

Post Office card accounts closure extended until November 2022



The Post Office Card Accounts (POca) scheme was previously set to end in November this year. Following the disruption caused by the pandemic, it has now been extended for 12 months to ensure everyone has the time to make alternative arrangements.

The Department for Work and Pensions is writing to all customers who currently receive payment into a POca, telling them the service is ending and encouraging those who are able to open a bank account to do so.

Those who remain unable to access such services will be migrated onto a new Payment Exception Service, which allows them to choose how they receive their payments.

Minister for Pensions, Guy Opperman, said:

Whilst the vast majority of pensions and benefits are paid directly into peoples' bank accounts, some people prefer to collect their payments over the counter at their local Post Office.

This extra time means we can support our most vulnerable customers to move to the payment method that will suit them best – even if that means making sure they can still get cash via the Post Office using a card from the new Payment Exception Service.

Under the new Payment Exception Service, pensioners and benefit claimants are able to choose how they receive their payments. These methods include the delivery of digital vouchers via:

- a SMS
- an email
- a unique barcode displayed on a mobile phone

In addition, all customers who are migrated from POca to the new service will

receive a reusable mag stripe plastic card, which can be used to receive their benefits in cash from more than 28,000 PayPoint retail outlets or 11,500 Post Office branches.

Extensive work has been undertaken to identify those most at risk in order to provide vulnerable claimants with additional support before the move to the new system.

Further information

- For more information about the Payment Exception Service: [Payment Exception Service – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/services/payment-exception-service)
- For more information on the closure of POCas: [How and when your benefits are paid – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/how-and-when-your-benefits-are-paid)
- From January 2021 to July 2021, the number of active POCas has reduced from 590,000 to 382,000.
- DWP are encouraging customers who can open a bank account to open a bank account, but vulnerable claimants who cannot open a bank account will need to move over to the new Payment Exception Service.
- DWP are writing to all customers who currently receive payment into a POCa. They will receive two letters telling them that the POCa is coming to an end and advising them that if they are unable to provide a bank account we will move their payments to the Payment Exception Service.
- For customers who we believe could be at risk of harm we will attempt to ring them to support them through the change.
- All customers who are migrated to the Payment Exception Service from POCa will receive a payment card which they can take to their Post Office branch (or PayPoint retailer) for encashment.
- Checks will be made when customers are moved to the Payment Exception Service to ensure vouchers are being cashed.
- For HMRC Customers: The extension to POCa and the alternative Payment Exception Service voucher product only apply to payments from DWP.
- Should you be in receipt of tax credits, Child Benefit or Guardians Allowance you will need to provide HMRC with alternative bank details by 5 April 2022

- HMRC is encouraging their customers to act now so they do not miss any payments once their Post Office card account closes.
- You can contact HMRC's helplines (0345 300 3900 for tax credits or 0300 200 3100 for Child Benefit) or use your Personal Tax Account to provide alternative account details. To find out how to open a bank account visit Citizens Advice.

Media enquiries for this press release – 0115 965 8781

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Last updated 29 November 2021 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 29 November 2021

The deadline for closing POCAs for HMRC payments has changed

2. 9 September 2021

First published.

[Divorce applications move online](#)

News story

Fewer errors in online applications mean divorces are finalised in 20 weeks on average



From Monday 13 September legal representatives must submit all applications for divorce online using MyHMCTS.

The only exceptions are applications for civil partnership dissolution, judicial separation and nullity, which should be filed at the Bury St. Edmunds Regional Divorce Centre.

The change follows an update to the Family Procedure Rules made by the President of the Family Division in August.

Benefits of using MyHMCTS

MyHMCTS is an online service for issuing, paying for and managing applications in the civil and family courts, and tribunals. Launched in 2018, it has now successfully processed over 150,000 divorce applications. The service allows representatives to submit applications at any time of day and monitor progress easily from any device and location.

Adam Lennon, Deputy Director, Family, commented:

COVID-19 has shown how MyHMCTS helps us to provide a modern, reliable service. Applications are proceeding more smoothly, and we now return fewer than 1% of online applications compared to around 20% of paper applications for legal representatives to amend or provide more information. That means divorcing couples can move forward with their lives faster.

We're really pleased with the way the service has been adopted. Around 70% of all divorce applications are now being made using MyHMCTS and it's helping us to finalise divorces in an average of 20 weeks compared to around 60 weeks for paper applications.

By mandating the service now, we can begin preparing MyHMCTS to meet the requirements of the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act 2020 which come into force on 6 April 2022.

Preparing for the move to MyHMCTS

There will be a transitional period from 14 September 2021 to 4 October 2021 when we will continue to process paper applications. This gives legal representatives additional time to register for access to MyHMCTS and check the guidance on submitting applications online.

For further support on registering with MyHMCTS contact HMCTSFinancialRemedy@justice.gov.uk.

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