Postmaster support policy

Onboarding

Version 4.0

Post Office is determined to reset its relationship with postmasters and has introduced policies that set out guidelines on how Post Office should support postmasters, specifically for use across twelve areas.

The policies stand on their own but should be reviewed in conjunction with each other. Support teams should have an awareness of all twelve policies and how they link together.

The twelve Postmaster Support Policies are listed in section 2.2 of this policy ███████████████████████

Contents page

1 Overview

1.1 Introduction by the policy owner

██████████████████████ has overall accountability to the Board of Directors for the design and implementation of controls and supporting protocols to ensure postmasters[1] are onboarded in line with applicable regulatory requirements and contractual obligations, creating an overall positive onboarding experience for potential new postmasters (including Banking Hub operators given that these are appointed from existing postmasters).

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

1.2 Purpose

This policy is part of a framework that has been established to capture the minimum operations onboarding standards required relating to the initial onboarding of postmasters and their teams.

It is one of a set of policies that provide a clear framework for Postmaster Onboarding. Compliance with these policies supports the Post Office in meeting its business objectives and responsibilities to postmasters.

1.3 Core principles

Post Office intends to provide a postmaster onboarding process that attracts and appoints the best possible potential new postmasters to reduce network[3] churn, attrition and enables Post Office to maintain a stable and sustainable network. It therefore supports the long-term commercial viability of the Post Office.

Post Office will deliver postmaster onboarding in good faith with fairness, transparency, and professionalism (being the underpinning behaviours of Post Office).

It is essential that potential new postmasters and their teams are given the right levels of support throughout the onboarding journey. This will help Post Office lay the foundations for a sustainable, collaborative and transparent future partnership.

Post Office will evaluate all onboarding feedback received from postmasters and their teams and take relevant corrective actions agreed.

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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" means Post Office Limited.

[3] In this policy, "network" means branches not directly managed by Post Office.

1.4 Application

This Policy is applicable to all Post Office employees[4] that manage postmaster onboarding processes defines the minimum standards to control financial loss, postmaster impact, regulatory breaches and reputational damage in line with the Post Office's Risk Appetite. The policy applies to postmasters who are onboarded and appointed as a postmaster (regardless of what contract type they will have with Post Office and what Post Office model type they will operate) from when the postmaster submits an initial application through to appointment.

1.5 The risk

Post Office is committed to provide a supportive and straightforward onboarding journey, with the view to ensuring the right appointment decision for both Post Office and the prospective postmaster.

1.6 Legislation

Post Office seeks to comply with all relevant UK legal and regulatory requirements 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.

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[4] In this Policy "employee" means permanent staff, temporary including agency staff, contractors, consultants and anyone else working for or on behalf of Post Office and, for clarity, does not include postmasters or their staff.
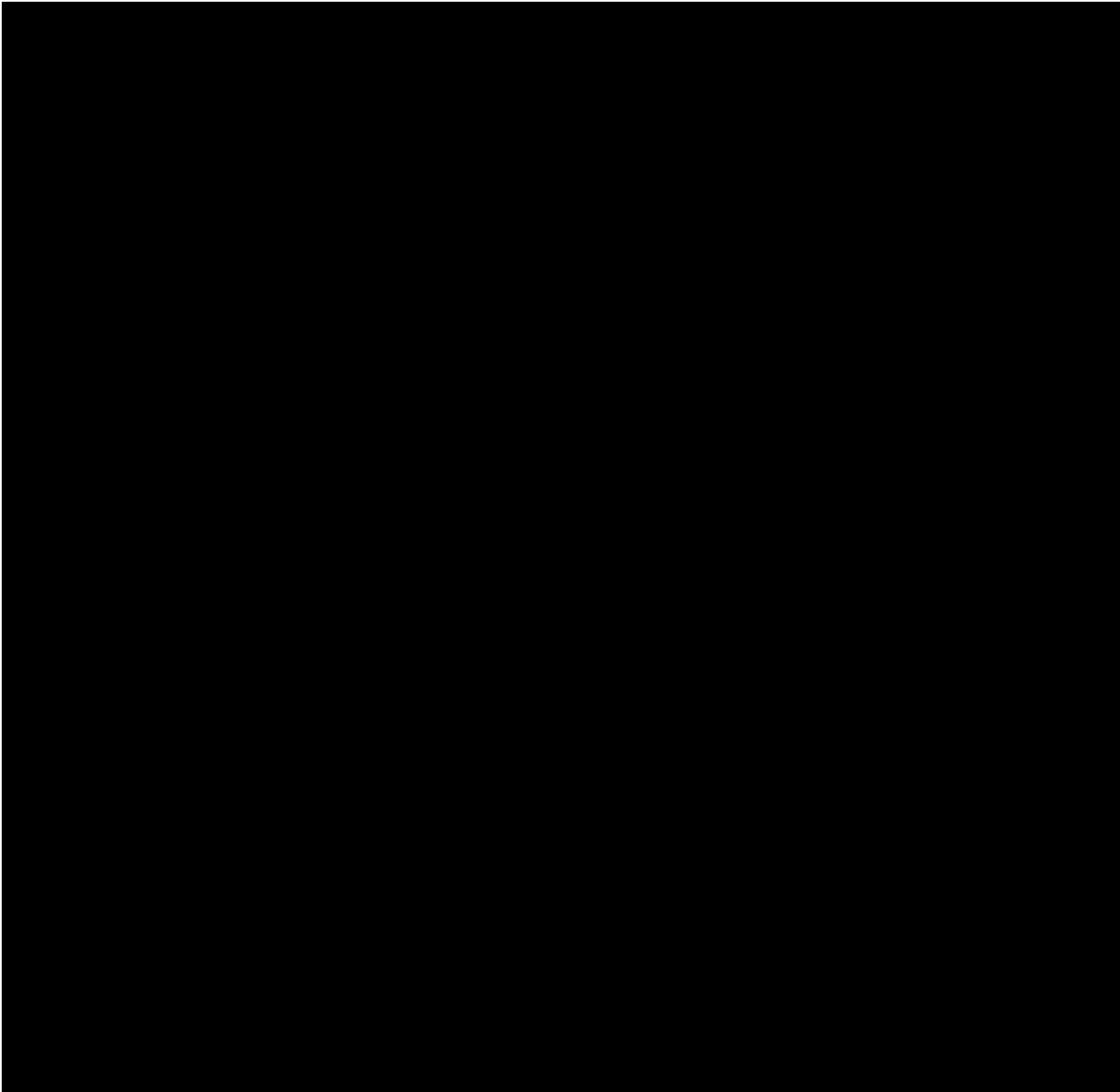
2.2 Policy framework

