# Postmaster support policy

## Postmaster discrepancy review and resolution

Version 2.1 | Public | May 2026

POST OFFICE

# Contents


1 Overview ..... 3

1.1 Introduction ..... 3
1.2 Purpose ..... 3
1.3 Who must comply ..... 3
1.4 Corporate partners ..... 3

2 Principles ..... 4

2.1 Principles for postmaster discrepancy reviews and resolution ..... 4
2.2 Conflicts of interest ..... 5
2.3 Postmasters ..... 5

3 Policy framework ..... 6

3.1 Policy framework ..... 6
3.2 Additional policies ..... 6
3.3 Policy queries ..... 6

4 Where to go for help ..... 7

4.1 Postmaster wellbeing ..... 7
4.2 Reporting a concern – how to 'Speak Up' ..... 7
4.3 Postmaster complaints ..... 7
4.4 National Federation of SubPostmasters ..... 7

5 Document control ..... 8

5.1 Document control record ..... 8
5.2 Policy approval ..... 8

6 Appendices ..... 9

Appendix 1 – Definitions ..... 9
Appendix 2 – Governance responsibilities ..... 10

# 1 Overview

## 1.1 Introduction

The relationship between postmasters and Post Office is vital to mutual success. Working in partnership with postmasters, we support them in serving our customers and communities.

This is one of ten 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 all the postmaster support policies can be found in the 'Policy framework' section of this document.

This policy is reviewed and updated annually, or more frequently as necessary. This ensures ongoing compliance with regulatory or legislative changes and reflects any lessons learned from both internal and external events. It is subject to annual review and approval by an authorised committee on behalf of the Board of directors. 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

Where a discrepancy (loss or gain) is identified by a branch colleague, through the issuing of a transaction correction, or during a stock check visit, the postmaster has the right to ask for it be reviewed to establish the cause. The purpose of this policy is to set out the expected standards for Post Office employees in dealing with any discrepancy the postmaster has asked to be reviewed and arriving at a resolution. Where the postmaster disagrees with the outcome of a discrepancy review, they can ask for this to be escalated further.

## 1.3 Who must comply

Compliance with this policy is mandatory for all non-Directly Managed Branches (DMB) employees[3] working within or for Post Office Limited, including permanent and temporary colleagues (consultants, contractors, third party agents and their employees), who are involved in the handling and management of postmaster discrepancy review and resolution activities.

Colleagues working in DMBs will comply with the Crown Offices - loss and gains policy,

## 1.4 Corporate partners

The principles and procedures described in this policy for discrepancy reviews, resolutions, and escalations, also apply to corporate partners. If the corporate partner wishes to have all, or part, of a discrepancy reviewed, they should first complete their own internal processes to try and identify and resolve the cause of the discrepancy. If this is not successful, Post Office will provide further support where requested to do so.

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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.

3 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

## 2.1 Principles for postmaster discrepancy reviews and resolution

Post Office will:

Maintain an effective governance and assurance environment including:

- Documented and approved processes for discrepancy review and resolution.
- Requesting comprehensive operational training for branch staff where required, to make sure they feel confident when using Horizon.
- Ensuring all postmaster facing training material related to discrepancies is up to date and/or current.
- Aiming to complete a discrepancy review within 20 days following initial triage, which includes reviewing any disputed outcomes.
- Advising the postmaster why a particular decision relating to the outcome of a discrepancy review or an escalation has been made.
- Providing the postmaster with a copy of the report, detailing the information and data used in making our decision, on all completed discrepancy reviews and escalations.
- Twice weekly reviews of open discrepancy reviews and escalated cases, to make sure they are being progressed appropriately.
- Having a self-assessment control framework in place to make sure Post Office employees and processes are compliant with this policy.
- Quality assuring discrepancy review and escalation activities to ensure the outcome is appropriate to the circumstances.
- Advising the postmaster of their right to ask for a discrepancy review decision to be escalated if they disagree with the outcome.
- A governance committee, including representatives from operations, legal and contract management, to review escalated cases and agree an outcome, based on the findings of the review and any additional information provided by the postmaster.
- Analysing the output of discrepancy reviews to identify common/recurring themes and holding the relevant business function to account to improve processes/training materials, with the aim of reducing the number of discrepancies across the network.
- Providing initial training to new employees and annual refresher training thereafter, (unless required earlier due to changes made) on this policy for employees who are involved in the handling and management of postmaster discrepancy review and resolution activities.

Foster an environment where postmasters and Post Office work in partnership to resolve discrepancies and review escalations in good faith with fairness, transparency, and professionalism. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Involving the postmaster in all stages of the process to review the discrepancy and giving full visibility of the information and data used in reaching the outcome.
- Establishing whether the reported loss or gain represents an established discrepancy.
- Making no assumptions about liability when a postmaster requests a discrepancy review.
- Completing discrepancy reviews properly, fully, and fairly, and ensuring we comply with legal obligations in relation to discrepancy review and escalation outcomes.
- Making reasonable enquiries, undertaking reasonable analysis, and conducting a fair and transparent discrepancy review and/or escalation review, including considering all available relevant facts and information to identify the probable causes of the discrepancy.
- Fully disclosing with the postmaster all relevant records and transaction data that has been used to arrive at the discrepancy review outcome.

