



Postmaster Support Guide





Foreword



Dear Postmaster,

When I took up this job in September 2019, I said that the key priority for me and the business was to transform our relationship with you.

For our respective businesses to succeed, Post Office needs to adopt a fresh approach in how it supports you, as you serve our shared customers every day. This first support guide for postmasters is just one example of this new approach in action, and I hope you will find it useful.

I would ask you to feed back any ideas for improvement you have to your area manager. I want to build a new, genuinely two-way, partnership with you and we'll always look to make improvements wherever we can.

So, I want to reaffirm what I said when I joined. How we work with and support you remains my central priority. It is our job to make your job easier.

Thank you for all you are doing serving customers in communities across the country.



Nick Read, Group Chief Executive Officer





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SECTION 1



The purpose of this guide



This guide has been written to share the support that is available from Post Office for postmasters. It is not intended to be a guide to everything that is available to you as a postmaster, but is intended to help signpost key support routes. Nothing in this guide alters any of the terms of the contract between Post Office and postmasters or introduces any new operational procedures, it is simply a guide to the available support.

Why has this guide been created?

Post Office has changed – and continues to change. The support Post Office offers postmasters has been significantly increased, both in the network and in the support centres. This guide shares what that support looks like, so every postmaster can access support when they need it and to ensure postmasters are aware of the most up-to-date support available to them.

We also recognise that sometimes things go wrong, and when they do we'll work with the postmaster to resolve things as quickly as possible through the support processes we have in place. We know Post Office hasn't always got things right and we hope this guide gives you confidence that Post Office has changed, with postmasters at the heart of everything we do.





The relationship



You hold a unique position at the heart of the community you serve.

A position of trust. A position of respect.

You have chosen to invest in the Post Office brand and in the local community.

With all this, we share an obligation to the thousands of customers who use Post Office branches to ensure that we are providing the highest quality service and standards. It is beneficial for both Post Office and postmasters to work together to achieve this, and Post Office is committed to supporting you as a postmaster and resetting the relationship with any postmaster where we have got things wrong in the past.

The contract between Post Office and postmasters requires both parties to act in good faith. Post Office will behave fairly and professionally when working with postmasters, and as a postmaster we know you will do the same in return. This guide has been written to support the relationship between Post Office and postmasters, outlining the expectations of both parties to ensure we collectively deliver for the customers and communities we serve.

If you don't think we are getting it right, or don't think a member of the Post Office team is behaving in the right way, we want to know. In the first instance you should contact your area manager or regional manager, but you can also approach any member of the Post Office management team, who will take any complaint you have seriously.



General support

WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU AND/OR YOUR TEAM:

We provide several direct sources of support for postmasters, including face-to-face support, telephone support and digital support.

Face-to-face support

Your primary contact point is your area manager. Your area manager can be contacted by telephone, email or WhatsApp. They provide tailored support for an individual branch's needs and can share performance data and discuss operational issues with you. Area managers and regional managers also hold events and meetings for postmasters, which are valuable networking opportunities. You can add your area manager's name, phone number and email address below for reference.



Area manager:

Telephone:

Email:

We also have a range of other support options available including training advisors, business support managers, security managers and audit advisors. They are all available to support you in the successful running of your business. For any support needs, please contact the Branch Support Centre on **GRO** or visit Branch Hub (branchhub.postoffice.co.uk) in the first instance.





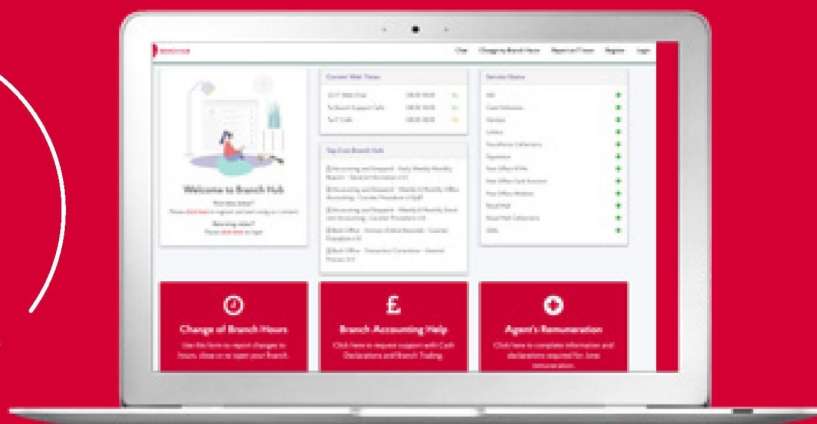
General support

Digital support

Branch Hub (branchhub.postoffice.co.uk) provides a digital platform for many tasks that used to be done over the phone. Information to help you troubleshoot issues is available on Branch Hub. More useful tools are being added regularly to make Branch Hub a one-stop shop for postmasters. We see Branch Hub as an important tool to provide even better support to postmasters and welcome any ideas for more things we can make digitally available for you.