This policy is part of a framework of postmaster support policies that has been established to set the minimum operating standards relating to the management of postmaster contract risks throughout the business and network in line with Post Office's risk appetite. These are subject to an annual review. The framework includes the following policies:

- Postmaster Onboarding (this policy)

- Postmaster Training

- Postmaster Complaint Handling

- Network Monitoring and Branch Assurance Support

- Network Cash and Stock Management

- Network Transaction Corrections

- Postmaster Account Support

- Postmaster Accounting Dispute Resolution

- Postmaster Contract Performance

- Postmaster Contract Suspension

- Postmaster Contract Termination Decision Review

- Postmaster Decision Review

2.3 Who must comply?

Compliance with this policy is mandatory for all Post Office employees that manage postmaster (including Banking Hub) onboarding processes.

Where non-compliance with this policy by Post Office employees is identified by Post Office, Post Office will carry out an investigation. Where it is identified that an instance of non-compliance is caused through wilful disregard or negligence, this will be investigated in accordance with the Group Investigations Policy.

## 2.4 Roles & responsibilities jointly responsible for onboarding

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

- **Risk and Compliance Committee** - is the standing committee of the Senior Executive Group who review and approve Postmaster Support policies for recommendation to the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee.

- ██████████████████████ is the policy owner, who must comply with the governance responsibilities set out at section 5.1.

- ██████████████████████████ is accountable for the deployment of this policy. This role is also responsible for regularly reviewing the standards and processes set out in this policy and for drafting any amendments that may be required.

- ███████████████████ accountable for the deployment of procedures and decisions required in this policy and supporting ███████████████████ who onboard postmasters.

- ████████████████████████ carries out onboarding processes and checks and should be fully conversant with this policy and linked policies.

