

ACCESS TO CASH ASSESSMENT PROCESS



Begin



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What is good access to cash?

Our job is to protect good access to cash across the UK. In 2024, the Government decided that, as 95% of people live within a reasonable distance of cash access, we should aim to keep that level of access overall.

That means we will be focusing on communities which have a problem, or where a change in the cash network causes a problem, rather than searching to extend cash access to every corner of every region.



What is a reasonable distance?

In towns and cities, we need to consider whether 95% of people are able to withdraw and deposit cash **within 1 mile** of where they live.

In rural areas, we need to consider whether 95% of people are able to withdraw and deposit cash **within 3 miles** of where they live.

What we know about different communities

Different types of communities need different services:

We keep a database of every high street in the UK, and work out who might need to use cash on each high street. We start to work out who needs what services by looking at the number of shops and the number of people who live nearby.

Retail Centre

- **Small:** 5 to 39 retailers who rely on cash
- **Medium:** 40+ retailers who rely on cash
- **Large:** 70+ retailers who rely on cash and 10k+ Population
- **Very Large:** 100+ retailers who rely on cash and 30k+ Population

How do we calculate the population?

We focus on the number of people over the age of 18 who live within the local area as this is a good way of understanding who will need the services we are looking at.

What's the local area?

To know what's changed, we need to know who uses the High Street.

Local Areas

For every High Street in the country, we will try to understand the local area which relies on that High Street.

We know that each area is different, and we take lots of steps to understand as much as we can about each place, so we take into account things like rivers, roads, hills and other barriers in working out who uses the high street.

- We will use standard geographical boundaries to build a picture of the local area, and take into account data about where people travel to do their banking, and then work out the population who are likely to be affected by any change in cash services locally.



Reasons for us to do a cash access assessment

We will carry out assessments when one of the following things happens:

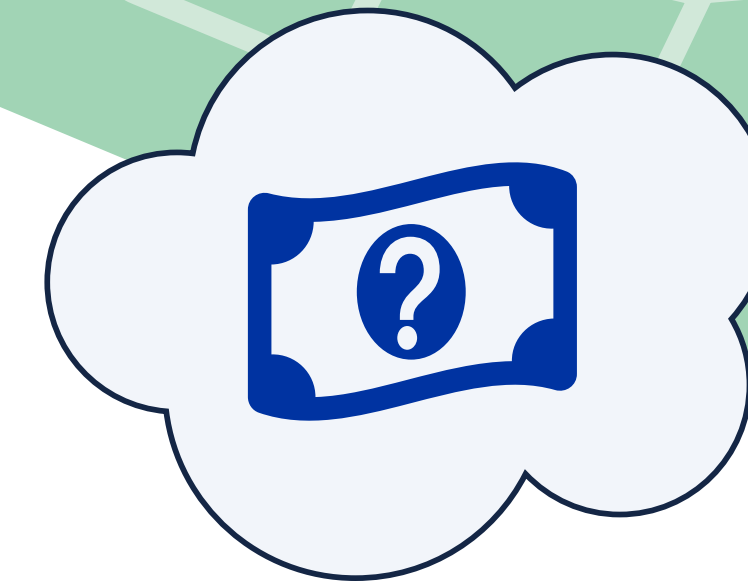
- Where a cash service closes or changes significantly. That could be the closure of a bank branch, or a reduction in the number of counters in the branch.
- When someone gets in touch with us to make a request. They've got to have some knowledge of the local community before we act.
- When we have done an access to cash assessment and made a decision, and someone asks us to review that decision within 28 days of us publishing it.

We follow 3 steps to understand cash access in each community.

Step 1 - What services are left on the high street and are they enough?

Step 2 - Is the impact of the change significant?

Step 3 - What services, if any, does the community need instead?





Step 1: What services are left and are they enough?

For an assessment, we need to understand what services are left in a community and whether they are adequate.

When we do an assessment, we've got to consider:

- Whether the cash services we're looking at are accessible to 95% of people within the relevant distance
- Whether the facilities that are available have the capacity to serve people in the local area
- Whether it is reasonable for people to travel to the facilities.

At Step 1, we consider what will be left in a community after a change to the cash services on a high street.

Examples

If a bank is closing but there are at least two other places to deposit and withdraw cash, including a Post Office, we usually won't need to do anything more unless there is something to indicate that there isn't enough capacity to serve people and businesses.