Branch Hub also contains the Digital Service Desk, an online version of the IT Service Desk, to report IT issues. If you have an IT issue and are unable to use the Digital Service Desk, we also provide a phone number to contact the IT Service Desk or **GRO**

You will see throughout this guide that where digital support exists we have highlighted it with the arrow icon below so you know you can use a digital option whenever it is available.



Support with day-to-day transactions

We provide information on Horizon about how to transact products and services and topics such as branch balancing and discrepancies. To access this Help resource on Horizon, please press the Help Home button and then press the appropriate button for the topic you need.

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU AND/OR YOUR TEAM

Please use the support available to you as soon as possible if you experience an issue. Keep in touch with your area manager and please join events and meetings you are invited to as these are designed to benefit you and your business.

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General support

Telephone support

The Branch Support Centre can help if you experience an operational issue and should be your first port of call if you need any support but don't know how to get it. The Branch Support Centre can be contacted on **GRO**. If you need support with any of the following issues, the best number to call is listed below:

Arranging to resolve a discrepancy	Loss Recovery
ATM issues	Bank of Ireland ATM Helpdesk
Branch balancing	Branch Support Centre
Cash ordering	Inventory Support Desk
Fit and Proper declarations	Branch Support Centre
IT issues <i>(The Digital Service Desk on Branch Hub is also available to log an incident)</i>	IT Service Desk
Missing posters or leaflets	Branch Support Centre stock queries
Remuneration queries	Remuneration Support Centre
Reporting a security incident	Grapevine
Reporting suspicious activity, fraud and suspicions of money laundering	Grapevine
Safe repairs	Insafe
Security equipment	Post Office Equipment Team
Signage replacement	Futurama (approved signage manufacturer)
Smart IDs	Branch Support Centre
Transaction Corrections (TCs)	for an explanation of the TC it's the Branch Support Centre to dispute a TC it's the Disputes Team

GRO

You can find a full list of contact numbers at onepostoffice.co.uk/telephone-directory





General support

The NFSP

The National Federation of SubPostmasters (NFSP) is the trade association of those who own and operate Post Offices around the country. As postmasters themselves, they are acutely aware of the challenges postmasters face on a day-to-day basis.

Mission

The NFSP is a membership-led organisation, supporting members to operate Post Office and retail outlets. It represents their interests at every level of policy and decision-making. It offers an opportunity to belong to, and take part in, a community working together for a more successful future. Membership is free.

The Board of Directors

The Board of Directors are either postmasters themselves or representatives of owner/operators of Post Offices and provide a national reach for networking and support on all issues relating to Post Offices. They work with Post Office on behalf of members to enable a positive and productive relationship between the network and Post Office.

Networking

Split into 10 regions, there are regular seminars that are open to postmasters with guest speakers from across Post Office, Royal Mail and other stakeholders, with the aim of informing postmasters of the latest product information and retail trends.

Retail Support

The NFSP offers free advice, help and support to postmasters to improve the business and help drive sales. This covers store layout, preferred suppliers, commercial property and finance.

Mails Support

A key component of every Post Office is mails segregation. The NFSP Mails Segregation Team offers support to enable postmasters to collectively achieve the agreed targets with Royal Mail.



SECTION 4



Training

Early days support

The support we provide as you begin your journey with Post Office is key to helping you build a vibrant Post Office. We start with the basics and build your confidence to help you realise the commercial opportunities that a Post Office brings.

WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU

We'll ensure that we fully support you during your early days of appointment to guarantee you have the best possible start as a postmaster. We'll reinforce and embed our training and build on the basics brilliantly to make sure you are proficient in Horizon navigation, balancing and cash management. To help you achieve this, we'll deliver to you a comprehensive package of training that will see highly skilled training professionals deliver up to six days of on-site support. This support will be supplemented by a minimum of one repeat balance visit, ensuring that you are comfortable with the preparation of the weekly accounts.

The completion of on-site training is not the end of the early days support relationship; after this period we pass the baton to your personal business support manager. Their goal is to tailor their support to help you and your team move from being good to great during the early months of appointment.

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

Make best possible use of our skills, knowledge and experience – it really is that simple. Please arrange for you or your nominated team member(s) to be on site and available during the six days of initial training.

