

Postmaster support policy

Postmaster onboarding

Version 3.2 | Public | May 2026



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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 postmaster¹ and Post Office².

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the minimum operational standards required for the onboarding of postmasters and their teams.

1.3 Who must comply

Compliance with this policy is mandatory for all employees³ working within or for Post Office Limited, including permanent and temporary colleagues (consultants, contractors, third party agents and their employees), who are involved in postmaster onboarding and vetting activities on behalf of Post Office.

1.4 Corporate partners

Corporate partners who are on time limited agreements are outside of the scope for this policy and follow a separate process designed for corporate businesses.

Corporate partners who are not on time limited agreements are in scope of this policy and Procurement Act 2023 legislation.

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 Core principles of the postmaster onboarding policy

Post Office will:

Maintain an effective governance and assurance environment including:

- Documented and approved processes for awarding or assigning branch contracts.
- Evaluating all onboarding feedback received from applicants, postmasters, and their teams, and taking the relevant corrective actions where appropriate.
- Quality assuring onboarding activities completed by Post Office employees, to make sure they are completed accurately.
- Having quality assurance self-assessment controls in place to make sure Post Office employees and processes are compliant with this policy.
- Providing annual refresher training on this policy for employees who are involved in postmaster onboarding and vetting activities.

Foster an environment to deliver postmaster onboarding in good faith with fairness, transparency, and professionalism. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Providing a postmaster onboarding process to attract, appoint and retain the best possible postmasters. This helps to reduce network churn and attrition and enables Post Office to maintain a stable and sustainable network.
- Making sure applicants and their teams are given the right levels of support throughout the onboarding journey, to lay the foundations for a sustainable, collaborative, and transparent future partnership.
- Providing comprehensive supporting documents and telephone calls to make sure applicants feel supported throughout the onboarding journey.
- Tailoring onboarding journeys to the applicant and post office branch type.
- Reviewing detailed financial assessments, submitted by applicants, to check the financial sustainability of the proposed operation.
- Applicants attending a suitability assessment to discuss their business plan, their knowledge, and any experience that will support them in running a post office.
- Advising the applicant what training they will have to complete if successful.
- Making sure, through a comprehensive vetting process, all applicants and their branch assistants are suitable to work in a post office branch.

On completion of postmaster onboarding activities:

- Unsuccessful applicants for a new branch and/or new contract will not be able to reapply for the same branch whilst that application process remains active. Should the branch be readvertised, following an unsuccessful outcome of the original application process, or the opportunity becomes available again, unsuccessful applicants from the original process will be able to reapply at that time.
- Unsuccessful commercial transfer applicants cannot reapply for the same branch for a minimum of six months from the date of the unsuccessful notification letter. This restriction applies to all business entities the application may be made in, where the same person has control, for example: partnerships or companies where the same individual is a partner or director. There could be a wide range of situations where this is applicable and Post Office will act reasonably in applying this principle.

- Existing postmasters who are unsuccessful in the onboarding process to run a Banking Hub will not be able to reapply within a six-month period, unless they are invited to apply by Post Office for a new Banking Hub that will be opening near to their branch.
- If applicants are successful in the onboarding process but are not appointed by Post Office for the requested branch or Banking Hub, they can reapply for another branch or Banking Hub straightaway.
- The applicant has the right to appeal an unsuccessful suitability assessment and will be given details on how to do this at the time.
- If successful, a Deed of Assignment or a new agreement is created and sent to the applicant for signature.
- The agreement is signed by, or on behalf of, the postmaster and returned to Post Office where it will be checked and countersigned by a Post Office Limited representative. A copy of the signed agreement is returned to the postmaster.
- Where a Deed of Assignment is issued to transfer the existing contract to the new postmaster, this will be signed by, or on behalf of, the existing postmaster, the new postmaster, their witnesses, and returned to Post Office where it will be checked. A letter of consent will be sent to confirm when the Deed of Assignment will take effect.
- Once the offer is accepted in writing by the applicant the operational branch transfer and training dates, where applicable, will be mutually agreed and scheduled.

