Responses to NFSP questions on Postmaster Support policies

1. Network Cash and Stock Policy

1.1	What do PO deem as excess cash?	This is any amount over and above the amount that Post Office request is sent back. If Post Office send a planned order message for £10,000, and the branch declares they are holding £30,000 the night before collection, Post Office would expect them to send back the difference, £20,000. If the branch only returns £5,000, they are holding £15,000 excess. This may be because there was a local issue the branch knew about.
1.2	Cash requests. Are there any ongoing issues and are they recorded?	We can have issues when a branch makes inaccurate or incomplete cash declarations. All calls to cash centre are recorded.
1.3	What AM support is provided?	AMs should only be an escalation point if the branch believes the Inventory Team have not dealt with them correctly. All queries should go directly to the Inventory team for fastest resolution.
1.4	Cash & Stock returns discrepancy. What is the timescale and is it recorded?	Currently the timescale is open ended, but we would need to know within 14 days if CCTV footage is required so that it can be downloaded and stored in its original condition.
1.5	Can PO share the liquidity level of cash?	Enquiries are being undertaken with Treasury, but it is unlikely that this information is shareable.
1.6	How can excess Stock & Cash lead to non-compliance errors or loss?	Having too much cash and stock, means more to count and can increase the risk of making errors when counting, although daily accurate cash declaration and verification with the Horizon generated cash on hand figure would help identify if any errors had occurred and make identification of the error easier.

2. Postmaster Account Support Policy

2.1	What is deemed irrecoverable and then written off?	Irrecoverable balances would be those where we have established that a discrepancy is a loss, either through carrying out an investigation or because of agreement from the Postmaster. We will have followed our process but will have reached a deadlock. The review process has yet to be confirmed.
2.	Established losses attributable to a former Postmaster	• These discrepancies would have been investigated and found

2	could result in irrecoverable balances. Can you explain: • What documentation is available? • What action would be taken?	• to be losses. The paperwork relating to the investigation would be available to the postmaster (as set out in the Accounting Dispute Resolution policy) • Once a loss is established, the current process would be to telephone the former postmaster, then send a letter, with a follow up letter sent the following week.
2.3	If a T/C is disputed are the contact details for the Disputes Team on the letter?	There is a contact number on the transaction correction itself, and the dispute process is set out in any letters sent from the Postmaster Account Support team.
2.4	Recovering monies. What are the other courses of action?	For current postmasters, on a case-by-case basis, contractual action may be considered eventually – but only for investigated losses. For former postmasters there is currently no further action taken.

3. Postmaster Termination Decision Review Policy (formerly the Appeals Policy)

3.1	What are the SLAs?	The process is still being finalised, but it is likely that the Decision Review Panel will sit on a monthly basis and the SLAs would need to fit round this. At the time a postmaster is made aware of their right to request that a decision be reviewed the timescales involved would be explained.
3.2	Why would a notice period be given?	There may be occasions that on reviewing the circumstances the Review Panel may not believe there would be sufficient grounds for immediate termination but there are grounds for termination by notice.

4. Postmaster Contract Performance Policy (formerly the Contractual Performance Policy)

4.1	Immediate termination is not appropriate for an offence charge, it must be a conviction.	This language mirrors both the Local and Main agreement which gives an immediate termination right for an agreement to be terminated if a postmaster is charged with an offense. Clearly, in practice a review of the circumstances would need to be made and

		any decision taken on a case by case basis
4.2	Information to be shared with the Postmaster unless • Legal privilege • Data Protection • Material relating to a criminal charge (this clause needs to be clarified)	Post Office will share any information it can with a postmaster unless it considers that the information is privileged. This will be determined through review with Post Office's Data Protection and Information Rights Team

5. Postmaster Contract Suspension Policy (formerly Suspension Policy)

5.1	PO must record that Postmaster was advised to contact the NFSP or Legal Representative	This can be noted in the rationale documents that are completed.
5.2	All records supplied unless • Legal privilege • Data Protection • Material relating to a criminal charge (this clause needs to be clarified)	Post Office will share any information it can with a postmaster unless it considers that the information is privileged. This will be determined through review with Post Office's Data Protection and Information Rights Team
5.3	What contracts don't give PO the right to suspend?	There are no contracts that do not give this right.