- ████████████████ carries out the financial analysis behind Financial Assessments which are submitted as part of the postmaster onboarding process.
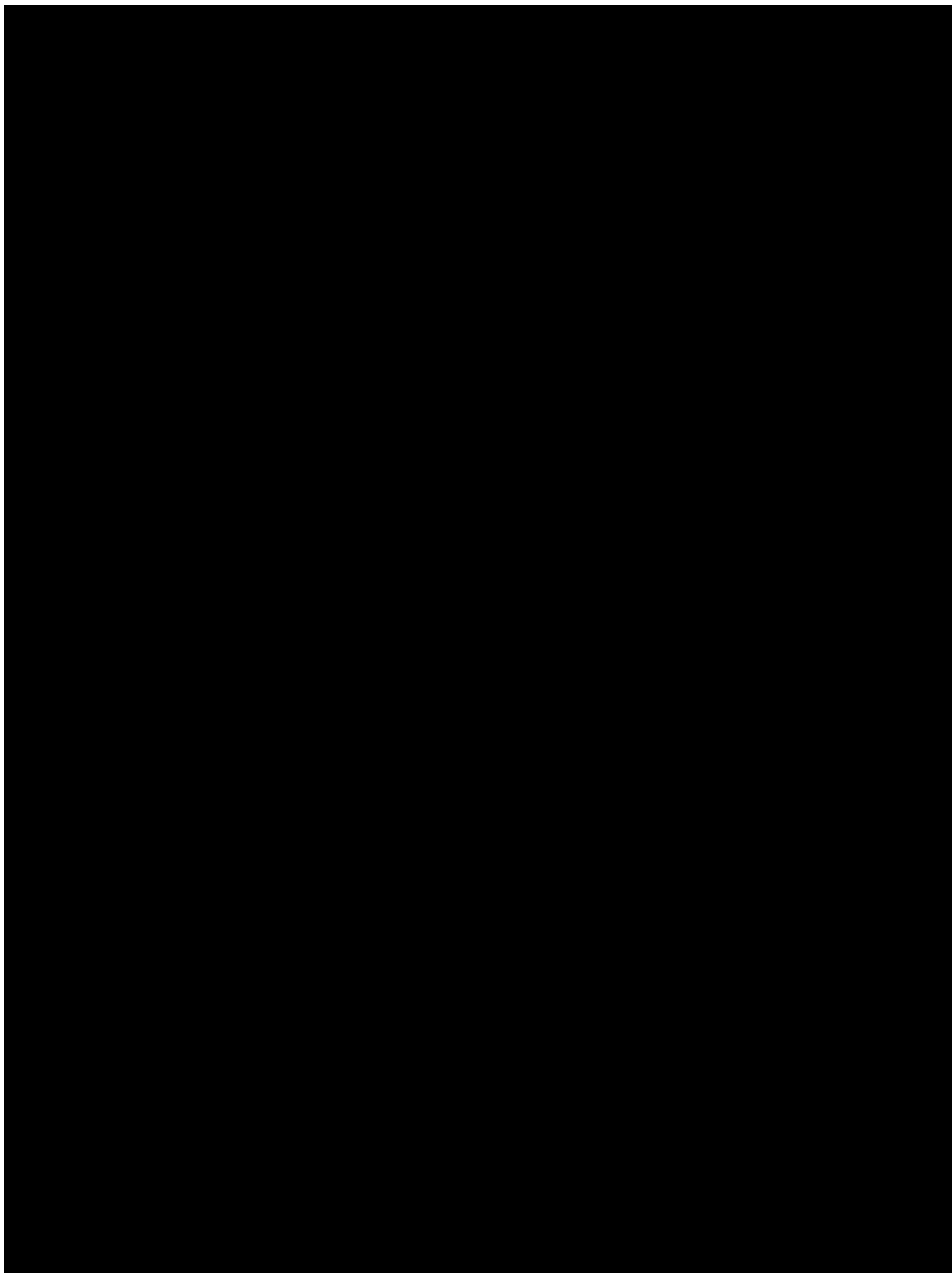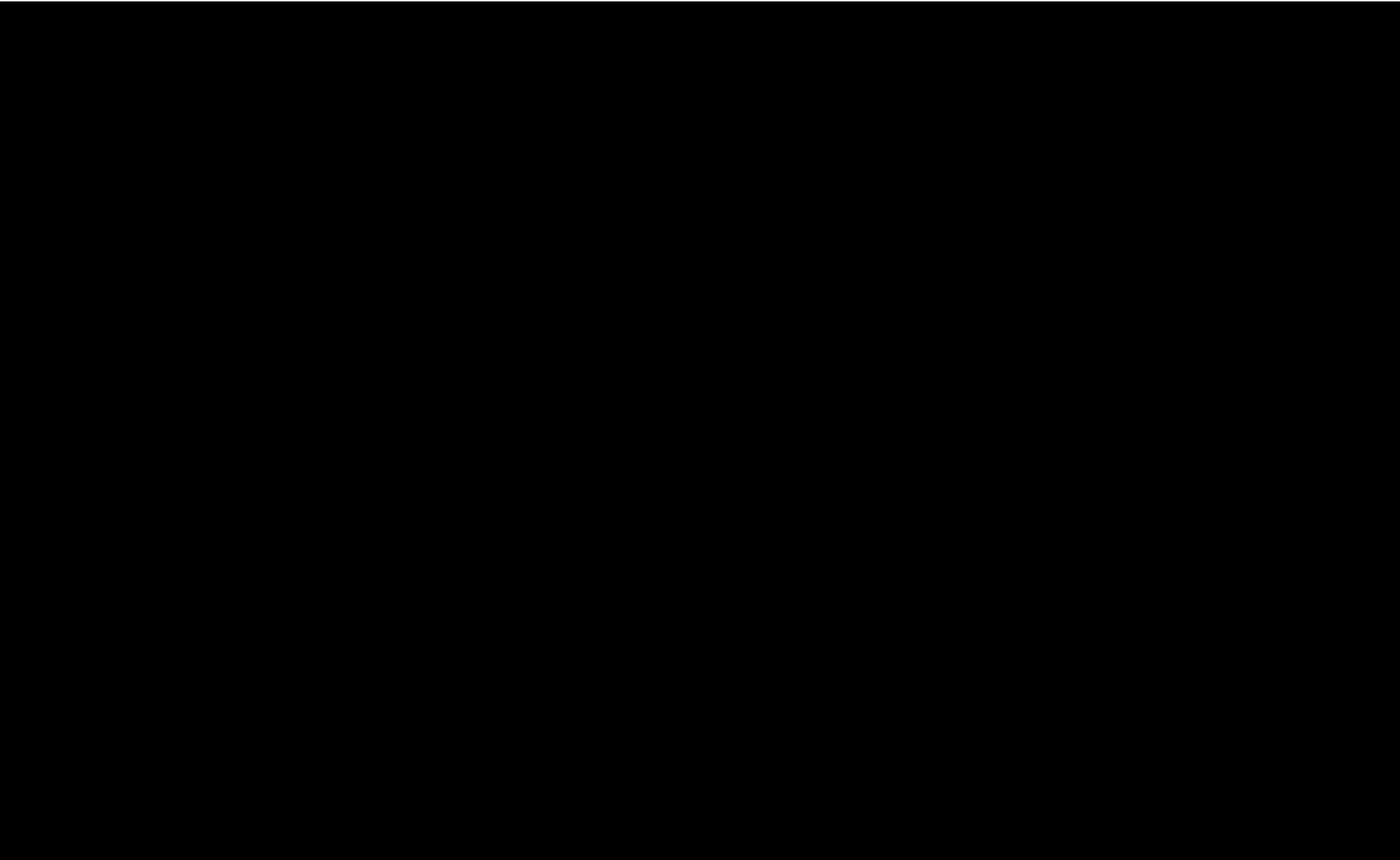