Community-run post offices in the UK: What do we know?

The Future of the Post Office Network consultation sought to understand how communities could play a greater role in shaping how post office services are delivered in their local area.

The government's December 2017 response committed to "make setting up and running community-owned shops, with a post office branch, as straightforward as possible" - an essential task if communities are to support the network in future.

Using data from Post Office and the Plunkett Foundation, we undertook desk analysis of the approximately 350 community-run shops and 50 community-run pubs in the UK as of March 2017. Just under half - 187 - provide post office services.

The findings in this report are drawn from 163 survey responses - 93 from those that provide post office services - and 14 telephone interviews, as well as discussions with relevant stakeholders.

Citizens Advice is the official consumer watchdog for the postal market.

citizens advice

Community-run post offices: good for consumers
- They help maintain access to post office and banking services in rural areas and deliver wider social benefits to communities.

They may not be right for all communities
- They are community-driven, and work best in areas with skills, resources and social capital.
- They tend to be in less deprived areas that face significant barriers to accessing services and have poor access to banks and shops.

Post Office should make it easier to set one up
- Once up and running, most find it easy - but the application process can make it difficult.

86% Providing post office services reduces social isolation in the community

9 in 10 Say that providing post office services increases their social impact

73% Develop skills and experience in the local community

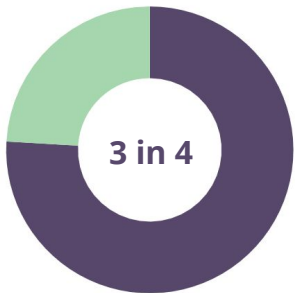**2 in 3** Say they increase strength of the local economy

9 in 10 Say doing so has a positive impact on the strength of the local community

187 community-run shops and pubs offer post office services in the UK

96% are located in rural areas[1]

2 in 3 were established due to recent loss of local post office

Most have protected Community Status

3 in 4

1) data for England only

We'll work with the Plunkett Foundation and Post Office to produce guides and resources so that communities understand how they could help deliver local post office services.

We'll work with Post Office to make it easier for community-run enterprises to apply to run a post office.

Look out for more from us soon.

Setting up a community-run post office can be challenging - Post Office could make this easier

Once up and running, **4 in 5** say that it is very or fairly easy to run post office services alongside their wider business - the barriers are at the start:

● **3 in 10** found it difficult to get set up.

Could other community-run enterprises support the post office network in future?

Some communities with reduced access to post office services due to temporary closures or outreaches may wish to consider this model.

● **43%** of community shops who don't offer post office services would consider doing so if their local post office closed

"It is a labour of love, but something we felt was important to the community"

"It is the focal point of the village"

"Be aware that it could be a lot of work for little return. That said it is a necessity for a small island community like ours."

Banking services are particularly valued

7 in 10 said that withdrawing cash from a bank account is in the top 3 services used by their customers. Analysis of Post Office data supports these findings further.

Community-run post offices tend to be in rural areas with poor access to local public and banking services - with a large older population and limited public transport.

We know that rural and older consumers rely on post offices to access banking - and local bank closures make post offices even more essential to these communities.

Community-run branches undertake more banking transactions than the network average