- Ensuring Horizon, or any other system in use within Post Office, did not contribute to the discrepancy and, if suspected, ensuring these are appropriately reported.
- Where we are made aware of them, considering all relevant postmaster circumstances including those who find themselves in a vulnerable situation due to health, financial capacity, or life events.
- Passing the postmaster's case to the team who discuss repayment with the postmaster, only once the review is complete and the outcome has found it appropriate to do so.

## 2.2 Conflicts of interest

At Post Office, we have legal and regulatory obligations to manage conflicts of interest. Where there is a known or potential conflict of interest for a Post Office employee involved in a discrepancy review, this should be handled following the Conflicts of interest policy. Concerns can also be raised via Speak Up (see section 4.2 for more information).

## 2.3 Postmasters

Many postmasters operate through 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).

# 3 Policy framework

## 3.1 Policy framework

The postmaster support policies are reviewed annually and set out guidelines on how Post Office should support postmasters across ten specific areas. Each policy stands on its own, but should be reviewed in conjunction with the others.

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
- Network operational support
- Network cash and stock management
- Network transaction corrections
- Postmaster account support
- Postmaster discrepancy review and resolution

Our agreement with the postmaster

- Postmaster contract management

## 3.2 Additional policies

You can find the full set of postmaster support policies on Branch Hub in the 'Help to run your branch' section or by visiting at: https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/governance/post-office-policies/post-office-policies.

## 3.3 Policy queries

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

# 4 Where to go for help

## 4.1 Postmaster wellbeing

Postmaster wellbeing matters to us. Branch Hub provides an online space where postmasters can find help and support when they need it. This could be to deal with an urgent or emerging situation, accessing professional resources, or getting friendly support and advice by joining a community group.

## 4.2 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:

- 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 manager, 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.

## 4.3 Postmaster complaints

If a postmaster or a member of their branch staff has any concerns with this, or any of the other postmaster support policies, they can raise a complaint via Branch Hub. You can find more information about how we handle postmaster complaints in the Postmaster complaint handling policy available on Branch Hub and the corporate website.

## 4.4 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

# 5 Document control

## 5.1 Document control record

| Version | Document review period | Policy – effective date |
|---|---|---|
| 1.0 | Annual | 23 January 2025 |
| 1.1 | Annual | 29 April 2025 |
| 2.0 | Annual | 17 July 2025 |
| 2.1 | Template updated | 20 May 2026 |

## 5.2 Policy approval

| Committee | Date approved |
|---|---|
| On behalf of the Board | 17 July 2025 |

**Next policy annual review date:** 31 July 2026

# 6 Appendices

## Appendix 1 – Definitions

**Board of directors -** Post Office Limited's Board of Directors comprises the Chair, a Senior Independent Director, seven other Non-Executive Directors and two Executive Directors. You can find more information on the Board by visiting our Post Office Corporate website.

**Discrepancy** – Any difference between (i) the actual cash and stock position of a branch and (ii) the cash and stock position shown on Horizon, as derived from transactions input by branch staff into the branch's terminals. A discrepancy could be negative or positive.

**Discrepancy review** - the review of an identified discrepancy to understand if it qualifies as an **Established discrepancy**.

**Escalation** – where the postmaster disagrees with the findings of a discrepancy review, they can raise a dispute to ask for the discrepancy review to be investigated further.

**Established discrepancy** – the discrepancy represents an actual loss or gain to Post Office and it is not an accounting or system error that has created a loss or gain; this will be established through the completion of a **Discrepancy review**.

**Established gain** – An event that causes a positive discrepancy (i.e. the situation where the branch has more cash and/or stock than the derived figures for cash and/or stock on Horizon), which has been reviewed by Post Office, and/or agreed by the postmaster, and found to be an **Established discrepancy** which (1) indicates a gain for Post Office and (2) which is attributed to the negligence, carelessness or error of the postmaster and/or a member of their team.

**Established loss** – An event that causes a negative discrepancy (i.e. the situation where the branch has less cash and/or stock than the derived figures for cash and/or stock on Horizon), which has been reviewed by Post Office, and/or agreed by the postmaster, and found to be an **Established discrepancy** which (1) indicates a loss to Post Office and (2) which is attributable to the negligence, carelessness or error of the postmaster and/or a member of their team.

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

**Shortfall** – An event that causes a negative discrepancy (e.g., the situation where the branch has less cash and/or stock than the derived figures for cash and/or stock on Horizon), which will be investigated by Post Office.

**Corporate partner** – a corporate business that operates post offices in several locations within its retail estate. A corporate partner is likely to operate from more than 25 retail stores, has centralised support functions/head office management and has strategic alignment to future Post Office Limited propositions/network growth.

## 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.

Once approved, the policy owner is responsible for overseeing compliance with this policy and providing assurance to the Board of directors.

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