Postmaster support policy

Network transaction corrections

POST OFFICE

Contents

1 Overview

1.1 Introduction

This is one of nine postmaster support policies which provide a clear framework and define the standard for how Post Office supports and works in partnership with postmasters. Compliance with these policies also supports us in meeting business objectives and balancing the needs of our shareholder, employees, and other stakeholders. Details of the nine policies can be found in the 'Policy framework' section of this document.

The network transaction corrections policy is reviewed and updated annually, or more frequently as necessary. This ensures ongoing compliance with regulatory or legislative changes and to reflect any lessons learned from both internal and external events. It is subject to annual review and endorsement at the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee (ARC). It is then adopted by Post Office Limited.

This policy is a non-contractual document provided for information. It does not form part of the contract between any postmaster[1] and Post Office[2].

1.2 Purpose

Postmasters provide products and services to customers on behalf of Post Office and, in doing so, are asked to meet the contractual obligations set out in their agreements, with the appropriate support from Post Office. Sometimes, errors can occur that create discrepancies between client/supplier/cash or stock and branch data.

The purpose of this policy is to set out the standards for identifying and issuing transaction corrections and transaction acknowledgements to postmasters.

1.3 Who must comply

Compliance with this policy is mandatory for all employees[3] working within or for Post Office Limited, including permanent and temporary colleagues (consultants, contractors, third party agents and their employees), who deal with transaction correction and transaction acknowledgement activities on behalf of Post Office.

1.4 Strategic partners

Strategic partners also receive transaction corrections under this policy and follow the same principles for any transaction disputes.

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[1] In this policy, "postmaster" refers to a limited company, partnership, limited liability partnership, other entity or individual that contracts with Post Office for the operation of a Post Office branch.

[2] In this policy, "Post Office" and "Group" means Post Office Limited.

[4] In this policy "employee" and "staff" means all persons working for the Group, or on our behalf, in any capacity including employees at all levels, directors, agency workers, volunteers, interns, and contractors.

2 Principles and framework

2.1 Core principles

Post Office will:

Maintain an effective governance and assurance environment including:

- Documented and approved processes for transaction corrections and transaction acknowledgements.
- When a transaction correction is issued, providing an explanation to the postmaster as to the cause and details of who the postmaster can contact for any queries.
- Supporting postmasters to help them understand why transaction corrections are issued.
- Supporting postmasters in how to accept or dispute a transaction correction.
- Providing the postmaster with information upon request, to support the reason for the transaction correction being issued.
- Analysing transaction correction data to identify common and/or recurring issues and themes, with the aim of reducing or mitigating the need to issue transaction corrections in the future.
- Having quality assurance self-assessment controls in place to make sure Post Office employees and processes are compliant with this policy.
- Annual refresher training on this policy for employees who deal with transaction correction and transaction acknowledgement activities.

Foster an environment where postmasters and Post Office work in partnership to investigate and correct errors in good faith with fairness, transparency, and professionalism. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Promptly identifying errors in the reconciliation between third party files, cash and stock and the data recorded by the branch in Horizon.
- Providing a clear and easy option on Horizon which allows postmasters to dispute any transaction corrections that have been issued.
- Carrying out timely investigations for enquiries from customers (of the branch), postmasters or clients alerting Post Office of a potential error with a bill payment or banking transaction.
- Issuing transaction acknowledgements, so the branch is aware of transactions performed on third party devices and can balance Horizon.
- Attempting to recover the error value of mis-keys Post Office is informed about by the postmaster or client.
- Sending transaction corrections to Horizon with a narrative which explains why it was issued and details of who to contact if the postmaster needs more information, support, or they wish to raise a dispute.
- Allowing postmasters time to investigate the cause of a transaction correction.
- Where a transaction correction is still open at the end of the postmaster's trading period, making sure they can either raise a dispute for it to be reviewed or accept it. One of these options must be chosen before the trading period can be rolled over.

