

CONSUMER FOCUS POST (NI)  
EVALUATING OUTREACH SERVICES IN NORTHERN IRELAND  
RESEARCH FINDINGS  
2009



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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background

Following a national public consultation in May 2007, the Government announced its intention to fund the closure of up to 2,500 post offices. As part of this programme carried out between June 2008 and December 2009 approximately 500 branches were replaced with outreach services across the UK, including 54 in Northern Ireland. These services were introduced with the intention of helping alleviate the impact of the closures, especially those in smaller or more remote rural communities. In these instances the demise of post office services would have led to a local breach of the Government's accessibility criteria.

Outreach services can take 4 different forms:

- Mobile service – a vehicle fitted out with a post office counter and equipment, that will stop at an agreed place in a community at fixed times, for a set period of time
- Hosted service – a subpostmaster from a nearby (core) post office visits a community at fixed times and runs a service from a 'hosted' location, for example a village hall or local shop
- Partner service – a local business person runs a post office service from their premises, for example in a local shop, normally during the course of normal business hours, under the supervision of a nearby core post office
- Home service – the subpostmaster of a post office in the general vicinity of a rural or remote area can be contacted by phone, and offers a service brought to the door of registered users, or to an agreed location, for a limited range of products.

As part of this research we were also asked to consider the impact of the introduction of the PO Essentials pilot at Kirkcubbin in County Down, one of only two examples of this model in Northern Ireland and operating in a similar manner to the Partner outreach model, but without the oversight of a core subpostmaster.

### Objectives

This Northern Ireland research was commissioned by Consumer Focus Post in August 2009 and was designed to evaluate the impact that has been made by the replacement of 54 full-time post office branches with a similar number of outreach services, in order to:

- determine whether consumers have retained access to the post office services that they need
- establish whether outreach services are providing a sustainable and valued alternative to fixed location post offices
- determine the consumer experience of outreach services in urban locations, and their viability in providing post office services within these types of community
- provide evidence on the viability of outreach services
- outline the strengths and weaknesses of the different types of outreach model
- identify which types of outreach model are most effective.

The more detailed, specific objectives of the research were to:

1. Establish consumer awareness and satisfaction with rural outreach services (across the four outreach models and the PO Essentials pilot) that have been in operation for a period of at least six months in Northern Ireland
2. Evaluate the reliability, location and accessibility of outreach services
3. Confirm the product range on offer at the different types of outreach service
4. Establish which products and services consumers visiting outreach services use most often, and which products/services consumers would like to see offered that currently are not, and what services they believe they might need in the future
5. Establish whether consumers have changed the way they use post office services following the closure of a fixed post office and the introduction of an outreach service
6. Establish whether the introduction of outreach services has had an impact on the local community.
7. Establish whether outreach services provide facilities for disabled consumers, older consumers, and vulnerable consumers, and whether consumer privacy and safety is taken into consideration.
8. Establish how many consumers are not using the outreach service in their village/community, and the reasons why they are not using the service.
9. Establish which type/s of outreach model is/are most effective in meeting consumers' needs, and why.

### The Research Programme

The programme of research encompassed 2 phases; quantitative survey research followed by qualitative focus group research.

The quantitative research was conducted among a sample of 333 users of outreach services comprising:

- 132 users of hosted services,
- 149 partner service users
- 44 mobile service users, and
- 5 home service users.

A sample of 90 non users was also included, comprising:

- 33 residing in communities serviced by hosted outreach
- 39 in an area serviced by partner service
- 13 in an area serviced by mobile outreach
- 8 from a home service area.

The qualitative research was conducted in 5 different locations across Northern Ireland, each serviced by a different outreach model. Due to the difficulties encountered finding people aware of home outreach service during the quantitative phase, this outreach type was not covered during the qualitative phase. Instead an additional group of hosted service users, non users was recruited (more details can be found in methodology and sample section).

Because of the low sample size for the Home Service survey, we have been cautious in this report in reaching conclusions from this sample.

## **Key Findings**

The key findings for each type of outreach service were as follows:

### **Partner service**

- There are high levels of awareness of the service
- The level of awareness was mainly driven by post office staff prior to closure
- A personalised approach, such as a letter or leaflet, is preferred in disseminating additional information about the service
- Overall satisfaction is extremely high
- Satisfaction with specific issues such as accessibility and reliability is high, while satisfaction with the product range is slightly lower

- The service customers would most like to see more widely available is the opportunity to renew car tax
- The majority maintain they have not changed their behaviour towards, or usage of, post office services since the introduction of outreach
- There is a feeling that, on balance, the substitution of outreach for traditional branches has had a negative impact on the community, including less social interaction
- Lack of privacy at the counter is an issue for the majority of users

### **Hosted Service**

- There are high levels of awareness with the exception of the outreach at Ardgarvan, which was not operational at the time of the survey
- The service in Dunamore is so well used it was difficult to find non users
- Post office staff informed the majority of the users about the service before the closure of the original branch.
- New or additional information about the service currently should be communicated via outreach staff
- Overall satisfaction with the service is extremely high
- There is high satisfaction with accessibility and reliability of the service
- There is room for improvement in terms of opening hours and the products and services offered
- The majority of customers maintain they have not changed their behaviour towards, or usage of, post office services since the introduction of the outreach
- There is a feeling that, on balance, the substitution of outreach for traditional branches has had a negative impact on the community, including less social interaction
- Lack of privacy at the counter is an issue for the majority of users

### **Mobile Service**

- There is widespread awareness of the service
- This awareness is driven by visibility of the mobile as well as by information from staff before the closure
- A letter to their home is the preferred method of communication regarding new information about the service
- Overall satisfaction with the service is very high
- Satisfaction with the reliability of the service is high
- There is room for improvement in terms of the product range, with calls for the

provision of foreign currency to be more widely available

- The majority maintain they have not changed their behaviour towards, or usage of, post office services since the introduction of the outreach
- The substitution of outreach for traditional branches is believed to have had, on balance, a negative impact on the local community, particularly on social interaction
- There are concerns over the level of privacy within the mobile unit, and over accessibility for elderly or less able customers

### **Home Service**

- There is very low awareness of the service itself and of the products available through the service
- Among those aware, the main source of information was from post office staff pre closure
- Information in the local paper is the preferred method for finding out information about the service in future
- Overall satisfaction is at a lower level than with the other outreach types
- Satisfaction with accessibility and reliability is also lower than with the other services
- There is thought to be room for improvement in terms of the product range, though there is little awareness overall of what the service can provide
- Half of users interviewed believe they have not changed their behaviour towards, or usage of, post office services since the introduction of the outreach, though the lack of awareness of the service generally suggests a different conclusion
- The substitution of outreach for traditional branches is believed to have had a negative impact on the community

*Please note the home service user sample is small (n=8)*

### **Post Office Essentials**

- Kircubbin residents were left without a service for some months following the post office closure due to the unplanned closure of the traditional branch in the village
- News of the outreach service spread mainly via word of mouth when it opened in the local garage/general store
- A more comprehensive approach to providing information to local residents about the service is desired, such as by letter or leaflet
- Overall satisfaction is at a low level and is influenced in particular by a lack of privacy at the counter and a perception of 'untrained' staff

- The location is considered more inconvenient than that of the previous traditional post office
- An increase in the range of products and services available is desired
- Indications from the focus group are that the service is underused by Kircubbin residents

### Recommendations

The key areas for improvement, based on the consumer feedback from the survey and across the range of outreach services, are as follows:

#### **Partner Outreach**

- an enhancement in privacy levels
- increase in the products and services on offer
- longer opening hours
- a separate counter area for post office customers

#### **Hosted Outreach**

- longer opening hours
- increase in the number of days open
- enhancement to privacy
- increase in the products and services available

#### **Mobile Outreach**

- ensure the mobile unit is located in a safe location
- adequate parking adjacent to the mobile
- improved accessibility for older customers
- improved consistency of opening hours
- increased level of privacy
- wider range of products and services

#### **Home Service**

- substantially more publicity and information on the service
- a return to a service provided at a fixed and permanent location

*Please note the home service user sample is small (n=8)*

## **PO Essentials**

- more training for staff
- focus that training on a limited number of staff to work at the post office counter
- increased level of privacy

broader range of products and services available

## 2. METHODOLOGY & SAMPLE

The methodological approach adopted combined a quantitative survey with qualitative focus group research.

The quantitative methodology opted for was a face to face ad hoc survey conducted among users and non-users of outreach services across Northern Ireland. All non-users had to be aware of the outreach services to enable them to discuss why they were non-users.

The face to face approach was decided upon for a number of reasons. Millward Brown Ulster has access to an interviewer panel of around 150. These interviewers are experienced and have significant expertise and geographical knowledge of Northern Ireland. The interviewers utilised lived in and around each of the areas identified as being serviced by at least one of the outreach services and, given their close geographical proximity, face to face interviewing could be carried out relatively easily.

While the recommended sample for the quantitative phase was 500, a total of 423 interviews were achieved; 333 with users and 90 with non users. The sample was designed to be representative of each county in Northern Ireland and all outreach types. Fieldwork was conducted between 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

Qualitative research was utilised to complement the quantitative phase, gaining a more in-depth understanding of attitudes towards outreach services among both users and non users and to establish the importance of these services to users. This element followed the quantitative phase so that findings from the quantitative phase could be used to help develop the discussion guide. Groups were conducted from 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

The sample structure of the focus groups is outlined below:

CRITERIA	LOCATION
Users and non users of Mobile Outreach Service	Jerrettspass, Co Down
All to be aware of Outreach Service	

Users and non users of Hosted Outreach Service	Park, Co L'derry
All to be aware of Outreach Service	
Users and non users of Partner Outreach Service	Dunamanagh, Co Tyrone
All to be aware of Outreach Service	
Users and non users of Hosted Outreach Service	Dunamore, Co Tyrone
All to be aware of Outreach Service	
Users and non users of Post Office Essential Outreach Service	Kircubbin, Co Down
All to be aware of Outreach Service	

*All research was conducted in accordance the Market Research Society ethical Code of Conduct.*

### 3. ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE

Overall, the quantitative sample was representative of the 6 Northern Ireland counties and outreach types within each of the counties, though there were some difficulties achieving the sample targets in some areas.

Obtaining interviews with those aware of the home service, regardless of whether they were users or non users, was impossible in some locations. As a result only 8 interviews took place with residents who understood themselves to be home service users and 5 with non users. This sample size is therefore too small to draw solid conclusions from.

To establish the extent of non awareness of the home service in areas where no surveys were conducted, interviewers were sent back into the locations to conduct hand tallies or counts of those unaware of the service.

- In Carnalbanagh a total of 40 people were asked if they aware of the home outreach service operating within their community – none of the 40 had heard about the service
- In Dunseverick, all 111 people asked the question were unaware of the home outreach service operating within their community
- Ballycassidy was another area where no interviews could be conducted. 27 people were asked if they were aware of the home service – none of them were aware.

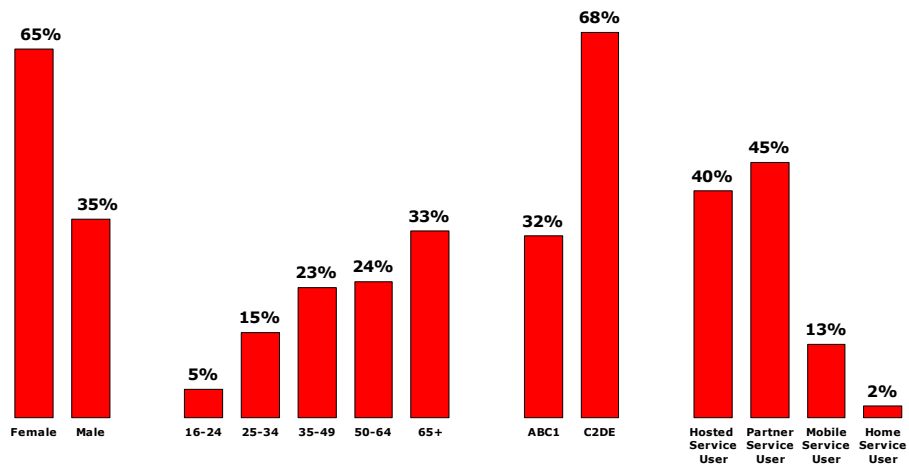
The quantitative sample was made up of the following:

- 132 hosted service users / 33 non users of the hosted service
  - (In Ardgarvan the interviewers could not find anyone aware of the hosted service and it was subsequently found not to be operating at the time)
- 149 partner service users / 39 non users of the partner service
- 44 mobile service users / 13 non users of the mobile service
- 8 home service users / 5 non users of the home service

Almost 7 in 10 (65%) of the user sample were female, compared to over 3 in 10 who were male (35%). There were more 65+ year old users than any of the other age groups, indicating the reliance on the services of older people. C2DEs are heavier users than ABC1s. Almost half the sample (45%) were users of a partner service,

while 4 in 10 (40%) were users of a hosted service. Over 1 in 10 used a mobile service while only 2% availed of a home service (see figure 1).

