



Postmaster Guide to Policies

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this guide

Post Office is committed to working with, and supporting, postmasters. Post Office has policies in place that set out principles for our Post Office teams to follow. This guide has been written to share information with you about those principles, and how they are linked by the policies.

The policies detail how Post Office teams will support you and your team in running your Post Office. They ensure that all of our people understand the importance of following policy principles when working with, and on behalf of, postmasters.

The policies have the objective of ensuring that we are treating you, as the postmaster, fairly, transparently and professionally.

This guide is a non-contractual document provided for informational purposes. It does not form part of the contract between you and Post Office.

What areas do the policy standards cover?

Setting you up for success

- Postmaster Onboarding
- Postmaster Training

Our agreement with you, the postmaster

- Postmaster Contractual Performance
- Postmaster Suspension
- Postmaster Termination
- Postmaster Termination Appeals

Branch monitoring, cash and stock management and account support

- Network Monitoring and Audit Support
- Network Cash and Stock Management
- Network Transaction Correction
- Postmaster Account Support
- Postmaster Accounting Dispute Resolution

We're listening...

- Postmaster Complaint Handling

If you think we could do better...

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. We offer several channels for you to voice your concerns through, including a "We're listening" feature on Branch Hub, your Area Managers and the Branch Support Centre

However, you can also approach any member of the Post Office team, who will take any complaint you have seriously.

2. Setting you up for success

The Onboarding and Training teams will use these policies to help support you during your early days of appointment with a view to ensuring that you have the best possible start as a postmaster. They'll reinforce and embed their training, giving you the training opportunities you need to run a successful Post Office branch.

Standards set out in each policy

The Postmaster Onboarding Policy

The Postmaster Onboarding Policy sets out our standards for these procedures:

**Managing postmaster applications
Supporting new postmasters before and after branch opening**

We're committed to working with you in good faith and in a transparent and collaborative way to build a trusting relationship with you.

- We aim to ensure you are satisfied with your on-boarding experience for you by keeping you informed and updated across all steps of the process.
- We'll provide early days support, via your dedicated Business Support Manager.

The Postmaster Training Policy

The Postmaster Training Policy sets out our standards for these procedures:

**Organising onboarding operational training
Offering you other operational training
Providing guides and work aids**

We're committed to providing operational training to you and your team and making sure you and your team feel confident when you conduct Post Office transactions and processes using Horizon.

- We'll ensure that your onboarding training is only considered to be complete if you, your Business Support Manager and Area Manager all agree on this.
- We'll offer a variety of training opportunities, for example via e-Learning modules, in branch and/or face to face classroom sessions. We will also provide additional support in the form of operational guides and work aids, including via Branch Hub, Horizon On-line help and we will provide a Postmaster Operational Training Catalogue for ongoing training and support needs.
- We'll monitor and review any regulatory changes to products and services so we can provide regular training to you.
- We'll evaluate training feedback received from Postmasters and take any action that may be required.

3. Our agreement with you, the postmaster

The Contracts Team and Area Managers will use these policies to ensure that you are treated fairly and professionally in relation to the agreement you have with us.

Collective standards

During any investigation related to contractual performance, you can:

- contact a Contract Advisor;
- request information and evidence from us about any contract performance issues identified and the investigation process;
- contact your NFSP representative for support; and
- at your own expense, arrange legal or other representation for written correspondence or meetings with us.

If we have to carry out an investigation:

- it will be fair and unbiased and will provide you with the opportunity to give us all relevant information;
- we'll complete any investigations as soon as we reasonably can, act on any information you give us and keep you updated;
- we'll share with you the supporting records and information where possible;
- if a meeting is required, we'll be flexible, within reason, in relation to your availability; and
- we'll always make the contractual basis, of any formal action taken, clear to you.

Standards set out in each policy

The Postmaster Contractual Performance Policy

The Postmaster Contractual Performance Policy sets out our standards for these procedures:

Defining contractual performance issues
Carrying out the investigation
Documenting the rationale behind a decision
Considering alternative contractual action
Applying monitoring periods

Where reasonably possible, we will resolve any performance issues by supporting you and working with you and your Area Manager through all available methods.

The Postmaster Suspension Policy

The Postmaster Suspension Policy sets out our standards for these procedures:

**Carrying out the investigation
Documenting the rationale behind a decision
Considering alternatives to suspension
Informing you of the decision
Paying fees during suspension
Arranging a temporary operator during the suspension period**

In certain circumstances it will be necessary to suspend a postmaster from operating their branch. If you are suspended:

- we are suspending you in order to investigate the cause of an issue and we are not implying there has been any misconduct nor predetermining any outcome of the investigation;
- we will have carried out a preliminary investigation to establish relevant facts, in doing so liaising as appropriate with you, before making the decision to suspend;
- we'll inform you of the suspension by telephone and follow up by a letter;
- we'll continue to pay you (based on the previous six-month trading period, excluding Christmas trading);
- we'll offer to arrange a temporary operator to continue trading on your premises during the period of suspension, but will not do so without your express agreement; and
- a dedicated Contract Advisor will keep you updated throughout the suspension period.