6. Postmaster Contract Termination Policy (formerly Termination Policy)

6.1	Repudiatory breach. This cannot be on a charge basis it must be a conviction (innocent until proven guilty)	As above, this mirrors both the Local and Main agreement which gives an immediate termination right for an agreement to be terminated if a postmaster is charged with an offense. Clearly, in practice a review of the circumstances would need to be made and any decision taken on a case by case basis
6.	What breaches amount to a repudiatory breach?	I understand this feedback is being used as training resource for

2		your members. It may be easier if this is picked up in a separate session with David Southall rather than trying to condense into this answer.

7. Postmaster Complaint Handling Policy

7. 1	What are the SLA's across the range of PO functions?	Mel Fischer and Bella Liu will address all these questions when they attend a session with NFSP on 8th June (Calum is an attendee).
7. 2	PO analyse complaint Data. NFSP needs sight of this to monitor and help improve areas.	
7. 3	Volume of complaints and performance. NFSP needs sight of this and how it is measured.	
7. 4	How regular is the complaints Data reviewed and what are the conclusions? NFSP to be supplied with a copy of the report.	

8. Network Transaction Corrections Policy

8. 1	What are the SLAs?	These were added into the updated policy and can be found on pages 13/14.
8. 2	Not happy with the wording with "mis-key" as it implies the money will be recoverable. A new process needs to be found for mis-key errors.	We are working through a proposal to change part of the process.

The new process will mean that, if we are unable to recover the funds within a set timeframe, we will issue a corresponding TC to the branch, so the postmaster is not left waiting. We would send a letter acknowledging the credit, with a reminder of how to avoid mis keying in future including where information is held on Branch Hub and Horizon Online.

We will continue to chase in the background. If there are further mis-keys from the same branch, we'd review the case with the Area Manager. |

		We are also creating a dashboard to monitor instances where we have branches that have mis keyed for specific banks. We will also use this data to highlight which banks we have issues with on recovering funds.

9. Network Monitoring and Audit Support Policy

9.1	Auditors must inform the Postmaster of the right to request support from the NFSP at the start. This to be recorded.	We will add this into the opening (Reason for Audit) script if a postmaster does not know the contact details for their representative, they will be provided with the Head Office number (GRO). This will be much easier with announced audits that unannounced.
9.2	Network Monitoring - are dates of concerns recorded? When is a Postmaster informed, there is a question of diminished responsibility the longer it goes on?	Scheduling lead time is greatly reduced, meaning that issues are current when we contact the postmaster. **Risk audit Lead Times** Average lead time for audit FY 19/20 – 28 days Average lead time for audit FY 20/21 - 8 days
9.3	Audit opening script - NFSP to be supplied with a copy	Yes, will send with updated policies.
9.4	Audit Reporting Tool - can you expand on what it is, and it's use and involvement?	We've created a document to explain it and added screenshots.
9.5	Audit closing script - NFSP to be supplied with a copy	Yes, will send with updated policies.
9.6	Why retain a manual record for 60 days before sending to the Postmaster	Apologies. This paragraph reads terribly in the policy and is misleading. The cash and stock manual count sheet is filled in and used to fill in the more formal, electronic Audit Reporting Tool during the audit. The cash and stock count sheets ARE kept for 60 days after the audit, but the Audit Reporting Tool is updated at the time of the audit, not after 60 days! I've revised way this is worded in the policy, so thank you for flagging this

9.7	How can PO make Postmaster culpable if a security manual has not been supplied?	An updated Security Manual is currently being worked on and will be released to all branches shortly.
9.8	• Security Manual • Postmaster Support Guide • Summary Document • Operations Manual (Specific to office type, i.e. Mains, local etc) We would recommend the above are sent in hard copy to every office	We are creating a Branch Process Guide which will be issued in the next couple of months – it will be paper in a red binder for every branch. This will be a collation of existing materials such as the Operational Training Guide and Work Aids and will be designed to help postmasters and their assistants to solve problems via a reference point on the desk (i.e. next to the Horizon terminal). The Security Ops manual will shortly be sent out (although this will be electronic), as will the Postmaster Support Guide (again, this will electronic). The Postmaster Guide to Policies will be released either with the Postmaster Support Guide or the Branch Process Guide.
9.9	PO need to share High Level Report monthly on Cash Declarations, Branch Accounting and Cash in the Network	This is fine but we think it would be best to create a dashboard on this and the next question, so this is something I'll pick up with the team that can help with this over the coming weeks.
9.10	PO need to share High Level Report monthly on Branches monitored, contacted by phone, support visits and audits by type	As above.

There were no comments on the Accounting Dispute Resolution Policy.

Tracy Marshall has offered to answer any questions you may have on the Training and Onboarding policies.