

Alwen Some background for your info - I'll
try a pop round later to see if
you have any questions etc.,

The SPSO Contract

The subpostmasters contract has, in various forms, been in existence for over one hundred years. It was last issued in its current consolidated form in 1994 (100 pages). Subsequent to that and from time to time we have issued variations to the contract in writing to existing and new subpostmasters. The contract between subpostmasters and Post Office Ltd is expressed in various documents: the contract booklet itself, the remuneration booklet, and various operations manuals, including weekly bulletins.

Subpostmasters are obligated to ensure that the system is operated according to the rules and instructions that are provided to them by Post Office Ltd. No breach of these instructions is excused on the basis of ignorance (absentee subpostmaster). This approach has been effective as evidenced by the overall level of non-compliance which remains low.

Going forward, we recognise that our contracts need to have a more commercial look and feel to them and, as a consequence, all new operating model contracts have been greatly slimmed down (30 pages) with a refreshed operations manual that aims to explain the benefits of compliance as well as the operating model features and all in plain English.

Branch Transfers

When a branch changes hands, the key extracts of the contract are covered at the interview stage by the Contracts Advisor. A copy of the contract is sent to the agent as part of the pre-appointment pack. On the day of transfer the Field Support Advisor covers the key elements of the contract again with the agent who then signs the document to confirm understanding of the contract T&Cs.

Once an offer of appointment is accepted, training dates are then confirmed. Training processes are under constant review and can be modified to accommodate a variety of circumstances.

Training commences at the point of on site transfer in smaller branches and in larger branches where classroom training is required this happens before the on site transfer takes place. The Ops Manual is used as reference document during training and all subpostmasters have copy. Classroom training allows agents to become familiar with the Horizon system and provides an overview of the balancing procedures.

(Going forward – all branches will receive some element of classroom training to enhance their understanding of the new models.)

The on-site training includes how to complete the office balance and the trainer is on site with the agent for the completion of the first office balance. Follow up support is provided to assist with balancing or any other training needs. This takes the form of:

- Helpline support. If unable to resolve the issue the agent is referred to the Branch Support team.
- The Branch Support Team is able to provide telephone support to the agent. If this support doesn't fully resolve any issues (and in the majority of cases this does) then this is escalated to the Field Support Team.
- A member (trainer/auditor) of the Field Team will visit the branch to provide face to face support in resolving the issue.
- Remedial training would be arranged following the face to face support if the Field Support Advisor felt this was necessary.

Is the training adequate?

Customer satisfaction with training completed (independent research – questionnaires collated by Kendata – team leader receives a copy of each branch feedback form and if any comments cause concern or if any subpostmaster raises an issue regarding the quality of the training or lack of confidence this is followed up by the team leader). Currently, 95% satisfaction, response rate 69%.

Initial training

Larger branches – 8 days classroom and 6 days on site. All others – 6 days classroom and 6 days on site. Community branches – 6 days on site. Further follow up to embed training includes:

- One month after appointment, follow up call to check all okay, confident, etc.
- Three months after appointment – visit to check all okay/observe the branch operationally and refresh/support as necessary.
- Six to nine months after appointment – follow up unannounced – audit (procedural and cash/stock).

NB: Please note both the CWU and NFSP are on public record as having every confidence in the Horizon system and its operation.