On completion of your six days' training, please be honest about any areas you and your staff require greater support on and make sure you use the experience our business support managers offer. They are highly skilled retail professionals and some have been postmasters themselves – they know just how you feel.

Above all, never be afraid to shout out for additional support. We recognise that we all learn in different ways and we have the willingness and flexibility to meet your needs.



SECTION 4



Training

We also appreciate that training support is not just about those early days. It is important that you and/or your team continue to feel confident when conducting Post Office transactions and processes using Horizon.

WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU:

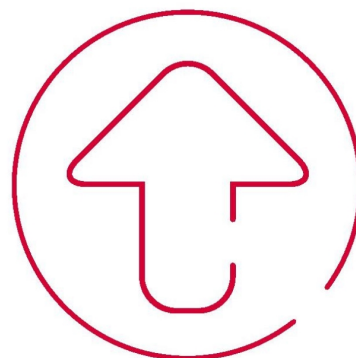
- We'll provide a comprehensive operational training package to you and/or your team. We want you to feel you can complete the basic transactions and processes brilliantly
- We have a blended learning approach, which means we provide a combination of online learning programmes, in-branch training, face-to-face classroom courses and operational guides and work aids. There really is something for everyone who needs to operate in branch using Horizon
- Our Postmaster Operational Training Catalogue is available and has details of all the different options available. You'll find details of how the training can be assigned or booked, how long it is expected to take and where to go for further help with your learning needs
- We'll monitor and review changes in regulations for products and services and we'll provide you with the training you and your staff need to complete regularly to make sure your branch remains compliant and your customers are protected

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

- Please take advantage of the learning available to you and your team. This will give you the confidence and skills to deliver great customer service
- Remember operational training is available to any new or existing members of your team so please browse the catalogue and take advantage of the learning options available. The catalogue is available at <http://onepostoffice.co.uk/media/47392/pmr-ops-training-catalogue-june-2020-approved-v10.pdf>
- Please make sure everyone completes the required compliance training on time. If the need arises, please work with our Branch Standards team to address any compliance issues
- Remember to register all assistants and make sure each individual working on the Post Office counter has their own Smart ID



SECTION 4



Training

Did you know?

We ask for feedback on all our courses. Here is what some postmasters had to say:

“I’ve gained better understanding of how to investigate discrepancies.”

*Investigating
Discrepancies pilot*

“Amazing training pack, brilliant training, every question asked was answered confidently and explained in depth.”

*One-Day Basic Balancing
classroom course*

“Trainer was very professional and knowledgeable, the training exceeded my expectations.”

*One-Day Basic
Transactions
classroom course*

Knowledge Articles

Did you know there is information on Branch Hub to help you troubleshoot common issues and to boost your knowledge about Post Office processes, products and services? Frequently accessed examples include:

- Help with Transaction Correction processes
- Help with completing and monitoring reversals
- Help with weekly and monthly stock unit processes
- Help with IT issues

You can also raise your IT incident there if you can’t resolve it using the information provided.

More documents are being added all the time. It’s worth checking there first if you experience an issue or want to find out more information – it could save you a phone call to the Branch Support Centre.

You’ll find the information on Branch Hub at branchhub.postoffice.co.uk





Customer experience

Customers visiting your branch want to have the best possible experience. Obvious aspects such as keeping your premises clean and tidy, having well-stocked shelves, being open when the customer information says you will be open and friendly, knowledgeable staff all contribute to the overall experience. Not only does this ensure the customer enjoys their visit, but it is also likely to have financial benefits for your business. Acting on customer feedback, both positive and negative, can make a real difference and mean customers will want to come back. When there is a consistently good customer experience in the Post Office network, the Post Office brand is strengthened and both Post Office and postmasters alike benefit from that strong brand.

STANDARDS

It is important to keep the branch safe, clean and accessible so customers can enjoy the branch experience.

WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU

- We provide advice and feedback on branch standards through your area manager. We can also help you with any further understanding of what is required to meet the Post Office branch standards through your area manager if you think you need it
- We provide branches with a customer feedback tool through Qualtrics (<https://postoffice.eu.qualtrics.com>)
- We have provided a simple and easy-to-follow Display Standards Guide that outlines the Post Office display standards for each area of your branch, including checklists, and contact details of where to find more help. Please ask your area manager for a copy

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

- As a minimum, please keep the outside of your branch clean and well-maintained and make sure the entrance is accessible to everyone and your business complies with the Equality Act 2010.
- Inside, please keep the branch clean, tidy and well-kept and the aisles clear and accessible. Please keep all counters and counter screens free from clutter.



Did you know?