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 the onboarding process, 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 Vetting

Each postmaster and branch assistant will be issued with a unique ID to access Post Office systems. The postmaster is responsible for making sure each branch assistant has been vetted by Post Office Limited and issued with their own unique Post Office ID. This ID is for the sole use of the person it has been issued to and must not be shared or used by any other individual on any occasion.

The unique Post Office ID is issued for use in branches operated by a single contract holder and must not be used in branches not operated by that contract holder. If a branch assistant wishes to work at a branch operated by a different contract holder, they must complete the vetting process again before being allowed to work at the new branch.

2.4 Procurement act 2023

The Procurement Act 2023 (PA23) is a UK law that reforms how public bodies buy goods, services and works. Post Office will comply with the PA2023, ensuring new postmaster agreement opportunities are conducted transparently, competitively, and in a manner that delivers value for money, integrity, and public benefit.

To achieve this, Post Office will:

- Make sure, as a Government contracting authority, the contract award processes are compliant with Procurement legislation.
- Treat new postmaster agreements as concession contracts and light touch 2.4 contracts under PA23.

- Advertise new contract opportunities on the Government [Find a Tender](#) Central Digital Platform (CDP) alongside Post Office's [Run a post office](#) website.
- Make a direct award, in accordance with the Procurement Act 2023, to preserve continuity of service and branch location where a postmaster dies in service and a family member succeeds to the business.
- Make a direct award, if required and in accordance with the Procurement Act 2023, to preserve continuity of service and branch location where a corporate partner transfers a franchise or premises that include a post office to another contract holder or new applicant.
- Make a direct award in line with schedule 5 of the Procurement Act 2023 (1) where there is an extreme and unavoidable urgency and there is insufficient time to run a competitive process, (2) where there is only one available Operator or (3) when any other circumstance set out in that schedule applies.
- Where a direct award is made, a UK5: Transparency notice will be published on the Government CDP and an 8-day standstill period will take effect.
- Corporate partners who are on time limited contracts are outside the scope of the PA23 regulations and direct awards can be made without having to publish a UK5: Transparency notice.

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 Branch Hub

Branch Hub is the postmaster's primary source of information. It provides useful information and services to help postmasters and their branch assistants run their branch and self-serve their needs.

4.3 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

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.



4.4 Postmaster complaints

If a postmaster or a member of their branch staff have 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.

4.5 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
2.0	Annual	25 March 2025
2.1	Update to template	29 April 2025
2.2	Update to template	17 July 2025
3.0	Annual	17 April 2026
3.1	Procurement act details added	20 May 2026
3.2	Procurement act details updated	29 May 2026

5.2 Policy approval

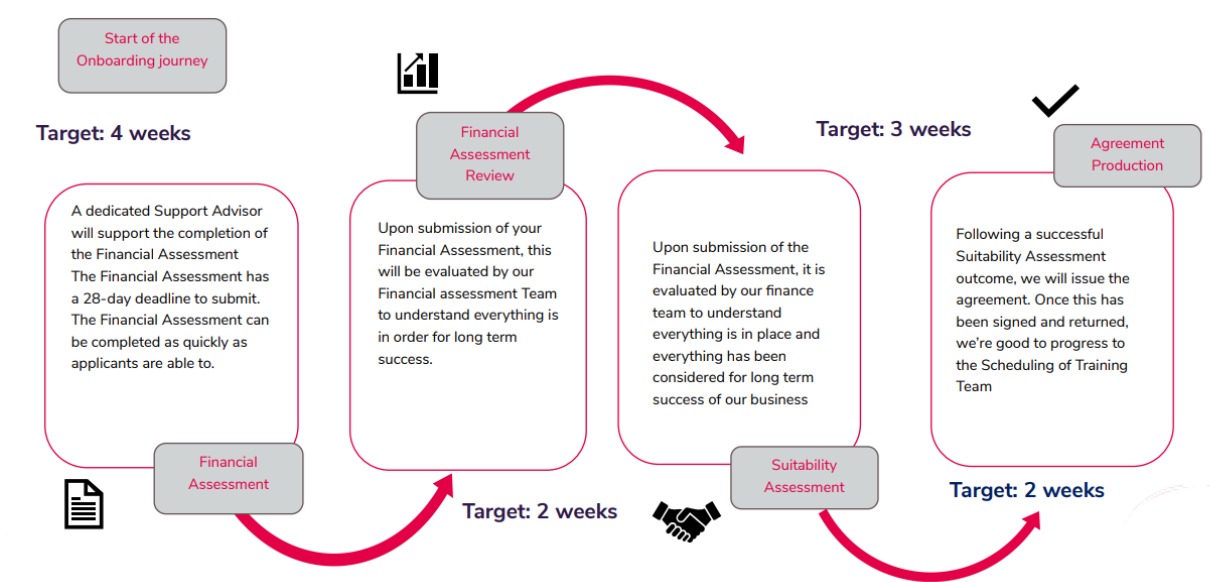
Committee	Date approved
On behalf of the Board	29 May 2026