If the last bank in town is closing, we will investigate further.

If a Post Office is closing, we will look at whether there are alternatives and whether 95% of people can access cash services within a reasonable distance.

Note: We will also look at these issues where there is a temporary closure (as defined by regulation) and a material change in opening hours.



Designated firms

Click logo to visit website





Step 2: Does the deficiency have a significant impact on the local area?

LINK will use a 3-tiered approach to understand the impact of trigger events across the local area, as shown below:



Retail Centre
Is there a significant impact within 1 mile or 3 miles from the High Street?

Local Area
Is there a significant impact within the area surrounding the high street?

Catchment Area
Is there a significant impact when considering other nearby high streets?





How do we decide if an impact is significant?

We look at what impact it will have on people. We know that cash users are more likely to be financially vulnerable, not own a smartphone, and be older than average.

1. How close are the nearest options to get cash?

- How easy is it to get there?
- How much does it cost on the bus?

Criteria measure	Rating		Notes
	urban	rural	
Proximity to provision	1+ mile or 15+ mins	3+ miles or 30+ mins	Journey time will be measured using published bus timetables for the relevant route(s) at the time of the assessment.
	Under 1 mile or 15 mins	Under 3 miles or 30 mins	

Green = £0 - £2.50 / Red = £2.51+

2. How financially vulnerable the community are

3. Whether people have good digital skills

4. How many older people live nearby

We use data from [CACI](#) to support our understanding of the adults living near a High Street. CACI give us robust and consistent data to help us make well informed decisions on where the need is the greatest.

Seasonality & Small businesses

We also check whether there is likely to be seasonal demand for cash and whether there is suitable access to coin and notes for local retailers.

