

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **The Coronavirus Pandemic and Changes to the Post Office Network**

#### **1) How will the Principles of Community Engagement be applied in view of the confusion arising from the pandemic?**

We will, wherever possible, adhere to these principles.

Due to the difficult circumstances surrounding the Coronavirus pandemic, many branches have needed to close or reduce opening hours temporarily. These temporary operational changes are to help manage the impact of the pandemic, which could be due to the need to self-isolate, lack of available safety equipment or reduced availability of staff. To help us advise local representatives as quickly as we possibly can, we have been issuing a more general communication supported by these regularly updated Frequently Asked Questions.

Please be assured that we will continue to communicate in more specific detail regarding any temporary closures not relating to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

The latest updates can be found on our Consultation Hub, [www.postoffice.co.uk](http://www.postoffice.co.uk).

#### **2) The coronavirus pandemic caused great economic and social upheaval. Now that lockdown has eased and the country is trying to get back on its feet, how is Post Office Ltd aiming to continue its essential services to the public?**

We want to make sure our customers can access our quality services and products across our network. We are committed to maintaining our access criteria so that 99% of the UK's population are within 3 miles of a Post Office and 90% are within 1 mile.

However, due to the effects of coronavirus on retail businesses, the UK high street remains a challenging environment in which to operate. While we will always look to reopen branches when they close we cannot commit to doing so in every instance at this time. We will continue to review this position and prioritise those areas with the highest need.

For more information about branches in your area visit [postoffice.co.uk/branch-finder](http://postoffice.co.uk/branch-finder) on the Post Office website and App. This is being updated three times a day by a dedicated team to provide customers with the most up to date information.

#### **3) Why is my branch re-opening delayed and how will it affect me?**

To comply with Government guidelines of social distancing we have had to delay some of our planned branch re-openings. This is to ensure the safety of our Post Office colleagues, postmasters and their teams.

Re-openings will be rescheduled as soon as Government guidelines permit us to do so and we will be working hard to restore services to the local community.

Currently we are not able to confirm how long a branch reopening will be delayed. However we will provide posters in branch as soon as the new date is known.

#### **4) How will I know if the changes planned for my branch will go ahead?**

Once we have an update to share, an information letter with full details will be available on our Consultation Hub, [www.postoffice.co.uk](http://www.postoffice.co.uk). You can search the Hub by entering the branch name, code or postcode to access the letter.

#### **5) You state I can use any convenient alternative branch of my choice. What if the alternative branches to my Post Office branch are also closed or too far away?**

We understand the frustration experienced in such a case. Clearly this pandemic is having a big impact on all businesses countrywide and things are changing daily. Post Office Limited are reviewing what support and guidance they can give to staff and branches and will continue to do so in the days ahead.

For more information about branches in your area visit the Post Office website [postoffice.co.uk/branch-finder](http://postoffice.co.uk/branch-finder)

#### **6) I live in a remote area and rely on the Outreach service for post office services. Are Outreach services liable to be closing at this time also?**

Post Offices have been designated an essential service, which means they should stay open to provide a vital lifeline for banking services, benefits, and to enable letters and parcels to be sent – *as long as this can be done safely and with appropriate care for vulnerable postmasters and branch teams*. **This also applies to Outreaches**, which provides Post Office services to isolated communities, provided that the location from which they are being run is not a village hall, community centre, or other public venue or non-essential retail outlet which has been closed based on Government advice.

#### **7) Despite the efforts being put into the country's recovery, the pandemic is ongoing and its effects are causing setbacks for businesses. How is Post Office Ltd proposing to address this issue?**

The requirement to operate safely for customers and our teams will remain our priority. Some branches may need to make temporary operational changes depending on the circumstances, and we are continually reviewing what support and guidance we can give to staff and branches and will continue to do so.

#### **8) Lockdown has eased and businesses are trying to return to a new normal. However, some Post Office branches that closed because of the pandemic have still not re-opened. Why is this?**

Due to the effects of coronavirus on retail businesses, the UK high street remains a challenging environment in which to operate. While we will always look to reopen branches when they close we cannot commit to doing so in every instance at this time. Other factors apart from the pandemic may also contribute to some closures, such as the resignation of a postmaster. We will continue to review this position and prioritise those areas with the highest need.

We're incredibly proud of our postmasters and branch staff for their dedication to serving customers and keeping the largest retail network in the UK open for business during this difficult time. The situation around the coronavirus pandemic is still changing and

undoubtedly some disruption to services may continue. Postmasters are not immune to this virus, and we have a duty to help protect them.

**9) In light of Post Office Ltd resuming normal business as we come through the pandemic, and while the coronavirus remains a threat, are workers and customers being kept safe as a priority?**

Post Office branches came up with a range of solutions to make sure social distancing could be maintained in branch and shared the measures they put in place on social media. In line with other retailers, we advised a 2 metre (6 foot) distance between customers in the queue and at the counter which are marked with tape on the floor where appropriate. The guidance is to limit the number of customers in branch if necessary. Each postmaster was provided with in-store signage to encourage customers to follow Government guidance on staying two metres apart whilst in branch.

We worked hard to make arrangements so that customers can respect social distancing and for postmasters to have the protective equipment they needed. We kept branches updated with the latest advice and guidance through our existing communication channels and a daily email from Retail and Franchise Network Director.

We provided each of our postmasters with updated guidance on hand washing and hygiene to enable business to continue. We worked closely with Government to secure a supply of hand sanitizer and gloves. We also provided each branch with funds to access local supplies of sanitizer. We installed Perspex screens in branches across the network.

Please be assured that all of these measures remain in place and will continue to be stringently implemented for the protection and safety of all.

**10) What plans does Post Office Ltd have in place to deal with a possible new wave of the virus in the coming months?**

We understand that the future is uncertain and remains a cause for concern. The UK high street continues to be a challenging environment in which to operate. We intend to comply with all Government guidelines as they are issued, and to prioritise the safety of our customers and colleagues. Post Office Limited will continue to review and apply what support and guidance they can give to staff and branches in the months ahead.

For further information please visit [www.postoffice.co.uk/coronavirus](http://www.postoffice.co.uk/coronavirus)  
Or for Royal Mail related questions please visit [www.royalmail.com/coronavirus](http://www.royalmail.com/coronavirus)