Next policy annual review date: 31 March 2027

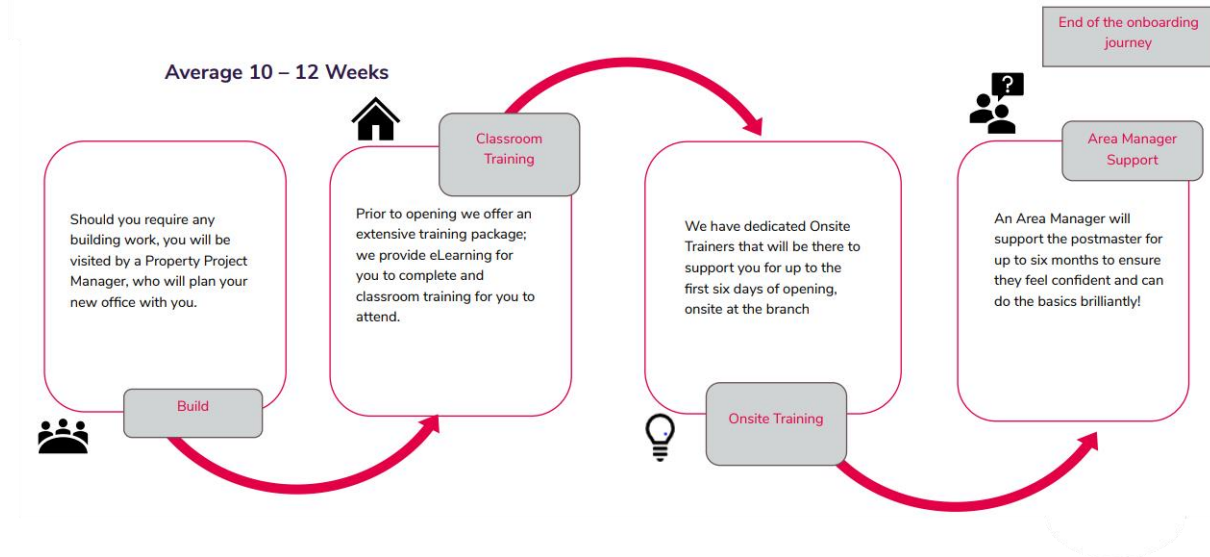
6 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Onboarding journey timelines