The Postmaster Termination Policy

The Postmaster Termination Policy sets out our standards for these procedures:

**Understanding our termination rights
Carrying out the investigation
Documenting the rationale behind a decision Using rationale to make a decision
Checking that we've fulfilled our contractual obligations
Considering alternatives to termination
Applying notice periods
Informing you of the decision**

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

We will obtain and consider the applicable facts before making any decision to terminate.

We'll notify you and include the reason for the termination and invite you to submit an appeal request if you disagree with our decision.

The Postmaster Appeals Policy

The Postmaster Appeals Policy sets out our standards for these procedures:

Notifying you of your right to appeal a termination decision
Carrying out the review and investigation
Using rationale to make a decision
Choosing the right decision option
Informing you of the decision

If you believe we've failed in our obligation in relation to termination, you have the right to appeal against the decision we've made.

If you appeal:

- we'll make sure there are suitable channels to raise your appeal;
- we'll be quick to assign your appeal to an Appeals Panel, that will have no prior knowledge of the circumstances which led up to the appeal being requested;
- we'll make sure the appeal request is fully understood and investigated, so it can be established whether we had the right to terminate your contract and whether the decision was taken in compliance with the termination provisions set out in your agreement with us; and
- the Appeals Panel will make their decision and inform you what it is, and the reason for it, as soon as they can.

4. Branch monitoring, cash and stock management and account support

Several teams, including Network Monitoring and Audit Support; Postmaster Account Support; Branch Support and Cash and Stock Management, ensure that any support you need to manage your cash and stock, or help with accounting practices and discrepancies, is available to you.

Collective standards

In relation to branch monitoring, cash and stock management and account support:

- we want you to run your branch without experiencing unforeseen issues, but if we discover an issue, we'll aim to let you know about it without undue delay;
- if you discover an issue, we'll address it, without undue delay, after you tell us about it;
- we'll offer support to you, and work with you to resolve the issue and help you to avoid it happening again;
- if the issue isn't easily fixed, we may carry out an investigation to understand the root cause of the issue and come to a resolution; and
- we'll encourage questions and feedback about the support you receive.

Standards set out in each policy

Network Cash and Stock Management Policy

The Network Cash and Stock Management Policy sets out our standards for these procedures:

Forecasting and planning your cash supplies
Receiving your stock orders and requests to change your cash levels
Offering emergency order options
Supporting you with cash remittance and stock discrepancies
Dealing with disputed cash and stock remittances and transaction corrections

You have agreed to provide products and services on behalf of Post Office, and for clients of Post Office, under the agreement we have with you. The cash and stock that you use to carry out those transactions is owned and funded by Post Office, unless your branch is self-funded.

It's important that you have enough cash and stock in your branch to trade, but that you don't have excess cash and stock that will make your accounting more complicated and increase your security risk.

When we manage cash and stock:

- through effective forecasting, we'll aim to ensure that your branch has enough cash, coin and foreign currency (where applicable) to trade and we'll aim to avoid situations where you hold too much cash or stock;
- we'll provide free cash and stock deliveries and collections on scheduled days;
- we'll aim to get your special stamps, such as First Day Covers and Christmas stamps, to you in plenty of time;
- we'll give you a method to place emergency orders;
- if we find a discrepancy in a cash or stock remittance that you have sent us, we'll let you know without undue delay and support you with the next steps; and
- when you let us know about a discrepancy in a cash or stock remittance that we have sent you, we'll follow a process to investigate without undue delay.

Postmaster Transaction Correction Policy

The Postmaster Transaction Correction Policy sets out our standards for these procedures:

**Issuing Transaction Corrections and Transaction Acknowledgements
Providing information and supporting evidence to you
Investigating disputed transaction corrections**

Following Post Office guidelines on branch accounting processes should help you reduce the need for transaction corrections to be issued. However, sometimes you will receive a transaction correction or transaction acknowledgement.

When we issue a transaction correction:

- it will have been identified by a discrepancy in the reconciliation we do between files received from our third-party clients and the data recorded in branch on Horizon, or from us being notified about a mis-key;
- we'll send you an explanation of the reason for the transaction correction and make it clear that you can call us for further support e.g. by answering further questions; and
- you can dispute the transaction correction, in which case we'll investigate it and aim to resolve the dispute within 10 days, keeping you updated if it takes longer.

We'll arrange for a transaction acknowledgement to be sent to you each morning for the transactions carried out during the previous day on the lottery terminal or Paystation¹, so your cash and stock will be correctly adjusted on Horizon.

¹ For Paystation a transaction acknowledgement will only be sent on the following day if the Batch Control Summary has been produced by the cut off time, otherwise it will be sent on the subsequent day.

Network Monitoring and Audit Support Policy

The Network Monitoring and Audit Support Policy sets out our standards for these procedures:

**Monitoring the network
Scheduling supportive visits and audits
Carrying out an audit
Involving the Contracts team
Performing closure audits
Performing post Security Incident audits
Assuring quality**

We carry out network monitoring and audit support activity to maintain the integrity and accuracy of cash and stock in the Post Office network. We also monitor postmaster compliance with accounting practices as it helps us to identify issues early and makes investigating the root cause of any issues easier for both of us.