Figure 1  
**ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE - USERS**  
 Sept-09

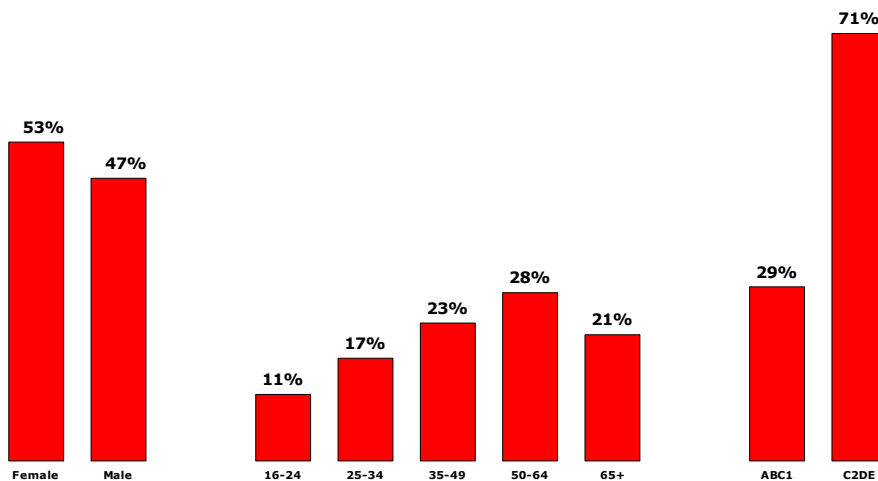


Base: 333 Users

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Over half the non user sample was female (53%) and 35-64 (51%). More C2DE than ABC1 non users were surveyed (71% vs. 29%) (see figure 2).

Figure 2  
**ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE - NON USERS**  
 Sept-09



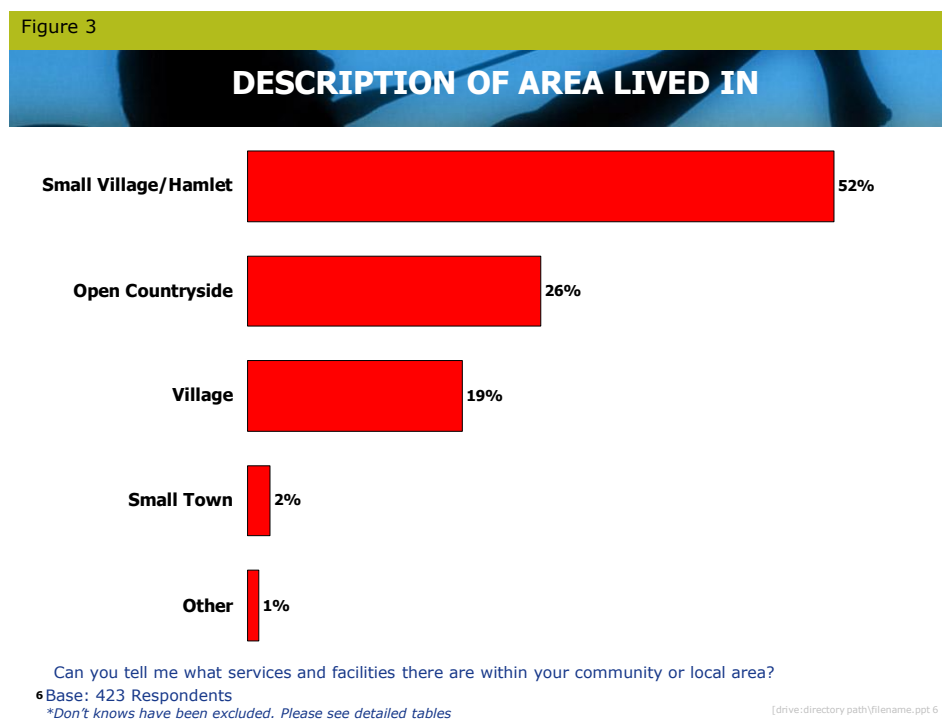
Base: 90 Non Users

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## 4. THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

In order to establish the impact of the introduction of outreach services it was important to learn something about the nature of the communities now served by outreach and how they are perceived by their residents. Consequently, we asked our respondents in the quantitative survey a number of questions about their community and the issue was also discussed during the focus groups.

Over half (52%) of the quantitative sample (combined users and non users) described the community within which they live as a small village or hamlet. Just over a quarter (26%) explained their local area as open countryside with almost a fifth (19%) describing their community as a village (see figure 3).



During the focus groups it was established that most of the respondents were natives in their community – the majority had lived there all their lives. The older respondents were reluctant to highlight any bad points about their community. The fact they had grown up with most people was regarded as a positive. This seemed to them to foster mutual respect and empathy within each of the communities. They have grown up there, know everyone and believe the residents make the community. There is a great sense of community spirit. Positive terms were used to describe their

home communities:

*'Everyone looks out for everyone'*

*'You worry about the elderly people near you'*

*'Any tragedies, the whole community comes together'*

*'People rally round and help out' – fund raising / farming*

*'Quite nice to have a close knit community'*

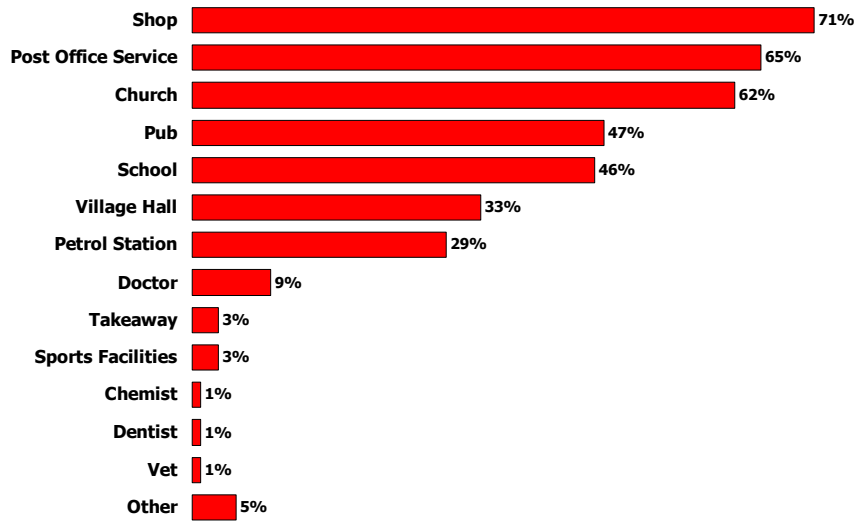
When prompted, the main cause for concern among family builders was the lack of activities and facilities for their children.

Other negative aspects of local areas highlighted during the focus groups included the roads not gritted in winter and infrequency or lack of bus services, especially when residents have no access to a car. In Dunamore there is a sense of frustration among residents that they are not being classed as a village, which appears to exclude the community from some local services and entitlements.

In terms of services available within each community, a shop is most common with almost three quarters (71%) of the combined (users and non users) quantitative sample mentioning it. The post office service (65%) and church (62%) were noted by almost two thirds of respondents in the quantitative survey. Almost half the sample mentioned a pub (47%) and school (46%). A village hall was mentioned as a service by a third (33%) of the sample, while a petrol station was cited by almost 3 in 10 (29%). Services noted less frequently included a GP practice (9%), a takeaway (3%), sports facilities (3%), chemist (1%), dentist (1%) and vet (1%) (see figure 4).

Figure 4

## SERVICES AVAILABLE WITHIN COMMUNITY



Can you tell me what services and facilities there are within your community or local area?

Base: 423 Respondents

\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

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## 5. THE PREVIOUS POST OFFICE

During the qualitative phase of the research the original post office was referred to by many as previously having been the focal point of the community. Since the closure, some felt there was no longer any focal point. Social gatherings were described as taking place in the previous traditional post office on a weekly basis while pensions or benefits were collected. People would 'spend an hour or more there' for a transaction that should take no longer than 5 to 10 minutes. The weekly post office visit was described as *'some pensioners' lifeline to the community'* - they looked forward to the trip.

During the focus groups they talked about the Postmaster or Postmistress as a friend. They had a close personal relationship and all customers were made to feel valued. They described how the post office staff knew what they wanted before they entered. They were knowledgeable about all products and services:

*'You could have asked her anything and she would have known'.*

The strength of feeling towards their post office came to the fore during the focus groups when discussing how they felt about the closure. The main emotions were anger and shock. This was driven by perceptions of the extent to which the post office was utilised:

*'How could it be closing when everyone uses it'*

*'It's some people's lifeline'*

Residents were angry because they felt it was their right to have a post office within the area. It had been there so long and was part of weekly life. They felt they were being robbed of an essential part of the community:

*'Post Office was there for the community and it's been taken away from us'*

*'It was there for generations – in my father's time'*

The closure also bred concern within the communities as to what amenities they would lose next and how they would get their essentials:

*'What is the next thing to go'*

*'What will I do now for money'*

Some residents felt they were being penalised because of where they live. These

rural communities consider themselves paying much higher rates in comparison to those living in towns and cities, but the services they receive are described as being much inferior:

*'You get this feeling that because of where you live you don't matter'*

*'People living in Belfast wouldn't be treated like this'*

The sense of community spirit in these areas was very evident as even non users of the outreach services were concerned for the older and less mobile within their community:

*'Initially it didn't concern me because I didn't use it but I started caring for someone and seeing it from their point of view suddenly made me realise they couldn't get to it if it moved'*

Another concern highlighted by residents was the impact the closure would have on the local economy. Local people would lift their money from the post office and spend it within the local area, but would this still happen if they have to travel further afield to lift money?

*'If people lift their money in Cookstown they will spend it in Cookstown'*

These communities did not shy away from taking action against the loss of their post office. The strength of opinion was demonstrated in the numbers who participated in organised campaigning against the closure. Many signed petitions, some wrote letters and attended meetings in areas where these took place. However there was often a feeling that closure was a *fait accompli*:

*'They told us campaigning was a waste of time. It was going to close anyway'*

*'No point protesting – might as well have stayed at home'*

*'Cosmetic exercise to make you feel better but decision had already been made'*

*'I don't know why we had a meeting for no matter what we said it wasn't taken into consideration'*

In summary, therefore, it is clear that communities where outreach services replaced fixed, orthodox post office branches felt, without exception, that their neighbourhood and lifestyle had been negatively affected by the change.

## 6. AWARENESS OF & SATISFACTION WITH OUTREACH SERVICES

People will not, of course, use a service if they are not aware of it. The ultimate success of outreach as an alternative to full-time post office services depends, to a large extent, on local residents being aware of its location, hours of business and service offering. The research consequently focused on local residents' knowledge of outreach services and levels of satisfaction with the services provided.

### **Awareness**

Prior to the research it had been suggested that publicity for outreach services was patchy, and consequently the knowledge of local residents regarding what was offered.

As discussed earlier, during the quantitative phase of the research difficulties were experienced in achieving the sample in some areas, particularly in relation to awareness of home service – this includes both users and non users. Only 8 interviews were conducted with home service users overall and 5 with non users, all in one of the five areas where a home service is offered.

There was no awareness of the home outreach service found in the following areas where the service is operational – Ballintoy, Carnalbanagh, Dunseverick and Ballycassidy. In each of these areas the interviewers conducted a hand tally or count of residents and were unable to find anyone who had heard of the home service which is offered to people within their community.

In Ardgarvan there was no awareness of the hosted outreach service available though it was subsequently discovered that the service was not operational at the time of the survey.