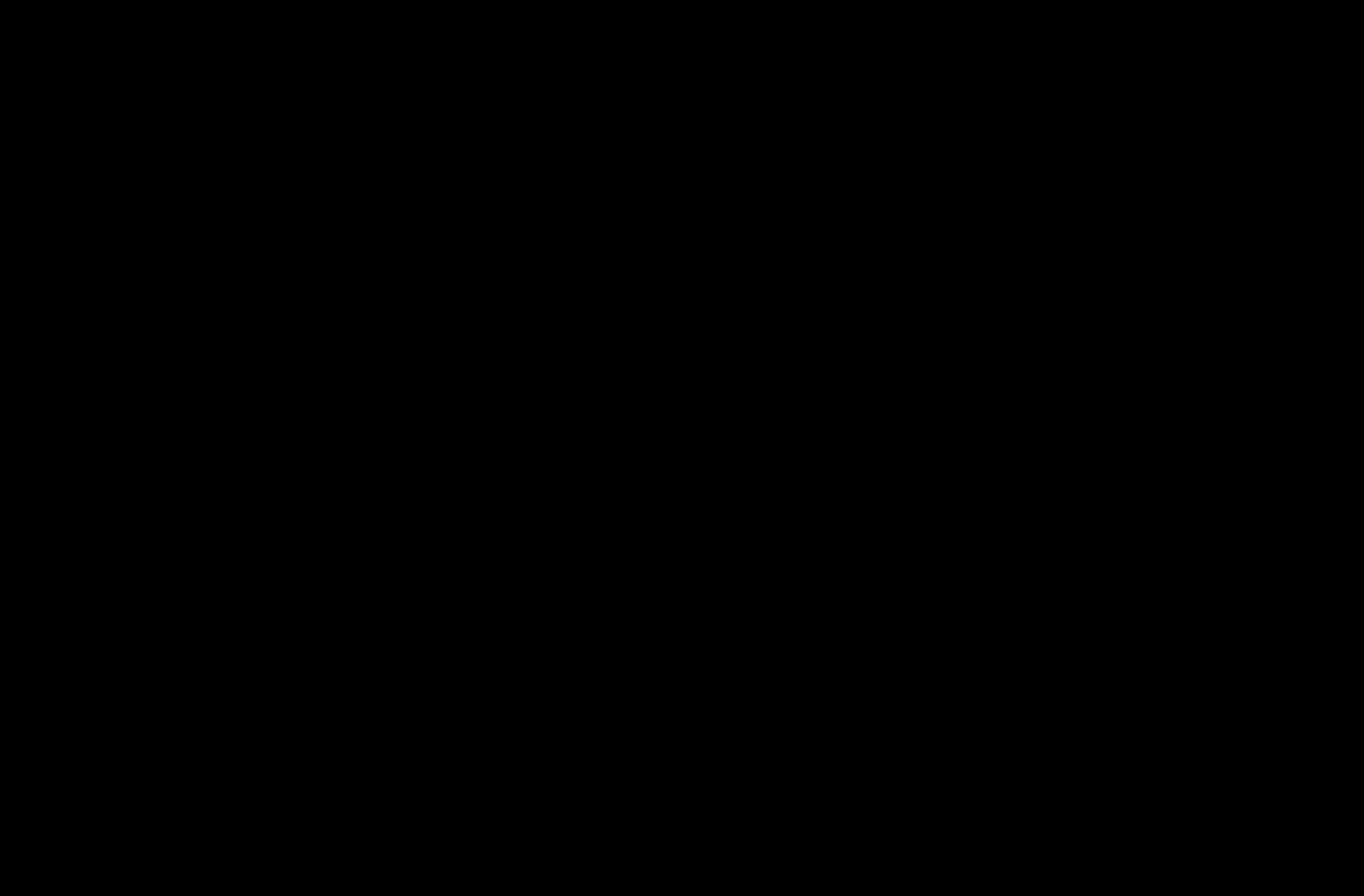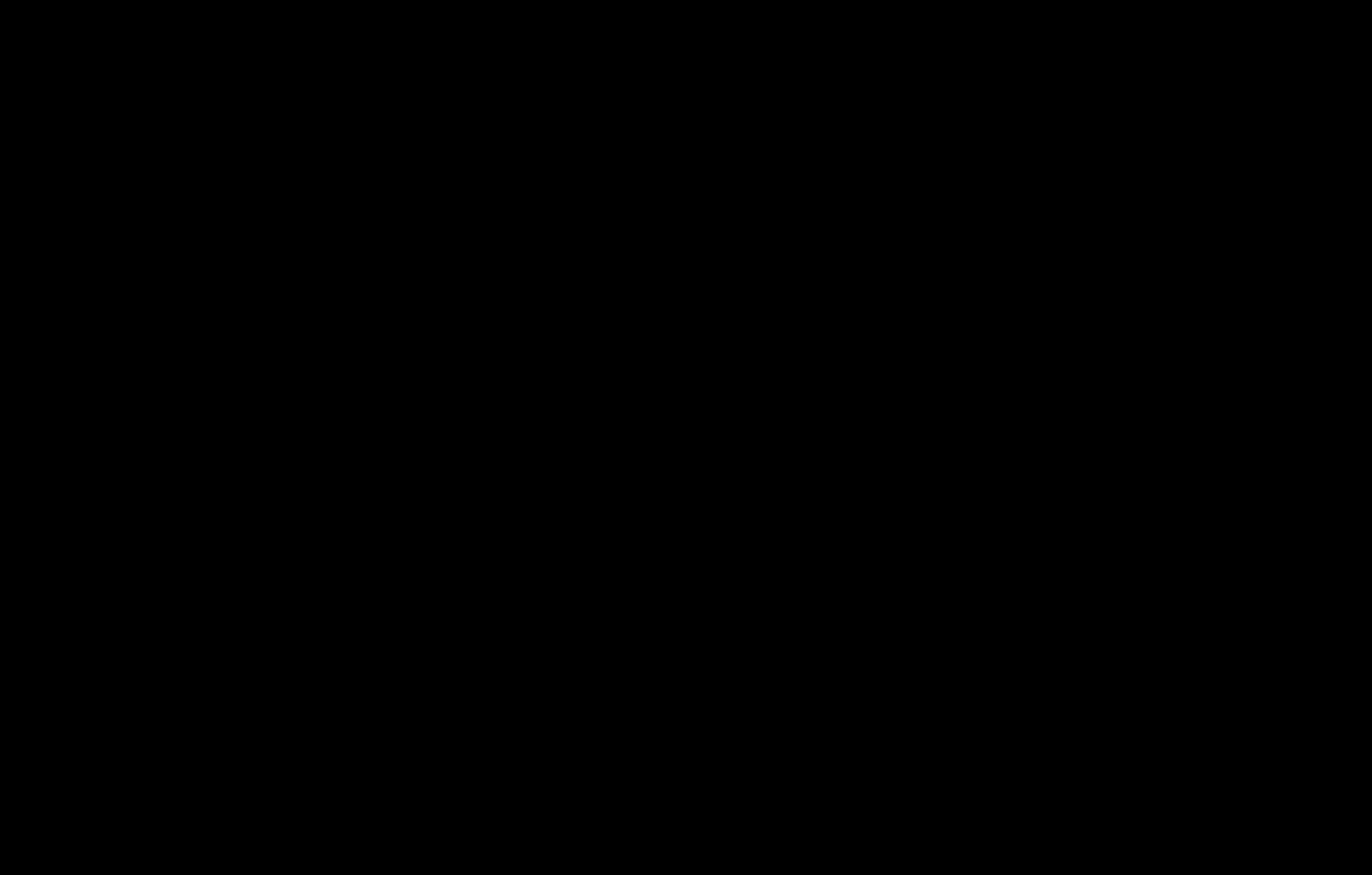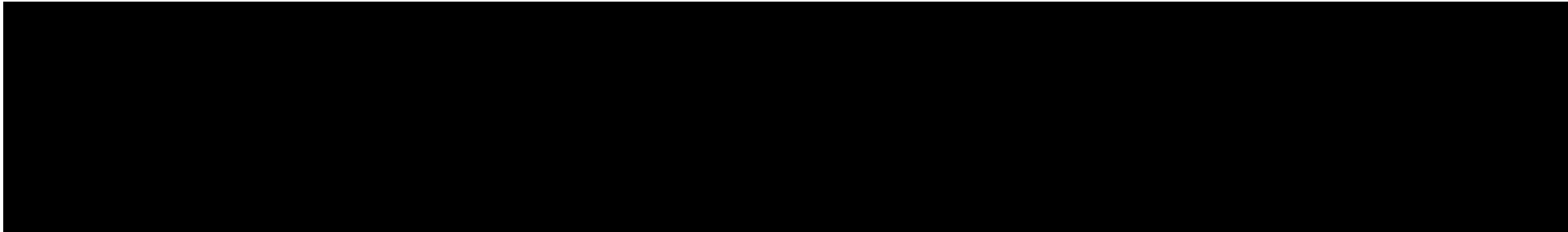
3 Procedures