Postmasters regularly win awards and recognition for their high standards and customer service. Read their stories on the *One* website.





Customer experience



Opening times

It is important branches open for their advertised opening times as it gives customers confidence they can access Post Office services when we've said they can. Making sure we have the correct opening hours for your branch also means we can accurately reflect this in your safe access and security monitoring times, keeping you and your staff safe and secure.

WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU

- We advertise the opening hours for your branch on our online Branch Finder tool accessed by customers at postoffice.co.uk/branch-finder. We aim to make the customer-facing website as informative as possible for customers.
- We will consider any changes to opening hours you wish to make and work this through with you.

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

- Please make sure your opening hours match the ones advertised to customers on Branch Finder so customers can access Post Office services during those times.
- If you wish to make a permanent change to your opening hours, please contact the Branch Support Centre in the first instance, and please wait for confirmation that the request has been accepted before making any changes to your opening hours.
- If the store is open longer than the Post Office, please keep the Paystation™ on the retail counter so customers can access certain services such as energy payments out of hours.
- If you have a combi counter, please ensure it is available during your retail opening hours with trained staff available to serve customers.





Customer experience

Health and safety at branches

Like anyone operating business premises, postmasters have a legal duty of care to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of your employees, customers and members of the public at or outside your premises. There are specific duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Occupiers' Liability Acts 1957 and 1984, such as making sure your premises are safe, including external signage.

WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU

- We can direct you to the guidance available about your health and safety management obligations, including guidance published by the Health and Safety Executive at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/>
- Employers who have five or more employees should undertake a risk assessment and you can find a tool for this at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/retail/index.htm>. Examples can be found at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/casestudies/>
- Your area manager has been provided with accessibility guidelines and can give advice
- Area managers are carrying out accessibility surveys at many branches already and this work will continue. This information is due to be published on the customer-facing Branch Finder site soon

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

- Please regularly inspect your premises, fixtures and fittings (including external signage) to ensure you meet the necessary legislation and identify any potential issues that might need maintenance or repair
- Please familiarise yourself with and follow the guidance available to you such as the Health and Safety Executive guidance above





Customer experience



Signage

Having clear and strong signage outside your store makes a big difference in attracting footfall by shouting out that your Post Office is there, communicating the main services on offer and letting customers know you're open for business. Inside your branch, strong signage helps the customer find the service counters more easily, communicates when a position is open or closed and tells them what services you offer.

WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU

- We provide advice and feedback on signage requirements and standards through your area manager.
- We also have a useful shopfront guide available to help you create a highly visible, attractive and cost-effective shopfront that will help you attract new customers. Please ask your area manager for a copy

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

- If you are planning a major refit or refresh, our Branch Design team can help with advice and can be emailed at

GRO





Customer experience

Marketing material

Marketing material helps you promote products, services and offers to your customers, to help you grow sales.

WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU

- Periodically, new marketing material will be sent to you, according to the size of branch and products available, along with detailed display instructions so you know what to place where

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

- Please display the material following the display instructions and remove any other older marketing material that isn't current
- Let us know, via the contact details in the display instructions, if you are receiving too much or too little material and we'll adjust this to meet what you need





Customer experience

Products

We need to show our regulators and customers that we are following the rules around promoting, introducing and arranging certain products including Financial Services, money laundering compliance and data protection rules. It's also important that all the products and services we offer are transacted correctly, for example mails items following pricing in proportion guidelines.

WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU

- We work with the relevant regulators and suppliers direct, saving you both time and cost
- We provide you with products and services that are easy to transact on Horizon, with clear operating guidelines and training and support when needed
- Our website has a customer chat and contact function so we can answer customer queries on your behalf

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

- Please make sure everyone working in the branch completes all their necessary compliance training within the required timescales and applies the learning from this training
- To ensure the best possible customer experience, please make sure all staff know how the products and services should be transacted





Managing cash and stock and branch balancing



Getting cash and stock levels just right is an important part of running a Post Office branch. Keeping too much cash and stock is not only a security risk to you, your staff and customers, but it could also mean there is not enough cash and stock for other branches. Too little cash or stock and you may not have enough for customers. There are also major productivity benefits in managing the levels of cash, stock and currency at the correct levels in that less cash, stock and currency makes it easier for you to count.

Accurate transactions

Getting the basics right and ensuring customer transactions are processed accurately helps reduce potential mistakes in branch, makes sure the customer gets the service they want and limits any financial losses to you.