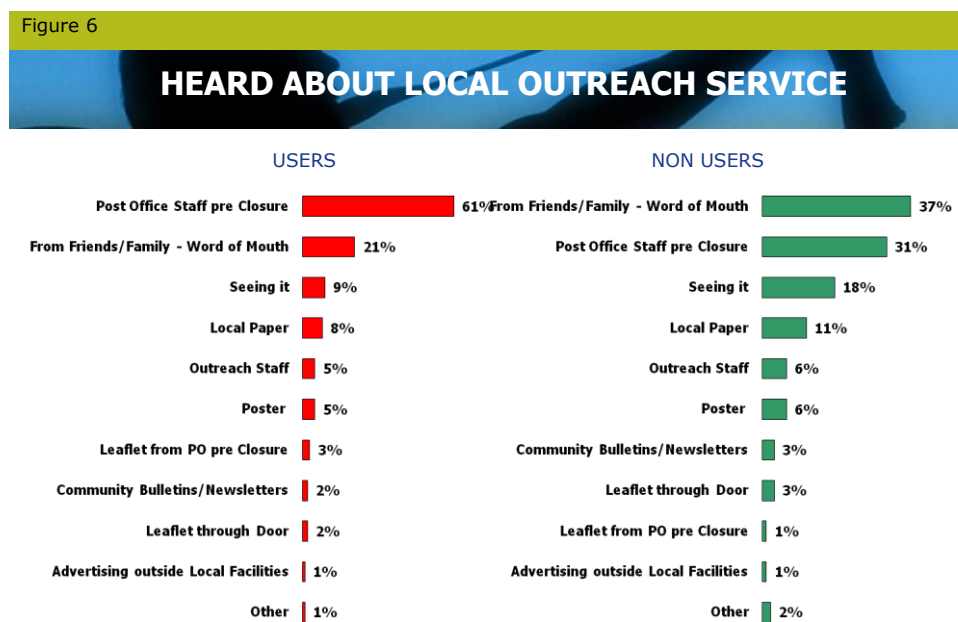
However, in all other areas and across all other outreach types awareness (as indicated by the quantitative survey) was found to be at a high level.

Although the Kircubbin residents, who are serviced by the post office essentials outreach service, were not included in the quantitative phase, a focus group was conducted with a mixture of users and non users from this area. This community appeared to be less informed of proposed plans following the closure of the post office and were left without a post office service for some months. News of the post

office essentials outreach service spread largely via word of mouth and people also became aware of the service when visiting the garage in which it is located.

In terms of the medium by which people heard of the outreach, the quantitative research revealed that word of mouth from the previous post office staff or from friends was the most common source of information. The majority of users heard from previous post office staff before the closure, with over 3 in 5 (61%) citing this as their source. Over a fifth of users (21%) heard from friends or family. Almost 2 in 5 (37%) non users heard from friends or family, with previous post office staff as the source of information among over 3 in 10 (31%).

The visibility of the outreach service was the source of information for almost 1 in 10 (9%) users and almost 1 in 5 (18%) of non users. Outreach staff and a variety of advertising channels were also a source of information, but to a lesser extent (see figure 6).

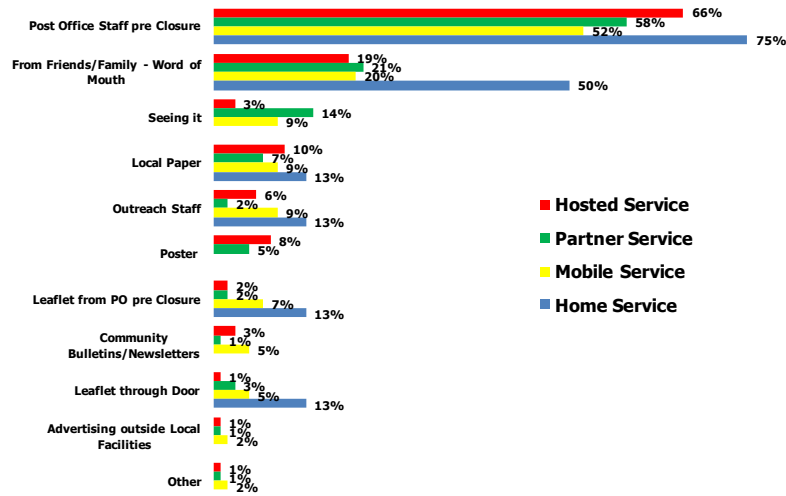


How did you hear about the local post office outreach service within your community?  
 6 Base: 333 Users / 90 Non Users  
 \*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables  
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Of the 8 home service users surveyed (all in Drumnakilly), 6 heard about the outreach service from post office staff before the closure. Hosted service users were more likely than any other outreach type users to have heard from staff before the closure, with almost 7 in 10 (66%) claiming they heard this way. Almost a fifth of all other outreach type users found out about the service this way. Those using the

partner service were more likely to have learned about the service by seeing it, with over 1 in 10 (14%) finding out like this (see figure 7).

**Figure 7**  
**HOW USERS HEARD ABOUT LOCAL OUTREACH SERVICE BY OUTREACH TYPE**



How did you hear about the local post office outreach service within your community?

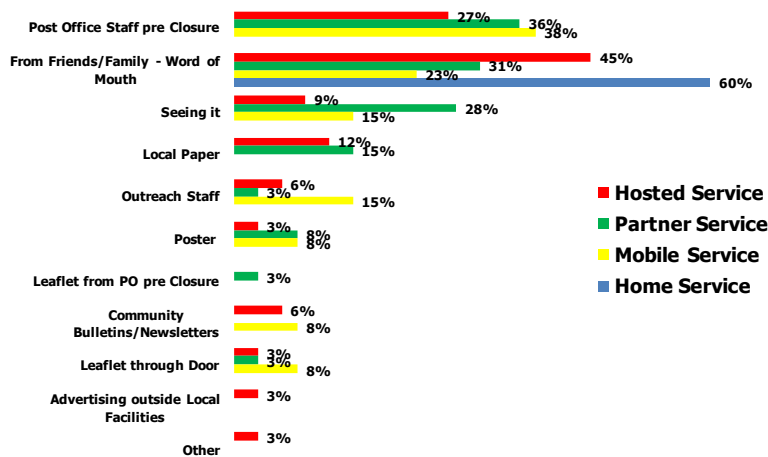
7 Base: 333 Users

\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

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Figure 8 demonstrates that among non users, those living in communities serviced by a mobile outreach were slightly more likely to have heard from previous post office staff before the closure.

**Figure 8**  
**HOW NON USERS HEARD ABOUT LOCAL OUTREACH SERVICE BY OUTREACH TYPE WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITY**



How did you hear about the local post office outreach service within your community?

8 Base: 90 Non Users

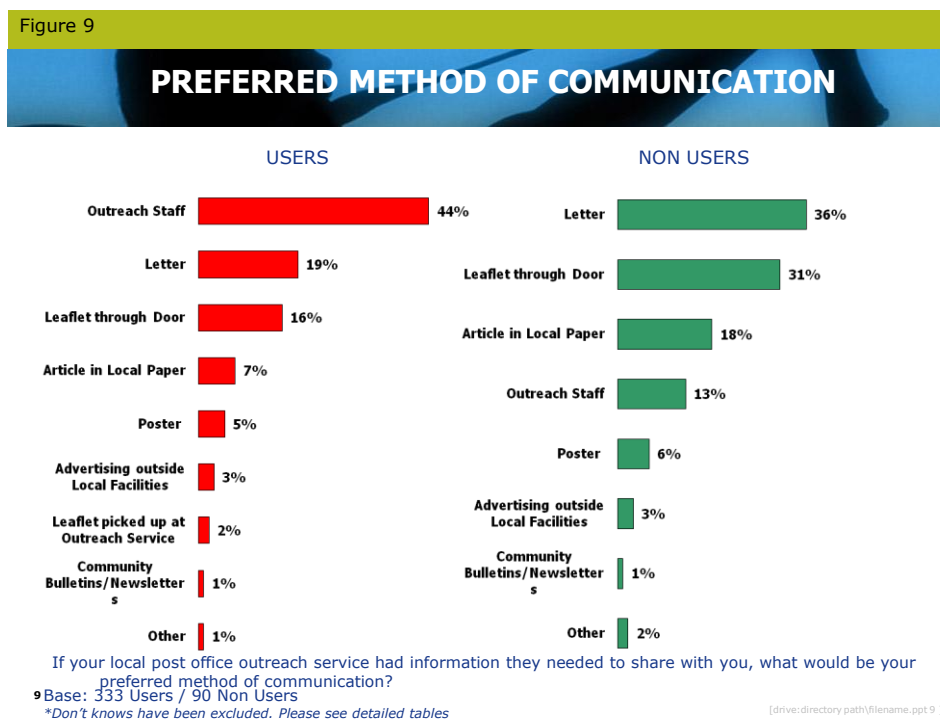
\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

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Respondents were asked how they would have liked to have been made aware of

the post office outreach service in their area and how they would like to be advised of new information. The results of this for both users and non-users are shown in figure 9 below.

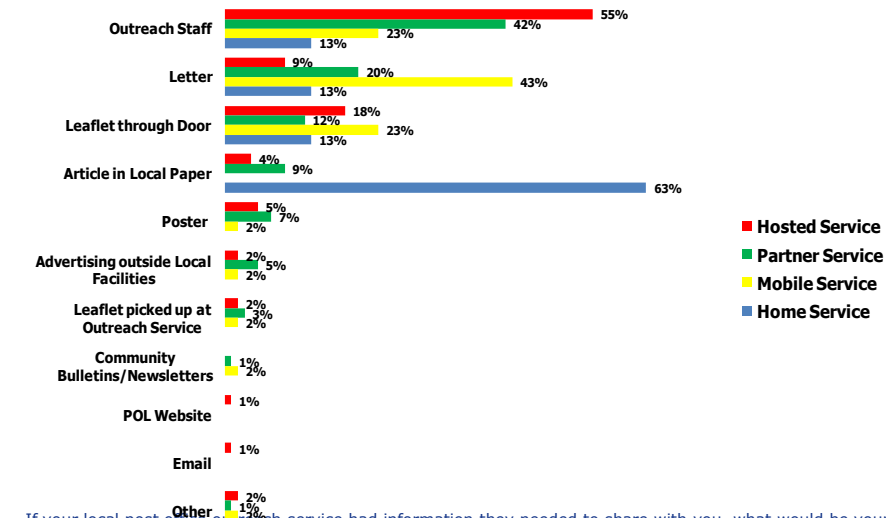
The preferred method of communication for users overall, as revealed during the quantitative survey, is being informed direct by post office staff of all relevant information regarding the outreach service, with over 2 in 5 (44%) citing this. Second most popular was being informed by letter, and this was mentioned by almost a fifth (19%). Among non users, a letter was the most popular method of communication with almost 2 in 5 (36%) citing this. A leaflet through their door was stated as being preferred by over 3 in 10 (31%) of non users (see figure 9).



More hosted service users than any other outreach type users state finding out via the outreach staff is their preferred method for hearing relevant information, with over half (55%) mentioning this. A letter was a more popular choice for mobile service users with over 2 in 5 (43%) citing this method (see figure 10).

Figure 10

## PREFERRED METHOD OF COMMUNICATION AMONG USERS BY OUTREACH TYPE

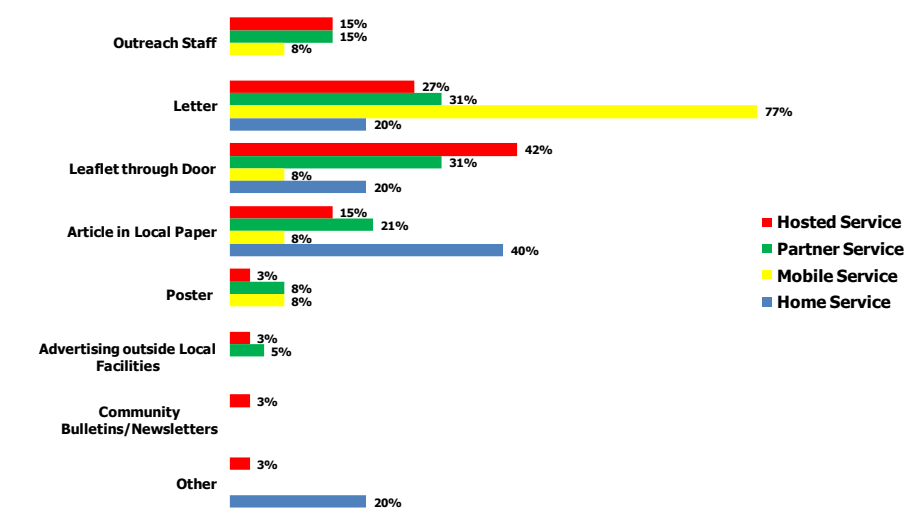


If your local post office outreach service had information they needed to share with you, what would be your preferred method of communication?  
 Base: 333 Users  
 \*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

A letter is the preferred method of communication among more non-users of the mobile service than any other outreach type with over three quarters (77%) citing this. Those non-users living within a community serviced by a hosted outreach are more likely than other non-users to prefer a leaflet through the door with over 2 in 5 (42%) stating this. Either a leaflet through the door or a letter is the preferred method for those living in an area serviced by a partner outreach (see figure 11).

