to any meeting taking place.
Stage 1 - 2 can be the local Branch Secretary or Regional Secretary				
Training level - 1) basic understanding of issues and policies relating to contracts. 2) Building relationships with local AM's. 3) Access to guidelines from NFSP to enable most questions or queries to be answered. This can be in the form of worksheets on PO procedures (need to be completed). 4) NFSP has created a Branch/Regional Secretaries section on the NFSP website with support information.				

Issues - Cash declarations, opening hours, continuous discrepancies, branch accounts, irregularities (financial/fraud etc), restrictions (products), non-compliance, legal and regulatory (anti-money laundering - mails integrity), premises standards and customer complaints etc.

PO	NFSP	SUBPOSTMASTER	NFSP	PO
STAGE 3	STAGE 3	STAGE 4	STAGE 4	STAGE 4
Has anyone from PO been given responsibility for going through Horizon reports and checking data?	Work with the AM, PO and the subpostmaster to seek a resolution to the issue. Have you received all the reports from PO concerning the issue?	Situation is now serious and could escalate to suspension and termination of contract.	Advocacy Representative to take over case and work with PO to a mutually beneficial solution.	Must now engage further with NFSP to explore all options and solutions before coming to a final decision.
Have any results including Horizon data been shared with the subpostmaster/ NFSP?	1) Depending on the issue would further training resolve the issue? 2) Has the PO identified who is responsible for the situation. Are there any PO procedural concerns?		Now need to refer to Appendix nine, (p.56) which covers suspensions, terminations and appeals.	Provide all Horizon Data and full disclosure to help the NFSP understand what may have happened.
This would be a tier 3 stage situation and PO should be carrying out a thorough investigation of the post office. They will have been monitoring the post office as well.	As this is a tier 3 stage situation, NFSP Representative can request evidence from PO ahead of any potential meeting.		Requirement for senior NFSP Advocacy Representative to be involved.	
Stage 3 - 4 would be a Senior NFSP Advocacy Representative				
Training level - 1) Interview techniques - adult to adult conversation 2) In-depth knowledge of PO policies and contracts. 3) Information gathering and processing both from PO and the subpostmaster. 4) What can we do or not? 5) Does a solicitor need to be involved?				

Appendix nine

Suspension policy

PO	SUBPOSTMASTER	NFSP ADVOCACY REPRESENTATIVE
Inform the subpostmaster of the suspension, firstly by telephone then followed with a letter giving the reason for the suspension	Comply with the terms of the suspension	Complete a Case Investigation Report
Apply fairness, transparency and professionalism	Contact the NFSP for help and advice	Check that PO have complied with their Suspension Policy guidelines
Advise the subpostmaster to contact the NFSP	Ensure you get responses in a timely manner (10 working days at the start and then every five days thereafter)	What alternatives were discussed prior to the suspension
Gather as much information as possible relating to the issue, liaising with the subpostmaster and other PO teams	Be flexible with availability for meetings when required	Check that contractually PO have the right to suspend the subpostmaster as some contracts may not
Complete a Suspension Rationale Document before a suspension	Be transparent and open to PO	Discuss with the subpostmaster the possibility of a Temp running the office
Consult with Contract Investigation and Resolution Manager before suspending a subpostmaster and continue the dialogue during the period of suspension	Arrange representation (NFSP or Legal) for correspondence or meetings with PO	Discuss with Contract Advisor the basics of the case
Consider all other options before suspending	Request all evidence and information in relation to the investigation	Request all relevant paperwork and reports are supplied to you in a timely manner
Ensure the decision is in line with other PO policies	Contact the nominated Contract Advisor at any time to discuss issues and progress	Attend all interviews as requested
Ensure the Suspension Policy is adhered to and the subpostmaster is supported throughout including contact details for the Contract Advisor dealing with the case		
Explain what will be required from the subpostmaster		
Deal with all contact from the subpostmaster, whether written or otherwise in a timely manner		
Be flexible with meetings when required		
Keep the suspension regularly under review, 10 working days at start and then every 5 working days, subpostmaster to be contacted following each review		
Confirm that remuneration will still be made during the suspension period		

nfsp

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GRO
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