2.2 Postmasters:

As many postmasters are limited companies or partnerships (and as individual postmasters may appoint managers to operate a branch on their behalf) any steps that need to be taken by a postmaster under this policy can be taken by someone authorised to act on that postmaster's behalf (such as a director, partner or manager).

2.3 Policy framework

Post Office is determined to reset its relationship with postmasters and has established a suite of postmaster support polices which are subject to an annual review. The policy suite is designed to set out guidelines on how Post Office should support postmasters across nine specific areas. The policies stand on their own, but should be reviewed in conjunction with each other.

Setting branches up for success
- Postmaster onboarding
- Postmaster training

We're listening…
- Postmaster complaint handling

Network monitoring, cash and stock management and account support
- Network monitoring and operational support
- Network cash and stock management
- Network transaction corrections
- Postmaster account support
- Postmaster accounting dispute resolution

Our agreement with the postmaster
- Postmaster contract management

2.4 Additional policies

You can find the full set of postmaster support policies at:
https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/governance/post-office-policies/post-office-policies

3 Where to go for help

3.1 Postmaster wellbeing

Postmaster wellbeing matters to us. Branch Hub provides an online space where postmasters can find help and support when they need it.

3.2 Reporting a concern – how to 'Speak Up'

Post Office strives to foster an environment where everyone feels comfortable speaking up. We encourage everyone to raise concerns about wrongdoing, illegal activities, or unethical behaviour.

To support this, we have several reporting channels:
- The Speak Up reporter's line manager.
- Contacting the Speak Up service, a confidential reporting service which is operated by an independent company on behalf of Post Office.
- Direct to the Speak Up Manager at speakup@postoffice.co.uk
- To a frontline team, e.g. area managers, the Branch Support Centre, and Grapevine.

Information and contact details

Speak Up:
- Telephone number: 0800 041 8159
- http://speakup.postoffice.co.uk which is a secure online web portal
- Email direct: speakup@postoffice.co.uk
- Through the QR code below.

3.3 National Federation of SubPostmasters

Postmasters may also contact the National Federation of SubPostmasters (NFSP) for help and support, by:
- calling its helpline on 01273 452324
- emailing admin@nfsp.org.uk
- visiting its website NFSP.org.uk

3.4 Policy queries

If you have any queries about this policy, or any of the other eight postmaster support policies, you can email us at postmastersupportpolicies@postoffice.co.uk.

4 Document control

4.1 Document control record

Version	Document review period	Policy – effective date
1.0	Annual	23 January 2025

4.2 Policy approval

Committee	Date approved
POL ARC	23 January 2025

Next policy annual review date: 31 March 2025

5 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Definitions

Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee – is the Committee of the Post Office Limited Board which reviews and approves Postmaster Support policies.

Client - Client is the term used to describe the organisation which has a contract in place for Post Office/Payzone to process transactions on its behalf.

National Federation of SubPostmasters (NFSP) – a professional trade association which exists to support postmasters.

Trading period – A four or five-week cyclical financial period at the end of which the postmaster reconciles the cash and stock position of a branch with the cash and stock position shown on Horizon.

Transaction acknowledgement – a notification to the branch, via Horizon, to acknowledge and accept the transactions carried out the previous day on a system not linked to Horizon. The effect of a postmaster accepting a transaction acknowledgement and transferring the corresponding cash into the stock unit is that Horizon will balance.

Transaction correction – corrections issued (i) in response to errors identified in the reconciliation between files received from third parties (clients or suppliers), or in cash and stock and the data recorded by the branch in Horizon, or (ii) in response to errors caused by mis-keys notified by the branch or a third party/client, or (iii) to provide funds to the postmaster in some cases where repayment is required.

Appendix 2 – Governance responsibilities

The policy sponsor is responsible for overseeing this policy and the policy owner is responsible for making sure the content is up-to-date and can be implemented. The owner will make sure it is implemented in practice and will inform the owners of other impacted policies where new or significant changes are made to it.

The Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee is responsible for approving this policy and overseeing compliance.

POST OFFICE