Figure 11

## PREFERRED METHOD OF COMMUNICATION AMONG NON USERS BY OUTREACH TYPE WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITY



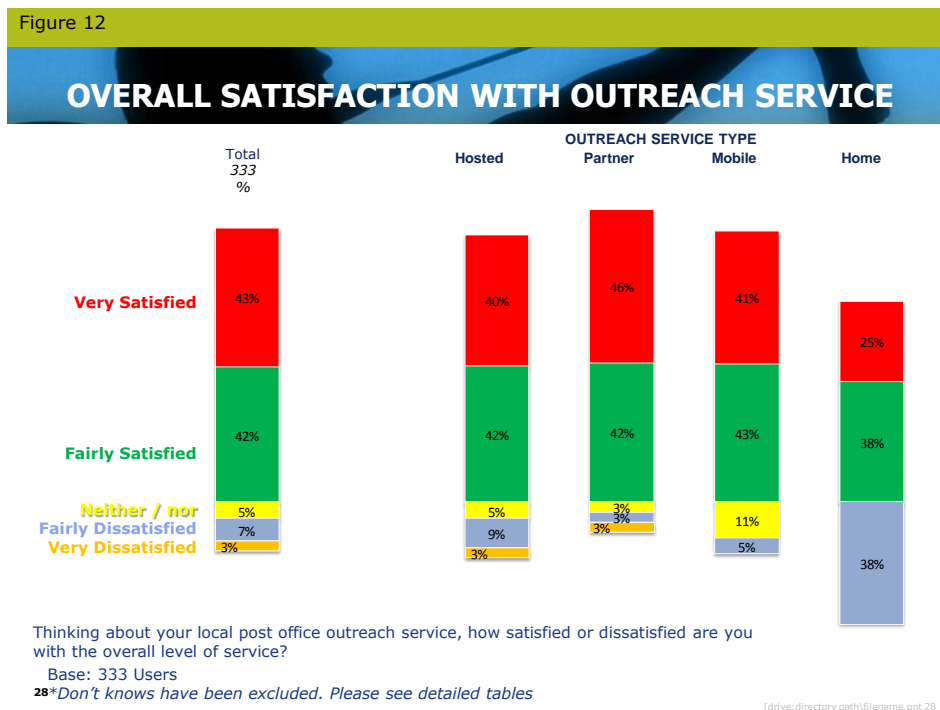
If your local post office outreach service had information they needed to share with you, what would be your preferred method of communication?  
 Base: 90 Non Users  
 \*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

Currently there is some confusion around opening hours for a number of mobile and hosted service users; in these instances a letter to their home, or a leaflet they could put up on their wall or fridge would be beneficial.

### Satisfaction Levels

Overall satisfaction with the outreach services is at a high level, with over 4 in 5 (85%) users claiming they are very or fairly satisfied.

Satisfaction is highest among partner service users with almost 9 in 10 (88%) either very or fairly satisfied. Satisfaction with the mobile (84%) and hosted (82%) services is also at a high level with over 4 in 5 very or fairly satisfied. The sample size of home service users identified was too small and unrepresentative to reach firm conclusions on satisfaction.

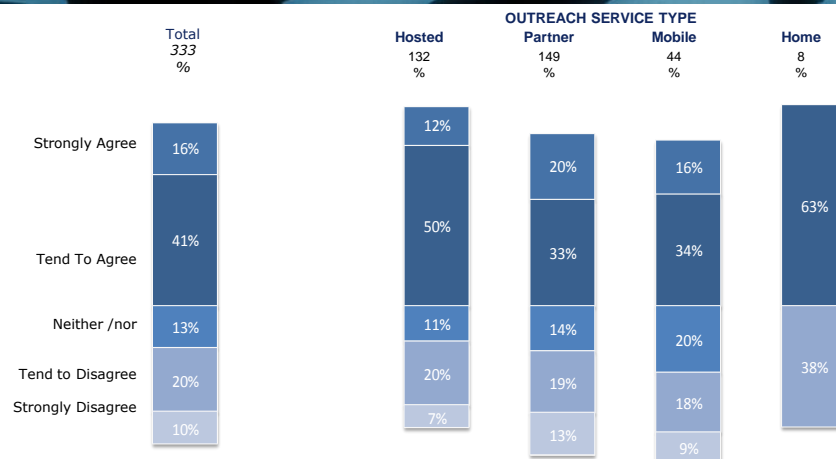


By contrast, the findings of the focus group conducted among users and non users of the post office essentials outreach service offered in Kircubbin, revealed that overall satisfaction with the service currently offered is low. This is driven by a number of factors, but in particular by complaints of a lack of privacy and of staff (allegedly) not being fully trained in all services offered.

When questioned in the quantitative survey on whether they felt their post office service needs were being met by their outreach service, almost 3 in 5 (57%) of users strongly agreed or tended to agree that this was the case. In contrast, only 3 in 10 (30%) strongly disagree or tend to disagree that their needs are being met.

Among users of a hosted service over 3 in 5 (62%) strongly agree or tend to agree that their postal service needs are currently being met, while over half (53%) of partner service users and half (50%) of mobile service users strongly agree or tend to agree.

**Figure 13**  
**ALL MY NEEDS ARE MET BY MY LOCAL POST OFFICE OUTREACH SERVICE**



To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?  
 [ Base: All Respondents n=333 ]  
 \*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 80 ]

Again, the sample of home service users identified was too small and unrepresentative to reach conclusions on whether the service met their needs.

## 7. IMPORTANCE OF SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF OUTREACH SERVICES

The research investigated which characteristics of a post office service consumers considered important. During the quantitative survey, users were asked to rate how important the following specific aspects of an outreach service are:

- Being constant, reliable and dependable
- Providing a high quality of service
- Having a good range of opening hours over a range of days and hours
- Being situated at a convenient location
- Having a full range of services
- Promoting and communicating the service to local people
- Ease of access

Being **constant, reliable and dependable** was ranked as most important with almost 4 in 5 (79%) rating it as vitally important and a further fifth (21%) rating it as important. More hosted service users (83%) rated being constant, reliable and dependable as vitally important than any other users. Almost 4 in 5 partner (78%) and mobile (77%) and half (50%) the home service users rated these aspects as vitally important.

Providing a **high level of quality and service** is also felt to be important with almost three quarters (74%) of users rating this as vitally important and over a quarter (26%) rating it as important. More mobile users rated this aspect as vitally important (80%), compared to almost three quarters of hosted (73%) and partner (74%) users and half (50%) of the home service users.

Ranked in joint third place in terms of importance was having a **good range of opening hours** and being available over a wide range of days / times so customers can access the service when suitable for them. Almost three quarters (74%) evaluated these as vitally important with a further quarter (25%) believing they are important. Among hosted users, 4 in 5 (80%) rated this aspect as vitally important compared to 7 in 10 partner (71%) and mobile (70%) users and almost 2 in 5 (38%) home users.

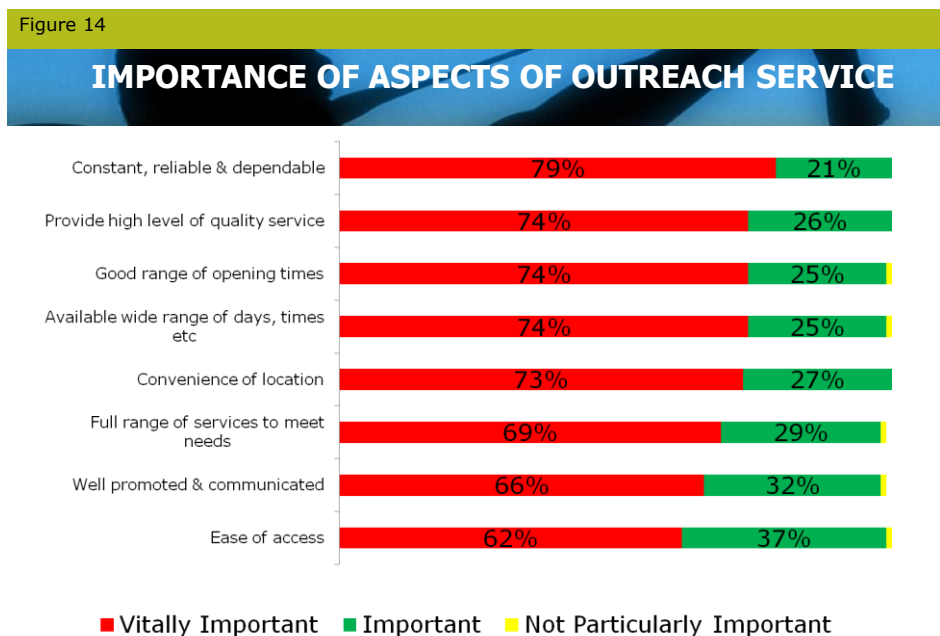
**Convenience of the location** is felt to be vitally important by almost three quarters (73%) while almost 3 in 10 (27%) rate it as important. The 'vitally important' figure

increased to almost 4 in 5 (77%) among mobile users, almost three quarters among hosted (74%) and partner (71%) users and half (50%) of home service users.

Almost 7 in 10 evaluated having a **full range of services** available to meet customer needs (69%) as vitally important. This figure remained fairly consistent across all outreach types, with the exception of home service users where the figure decline (hosted = 71%, partner = 68%, mobile = 70%, home = 38%).

**Promoting and communicating the service** to locals is regarded as vitally important by almost 7 in 10 (66%), this figure increases to almost 4 in 5 (77%) of partner service users and 7 in 10 (70%) hosted service users. Almost 2 in 5 (38%) home service users and 3 in 5 (60%) partner service users regard this aspect as vitally important.

**Ease of access** was felt to be vitally important by over 3 in 5 (62%), increasing marginally among hosted (64%) and mobile (64%) service users. Almost 3 in 5 (59%) partner service users and half of the 8 home service users rated this aspect as vitally important (see figure 14).



Base: 333 Users  
 27\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

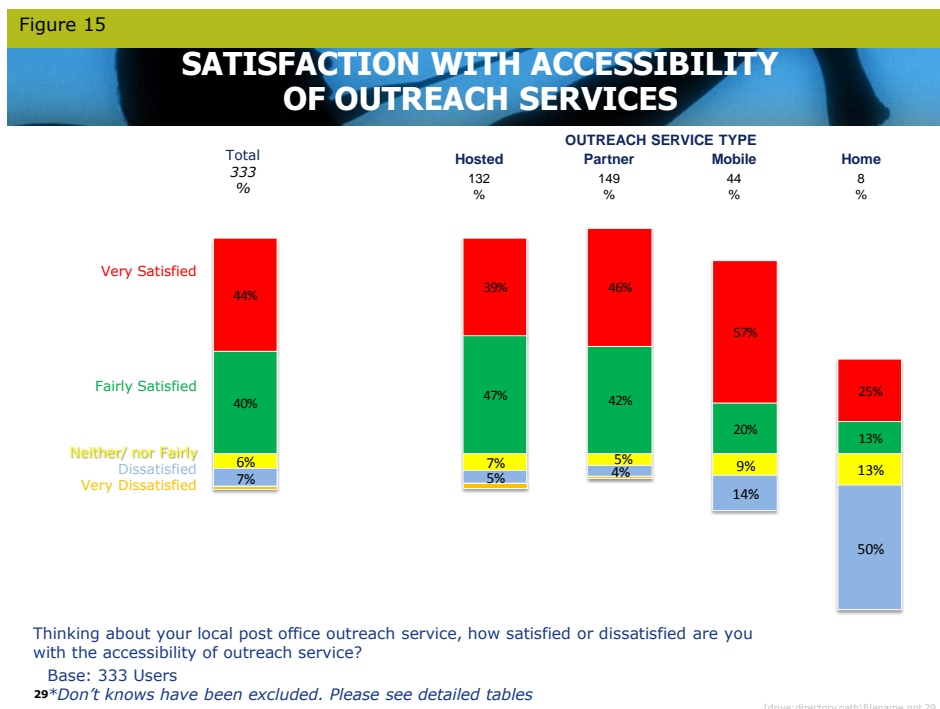
[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 27 ]

In the following section we consider how each of the types of outreach matches up in respect of these important characteristics.

