

## **Making changes to grow the network**

Post Office is by far the largest retailer across the UK with over 11,500 branches. We currently maintain a vital commercial presence on the UK high street even as many retailers continue to leave it. Our aim is to faithfully provide the continuous personal touch that customers always need and although the Post Office is for everyone, we know some parts of society rely on us more than others.

In keeping with this, we are providing the right type of branches, in convenient locations, to ensure that customers can access the Post Office products and services they need, allowing them to operate in cash, pay their bills in person, purchase financial and travel products, verify their identity and more.

We have introduced a range of models to accomplish this objective, piloting new formats which are simpler and less complex to operate to meet the changing needs of the communities we serve. Under the Network Transformation Programme we modernised over 10,000 branches which saw the integration of Post Office branches into retail outlets. We continue to develop our services to remain relevant for customers, to effectively adapt and deliver our products and services, and to ensure we cater to our most vulnerable customers.

## **Why do you need to make changes to the network?**

The way we live in the UK is changing fast and people's commercial habits are being altered. For instance, there has been a rapid decline in the use of cash and banks are rapidly disappearing from the high street. For people who need to operate in cash, access Government services or pay bills, there are fewer places on their high street they can go to. The Coronavirus pandemic has accelerated the pace of this change, increasing economic uncertainty and hardship for many people. For the many who are struggling with these changes, we're proud to provide branches with the vital services they are unable to access elsewhere.

Our core products and services in mails & parcels and cash & banking have never been in more demand. We're also here for the new generation of online marketplace sellers who depend on us to get their goods to customers. We're the nation's front counter for local small business owners to pay in their till takings or manage their finances.

Franchising, through a carefully selected retail partner, forms part of the continuing modernisation of our network, to achieve commercial sustainability, and will help us to provide services that will meet customer needs and safeguard future service provision, now and for the long term. The vast majority of our 11,500 Post Office branches, large and small, are successfully operated with retail partners and we believe this is the best approach to keeping Post Offices in main shopping locations and at the heart of communities where they play in an important role in local economies.

## How will these branch changes affect me?

In most cases, the branch will continue to offer the same wide range of products and services as currently and will still be operated by friendly, trained staff. There will be a consultation or engagement period first to seek your views on things like accessibility and opening hours.

Like most high street retailers, we have had to develop a more flexible approach to how we provide services to our customers. Generally, instead of a separate Post Office counter area we have local-style branches, where customers can access Post Office services alongside the retail shop, creating a modern and convenient experience for customers. These branches offer a range of Post Office products and services, often over long opening hours and sometimes seven days a week, so customers can access their Post Office when it's convenient.

As well as traditional post and other services, today's Post Office network provides for the collection or return of online shopping, offers a 'Click & Collect' service for foreign currency available from over thousands of branches and day-to-day banking for the majority of customers of UK banks - 99 per cent of UK personal banking customers and 75 per cent of business customers can now carry out day-to-day banking at any of our branches.

## Why is my branch closed and how can I find out what's happening?

Sometimes unplanned changes happen to the Post Office network which are outside of our control.

For example, the postmaster might resign or there might be a building problem such as flooding. Where this is the case, we'll try to let you know as soon as possible by displaying posters locally and further information will be available on our [Consultation Hub](#). You can also find details of other branches in the area by visiting our website at [postoffice.co.uk/branch-finder](https://postoffice.co.uk/branch-finder)

If a branch closes, we will work closely with the postmaster to resolve any issues to enable us to restore service as quickly as possible. Where this isn't possible or if the operator can no longer run the branch we'll seek to identify a new postmaster in the local area and will advertise the opportunity on our website [runapostoffice.co.uk](https://runapostoffice.co.uk): In such cases, we also ask our customers as well as local representatives if they know of any retail partners who may be interested in a vacancy, to please share the link with them. As soon as we have a suitable plan in place for the area, we'll let our customers and their representatives know and will ask for feedback on our plans.

## How will I know if there are changes planned for my branch?

If there are any changes planned to the branch you use, information posters will be displayed in the branch. If we're carrying out a public consultation, customer leaflets will also be available in the branch, which you can take home, explaining more about the changes. You can also search by branch name, unique branch code or postcode on our Consultation Hub to find out more. This will provide an information letter with full details of the change and when it's going to happen.

## How will you take my views into account before making any changes?

We want to know what you think and as we plan changes, we will ask for your views on key areas.

If we are proposing to move your branch to new premises, we will carry out a six-week local public consultation before we make a final decision on the new location. During that time, you can let us know what you think about our plans. At the end of the consultation, all feedback will be carefully considered before we make a final decision

on the proposed move. More information on how we communicate change is available in our [Principles Of Community Engagement](#) available on our Consultation Hub.

### **What factors do you consider before making the decision to proceed with any changes?**

Post Office Ltd welcomes all feedback but the key factors considered in reaching a decision are, customer access to, into and inside the proposed new or alternative branches, with particular regard to vulnerable customers. We will also consider any local community issues affected by the proposal.

People often raise common issues such as car parking, road traffic and conditions. Whilst these are not in our direct control, we will carefully consider any impact the changes may have on these local issues.

### **How do I find out about the decisions you have made?**

We will keep you informed by displaying posters in the branch to support you through any changes. Details will also be published on our Consultation Hub under closed consultations. If you have taken part in a local public consultation and registered your views electronically, you will also be sent a link to our Consultation Hub when the final decision is announced. If you have written to us, we will write to you to let you know our final plans.

### **What do I do if I think you haven't followed the Principles of Community Engagement?**

If you think we haven't followed the Principles of Community Engagement 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 watchdog (Citizens Advice, Consumer Scotland or the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland) if you're not satisfied with our response. The watchdog will independently assess whether we have followed the Principles of Community Engagement process (rather than the decision itself) and recommend any actions concerning the complaint.

### **I'm interested in running a Post Office. How do I apply?**

For more information or to search for business opportunities in your area, please visit our website [runapostoffice.co.uk](http://runapostoffice.co.uk)

### **I want more information about mail products and services**

Royal Mail is responsible for all postal matters including the collection and delivery of mail and the location of post boxes. For more information, please visit [royalmail.com](http://royalmail.com)

### **How can I access any other information on Post Office Ltd?**

We update our website constantly and to get up to date information please visit [postoffice.co.uk](http://postoffice.co.uk)

### **How has the Pandemic affected the Post Office Network?**

Our priority is to keep our customers, postmasters and colleagues, safe and healthy and on a temporary basis some branches may need to close or reduce opening hours without notice. Further information is available from our [FAQs The Coronavirus Pandemic and Changes to the Post Office Network](#)