Some top tips:

- Please check the amount on screen after you enter the customer's transaction and make sure the Horizon online basket is empty before serving the next customer
- When completing chip and PIN transactions, please make sure the correct withdrawal or deposit icon is pressed
- Remember to double-check the physical cash or stock that's being transferred to or from the customer before the transaction is completed
- Please ensure any staff serving at the counter concentrate on the transaction in hand as this makes sure customer transactions are dealt with accurately and it also helps protect against sleight-of-hand incidents





Managing cash and stock and branch balancing

Cash declarations and overnight cash holdings

Cash in branch needs to be accurately checked and recorded on a regular basis to ensure the right levels of cash can be delivered and returned. It will also help you or your staff identify and resolve any discrepancies quickly or ask for our help in doing so. Holding too much cash is inefficient for you, but also presents a security risk that could impact your personal safety and that of your staff and customers.

WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU

- We make sure you have enough cash to meet customer demand, with notes and coins provided at no cost to you, and we plan and carry out cash deliveries and pick-ups from your branch
- We'll work with you to establish the appropriate levels of cash to hold if circumstances change
- We can provide you with information on what we think your cash holdings are at any time
- We'll provide support in investigating any cash discrepancies you may experience
- We provide you with the appropriate security equipment to store the cash and stock required in your branch

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

- Please complete an accurate cash declaration on Horizon for all the stock units used every day as close as possible to, but no later than, 7pm. This should include any stock units that may have only been used to accept Transaction Acknowledgements or to transfer cash/stock/currency. If a stock unit is not used, or if the branch is closed on the next day, please make sure the cash declaration is the last transaction on Horizon that day





Managing cash and stock and branch balancing

- During the declaration, please declare notes and coins against the correct denomination – any damaged or mutilated notes should be declared as ‘unusable’. Your cash declarations need to be accurate and a true reflection of the cash held in branch – otherwise it’s difficult to plan cash for your branch and to provide support if any discrepancies are identified. After you’ve completed your declaration, use the variance check function – this makes sure you are identifying any potential discrepancies on the day they happen
- Please check the planned order on Horizon before each remittance day to find out how much cash the branch will receive or will have to return on the next remittance. Any cash return pouches should be prepared ready for collection by the CViT driver by the appropriate time on your remittance day
- You can keep reviewing the level of cash by looking at the balance snapshot and identifying the level of payments against receipts. Please let the inventory team know on **GRO** if there are any major changes to circumstances for your branch, such as a new business customer





Managing cash and stock and branch balancing

Balancing

All branches need to complete their Trading Period once a month within their designated group. Best practice is to balance weekly so any discrepancies can be identified quickly and over a shorter timeframe.

WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU

- If a branch discrepancy arises, we provide support and assistance over the phone to help identify and fix the cause of the issue. If the reason for the discrepancy cannot be found, a dedicated branch support case handler will work with you to investigate the discrepancy

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

- Please complete an accurate Trading Period each month, and a weekly balance whenever possible, declaring and settling any discrepancies. If a discrepancy is settled to cash, please make sure the corresponding physical cash is put into the account
- If you need help with a branch discrepancy, please call the Branch Support Centre on

GRO





Managing cash and stock and branch balancing

Remittances of cash, stock and currency

Please follow the correct process for preparing and receiving remittances to reduce the likelihood of errors in branch.

WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU

- We ensure that any remittances sent to postmasters are prepared accurately to minimise errors in branch. We'll issue a Transaction Correction if there is an error
- We'll investigate any discrepancies in remittances and highlight any issues in branch, for example stock not being booked in, as soon as possible

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

- When preparing a remittance, it's worth having two members of staff on hand to double-check the contents of the pouch before sealing it, if possible
- Please record the amounts being returned accurately and when receiving remittances check the amount received matches the delivery note
- Please input a delivery of stock items into Horizon within 24 hours of delivery and double-check manually when inputting quantities
- If there is an error in the remittance received, please contact the Branch Support Centre on **GRO** as soon as possible

Did you know?

Our cash centres use Bank of England-approved equipment including High Speed Note Sorters to identify discrepancies and counterfeit notes. The note sorters are tested regularly to ensure only authentic, good quality notes are recirculated to branches. Bank of England carries out regular announced and unannounced audits to ensure we are complying with procedures, especially on how the equipment is used and to ensure we are adhering to the strictest of security standards.

Errors when returning cash are the largest cause of Transaction Corrections. This includes branches sending more cash back to us than has been declared. In 2019/2020, more than £6.7m was credited back to postmasters whose remittance pouches contained more than the amount identified on the Horizon remittance slip.