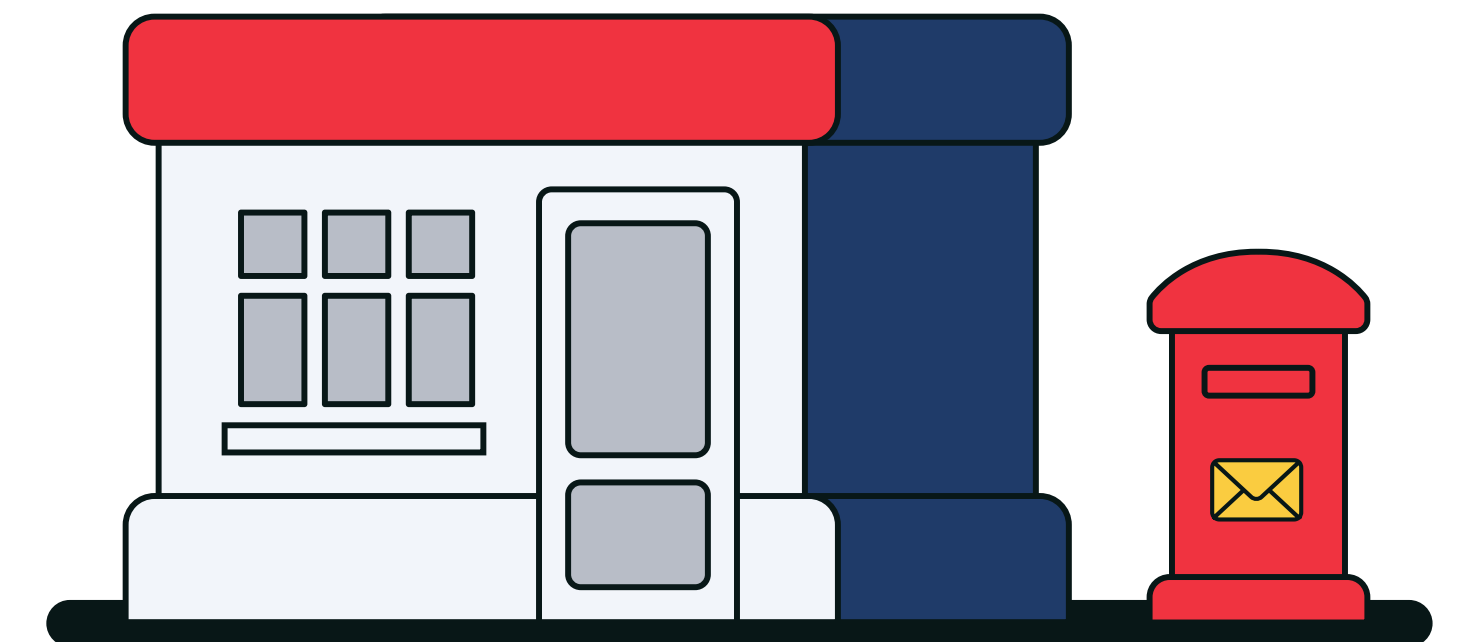




Our site visit - Post Offices

Criteria measure	Description	Rating
Proximity to Post Offices within 1 mile urban or 3 miles rural	Distance to the nearest Post Office - fully accessible and fit for purpose	1+ mile urban or 3+ miles rural
		Under 1 mile urban or 3 miles rural
Opening hours of Post Offices within 1 mile	Minimum opening hours of 5 days per week during core hours	Less than 5 days
		5+ days
Transaction capacity of Post Offices within 1 mile	Volume vs. capacity of Post Office	Needs significant increase
		Needs marginal increase
		Has capacity
Features of local Post Office	Accessibility requirements met and security/privacy offered	Yes/No

We know that what we see on a computer screen is not always enough to know what is right - so where we think we need to, we'll visit to understand more about the place.

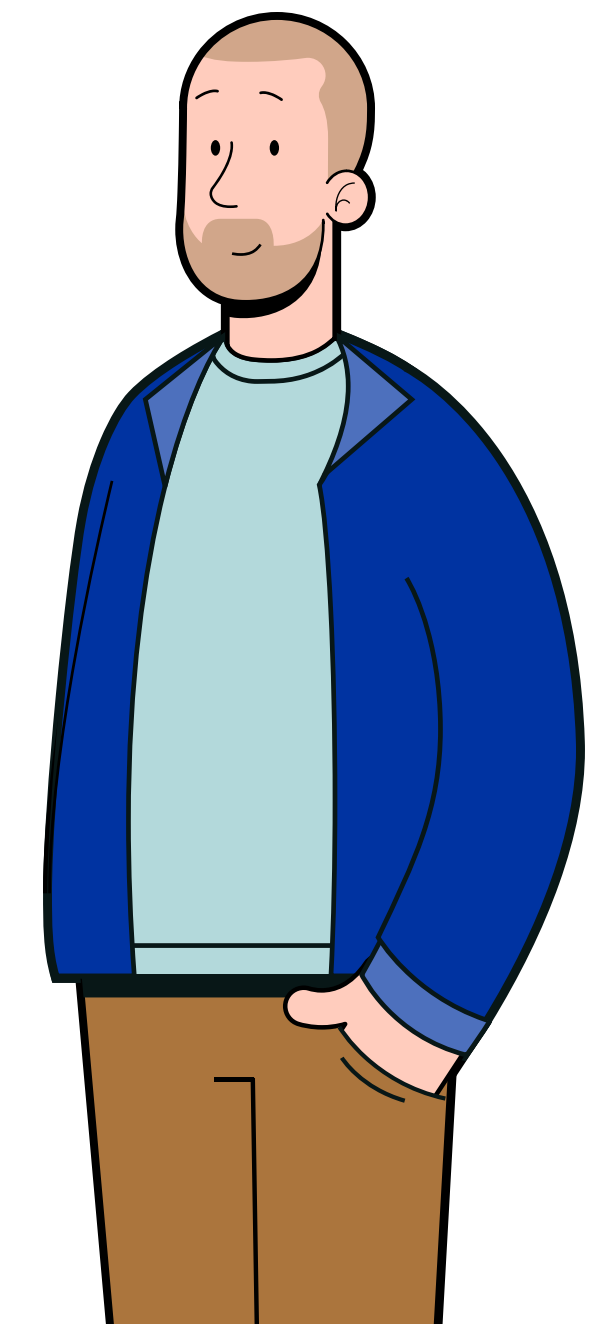




Our site visit - Other considerations

We'll always look at a community as a whole, and take into account a range of things, including:

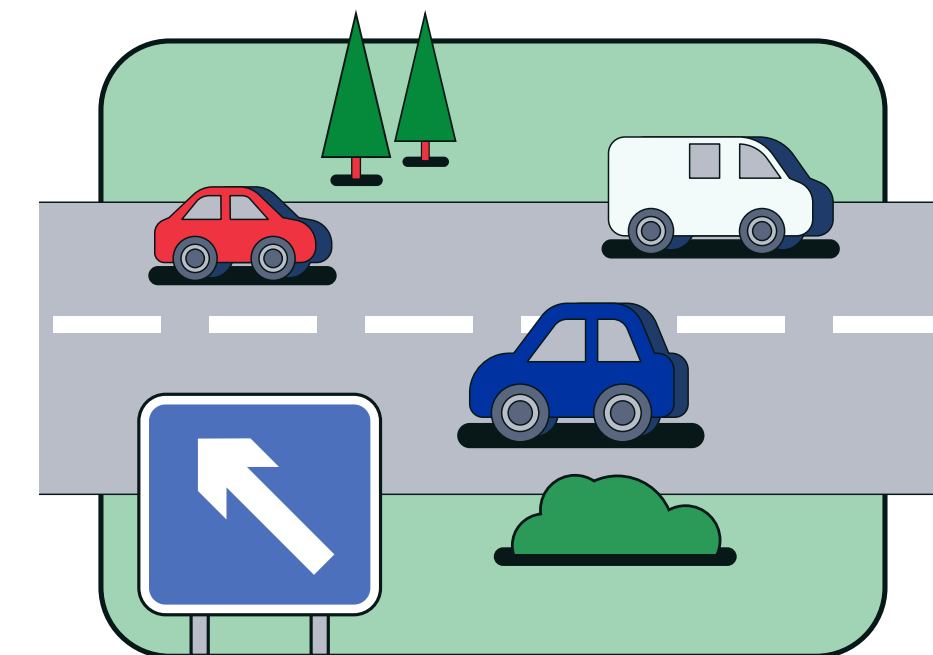
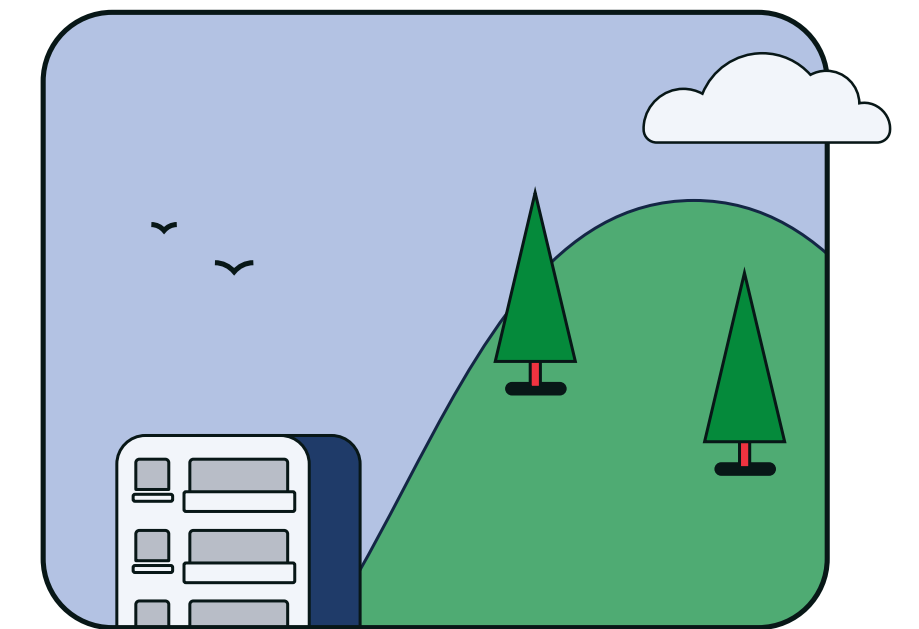
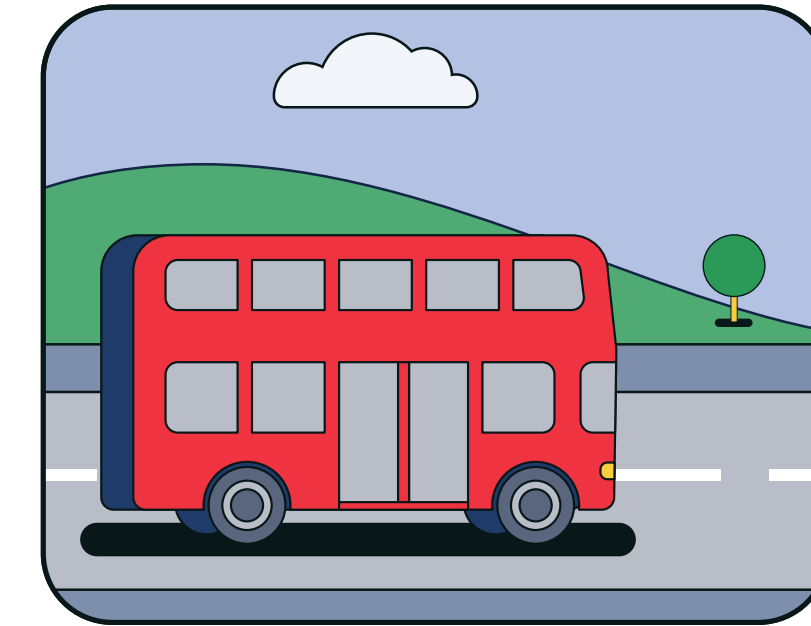
Transaction volumes of closing branch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How busy is the closing branch, and how well will remaining alternative cash services be able to deal with its closure.
Relevant retailers	Number of relevant retailers within 1 mile (urban) or 3 miles (rural) of retail centre
Local cash services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there other services, apart from Designated Banks and Post Offices, offering access to cash (inc. deposit/withdrawals for notes and coins for both SME and consumers). Are any temporary solutions being offered in the local community presently? ATMs - location, free or not, available hours, extent to which impacted by closures.
Local cash need	Community features that influence local cash need (e.g. market, nightlife etc.) and focus on regeneration, housing developments etc.