In order to support you:

- we'll use data to monitor branch activity, particularly in relation to accounting for cash and stock, in order to identify branches who are experiencing issues and to identify any concerns about the cash and stock in a branch;
- if any potential issues are identified, we'll contact you to arrange support for you to maintain accurate records of cash and stock through your branch accounting;
- on an occasion where we can't resolve an issue remotely, audit support will visit your branch to carry out a full count of cash and stock;
- we'll normally carry out an audit if you are subject to a serious security incident, such as a robbery or burglary;
- if you are closing your branch, we'll support you to closure by preparing you for a closure audit; and
- we'll aim to keep you fully engaged with any audit support provided and invite you to ask questions and give feedback.

Postmaster Account Support

The Postmaster Account Support Policy sets out our standards for these procedures:

**Understanding contractual obligations
Monitoring your accounts
Notifying you about discrepancies in your central account
Supporting you with discrepancy disputes
Arranging payments
Managing refusals to pay**

Your central postmaster account holds details of: (i) any branch discrepancies that you have moved into it by selecting the "settle centrally" button on Horizon at the end of a

trading period; (ii) transaction corrections that you have “settled centrally”; and (iii) any payments you have made to the Postmaster Account Support Team.

When you move a discrepancy into your central postmaster account at the end of a trading period:

- we’ll aim to contact you by telephone, where we can, and follow up with a letter and account statement to see if we can help you understand the reason for the discrepancy;
- if you need support to find the reason for any discrepancy, the Branch Support Centre will help you to investigate it in the first instance – for transaction corrections, the issuing team can help to explain the reason for it;
- after you’ve contacted the Branch Support Centre, or the transaction correction issuing team and if, between us, we can’t agree on the reason for the discrepancy or transaction correction, you can dispute it and request an investigation;
- if you understand and accept the discrepancy, or transaction correction, knowing it’s an error caused by you or your team, and you are contractually responsible for it, we’ll help you to make payment arrangements;
- if the discrepancy is a credit, we’ll give you the choice to either have it paid back to you, as soon as reasonably possible, or wait to see if a corresponding debit is issued to your account.

Postmaster Accounting Dispute Resolution

The Postmaster Accounting Dispute Resolution Policy sets out our standards for these procedures:

Helping you to find the reason for your discrepancy or transaction correction
Managing your discrepancy and transaction correction dispute
Investigating the dispute
Escalating the dispute
Reaching a resolution to the dispute
Informing you of the outcome

When branch discrepancies occur or transaction corrections are issued that you don’t understand the reason for, you can report this to us, and we’ll support you. We’ll work with you to find the reason for the discrepancy or provide you with evidence about why the transaction correction was issued. If, between us, we can’t agree on the reason, you can raise a dispute and we’ll investigate.

When you ask us for help with a discrepancy or transaction correction:

- we’ll start by pointing you to the Branch Support Centre or the contact details listed on the transaction correction narrative, if different. These are Tier 1 investigations during which we will talk you through basic steps to explain the transaction correction or help you find the discrepancy in branch;
- if there is no resolution for you at Tier 1, the investigation will be escalated to a Tier 2 team who can carry out more detailed investigation for you. We’ll aim to reach a resolution within 2 weeks and keep you informed on progress;

- in the event that a branch discrepancy or transaction correction matter could not be resolved with you, the issue will be escalated to a Tier 3 team for resolution;
- when the dispute is resolved, we'll let you know the outcome as soon as we can and explain why we reached the conclusion we did.

5. We're listening...

When things go wrong, we really do want to hear about it. The Complaint Handling policy is used across Post Office teams that could receive and handle your complaint.

Standards set out in each policy

Postmaster Complaint Handling Policy

The Postmaster Complaint Handling Policy sets our standards for these procedures:

Providing channels for you to use for raising complaints
Receiving and investigating your complaint
Reaching resolution
Informing you of the outcome
Updating you on key issues

We offer several channels for you to voice your concerns through, including a "We're listening" feature on Branch Hub.

If we receive a complaint from you:

- we'll review your complaint and respond as soon as reasonably possible;
- we'll handle complaints using a fair process;
- we'll keep you updated on our progress in relation to investigating your complaint;
- we aim to share issues that are of key concern to postmasters, how quickly we've been able to resolve them and what we are doing if they haven't been resolved;
- our front-line teams, such as Area Managers or the Branch Support Centre, will triage any written or verbal complaints received from you to identify any concerns that should be treated as whistleblowing and passed onto the Whistleblowing team;
- you can raise Whistleblowing concerns anonymously, but we encourage you to provide your details. If we can't contact you to obtain additional information, due to there being insufficient details within the report, it can limit the effectiveness of any investigation and we won't be able to give you feedback on the outcome.
- the Postmaster Support Guide sets out how you and your teams can raise issues and concerns. In the first instance you should contact your area manager or Grapevine on [GRO](#). If this doesn't answer your concern, you can raise issues directly with the whistleblowing team via the e-mail [whistleblowing@GRO](#)