

# Postmaster support policy

## Network monitoring

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# 1 Overview

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## 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.

The network monitoring 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 approval on behalf of 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<sup>1</sup> and Post Office<sup>2</sup>.

## 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.

Network monitoring activity monitors adherence to a number of core back office processes that help to maintain accurate accounting records and assure the value of physical cash and stock held in the branch. Monitoring branch compliance to these processes supports early identification of potential issues, enabling a timely resolution and reducing the potential impact for both branches and Post Office.

This policy explains how we will support branches where data suggests they are not carrying out robust back office processes, so may be at risk of accounting discrepancies through not maintaining accurate cash and stock records.

## 1.3 Who must comply

Compliance with this policy is mandatory for all employees<sup>3</sup> working within or for Post Office Limited, including permanent and temporary colleagues (consultants, contractors, third party agents and their employees), who perform network monitoring activities on behalf of Post Office.

## 1.4 Strategic partners

Strategic partners are also monitored under this policy. Where a risk to cash and, or stock is identified through lack of compliance to operational processes, this is raised with the strategic partner.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> In this policy, "Post Office" and "Group" means Post Office Limited.

<sup>3</sup> 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

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### 2.1 Core principles

Post Office will:

Maintain an effective governance and assurance environment including:

- Documented and approved processes for monitoring the network and providing support.
- Monitoring network activity to identify branches that may not be carrying out core operational processes and as such may be at risk of inaccurate accounting records.
- Offering support to identified branches to resolve branch accounting issues and mitigate risk in the branch. Wherever possible, this support will be offered remotely to minimise branch disruption.
- Where it is not possible to resolve branch accounting issues remotely, requesting the relevant team provide face to face support to the branch.
- Internal reporting to show how the Post Office network is performing against agreed cash and stock accounting practices.
- Having a self-assessment control framework in place to make sure Post Office employees and processes are compliant with this policy.
- Quality assuring network monitoring activities to make sure the right level of support has been provided/offered to the postmaster where appropriate.
- Annual refresher training (unless required earlier due to changes made) on this policy for employees who perform network monitoring activities.

Foster an environment where postmasters and Post Office work in partnership to maintain effective branch accounting in good faith with fairness, transparency, and professionalism. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Using branch level reporting of key risk indicators and a combined risk model, to prioritise and support branches.
- Reviewing the branch information to understand the branch accounting practices, and any concerns this may raise, before contacting the postmaster.
- Contacting the postmaster to provide support to help rectify the identified issue(s). This support may be provided through a telephone call, visit or a combination of both.
- A rationale document is completed to provide the reason why a support visit or stock check has been requested.
- Signposting the postmaster to the National Federation of SubPostmasters (NFSP) for advice and support when there is a need to contact the branch.

### 2.2 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).

## 2.3 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 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 on the corporate website at:

<https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/governance/post-office-policies/post-office-policies>

## 3 Where to go for help

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### 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. 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.

### 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:

- 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:admin@nfsp.org.uk)
- visiting its website [NFSP.org.uk](http://NFSP.org.uk)

### 3.4 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](mailto:postmastersupportpolicies@postoffice.co.uk).

# 4 Document control

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## 4.1 Document control record

Version	Document review period	Policy – effective date
1.0	Annual	23 January 2025
2.0	Annual	29 April 2025

## 4.2 Policy approval

Committee	Date approved
By authority of POL ARC	29 April 2025

Next policy annual review date: 31 May 2026



## 5 Appendices

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### Appendix 1 – Definitions

**Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee** – is the Committee of the Post Office Limited Board which reviews and approves postmaster support policies.

**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.

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

**Stock check** – This is a comprehensive assessment of the current trading position of a Post Office branch, and includes the verification of reported levels of cash, foreign currency (if applicable) and stock items.

**Support visits** – This is a supportive, face-to-face visit, to help the branch maintain accurate and up-to-date accounting.

**Strategic partner** – a corporate business that operates post offices in several locations within its retail estate. A strategic 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 Audit Risk and Compliance Committee are responsible for overseeing compliance with this policy.



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