Managing cash and stock and branch balancing

Transaction Corrections

Transaction Corrections should be kept to a minimum in an efficient branch, and following the guidelines on managing cash and stock will help you ensure this for your branch. However, occasionally a Transaction Correction will need to be issued. If you keep getting Transaction Corrections for the same reasons, it would be worth checking your operational processes, and please don't hesitate to ask us for support if you need to.

WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU

- We always explain the reason for a Transaction Correction and answer any questions you may have about it
- We always try to process Transaction Corrections as quickly as possible
- If you dispute a Transaction Correction, we'll work with you and/or your team to investigate it

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

- It is up to you how you manage Transaction Corrections in your branch. For example, you may only want to accept or dispute them yourself and for staff to leave them for you to deal with – if this is the case, then please make sure your staff know what to do with Transaction Correction messages on Horizon
- If you don't understand a Transaction Correction, please call the telephone number shown on the Transaction Correction notification
- If you don't agree with a Transaction Correction, please contact the Transaction Correction Disputes Team on **GRO** or email **GRO**
- Please note you won't be able to complete your monthly balancing until all Transaction Corrections are accepted





Managing cash and stock and branch balancing

Branch monitoring

To ensure the accuracy and integrity of branch cash and stock across the Post Office network, the accounting and transactions completed by branches is monitored remotely by Post Office to provide you with the best support.

WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU

- If we identify a potential issue with branch accounting or transactions, we'll complete a desktop investigation to understand the potential issue in more detail
- If the cause of the issue is simple, we'll telephone the branch to explain how to resolve the issue
- Where the cause is more complex or the branch requires more support, we'll arrange to visit the branch and work with you to try to resolve the issue
- If we can't identify the cause of the issue, we'll arrange for an audit at the branch. The aim of an audit is to ensure the accuracy and integrity of cash and stock at the branch and to provide support to the postmaster with any accounting and compliance issues. An audit will always be conducted by at least two Post Office staff and we will always explain the reason(s) for conducting the audit at the start
- If the audit identifies an issue with the accuracy and integrity of cash and/or stock, then we will carry out further investigations into the potential causes of the issue

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

- Please follow the processes for managing cash and stock. Meeting the expectations around cash management, cash declarations, balancing, remittances and Transaction Corrections helps us to identify any branches that may need additional support to achieve that
- If you experience any unexplained discrepancies in your branch, please notify us as quickly as possible, whatever the size of the discrepancy. We can then provide you with the right level of support to try to resolve the situation
- If we contact you about any issue identified in your branch, please work with us to help rectify the issue or provide additional information





Branch security

Your safety and the safety of your team and your customers is very important to us. Full guidelines on branch security for your particular branch format can be found in the Security Operations Manual – please follow the guidelines at all times. This can be found on Horizon Online Help or you can request a copy by contacting Grapevine on **GRO**

WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU

- Where applicable, we supply security equipment to every branch according to each branch's circumstances and contract type
- We work with the police and other external authorities on your behalf to help protect the network from crime
- We provide support to promote security compliance
- We have a zero tolerance approach to issues of violence and abuse towards you and your team
- We provide support in the event of any security incidents at branches

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

- For your safety, please follow the correct procedures for opening and closing the branch. When entering the branch, make sure the door is locked before the alarm is turned off
- Please formally identify all visitors, including contractors, and record their details
- Always keep your working cash to a minimum and never have more than the maximum your branch format allows
- Please store bulk cash in the safe, with any time-overlocks on at all times, and please keep all safes locked with the key removed from the safe lock
- Please secure the keys to the cash funding units (e.g. BidiSafe) and drop safes in the main safe during business hours
- Please make sure you use appropriate security equipment
- If you or your team experience any abuse or violence at the branch, please call Grapevine on **GRO** as quickly as possible
- You can register with the Grapevine service by calling **GRO** to receive proactive security alerts for your area and for the network





Remuneration

When running a business that includes a Post Office, you'll need to understand the revenues and costs of that part of your operation. We provide a monthly advice or invoice that breaks down your branch's revenues by product type and sales volumes, so you can look at your branch sales performance and identify opportunities for growing income and margin.

WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU

- We remunerate you for transactions that take place in your branch and any that take place online or through our direct channels that are linked to your branch
- We make sure those fees are accurately calculated and paid in line with our obligations, as set out in the contractual remuneration booklets. We occasionally update those remuneration booklets and provide all interim notifications of contractual changes to the remuneration booklets through the monthly remuneration advice/invoice inserts, or by personal letter to your registered contact address
- We provide a Remuneration Support Centre that you can contact by phone on **GRO** or email at **GRO** if you have any questions about remuneration

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

- If you haven't already, please check whether your business should be VAT registered – information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/vat-registration>. Please inform us if you should be VAT registered so we can ensure your contract and remuneration are set up correctly
- Many postmasters already have, but if you haven't done so please register on the online portal at <http://www.opustrustweb.co.uk/pol-agents/> to download and review each monthly remuneration advice/invoice. Where VAT is paid, please use these monthly invoices to complete your quarterly VAT returns. If you identify any discrepancy with your own records (or with reference to a Horizon Remuneration Report) please contact the Remuneration Support Centre above as quickly as possible. You can also contact this team if you forget your password for the online portal above or if you need a temporary password to register on the portal
- Please read and make sure you understand your remuneration booklet and any interim changes we let you know about. If in doubt, please contact your area manager
- If you make any changes to your company, your contact email address or personal address, or your bank account details, please tell the Remuneration Support Centre as soon as possible



Disputes and contracts

Disputes

If things do not quite go to plan, we want you to be confident that if you report the issue to us we will be there to support you. By working together to find a solution, we hope to be able to work out reasonable and practical steps to resolve any issue. By taking this approach, we want to be able to resolve issues amicably without either postmasters or Post Office having to incur significant costs or it taking too long to reach a conclusion. We know we haven't always got this right in the past, but we are determined to work with postmasters on resolving issues going forward.

Whistleblowing

We are committed to conducting business with the highest standards of honesty, integrity and openness. You and/or your team can raise concerns in confidence, secure in the knowledge that we will take those concerns seriously and act on them.

WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU

- We support anyone who raises a genuine concern, even if it turns out to be mistaken. You will not be treated unfairly or liable to any contractual action as a result of doing so

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

- If you have a concern, in the first instance please either contact your area manager or contact Grapevine on **GRO**. If this doesn't answer your concern, please contact the whistleblowing officer at **GRO**





Disputes and contracts

Transaction Corrections

The Transaction Correction Disputes Team will fully investigate all cases, contacting relevant teams and using several systems to try to identify the cause of the discrepancy.

WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU

- We acknowledge all disputes in writing within three working days
- We fully investigate each case, contacting relevant teams and using several systems
- We send you the results of the investigation with any evidence found to support the findings within 10 working days
- We'll arrange any extra support and/or training for you and your team, if required
- While the dispute is being investigated, you won't be asked to repay the amount

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

- Please call the Transaction Correction Disputes Team on **GRO** or email **GRO** as soon as possible if you wish to dispute a Transaction Correction
- Please respond to any requests for information from us as soon as you can





Disputes and contracts

Investigation process

We ask that as far as possible you or your team undertake your own investigations in branch and we can provide support for you to do this. Help and support can also be provided by the NFSP by contacting your local representative, through the NFSP website (www.nfsp.org.uk) or through the NFSP helpline or **GRO**. We have a four-tier investigation process (please see next page) to investigate issues and reach resolutions with postmasters to disputes. Not all investigations will require all four tiers of the investigation process and the vast majority of issues requiring investigation are resolved very quickly and simply.



Did you know?

Postmasters or their staff who are responsible for branch balancing and require further support in identifying causes of discrepancies and how to resolve them can attend a classroom course for support. The Postmaster Operational Training Catalogue can be found on <http://onepostoffice.co.uk/media/47392/pmr-ops-training-catalogue-june-2020-approved-v10.pdf>

Reviewing the reversals report is a good way of identifying issues in branch and whether any of your team may need some extra support.





Disputes and contracts

Tier 1 investigations are simple investigations that are usually resolved quickly. These investigations include calls to the Tier 1 team at the Branch Support Centre about balancing, desktop investigations undertaken by the branch monitoring team and some Transaction Correction and settlement disputes.

Tier 2 investigations are more skilled investigations. A Tier 2 investigation would be triggered because the matter could not be resolved in Tier 1. These investigations include calls into the Branch Support Centre that are escalated to the Tier 2 team, more complex Transaction Correction or settlement disputes, and branch audits.

Tier 3 investigations are specialist investigations. A Tier 3 investigation would be triggered because the matter could not be resolved in Tier 2. These investigations include security investigations (such as after a robbery or burglary) and investigations undertaken by the Contract Investigations and Resolution Team. Very few investigations reach Tier 3.

Tier 4 investigations are the most complex investigations we carry out and are completed by the Case Review Team. A Tier 4 investigation would be triggered either because a matter could not be resolved at Tier 3 or because the matter is historical and complex. It is exceptionally rare for an investigation to reach Tier 4.





Disputes and contracts

Issues with Horizon

We have a process in place to proactively identify issues that have the potential to impact branches. We also have a process in place for Fujitsu to investigate potential issues raised by postmasters. We inform branches about issues that affect their operations through Branch Focus or, for more urgent issues, through a Memoview.

WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU

- We make sure we address all issues with Horizon that have the potential to impact branch accounts or operations
- If you have any balancing discrepancies that you cannot explain, we'll check for any Horizon issues and advise you if Horizon could be the cause
- If you think there is an issue with Horizon that may explain a balancing discrepancy, we will ask Fujitsu to investigate and we will keep you updated. If Fujitsu does identify that the issue raised could impact branch accounts or operations, we will follow our processes to resolve the issue

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

- If you experience any branch discrepancies, please follow the support guidelines set out in the Branch Support Guide. You can find this at <http://www.onepostoffice.co.uk/media/46509/branch-support-guides-oct-2019.pdf>
- Please notify the Branch Support Centre or **GRO** if you experience an operational issue with Horizon



Disputes and contracts

Contracts

There may be times when you want to refer to your contract with Post Office. We understand that postmasters may not always be able to easily find their contract in their own records, but if you can, referring to it may be enough to answer your query. However if this doesn't answer your question, please contact GRO and we'll be in touch to answer your query and provide a copy of your specific contract where required.

Contract performance

There may be occasions when the obligations as set out in your contract are not being met. If this is the case, Post Office will take steps to ensure performance of the contract, while also supporting you in this process.

WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU

- If there is an issue, we ensure that all necessary steps have been taken by our teams, including your area manager, to support you and address the identified issue. We'll gather as much information as possible relating to the issue that has come to light, working as appropriate with both you and other Post Office teams, before taking any formal contractual action
- We'll act on any contact from you, written or otherwise, as quickly as possible

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

- Where reasonably possible, please work with us to resolve any performance issues through the available methods
- Once any investigation has been concluded, please comply with the terms of any letter (including a written direction) issued by us





Disputes and contracts

Suspension

There are rare circumstances where it is necessary to suspend the postmaster from operating the branch. Any period of suspension should be as short as possible and any suspended postmaster will receive appropriate support throughout this time. A specific contract advisor will be assigned to keep any suspended postmaster up-to-date with developments during their suspension and will act as a single point of contact through this process.

WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU

- We only carry out a suspension where absolutely necessary and when all alternatives have been considered
- We'll ensure you are supported and keep in regular contact with you throughout the suspension period, and respond to any contact from you as quickly as possible
- We pay remuneration during the suspension
- We'll keep the suspension under regular review and bring it to a conclusion as soon as is practical

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

- If a suspension takes place, please comply with the terms of the suspension and be open and honest with us so the situation can be resolved as quickly as possible
- Please respond to any written correspondence and telephone calls from us as quickly as possible and please remain flexible and available for meetings with the contract advisor to minimise the length of the suspension





Disputes and contracts

Termination

Termination is an extremely serious step and it is vital that the termination process is as clear as reasonably possible so any potential misunderstandings between the postmaster and Post Office can be avoided.

There may, however, be circumstances when termination of a postmaster's contract needs to be considered and a decision to terminate made.

WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU

- We'll gather as much information as possible relating to the issue that has caused termination to be considered, working as appropriate with you and other Post Office teams
- We'll treat you fairly throughout the termination procedure
- We'll act on and respond to any contact from you as quickly as possible

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

- Please be open and honest with us and please respond to written correspondence and telephone calls as quickly as possible to support the decision-making process
- Please remain flexible and available for meetings with the contract advisor if required





Communications



WHAT WE'LL DO FOR YOU

- We provide Branch Hub as an interactive tool for you and/or your staff. Branch Hub provides a digital platform for several tasks that used to need a phone call. Tasks such as stock ordering and finding information to help you troubleshoot issues are available on Branch Hub and more useful tools will be added to help make Branch Hub a one-stop shop for postmasters
- We provide the One website at www.onepostoffice.co.uk. We also send a regular One News email to postmasters that summarises current news
- We publish operational information each week in Branch Focus that branch teams need to know, such as product updates. This is published on Horizon, by email and on One
- We send pop-up memoview communications that appear on the Horizon terminal for urgent operational information
- Regional Facebook groups are available for you to connect with us and with other postmasters
- We provide an email address you can use to ask Post Office-related questions at **GRO** and we reply to all emails as quickly as possible

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

- Please read and use the communications channels we provide for you to ensure you keep up-to-date with Post Office news. We welcome your feedback and questions
- Please make sure you and your team are aware of and implement any changes to products and services or ways of working that we communicate to you
- Please keep us up-to-date with your latest contact details so we can make sure you get communications the way you want to receive them