## 8. ACCESSIBILITY, RELIABILITY & LOCATION OF SERVICES

### Accessibility

The specific aspect achieving the highest level of satisfaction is the accessibility of the services, with over 4 in 5 (84%) either very or fairly satisfied. Satisfaction with accessibility is higher among partner (88%) and hosted (86%) service users with almost 9 in 10 either very or fairly satisfied. Over three quarters (77%) are satisfied with accessibility at the mobile services. The findings for satisfaction over accessibility for home service users were low, but as pointed out earlier, the sample identified was small.

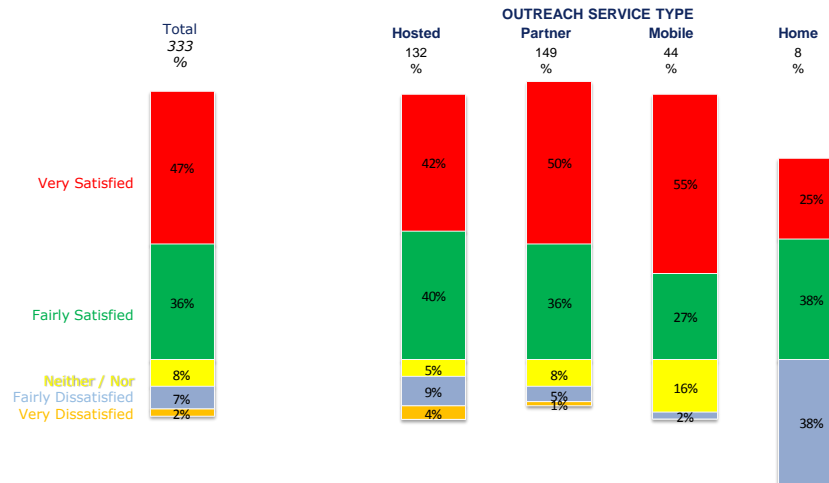


### Reliability

The reliability of all outreach services was rated either very or fairly satisfactory by over 4 in 5 (83%) of respondents. Reliability is high and consistent across the hosted (82%), partner (86%) and mobile (82%) services with over 4 in 5 either very or fairly satisfied with each. There are lower levels of satisfaction with the reliability of the home service with other 3 in 5 (63%) very or fairly satisfied, although again the sample size is small (n=8) (see figure 16).

Figure 16

## SATISFACTION WITH RELIABILITY OF OUTREACH SERVICES



Thinking about your local post office outreach service, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the reliability of the service?

Base: 333 Users

<sup>30</sup>\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory\_path\filename.ppt.30 ]

However, during the focus groups respondents commented that, since the post office closures, **technical difficulties** seem to be more evident, particularly in relation to the hosted and partner services. While the same problems occurred at the previous post office it seems they are more obvious now because there are less distractions in the outreach service. Also, the reduced opening hours mean there is less time for technical difficulties to be dealt with and for the service provided. When they occur these problems cause inconvenience, in particular for those less mobile:

*‘One day there were people waiting for their money and they couldn’t get it. It was a disaster. The older people who had struggled over had to go home with nothing’*

Those using partner outreach service recounted some instances where the outreach **ran out of money** and had to close for the afternoon. This annoys and inconveniences people when they have no satisfactory explanation or redress.

The qualitative research suggested that unreliability may also be driven by staff (reportedly) **not being adequately trained**. Some customers felt they could not rely on the staff being able to carry out customer requests straight away – they might have to wait for someone else to be served before their own request could be dealt with. This was an issue which seemed relevant in particular to the partner and post office essentials models.

## High Quality of Service

During the focus groups users talked about some of the outreach services not being ‘fully functional post offices’. Products and services are more limited.

*‘You have to go to another Post Office for passport form’*

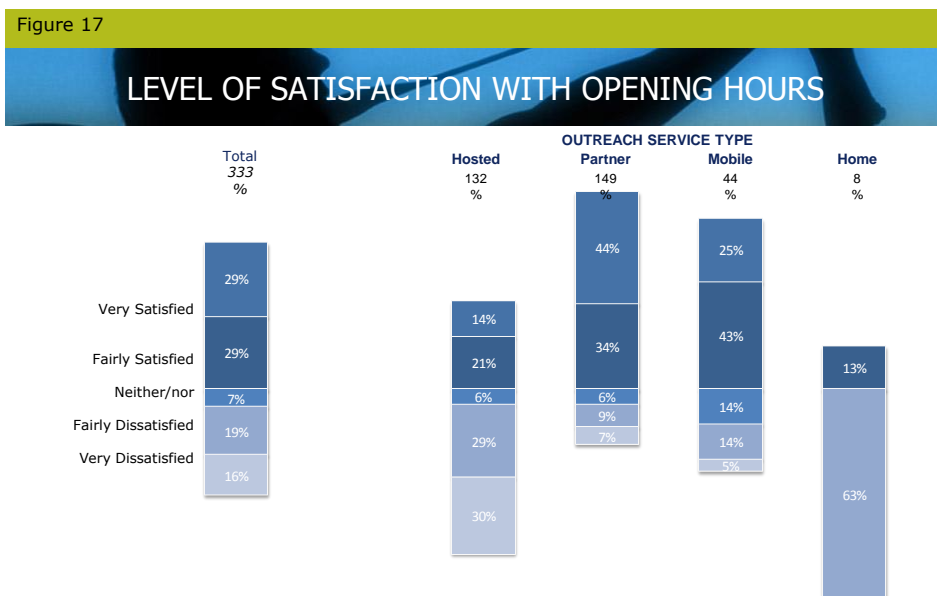
*‘They don’t check forms like they used to’*

*‘Can’t tax your car anymore and there is no cash point’*

The range of services offered at each type of outreach and the level of usage are discussed in detail in the following chapter.

## Good Range of Opening Hours

During the quantitative survey almost 3 in 5 (58%) of all users considered that they are very or fairly satisfied with the opening hours of their local outreach service. Partner service users are more likely than any other users to be satisfied with the opening hours of their service (78%). More mobile users (68%) than hosted service (35%) are satisfied with the opening hours (see figure 17). Hosted service users are substantially less satisfied with the hours of service available to them with 59% very or fairly dissatisfied with them.



Thinking about your local post office outreach service, how satisfied or dissatisfied with each of the following?

Base: 333 Users

<sup>97</sup>\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

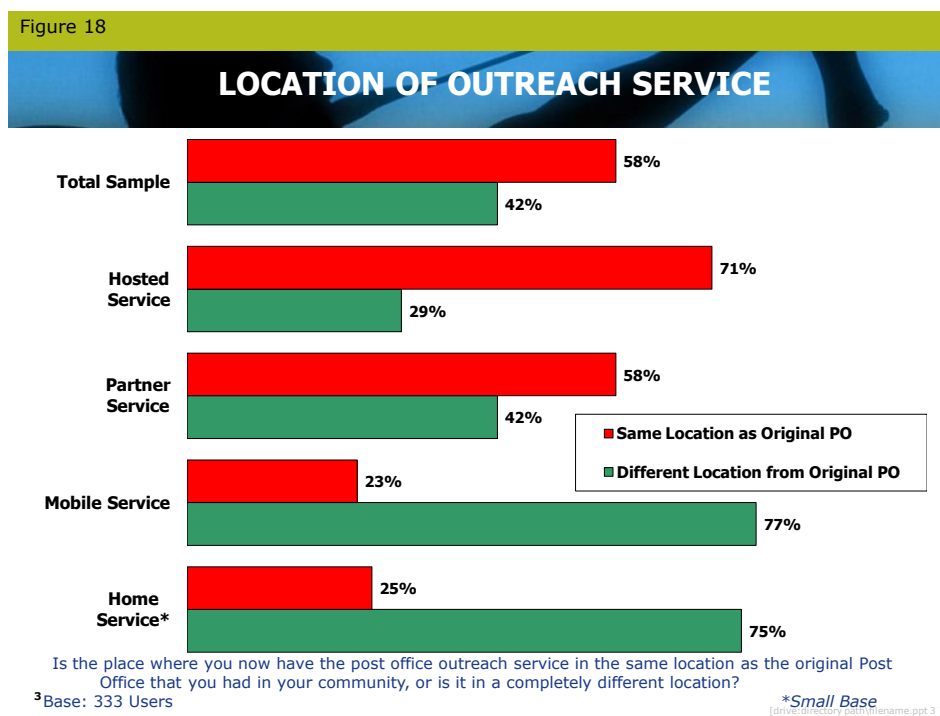
[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 97 ]

## Convenient Location

The quantitative survey among users revealed that for almost 3 in 5 (58%) the

outreach service is in the same location as their original post office. This is more likely among those benefiting from a hosted outreach service with almost three quarters (71%) claiming the service is in the same location as their original post office. Almost 3 in 5 (58%) of those partner service users are visiting the same location for their post office needs. Those most likely to be going to a different location for their post office service needs are mobile outreach users (77%).

Evidence gathered during the focus groups indicates that when an outreach service is in an alternative location there is little change in the distance from customers' homes. In most cases, the service is merely across the road from where the previous post office was situated or parked nearby in the instance of the mobile service (see figure 18).



Over half of all respondents describe the outreach service in their community as in the same location as the original post office. Those with a hosted service within their community are more likely to describe it is the 'same location'; with almost three quarters (73%) agreeing to this statement. Over half (51%) of those residents in areas serviced by a partner outreach consider it is in the same location as the original post office.



## 9. PRODUCT RANGE AND USAGE

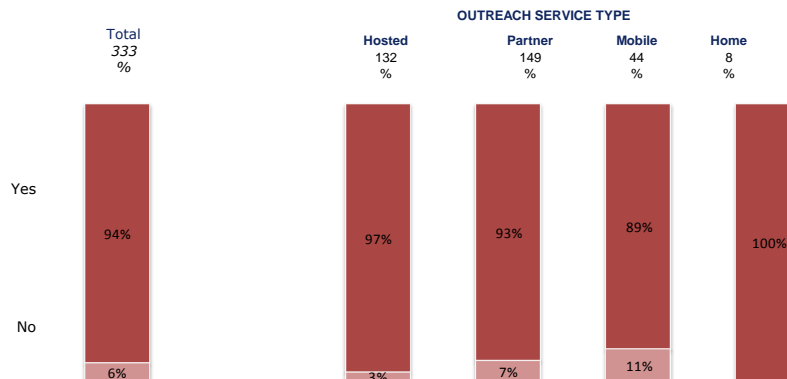
In this section we deal with the range of products and services offered at the outreach branches and how they are used. We also consider the level of business use of outreaches as compared to personal use.

### Personal or Business Use

Over 9 in 10 (94%) users interviewed use their local outreach service for personal use only. Users of the hosted service are more likely than users of the other service types to use it for personal use only, with 97% claiming this compared to 93% of partner service users and 89% of mobile service users (see figure 20).

Figure 20

### UTILISE LOCAL OUTREACH FOR PERSONAL USE ONLY



Is your usage of the local post office outreach service for your personal use only?

[ Base: All users n=333 ]

14

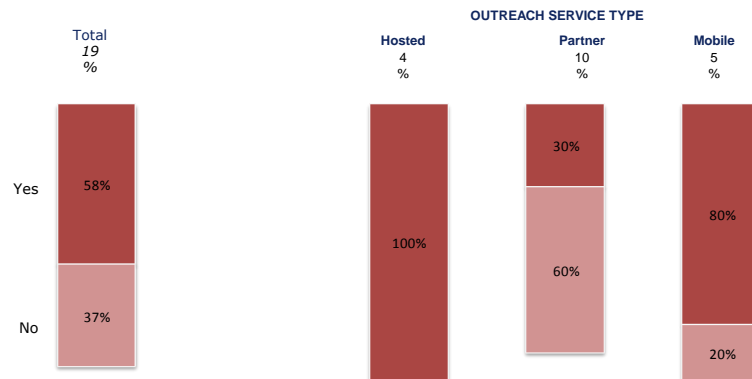
\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory.path\filename.ppt.14 ]

A small number of respondents used the outreach services for business purposes. All 4 hosted service users interviewed used it for both business and personal purposes, while 3 of the 10 partner service users (30%) and 4 of the 5 mobile service users (80%) also use it for business and personal purposes (see figure 21). Of the 11 people (58%) who are using the service for personal and business purposes, over half (55% - 6 people) of them are running a business from home.

Figure 21

## USE LOCAL OUTREACH FOR BUSINESS PURPOSES



15 Do you also use the local post office outreach service for business purposes?  
 [ Base: All who use for other than personal use n=19 ]  
 \*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 15 ]

The qualitative research revealed that the reduced opening hours are causing problems for potential business users who frequently have to travel to an alternative post office branch. This could be contributing to a reduction in the number of businesses using local outreach services. If, for example, businesses do not choose to use an alternative branch for banking they have to hold cash for longer, because the outreach service may not be open at the end of the day.