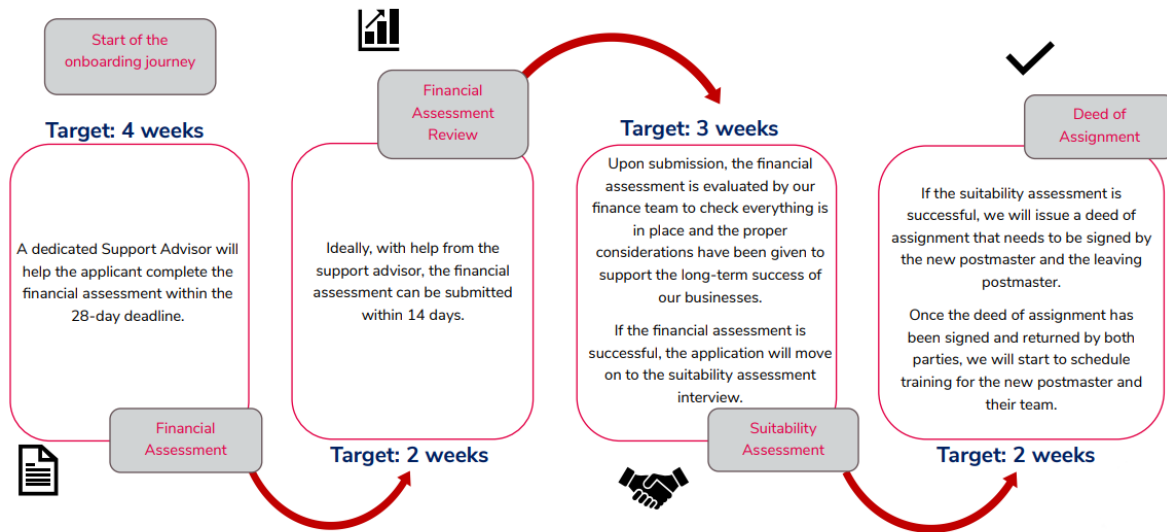
Agreement application



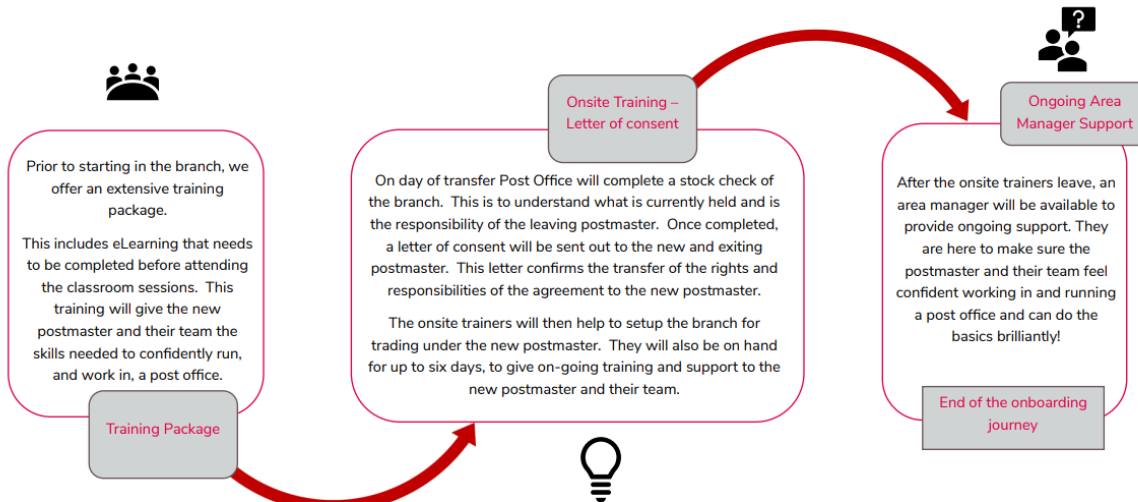
Agreement support



Deed of Assignment application



Deed of Assignment support



Appendix 2 – Definitions

8-day standstill period - this is the mandatory period of at least eight working days, beginning on the day a contract award notice is published, during which a contracting authority must not enter into a directly awarded contract, allowing suppliers the opportunity to challenge the award before the contract is concluded.

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.

Branch assistant – Someone who is employed by a corporate partner or postmaster to work in a post office branch.

Concession contract - A concession contract is a contract for works or services where the supplier receives at least part of their consideration through the right to exploit the works or services, bearing a real operating risk linked to demand or supply, rather than being paid solely by the contracting authority. This means the supplier's income depends wholly or partly on customers using their post office, exposing them to potential losses if customer visits are lower than expected.

Current round of competition – Applicants who are unsuccessful cannot immediately reapply for the same branch. For new branches and contracts, applications may only be submitted after the current application process has ended and/or if the branch opportunity is re-advertised. For commercial transfers, a minimum six-month waiting period applies before reapplying.

Commercial transfer – This is where the existing postmaster is selling their .business (in which a post office is located) to a prospective buyer, who will then apply for approval to have the postmaster agreement assigned to them.

Light touch contracts - A light-touch contract is a public services contract for certain social, health, education and other individual-facing public services, designated in regulations, which is subject to a more flexible and proportionate procurement regime under the Procurement Act 2023.

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

New branch and/or new contract – These are new postmaster agreement opportunities that have been advertised on the Government's Find a Tender website.

Corporate partner – A corporate business that operates post offices in several locations within their 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 3 – 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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