



Dear Customer

Changes to Your Branch

Chester Le Street Post Office
137 Front Street, Chester-le-Street, County Durham, DH3 3AA

I'm writing to let you know that we are changing the way we operate Chester Le Street Post Office. The branch will soon be operated by an independent franchise retail partner, RF Retail Limited (RF Retail), from the current premises, offering the same wide range of services, and extended opening on Tuesday mornings. We are finalising our plans, and we anticipate this change will happen by September 2025.

Why are we making this change?

Post Office Limited recently announced, as part of its commitment to deliver a "New Deal for Postmasters", it is moving to a fully franchised network by Autumn 2025. Over 99% of the Post Office network is already successfully operated via franchise and run by carefully selected retail partners. We are confident this will create a long-term, sustainable future for post offices in communities across the UK including Chester Le Street branch.

We will display posters in the branch to inform customers and provide a further update in branch to confirm the date of this change.

If you have any questions you would like to raise about this matter, please write to me via the National Consultation Team at the address shown at the end of the letter. Please note that your comments will not be kept confidential unless you expressly ask us to do so by clearly marking them "In Confidence".

Any future changes to service provision would be handled in line with our Principles of Community Engagement. An extract relating to Notification is available at the end of this letter.

If you are a local representative, it would be helpful if you could share this information through your social media channels and with any local groups or organisations that you know within the community, for example on noticeboards, local charities and in GP surgeries, to help our customers and your constituents understand what is happening to the Post Office in the local community. If you would like a supply of posters, please let us know.

Yours faithfully

Martin Edwards

Martin Edwards
Transformation Delivery Director
Post Office Limited

How to contact us:
comments@postoffice.co.uk
postofficeviews.co.uk
FREEPOST Your Comments

Good to know

- Post Office's "New Deal for Postmasters" will increase total annual postmaster remuneration by £250m by 2030. To find out more, visit our [Post Office Corporate](https://postoffice.corporate.co.uk) website, (postoffice.corporate.co.uk – search postmaster new deal).
- Franchise branches typically offer longer opening hours, as well as a wider retail offering compared to a standalone post office, providing greater convenience and accessibility for customers and businesses alike.
- Any independent franchise retail partner, including RF Retail, must have a clear track record of successfully running Post Office services, or similar customer-orientated retail ensuring they can deliver an excellent service to the community. RF Retail Ltd currently successfully run five Post Offices and six Banking Hubs and two additional retail stores. They are the largest operator of Banking Hubs in the UK.
- As with any proposed branch change, we understand that customers are often concerned about the impact of such changes on staff. Please be assured that our staff will be fully supported throughout this process.
- Any person employed to work in Chester Le Street Post Office will be trained to the highest Post Office standards and the branch staff will receive on-going training on all services, as well as general operational and service-related matters.
- Whilst we have made our decision and therefore, we are not inviting feedback on this change, any relevant information we receive will be considered as we finalise our plans.
- Posters will now be displayed in branch to let customers know about the change.
- Once the change has happened, we will continue to work with our retail franchise partner to review if the current branch or a new nearby location is the right long-term branch premises. Any proposed move to new location is unlikely to be before spring 2026 and would be subject to local public consultation in line with our Principals of Community Engagement.

Chester Le Street Post Office Information Summary

There are times our branches may need to make changes to its opening hours. The latest available branch information can be found on our website www.postoffice.co.uk/branch-finder

Current opening times		New opening times	
Monday	09:00 – 17:30	Monday	09:00 – 17:30
Tuesday	09:30 – 17:30	Tuesday	09:00 – 17:30
Wednesday	09:00 – 17:30	Wednesday	09:00 – 17:30
Thursday	09:00 – 17:30	Thursday	09:00 – 17:30
Friday	09:00 – 17:30	Friday	09:00 – 17:30
Saturday	09:00 – 12:30	Saturday	09:00 – 12:30
Sunday	Closed	Sunday	Closed
Services available at this branch			
The same range of services will still be available.			
Serving positions			
The same serving positions will still be available.			
Access			
Access arrangements will remain the same.			
Retail			
Stationery.			
Proposed month of Change		August/September 2025	

To get this information in a different format, for example, in larger print, audio or braille call
03452 66 01 15 or Textphone 03457 22 33 55.

Principles of Community Engagement on changes to the Post Office network (extract)

A full version of this document is available on our Consultation Hub - postofficeviews.co.uk

We are committed to engaging and supporting our customers and their representatives as we make changes to the Post Office network. The following Principles will be adopted when communicating about changes to your local Post Office branch.

We will **Notify** - where we are informing customers of changes around:

- Opening hours
- Unplanned closure¹/ planned service interruption
- Re-opening of a closed branch in the same site
- Opening a new branch unrelated to a previous closure
- Location used by a Mobile Post Office within a community
- Franchising of a Directly Managed branch in its existing site where there are no changes to access to the Post Office serving point

We will display a poster in branch (or nearby if appropriate) to notify customers of the above changes, aiming to provide four weeks' notice. Four weeks' notice may not be possible for an unplanned change, and in these instances, we will provide notice as soon as we are able to. For closures we will include details of the nearest alternative Post Offices and our customer helpline/textphone.

We notify locally elected representatives including but are not restricted to the Member of Parliament, Scottish Parliament, Welsh Parliament, or Northern Ireland Assembly, Local Authority Chief Executive, Ward Councillors, Parish or Community Council, selected charities, local Citizens Advice, Age UK, Northern Ireland's Disability Action and Northern Ireland's Rural Community Network. They are also encouraged to share all information additionally with local groups and organisations who they believe have an active interest in changes to their local Post Office.

These Principles have been agreed with Citizens Advice, Consumer Scotland and the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, the independent statutory consumer advocacy bodies.

What to do if you feel these Principles haven't been followed:

Please get in touch so we can investigate your complaint. We'll explain in our reply whether we believe we have followed our Principles of Community Engagement and will provide you with the contact details for the relevant consumer advocacy body (Citizens Advice, Consumer Scotland, or the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland) if you're not satisfied with our response. The consumer advocacy body will independently assess whether we have followed the Principles of Community Engagement process (rather than the decision itself) and recommend any actions with respect to the complaint.

Postofficeviews.co.uk

Comments@postoffice.co.uk

FREEPOST Your Comments

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Textphone: 03457 22 33 55

¹Where the closure is unplanned, the service provision in the area will be reviewed based on current usage, modelling and availability of any suitable replacement or alternative service model. A commercial decision will be made if to actively seek to replace the closed service and will not be subject to public consultation.