*'Dangerous for businesses to hold onto big amounts of money'*

*'A lot of local businesses badly need the service open to 5.30pm'*

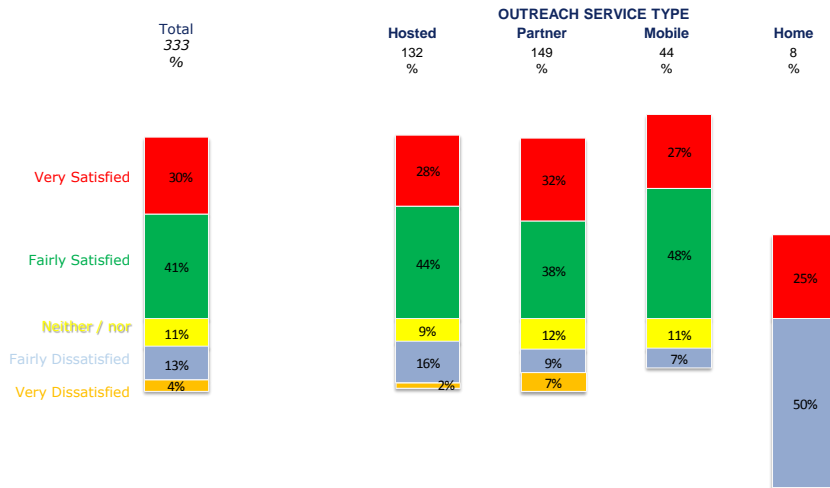
### The Product Range

Overall, over 7 in 10 (71%) of customers in the survey claim they are very or fairly satisfied with the product range on offer. When analysing by outreach type this figure remains consistent across hosted (72%), partner (70%) and mobile (75%) services.

A high proportion of the small sample of home service users identified are, however, fairly dissatisfied with the product range on offer.

Figure 22

## SATISFACTION WITH PRODUCT RANGE ON OFFER



Thinking about your local post office outreach service, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the product range on offer?

Base: 333 Users

<sup>31</sup>\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

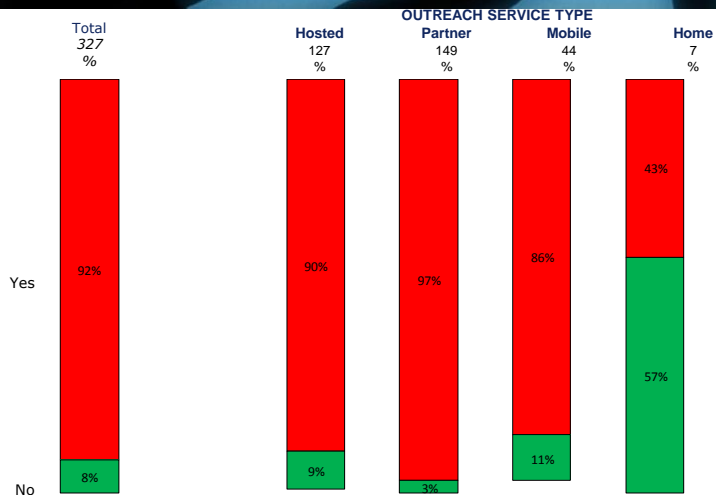
[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 31 ]

## Purchase of Stamps

Over 9 in 10 (92%) of consumers purchase stamps at their local outreach service. This figure is highest among partner service users where almost all (97%) purchase stamps. Among hosted survey users, 9 in 10 (90%) purchase stamps at their outreach service, as do almost 9 in 10 (86%) mobile service users. .

Figure 25

## USE OUTREACH SERVICE TO PURCHASE STAMPS



Whether you, yourself, use the post office outreach service for this particular service?

Base: All Respondents aware service is available - 327

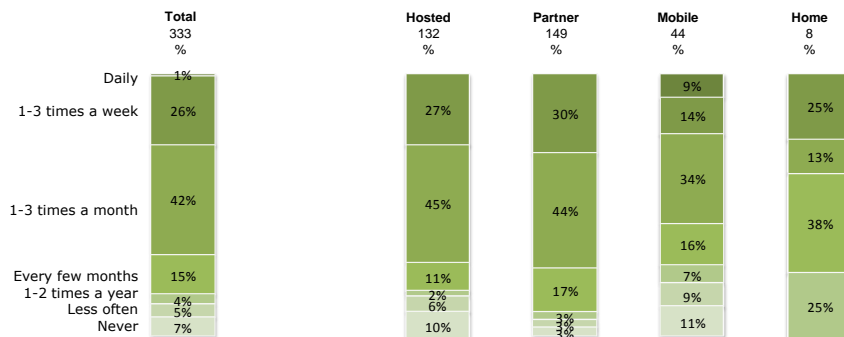
<sup>36</sup>\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 56 ]

The quantitative findings demonstrate that, overall, 2 in 5 (42%) purchase stamps 1-3 times a month. Over 2 in 5 hosted (45%) and partner (44%) service users also use this service 1-3 times a month, while mobile users require it less often (see figure 23).

Figure 23

### FREQUENCY OF REQUIRING SERVICES TO PURCHASE STAMPS



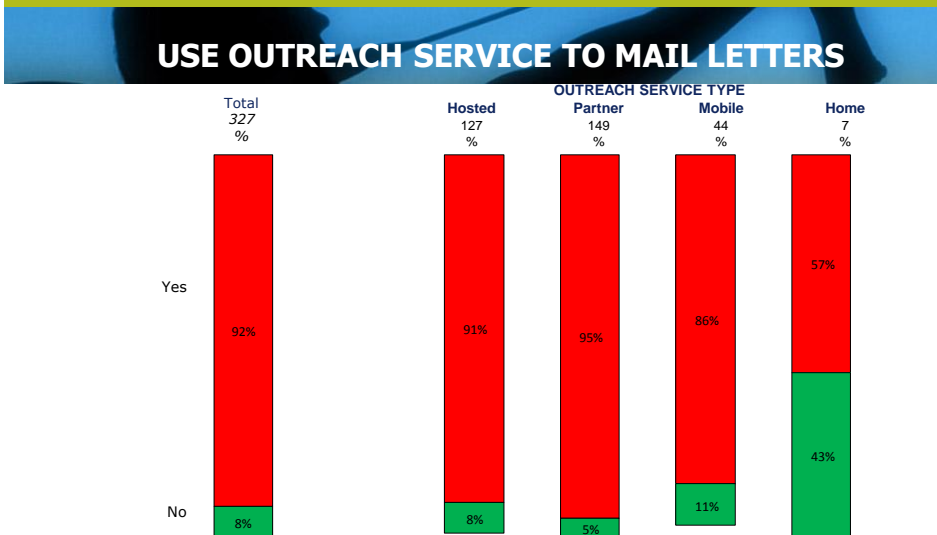
32 How often this service is required by you?  
 [ Base: All Respondents n=333 ]  
 \*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 32 ]

## Mailing

The numbers using the outreach to mail letters is very high. Overall 9 in 10 (92%) users mail letters from their local outreach service. This increases to almost all (95%) of partner service users, with over 9 in 10 hosted (91%) and almost 9 in 10 mobile (86%) service users.

Figure 28



Whether you, yourself, use the post office outreach service for this particular service?

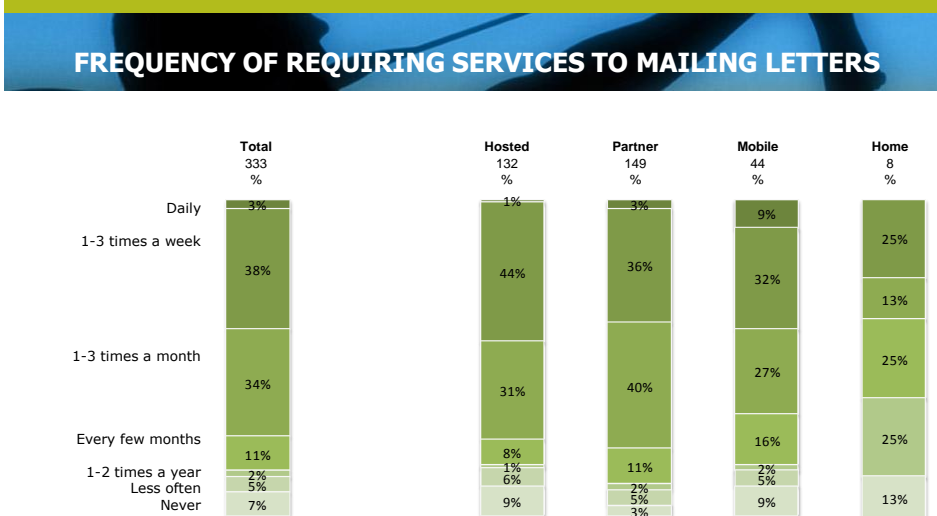
Base: All Respondents aware service is available - 327

\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 57 ]

The quantitative findings demonstrate that, overall, almost 2 in 5 (38%) customers use their local outreach to mail letters 1-3 times a week. The highest users of the mailing service are customers of hosted branches where over 2 in 5 hosted (44%) service users use the facility 1-3 times a week. Partner and mobile service users require the service less frequently, with over 30% using it 1-3 times a week.,

Figure 26



How often this service is required by you?

[ Base: All Respondents n=333 ]

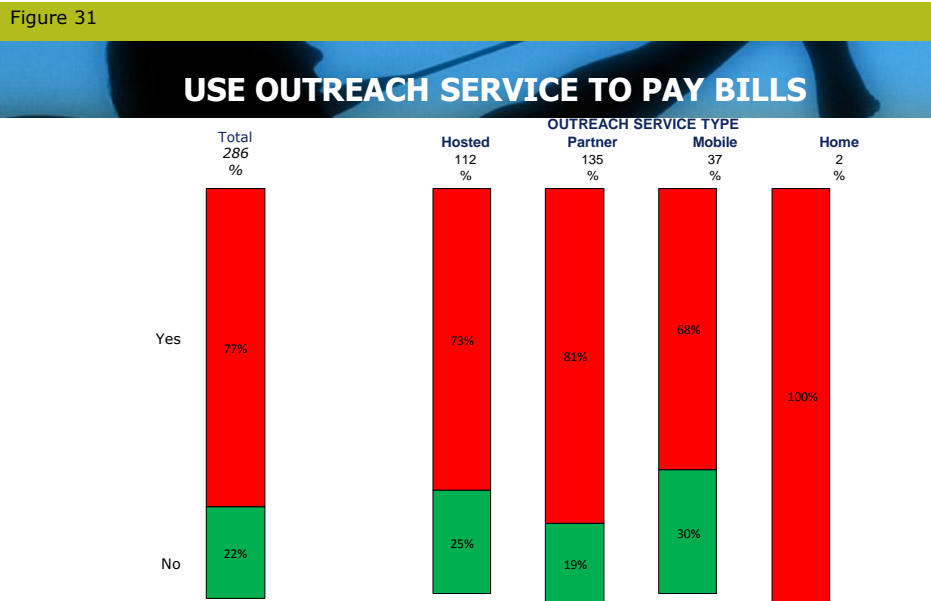
\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 33 ]

33

## Bill Payment

Overall three quarters (77%) of users pay bills at their local outreach. The partner service is more likely to be used for this purpose with over 4 in 5 (81%) paying bills there. Almost three quarters of hosted (73%) service users and almost 7 in 10 (68%) mobile service users pay their bills at the local outreach.



Whether you, yourself, use the post office outreach service for this particular service?

Base: All Respondents n=286

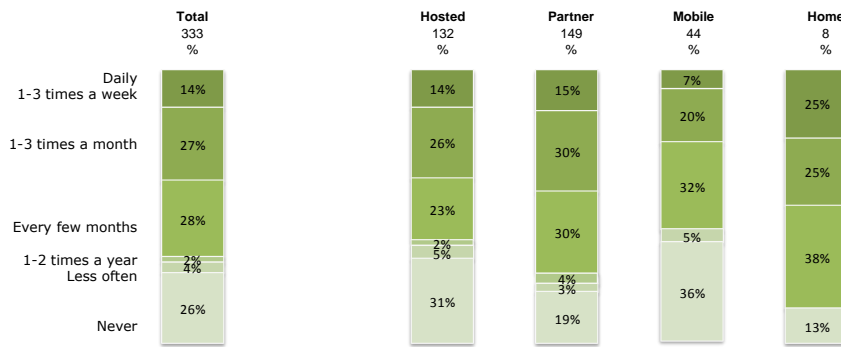
<sup>58</sup> Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 58 ]

Paying bills is a service most often required 1-3 times a month with, overall, 27% of users saying they use the service this frequently. A quarter of hosted (26%) and home (25%) service users pay bills at an outreach 1-3 times a month, while slightly more partner service users (30%) require the service this often. A fifth (20%) of mobile service users requires the facility 1-3 times a month (see figure 29).

