



Dear Customer

**Sittingbourne Post Office®**  
**Central Avenue, Sittingbourne, ME10 4AA**

I'm writing to let you know that we are changing the way we operate Sittingbourne Post Office.

From October 2019 the branch will be operated by an independent franchise partner ZCO Ltd, from the current premises, offering the same great range of products and services with extended opening on Saturday afternoons.

There will be no changes to the branch layout until our new retail partner refurbishes the existing premises next year. Please see the information sheet below for planned changes. Should this require a temporary closure period, posters will be displayed in branch nearer the time to provide customers with information on alternative services they may choose to use in the interim.

We are making this change in order to maintain Post Office services in this location. You will be aware of unprecedented changes on our high streets and the challenges facing many retailers. The needs of our customers are evolving too. Our priority is to provide secure and commercially sustainable services in all communities, continuing to meet customer needs now and into the future. We believe the changes we are making at Sittingbourne are the best way to secure Post Office services at this location. The vast majority of our 11500 Post Office Branches, large and small, are already successfully operated by independent franchisees.

**What happens next?**

We have provided posters for display in the branch, and information leaflets will also be available to let customers know about these changes. We've also written to local representatives. If you are a local representative, it would be helpful if you could share this information 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 Sittingbourne Post Office. If you would like a supply of these posters, please let us know. Our contact details can be found at the end of this letter.

We are now engaging with customers in accordance with our Principles of Community Engagement on changes to the Post Office Network (which are annexed to this letter), and will welcome comments until 21 August 2019. We won't be responding to you individually but as we finalise plans for the branch a summary of the key issues raised and our response will be provided online and in branch.

The change in the way we operate this branch is a commercial decision for Post Office Ltd and we are not seeking feedback on this aspect of the change. However we welcome feedback and comments that can help inform our plans, particularly on the following areas:

- Do you have any comments about access into the premises?
- Do you have any comments about access to Post Office services once inside the premises?

You can share your views on the proposed change through our easy and convenient online questionnaire via [postofficeviews.co.uk](https://postofficeviews.co.uk). When entering the site you can use the search function to find the engagement for this branch. The unique code for this branch is 007941.

You can also share your views by email, post or telephone and our contact details are below.

Thank you for considering our plans. Any information we receive will be considered as we finalise our plans for the new branch.

Yours faithfully



**Steve Blampied**  
**Head of Directly Managed Branch Network**  
**Post Office Limited**

**How to contact us:**

[postofficeviews.co.uk](https://postofficeviews.co.uk)

[comments@postoffice.co.uk](mailto:comments@postoffice.co.uk)

Call: 03452 66 01 15

Textphone: 03457 22 33 55

FREEPOST Your Comments

**Please note this is the full address to use  
and no further address details are required.**

Want to tell us what  
you think right here  
and now? Scan here.

If you don't have a QR  
code scanner on your  
phone, you can find  
one in your app store.



Please note that items sent by Freepost take 2 working days to arrive and don't include Saturday or Sunday. Therefore please do allow sufficient time for your comments to arrive before the end of the consultation period, as we are unable to consider feedback received after the deadline.

We are committed to engaging with and supporting our customers and their representatives as we make changes to the Post Office network. This engagement is being carried out in line with our Principles of Community Engagement which have been agreed with Citizens Advice, Citizens Advice Scotland and the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland - the independent statutory consumer watchdogs. A copy is available at the end of this letter.

Sittingbourne Post Office Information Sheet				
Planned Change in October 2019				
Post Office Opening hours	Current		New	
	Mon	09:00 – 17:30	Mon	09:00 - 17:30
	Tue	09:30 – 17:30	Tue	09:00 - 17:30
	Wed	09:00 – 17:30	Wed	09:00 - 17:30
	Thu	09:00 – 17:30	Thu	09:00 - 17:30
	Fri	09:00 – 17:30	Fri	09:00 - 17:30
	Sat	09:00 – 12:30	Sat	09:00 - 17:30
	Sun	Closed	Sun	Closed
	Products & Services	The same wide range of products and services will still be available.		
Access and facilities	Access into the branch is via a ramp with handrails. A low level serving counter, pin pads, low level writing desk and hearing loop will continue to be available.			
Additional Facilities	Three self-service kiosks for mails transactions including home shopping returns, E top-ups, and a range of bill payments.			
Planned Refurbishment in 2020				
Serving positions	There will be four serving positions in total; one screened, two open plan and a Post Office serving point at the retail counter. The total number of serving positions has been based on current and future predicted business levels.			
Retail	Cards and stationery			

