



Post Office News - May 2018

Citizens Advice looks at parcel deliveries for rural consumers

Citizens Advice [research](#) shows people in rural areas rely heavily on postal services and they're 50% more likely than urban residents to use a post office at least weekly. In a new [blog](#), we look at how the parcel delivery service differs in rural compared with urban areas.

We found rural consumers have different preferences for deliveries. For example, people in rural areas prefer items to be left in a safe place if they're not home, whereas urban residents prefer to pick up deliveries from a delivery office. Rural consumers also experience some problems more than other groups, such as late delivery and surcharging.

We discuss the solutions for delivery problems in rural areas, including the ability to nominate a safe place for parcels, and verifying that the parcel was dropped off correctly.

Enforcement action on unfair delivery charges

A crackdown on companies who make misleading claims over parcel deliveries has been [announced](#) by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). Companies will be required to take immediate action to ensure their advertising complies with new [guidance](#) or face enforcement action.

Any claim of 'UK delivery' must now include all parts of the UK, including the Scottish Highlands and Islands and Northern Ireland. Headline claims for delivery charges must be clear on which areas are included and excluded.

The move by the ASA follows campaigning from Citizens Advice Scotland which [found](#) consumers with Highlands and Islands addresses are charged at least 30% more for parcel delivery, than in other areas of mainland Britain.

Action plan to raise awareness of Post Office banking services

The finance industry and the Post Office have [launched](#) a plan to increase awareness of the banking services available at post office branches. Whilst 1 in 5 consumers has [used](#) a post office to access banking services, public and small business awareness of the service remains low.

The plan will focus on people likely to benefit most from the availability of Post Office banking services, including those living in rural or urban areas with less bank branch coverage.

Activities will include the use of regional and targeted localised media campaigns. Information leaflets and joint Post Office and bank branch outreach will be available in specific communities. Post Office banking services will be clearly and prominently promoted in banks' customer literature and websites.

Enhanced support for vulnerable consumers will be developed based on Citizens Advice best practice guidelines. We have recently published a [report](#) which looks at the experience of disabled people accessing postal services. Our research follows the customer journey for disabled postal consumers, and discusses the obstacles they face at each stage of that journey. Through listening to the first hand experiences of these consumers, we've been able to recommend best practice measures for operators at each stage of the journey.

Concerns raised about the future of cash machines

The Federation of Small Businesses ([FSB](#)) and consumer association [Which?](#) have launched a campaign to protect cashpoint access. LINK runs a network of 70,000 ATMs or cash machines. LINK has announced that it is cutting the interchange fee, paid by card issuers to ATM operators. The FSB and Which? are concerned that this could put at least 10,000 cash machines at risk.

However the government has recently [confirmed](#) that the Post Office will continue to provide 2,700 free-to-use ATMs in post office branches. These are provided by Post Office Ltd in partnership with the Bank of Ireland.

An additional 4,000 cash machines are provided in post offices under private agreements between post office operators and independent ATM providers. The government states that the continued provision of these machines is a commercial decision for operators and ATM providers.

Citizens Advice [research](#) finds 13% of consumers, and 9% of small

businesses that withdraw cash, have used a cash machine at a post office.

Post Office mortgages available through intermediaries

Post Office Ltd has [announced](#) it will be offering Post Office mortgages through an expanded range of intermediaries, such as estate agents and other financial advice businesses. Until now the only intermediary used was the Legal & General Mortgage Club.

The Post Office [withdrew](#) face-to-face mortgage advice from post office branches earlier this year. But customers can still [apply](#) for Post Office mortgages via the Post Office website or by phone.

Citizens Advice highlights importance of post as an option

Despite living in an increasingly digital world, more than 5 million people in the UK have never used the internet. In a new [blog](#), Citizens Advice highlights the importance of government and other providers ensuring post is still an option for users.

[Research](#) shows the majority of consumers engage with government services offline. Consumers are much more likely to receive council tax bills (61% vs. 12%), tax returns (45% vs. 15%) and benefits information (19% vs 5%) through the post, rather than online. Older people, those on benefits and low incomes are particularly reliant on accessing these services through the post.

Royal Mail CEO Moya Greene to retire

Moya Greene, Royal Mail's chief executive, is to step [down](#) in September. Her 8 year tenure included the legal [separation](#) of Post Office Ltd from Royal Mail in April 2012. Her term also saw the [listing](#) of Royal Mail on the London Stock Exchange in 2013 and the sale of the final government stake 2 years later.

The Canadian executive, who was previously CEO of Canada Post, will hand over to Rico Back, currently head of Royal Mail's European business General Logistics Systems ([GLS](#)). Mr Back has nearly 30 years' experience as a senior executive in the international parcels industry.

Post developments around the world

- **Ireland** - An Post's €50m [reinvention](#) of the post office network includes a focus on e-commerce and out of hours collections. Post offices are to offer broader range of financial services, including a full range of government savings products. They will

become a one-stop-shop for local and central government services. 20 new post offices are opening in communities of 500+ currently without a post office, but some branches will close.

- **France** - Aimed at heavy online customers, La Poste is [offering](#) subscribers free deliveries (with no minimum purchase) and free returns via all partner e-commerce sites.
- **Switzerland** - Swiss Post has [installed](#) its 100th parcel locker terminal in Switzerland. It plans to open an additional 100 terminals by 2020.
- **Australia** - Following an Ombudsman report on a high and persistent number of complaints on delivery issues and compensation, Australia Post is [introducing](#) a simpler compensation process and a clearer complaints procedure.
- **United States** - President Trump has [ordered](#) a task force to study the US Postal Service (USPS). The task force will look at pricing in the package delivery market. The president has expressed concerns about the service's 'unsustainable financial path' and has complained that the company's agreement with Amazon is a money loser for USPS.

More on Citizens Advice post policy work

- See our section on the Citizens Advice [website](#)
- Follow our Twitter account for regular updates: @CABPost