Figure 29

## FREQUENCY OF REQUIRING BILL PAYMENT SERVICE



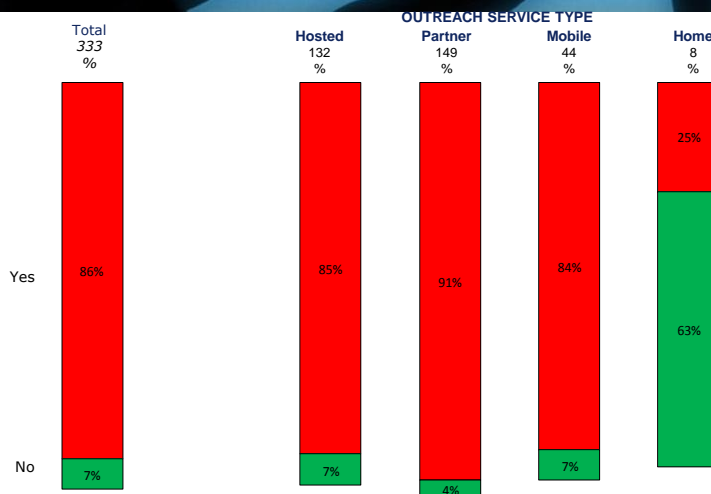
34 How often this service is required by you?  
 [ Base: All Respondents n=333 ]  
 \*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt.34 ]

Awareness of bill-payment as a service is more widespread among partner service users than any other, with over 9 in 10 (91%) stating they are able to pay bills there. Over 4 in 5 hosted (85%) and mobile (84%) service users are aware of bill-payment as a service offered.

Figure 30

## ABILITY TO PAY BILLS AT OUTREACH SERVICE



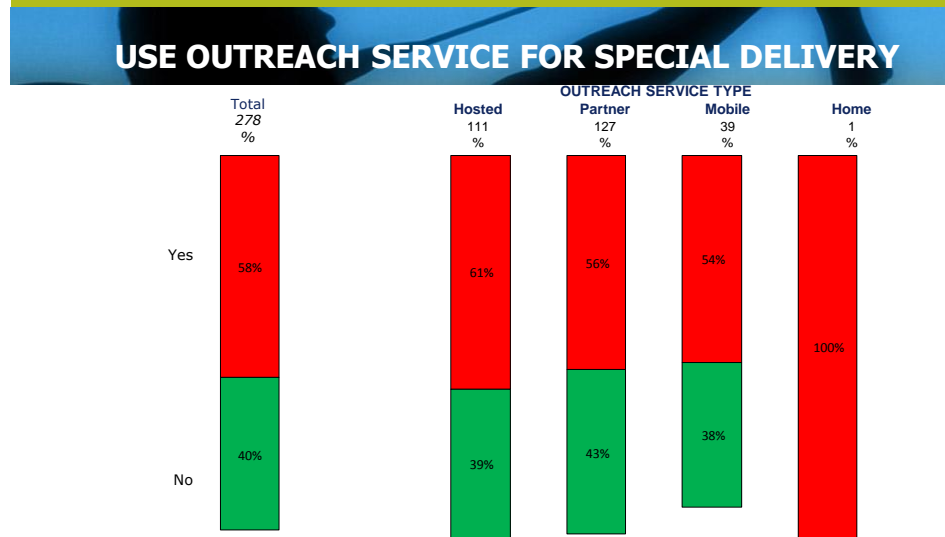
46 Whether this particular service is available in your community?  
 [ Base: All Respondents n=333 ]  
 \*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt.46 ]

## Special Delivery

Over half of all respondents (58%) across all outreach user types claim to use the Special Delivery service. This increases to over 3 in 5 (61%) of hosted service users, while over half of partner (56%) and mobile (54%) service users send special deliveries from their local outreach.

Figure 34



Whether you, yourself, use the post office outreach service for this particular service?

Base: All Respondents aware service is available - 278

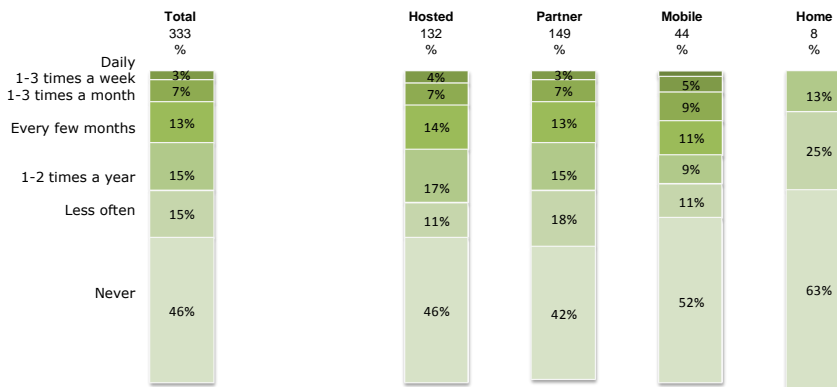
\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 59 ]

However, special delivery is required to a lesser extent than standard mailing, most usually 1-2 times a year. Almost 1 in 5 of hosted (17%) and partner (15%) service users say they require the facility this often, and almost 1 in 10 mobile users (9%).

Figure 32

## FREQUENCY OF REQUIRING SERVICES TO MAIL SPECIAL DELIVERY



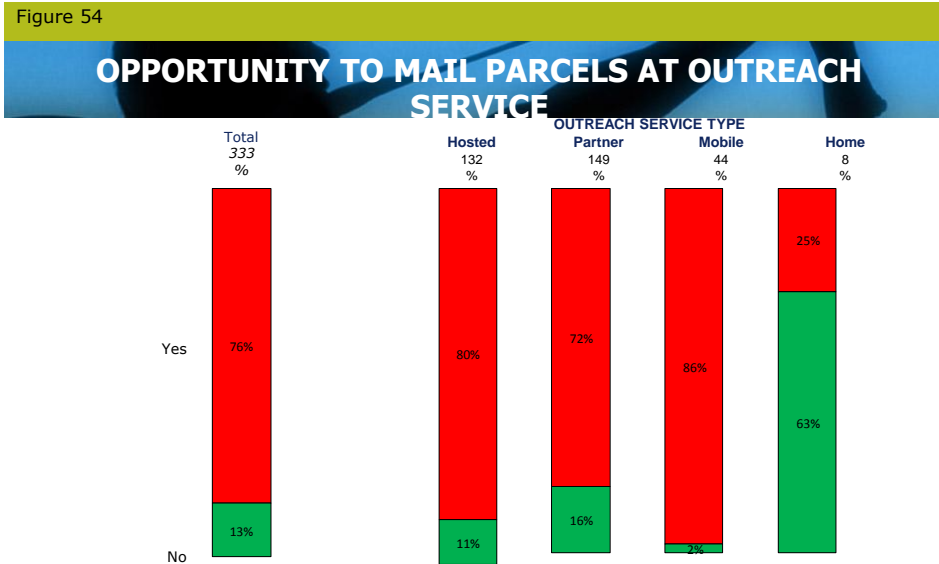
35 How often this service is required by you?  
 [ Base: All Respondents n=333 ]  
 \*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory.path\filename.ppt 35 ]

### Mailing of Parcels

Mailing of parcels appears to be a service most widely known to be available within the mobile outreach services with almost 9 in 10 (86%) aware they can mail parcels from their local service. For hosted services, 4 in 5 (80%) users understand mailing of parcels is possible. Almost three quarters (72%) of partner service users know they can mail parcels from their local outreach service, while only a quarter (25%) of home service users are aware the service is available to them (see figure 54).

Figure 54

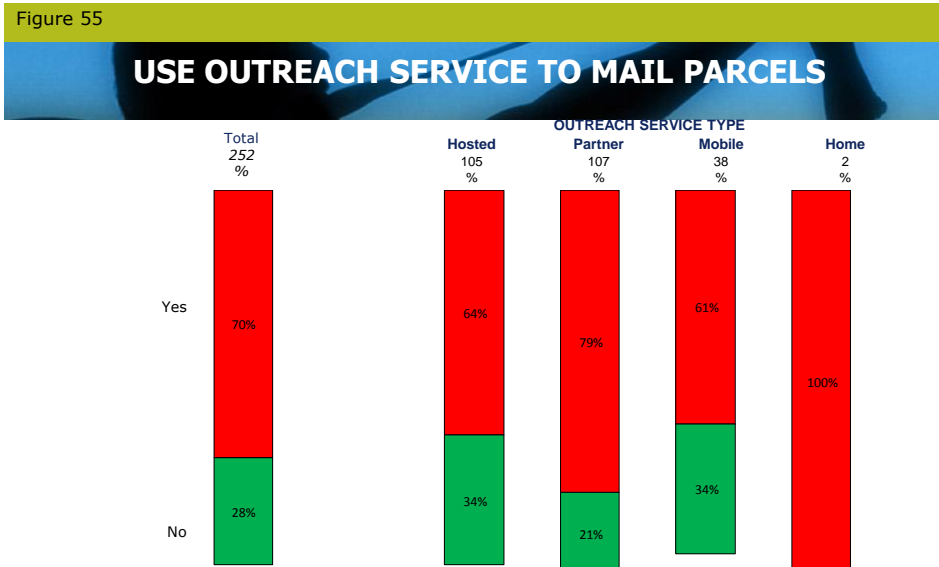


Whether this particular service is available in your community?  
 [ Base: All Respondents n=333 ]  
 \*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 54 ]

Almost 4 in 5 (79%) partner service users mail parcels from their local outreach service, while over 3 in 5 hosted (64%) and mobile (61%) service users take advantage of it.

Figure 55



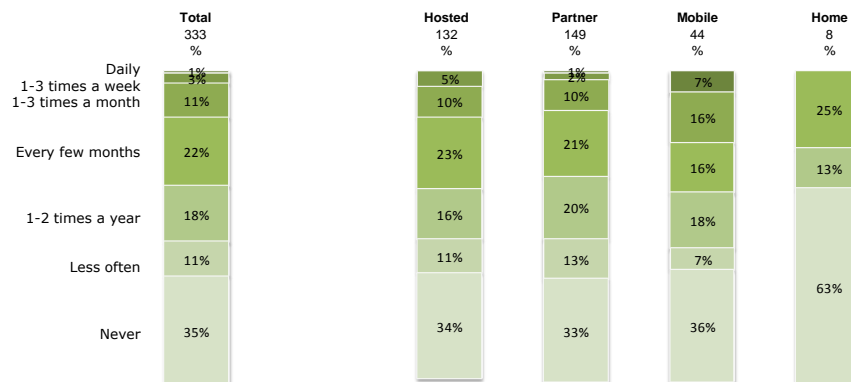
Whether you, yourself, use the post office outreach service for this particular service?  
 Base: All Respondents aware service is available - 252  
 \*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 66 ]

Mailing of parcels is a service that is required most often every few months, with over a fifth (22%) of all users stating this level of frequency. A quarter of home service

users (25%) say they require this service every few months, while almost 1 in 5 (16%) of mobile users require the service this frequently. Frequency is higher among hosted (23%) and partner (21%) users with over a fifth requiring the service every few months (see figure 53).

Figure 53  
**FREQUENCY OF REQUIRING SERVICES TO MAIL PARCELS**



42 How often this service is required by you?  
 [ Base: All Respondents n=333 ]  
 \*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

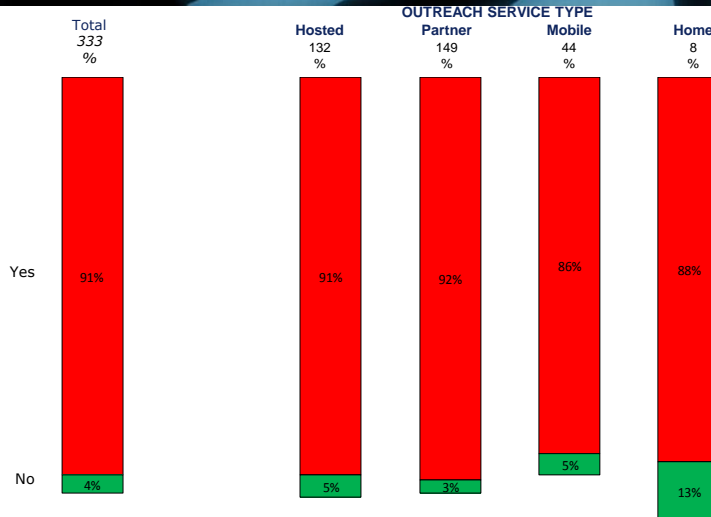
[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 42 ]

## Pensions and Benefit Collection

Over 9 in 10 hosted (91%) and partner (92%) service users are aware they can collect their pension or benefits from their local outreach service, while almost 9 in 10 of mobile (86%) and 88% of home service users know they can (see figure 36).