3.1 Postmaster/Banking Hub Operators[6] onboarding requirements

It is imperative that all onboarding activities are completed in a supported, transparent, and fully engaged manner. This will ensure that Post Office and postmasters and their teams work together to achieve a confident and trustworthy relationship. In support of this, Post Office will provide comprehensive supporting documents and telephone calls to offer substantial support throughout the onboarding journey.

The type of onboarding differs depending upon the Post Office branch type (including Banking Hubs) – please see internal processes, which are version and dated controlled and located centrally on the onboarding knowledge centre. A RACI system is in place to clarify who is responsible, accountable, informed or consulted across Post Office teams.

The list below details the high-level activities required in respect of onboarding: -

All opportunities are to be advertised on our Run a Post Office website (RaPO). This also includes Temporary Branches and Banking Hubs. ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ own the notification of the opportunity to the ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ with the ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ responsible for uploading and taking down the adverts. For Banking Hubs, the ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ own the notification of the opportunity to the ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ with the ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ responsible for uploading and taking down the adverts.

- The prospective new postmaster (or its directors/partners) submits the application which is tracked by the ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓

- The prospective new postmaster is invited to submit a detailed Financial Assessment

- ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ which is part of the onboarding structure, makes a financial decision as to the ongoing sustainability of the operation based on the Financial Assessment; they notify the ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ who updates the potential new postmaster.

- ▓ f unsuccessful, the potential new postmaster can resubmit the Financial Assessment ▓▓▓▓
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- The Suitability Assessment is conducted by the ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ they confirm the outcome of the assessment with the potential new postmaster

- ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ is notified of the suitability assessment outcome

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

f successful, agreement is created by the ███████████████████ and sent to the potential new postmaster for signature

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- An annual review assessing the financial standing of the business plan will be carried out. This aims to ensure its feasibility and highlight any area where additional support might be necessary to meet the requirements.