Our site visit - Proximity

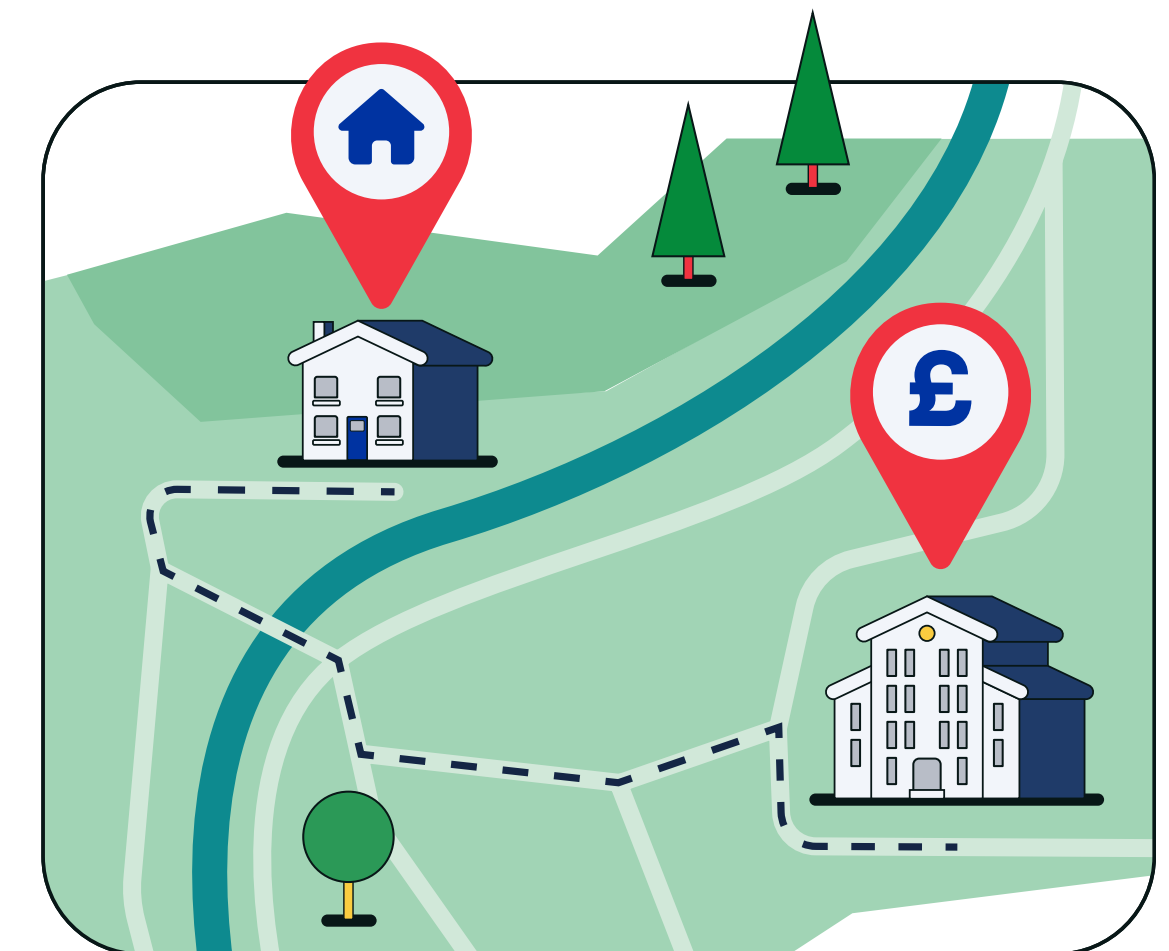
Criteria measure	Description	Rating	
		Urban	Rural
Validation of how far it is to another banking facility.	Validate journey time and distance to nearest qualifying bank branch - with a sense check on geographical barriers (e.g. rivers)	1+ mile or 15+ mins	3+ miles or 30+ mins
		Under 1 mile or 15 mins	Under 3 miles or 30 mins
Notes			
<p>We will consider how easy it is for someone to get to alternative cash services via public transport. We don't think it is suitable if people have to use 2 buses to access an alternative way to access cash services, and we'll also factor in geographic barriers like hills, rivers and major roads.</p> <p>Journey time will be measured using published bus timetables for the relevant route(s) at the time of the assessment.</p>			





