Postmaster support policy

Postmaster Onboarding

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 Postmaster Onboarding 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

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

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 are involved in postmaster onboarding activities (including Banking Hubs) on behalf of Post Office.

1.4 Strategic partners

Strategic partners are outside of the scope for this policy.

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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 and framework

2.1 Core principles

Post Office will:

Maintain an effective governance and assurance environment including:

- Documented and approved processes for onboarding new postmasters.
- Evaluating all onboarding feedback received from postmasters and their teams, and taking the relevant corrective actions where required.
- 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 (unless required earlier due to changes made) on this policy for employees who are involved in postmaster onboarding activities (including Banking Hubs).

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 and appoint the best possible potential new postmasters. This helps to reduce network churn and attrition and enables Post Office to maintain a stable and sustainable network.
- Making sure potential new postmasters 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 potential new postmasters feel supported throughout the onboarding journey.
- Tailoring onboarding journeys to the Post Office branch type (including Banking Hubs).
- Reviewing detailed financial assessments, submitted by potential new postmasters, to check the ongoing financial sustainability of the operation.
- Potential new postmasters attending a suitability assessment to discuss their business acumen and experience.
- Vetting all potential new postmasters (and their branch team/assistants) to meet legal, regulatory, and contractual obligations.

On completion of postmaster onboarding activities:

- Potential new postmasters who are unsuccessful in the onboarding process will not be able to reapply for a further six-month period.
- If successful, an agreement is created and sent to the potential new postmaster 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 electronically to the postmaster, who can request a paper copy if they want one.
- Operational training dates will be mutually agreed and scheduled once the agreement between Post Office and the postmaster is signed.

Where a postmaster submits their notice to leave within two years of starting to trade, there will be a leaving interview to understand why they are closing the branch. This information will be reviewed to identify any improvement opportunities that can be made to the postmaster onboarding journey and experience.

2.2 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

2.3 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:
- 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 – Applicable regulation and legislation

Post office will comply with all applicable legal and regulatory requirements when onboarding potential new postmasters, including (but not limited to):

- Sections 15 to 25 of the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 (the 2006 Act), section 24B of the Immigration Act 1971, and Schedule 6 of the Immigration Act 2016. Legislation to prevent illegal working.
- Section 122 of the Police Act 1997. Ensuring potential new postmasters or their directors/partners (if a potential new postmaster is a limited company or partnership) who have a criminal record are treated fairly and not discriminated against automatically because of a conviction or other information revealed.
- The Data Protection Act 2018. Provision for the regulation of the processing of information relating to individuals.
- Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Transfer of Funds (Information on the Payer) Regulations 2017.

Appendix 2 – Definitions

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

Branch assistant – Someone who is employed by a strategic partner or postmaster to work in a Post Office branch.

Banking Hub – A Post Office-managed space where people can do their day-to-day banking and talk to community staff from their own bank once a week.

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

Strategic partner – A corporate business that operates Post Offices in several locations within their 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.

Temporary postmaster – this refers to a limited company, partnership, limited liability partnership, other entity or individual that contracts with the Post Office for the operation of a Post Office branch or Banking Hub on a temporary basis.

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.

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

POST OFFICE