3.2 Onboarding journey timelines
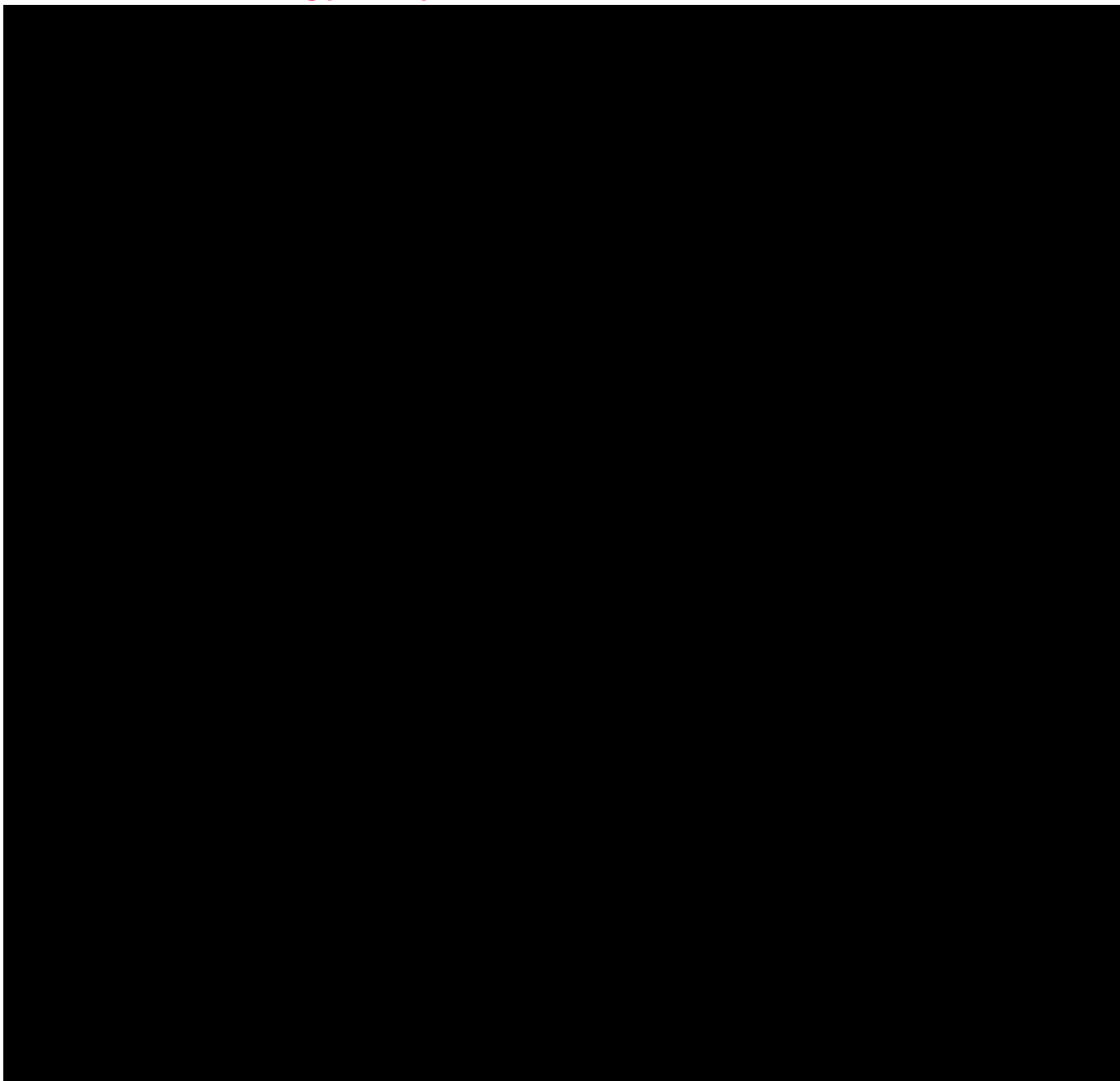
3.3 Scheduling of operational training

███ operational training will be organised as follows:

- Training dates will be mutually agreed and scheduled once the agreement between Post Office and the postmaster is signed and returned (i.e., the time at which the contract/appointment is confirmed).

- eLearning/classroom/onsite training will be discussed with prospective new postmasters or their staff (as applicable) 6 weeks prior to go live for new branches.

- In commercial transfer situations, we will aim to contact prospective new postmasters within 7 days of receipt by Post Office of the signed contract.

- At the point of being booked onto the classroom training, attendees will be registered ████████████████ to enable them to access the eLearning material

- The relevant branch staff will attend the classroom training as listed in section 3.1 of the Training Policy. (Such training is specific to the branch model).

- Once the classroom course is completed, the attendees will have a debrief session with the classroom trainers to discuss learning outcomes.

- Branch staff will receive in-branch support and training ██████████████████ starting on the first day of branch operation ████████████████████████

3.4 Collaborative working

Weekly or monthly calls with other functions allow ████████████ to review specific cases if required, talk about challenges that ███████████ or other teams may be experiencing and also share good experiences and practices.

Regular calls are held with the following:

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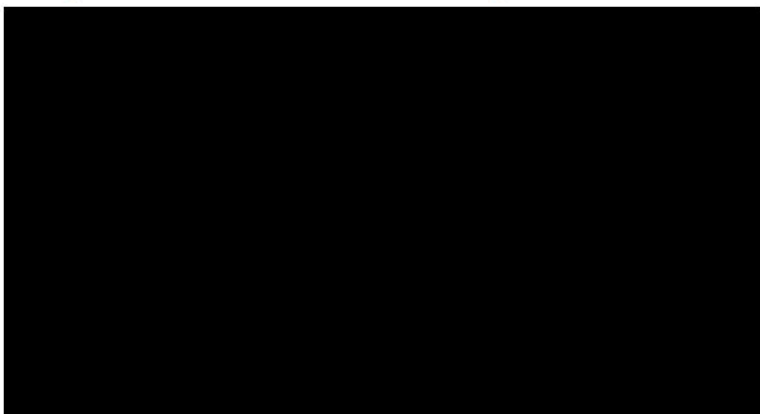
4 Where to go for help

4.1 Additional policies

This Policy is one of a set of policies. The full set of policies can be found on the ██████████ ████████████████████

4.2 How to raise a concern

Any postmaster, any postmaster's staff or any Post Office employee who suspects that there is a breach of this Policy should report this without any undue delay.