Step 3: What services are needed

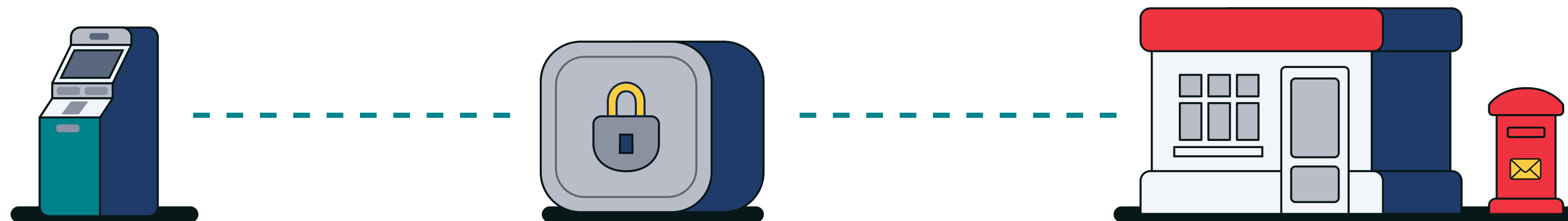
- We will focus on ensuring people and businesses can **withdraw and deposit** notes and coins **conveniently**.
- Where there is a problem for people doing that, we will **recommend services** to help them do it.
- What that service includes depends on the size of the place, and how well remaining services are set up to serve the local area.
- We won't always recommend new services. In some places, if what is already there has good capacity and meets local needs, it may continue to be suitable for local people and businesses.
- When we decide a community needs more services, we recommend the types of services it needs. Some places may need better options to deposit notes and coins, others may need “assisted cash services” - i.e. the sort of support you currently get in a banking hub.
- We will recommend what we think is needed, and [Cash Access UK](#) will usually be asked to deliver something that meets those needs. This could be an enhancement to a Post Office, a machine to speed up deposits, or a banking hub. We'll say what we think the minimum service will be.





Step 3: Service solutions

- In small places, a **Post Office** or **ATM** will usually be enough to meet the demand.
- In medium sized places, where there are at least 40 shops, we might recommend better ways to **deposit cash** or assisted cash services where a lot of local people are vulnerable, and where they have to travel a significant distance to access cash. That could mean automated deposit services or a **banking hub** are delivered to serve the local area.
- In large locations, where there are at least 70 retailers, we will consider the need for better ways to deposit cash or assisted cash services when people and businesses have to travel too far to access cash services. That could mean automated deposit services or a banking hub are delivered to serve the local area.
- In the largest places with over 100 retailers, we are more likely to recommend assisted cash services. Depending on the services available locally, this is more likely to result in a banking hub being delivered.



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