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

## **Principles of Community Engagement on changes to the Post Office network**

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
- Temporary closure<sup>1</sup>/ temporary service interruption
- Re-opening of a temporarily 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

We will display a poster in branch (or nearby if appropriate) to notify customers of the above changes, providing four weeks' notice. Where four weeks' notice is not possible, we will provide notice as soon as we are able to. For temporary closures we will include details of the nearest alternative Post Offices and our customer helpline/textphone.

We will **Engage** - where we are seeking feedback on a decision that has been made on:

- Re-opening of a temporarily closed branch in a new location (where the branch has been closed for more than three months)
- Franchising of a Directly Managed branch in its existing site

While the decision to proceed will have already been made, we will welcome suggestions about specific aspects of the change such as access arrangements and the internal layout. We will provide four weeks' notice or, where extenuating circumstances prevent this, we will provide as much notice as possible.

During this period we will display a poster in branch and provide information online. We will contact locally elected representatives<sup>2</sup>, the Consumer Advocacy Bodies and selected charities<sup>3</sup>, providing clear information on any changes to services or access arrangements at the branch. We will ask locally elected representatives to share information with other key community outlets (such as notice boards, local charities, magazines, GP surgeries etc.). We will publish the outcome of the engagement online and in branch, providing a summary of key issues raised with a clear response to each and any changes made to our original plans.

We will **Consult** - where we are seeking feedback on proposals prior to a decision being made on the:

- Permanent closure of a Post Office branch<sup>4</sup>
- Permanent relocation of a Post Office branch (including the franchising of a Directly Managed branch to a new site)

We will carry out a six-week<sup>5</sup> local public consultation, informing customers, locally elected representatives, Consumer Advocacy Bodies and selected charities of the proposal. This information will also be made available online and for a Directly Managed branch a press release will be issued to local media. We will ask locally elected representatives to share information with other key community outlets (such as notice boards, local charities, magazines, GP surgeries etc.).

The consultation will ask specific questions on areas where we would like feedback on access to Post Office services and will confirm when the change will happen if the decision is made to proceed. We will provide clear information on any changes to services as well as access to and into the new branch.

We welcome all feedback with the following factors being taken into account in making our decision, which we expect to make within four weeks of the close of consultation:

- Customer access to, into and inside the new or alternative branch/branches with particular regard to vulnerable consumers
- Any local community issues which could be affected by or affect the proposal

At the end of the consultation process we will write to locally elected representatives, Consumer Advocacy Bodies and respondents to the consultation (where practical) to confirm our decision and provide a summary of key issues raised with a clear response to each. This information will be made available online and in branch (where possible).

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

*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 watchdog (Citizens Advice, Citizens Advice 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 with respect to the complaint.

**postofficeviews.co.uk**  
**comments@postoffice.co.uk**  
**FREEPOST Your Comments**  
**Call: 03452 66 01 15**  
**Textphone: 03457 22 33 55**

<sup>1</sup>We will provide an update to locally elected representatives if the status of the temporarily closed branch has not changed after 12 months.

<sup>2</sup> Locally elected representatives include but are not restricted to the Member of Parliament, Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly, or Northern Ireland Assembly, Local Authority Chief Executive, Ward Councillors, Parish or Community Council.

<sup>3</sup> Selected charities are local Citizens Advice, Age UK, Northern Ireland's Disability Action and Northern Ireland's Rural Community Network. All parties referred to in 2 and 3 above are encouraged to share all information with local groups and organisations who they believe have an active interest in changes to their local Post Office.

<sup>4</sup> There may be a small number of cases where due to circumstances outside our control we have no option other than to permanently close a branch in a particular location. In these cases the consultation will seek feedback on alternative Post Office service provision in the area.

<sup>5</sup> If the consultation includes more than four weeks in July in Scotland and Northern Ireland or more than four weeks in August in England and Wales we will extend the period by one calendar week. We will not start any local public consultation during the two-week period which includes the Christmas and New Year bank holidays.