If a postmaster or any postmaster's staff are unable to raise the matter with the area manager of the relevant branch or if a Post Office employee is unable to speak to her or his line manager, any person can bring it to Post Office's attention independently and can use the Speak Up channels for this purpose. Any person can raise concerns anonymously, although disclosing as much information as possible helps ensure Post Office can conduct a thorough investigation.

For more details about how and where to raise concerns, please refer to the current Speak Up Policy ██

Please note that a postmaster may also contact the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters (NFSP) for help and support, by contacting their helpline on 01273 452324 or by emailing admin@nfsp.org.uk.

4.3 Who to contact for more information

If you need further information about this policy or wish to report an issue in relation to this policy, please contact the ████████████████████████████

5 Governance

5.1 Governance responsibilities

The Policy sponsor, the Group Chief Retail Officer of Post Office, takes responsibility for policies covering their areas.

The Policy Owner is the ████████████████ who is responsible for ensuring that the content is up to date and is capable of being executed. As part of the review process, they need to ensure that the minimum controls articulated in the policy are working or to identify any gaps and provide an action plan for remediation

Additionally, the ███████████████ is responsible for providing appropriate and timely reporting to the Risk and Compliance Committee and the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee as required.

The Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee are responsible for approving the Policy and overseeing compliance.

The Board is responsible for setting Post Office's risk appetite.

6 Document control

6.1 Document control version

Summary

GE policy sponsor	Standard owner	Standard implementer	Standard approver
Martin Roberts (Group Chief Retail Officer)	██████████	██████████	R&CC/ARC
Version	**Document review period**	**Policy – effective date**	**Policy location**
4.0	Annual	03/2024	Postmaster Support Policies ███████ █

Revision history

Version	Date	Changes	Updated by
0.1	17th August 2020	Draft Version	████████
1.0	18th February 2021	Updated Draft Version	
1.1	18th March 2021	Amendments to align with postmaster support policies	
1.2	30th March 2021	Addition of non-compliance minimum control standard Final approved by ARC	
1.3	30th April 2021	Extra references to branch staff and partners and directors of Ltd companies Amendments to align with postmaster support policies	
1.4	25th May 2021	Added linked policy statement to front page Added reference to the Group Investigations Policy to section 2.3 Who Must Comply? Updated link to section 4.1 Added footnote to link to the vetting policy referred to in this policy.	
1.5	26th October 2021	Updated scheduling of operational training 3.2 Roles & responsibilities jointly responsible for onboarding 2.4	
1.6	18th February 2022	**Annual Review** 1.2 Addition of section stating that a postmaster may authorise someone to act on their/its behalf 2.1 Updated risk appetite statements to include Operational statements 3.1 Added a paragraph on Run a Post Office website	

2.0	1st April 2022	3.2 Inserted timeline graphics Amended version number following approval	███
2.2	14th November 2022	Annual Review Addition of references to Banking Hub operators where their onboarding differs from postmasters. 2.5 ███████████ checks on Notice to Leave packs, quality assurance on all agreements, validation of entity changes and caller identity on all calls	███
2.3	13th December 2022	1.2 Removal of section acknowledging a postmaster's assistant can perform the steps in this policy 1.5 Clarification of risk relating to contract issuing 2.5 Addition of regular engagement with NFSP to discuss stalled cases 5.2 Added Speak Up contact details	███
3.0	27th January 2023	Updated to full version number following approval at ARC	███
3.1	8th December 2023	Amended risk exception statement Updated framework policy name – Contract Termination Decisions Review	███
3.2	16th January 2024	**Annual Review** 2.5 Mention of a separate ███████ removed 3.1 Added that a RACI system is in place Added annual reviews of business plan 3.3 Inclusion of eLearning 3.4 Collaborative working – new section 4.2 Added NFSP contact details	███
4.0	3rd April 2024	Updated version number following ARC approval GE replaced with SEG	███

6.2 Oversight committee

Oversight committee: Risk and Compliance Committee and Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee

Committee	Date approved
POL R&CC	12 MARCH 2024
POL ARC	20 MARCH 2024

Next review: 31 MARCH 2025

6.3 Company details

Post Office Limited and Post Office Management Services Limited are registered in England and Wales. Registered numbers 2154540 and 08459718 respectively. Registered Office: Finsbury Dials, 20 Finsbury Street, London EC2Y 9AQ.

Post Office Management Services Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), FRN 630318. Its Information Commissioners Office registration number is ZA090585.

Post Office Limited is authorised and regulated by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), REF 12137104. Its Information Commissioners Office registration number is Z4866081.

VAT registration number GB 172 6705 02. Registered office: Finsbury Dials, 20 Finsbury Street, London, England EC2Y 9AQ

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