



## **Customer and Stakeholder Engagement Congleton, High Street**

On 19 January 2021 we announced the closure of 82 branches, including our branch at Congleton, High Street. The following provides detail of the stakeholder engagement we have undertaken, and feedback received, since our announcement.

### **Customer and stakeholder contact**

On 29 March we wrote to all customers who either hold accounts at the branch, use it frequently or live nearby. The letters advised customers of the reasons behind our decision and effective date of closure. They also provided customers with details of the nearest alternative HSBC UK branch, alternative ways to continue to access their usual banking services and how to access the closure Impact Assessment.

We wrote to, Fiona Bruce, constituency MP, on 19 January 2021 to advise of our decision to close the branch and offered to meet to explain the reasons and how we would be supporting all of our customers during this period of change.

At announcement we wrote to a number of key stakeholders. These included:

- Which?
- Age UK
- Citizens Advice
- Alzheimer's Society
- Post Office

On 29 March our Local Director additionally wrote to the following key local stakeholders to advise of our decision to close:

- Post Office, Rachel Lawler
- All Town Councillors
- Town Council Chief Officer, David McGifford
- Chamber of Commerce, David Watson
- Congleton Library
- Age UK Cheshire East
- Alzheimer's Society Cheshire
- The Bridge Debt Advice Congleton

We have published an Impact Assessment on our public website. We also made copies of the report available in the closing branch. The assessment includes further details on the reasons behind our decision, the information used, the nearest HSBC UK and Post Office

branches, alternative ways to bank and how to contact the bank for additional support. These reports can be accessed at [www.hsbc.co.uk/branch-finder](http://www.hsbc.co.uk/branch-finder).

Posters have been displayed at the branch with information on the nearest HSBC UK branch and cash machine as well as the nearest Post Office counter.

We provided extensive training to our branch teams in order that they could fully support both personal and business customers with accessing alternative ways to bank. Following this training our branch staff have been proactively engaging with customers, particularly those who are reliant on the branch services, to help them look at the alternatives that are available, including the services provided by the Post Office.

We have also been engaging with the nearest Post Office counters to the branch to ensure they know we are closing, are aware of the services they can provide to our customers and to address any queries or concerns they may have in meeting the needs of our customers.

### **Customer and stakeholder reaction/feedback**

- We have written to Fiona Bruce constituency MP, and there has been no further correspondence.
- We have proactively contacted our vulnerable customers who use the branch to understand how they currently bank. During these calls we have taken the time to understand our customer's specific circumstances for example, where they live or transport used. This has allowed us to provide our customers with information on the services that may be suitable for them such as local Post Office or digital options available through our app or online banking.
- Customers have told us they are disappointed that the branch is closing however have been very happy that the team in the branch are being redeployed to other local branches.
- We have identified a number of potentially vulnerable small business banking customers who regularly use the branch and we have contacted these customers to discuss suitable alternative ways to bank. A number of these customers were not aware of the Post Office services available and were pleased they no longer need to make a long trip to a branch to pay in cash.
- Some customers have told us they are going to switch their bank account to a more convenient bank in the town, as branch banking is their preferred choice.
- Customers have been pleased to hear about the service the Post Office provides, however they have told us there is often a long queue.

### **Follow up action taken**

- We have contacted all of our customers who have expressed dissatisfaction in a survey to understand their specific situation and explain all of their options. We

supported some of these customers in registering for digital banking and reassured them that staff in the local branches would be able to continue to help them. We talked through the service the Post Office offers. All of the customers we spoke to were grateful for the phone call.

- We have contacted the 3 local Post Offices to ensure they are aware of the closure of Congleton, High Street branch and the services they can provide to our customers.
- All staff in Congleton, High Street branch have received tailored vulnerable customer training to upskill them in holding in depth conversations to support our customers in finding alternative ways to bank.
- We have supported customers to set up Direct Debits to pay their credit cards as this is something that cannot be done at the Post Office.
- We have proactively approached customers using the self-service machines to encourage them to set up mobile and internet banking.

### **Contacting the bank after closure**

Following the closure of this branch, if you have any questions or need advice on how to access our services, you can contact us in the following ways:

- Visit us at <https://www.hsbc.co.uk/ways-to-bank/>
- Contact us on 03457 404 404 (+44 1226 261 010 from outside the UK). Currently open 8am-8pm every day.
- Visit any HSBC UK branch (branch hours can vary so please check our website before you visit)

Braille, Large Print and Audio copies of this document can be provided upon request.

*Information correct at time of publication*