Figure 36

### OPPORTUNITY TO COLLECT PENSIONS & BENEFITS AT OUTREACH SERVICE



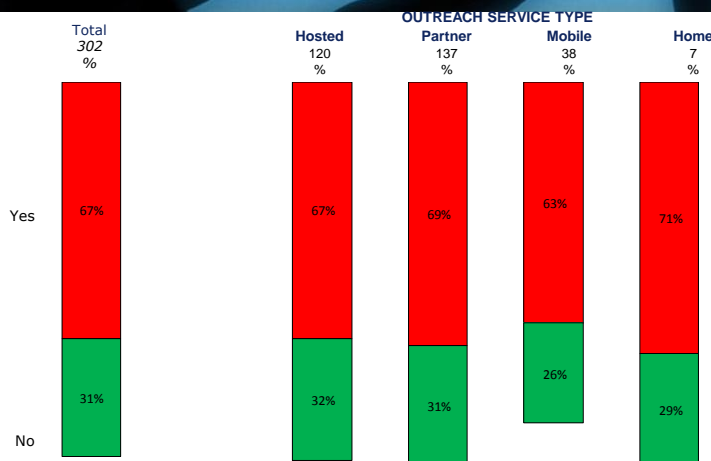
Whether this particular service is available in your community?  
 [ Base: All Respondents n=333 ]  
 \*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 48 ]

Almost 7 in 10 hosted (67%), partner (69%) and mobile (63%) service users avail themselves of the opportunity to collect their pensions and benefits,

Figure 37

### USE OUTREACH SERVICE TO COLLECT PENSIONS & BENEFITS



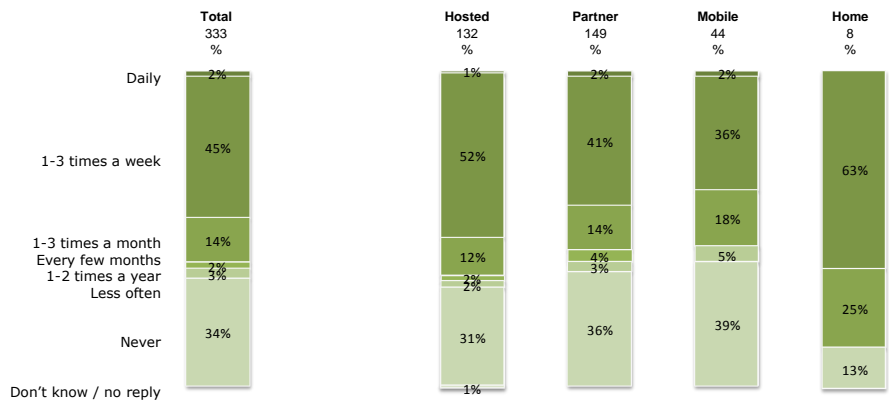
Whether you, yourself, use the post office outreach service for this particular service?  
 Base: All Respondents aware service is available - 302  
 \*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 60 ]

Collecting pensions / benefits is required by almost half of all outreach users (45%) 1-3 times a week. This figure increases to over half (52%) of hosted service users and almost two thirds (63%) of home service users. Partner (41%) and mobile (36%) users require the service 1-3 times a week less often (see figure 35).

Figure 35

## FREQUENCY OF REQUIRING SERVICES TO COLLECT PENSION OR BENEFITS



How often this service is required by you?  
 [ Base: All Respondents n=333 ]  
 36 \*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

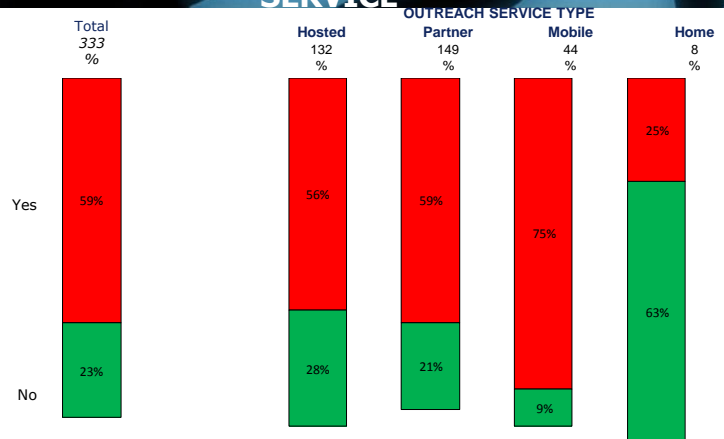
[drive:directory path\filename.ppt.36 ]

### Cash Withdrawal

Almost 3 in 5 of hosted (56%) and partner (59%) service users are aware they can withdraw cash from their outreach service, however the awareness among mobile service users is greater with three quarters (75%) knowing they can withdraw cash.

Figure 57

## AWARENESS OF CASH WITHDRAWAL AT OUTREACH SERVICE



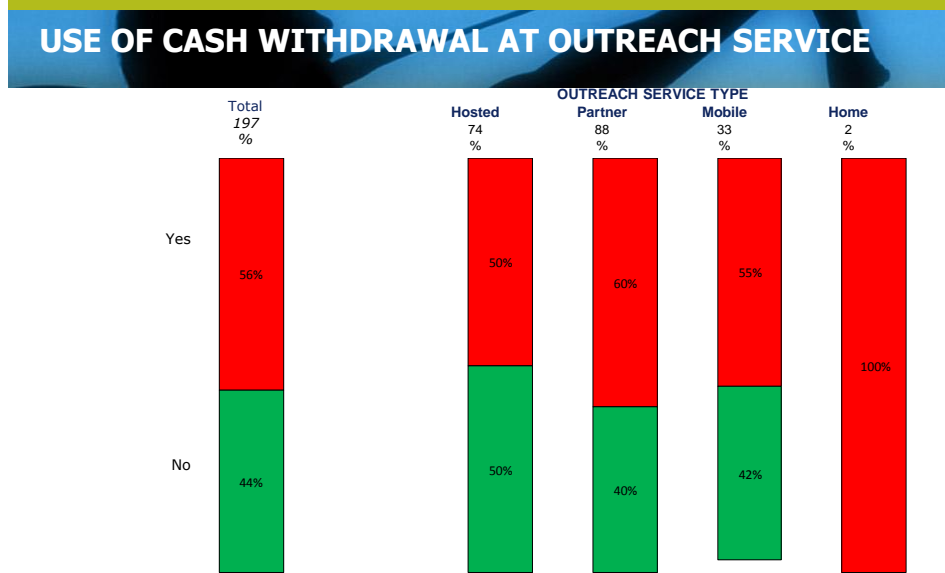
Whether this particular service is available in your community?  
 [ Base: All Respondents n=333 ]  
 55 \*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt.55 ]

Over half (55%) mobile service users and half (50%) of hosted service users say they withdraw cash from their local outreach service, while 3 in 5 (60%) of partner service

users use the service.

Figure 58



Whether you, yourself, use the post office outreach service for this particular service?

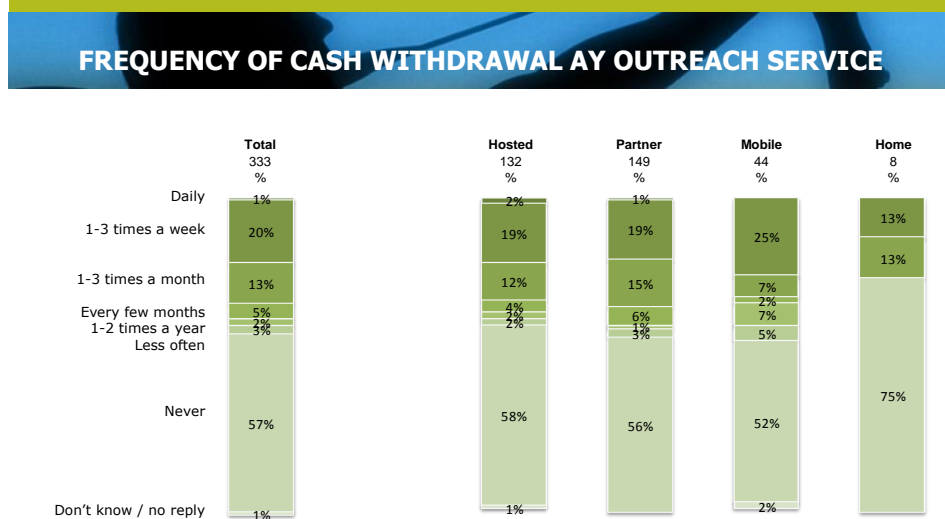
Base: All Respondents aware service is available - 197

\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 67 ]

Withdrawing cash is a less common requirement from outreaches services than other services provided, with the majority of the sample (57%) never requiring the service. However a fifth (20%) of the overall sample need to withdraw cash 1-3 times a week. This is a more common requirement among mobile service users with a quarter (25%) requiring the service this often (see figure 56).

Figure 56



How often this service is required by you?

[ Base: All Respondents n=333 ]

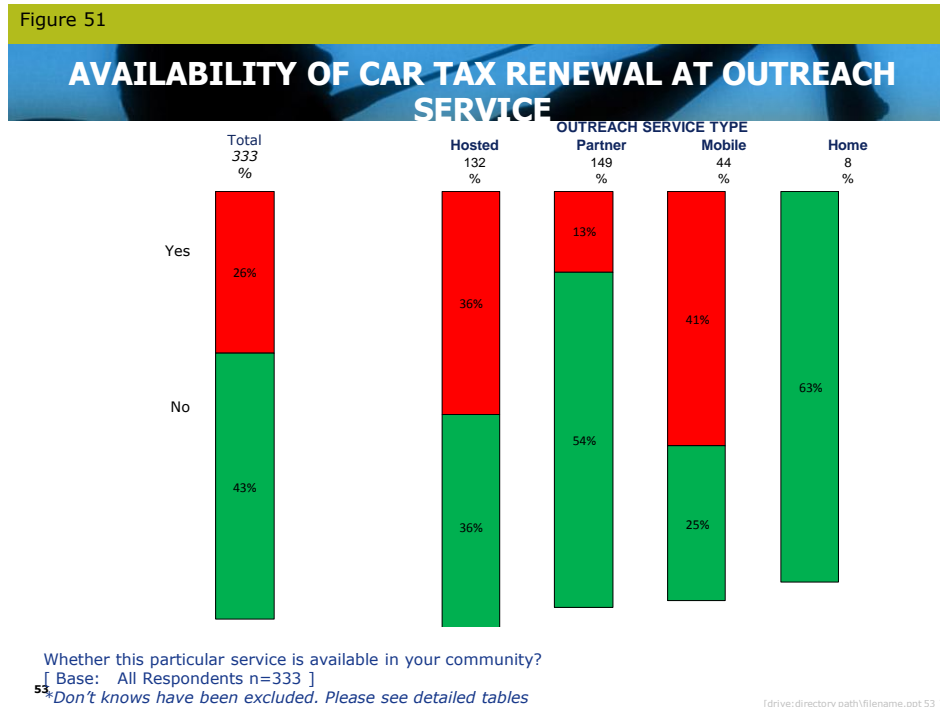
43

\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 43 ]

## Car Tax Transactions

Availability of car tax renewal is dependent on availability of the service at the core branch. Over a quarter (26%) of all users understand they can collect or renew car tax at their outreach service. This figure is higher among mobile (41%) and hosted (36%) service users. Over 1 in 10 (13%) partner service users understand they can deal with their car tax at the outreach service (see figure 51).



Almost half (45%) of those aware they can organise car tax avail themselves of the opportunity. This increases to 2 in 5 (40%) of hosted service users, while over half (55%) of partner and half (50%) of mobile service users take advantage of the service (see figure 52).

Figure 52

## USE OF OUTREACH SERVICE TO RENEW CAR TAX



Whether you, yourself, use the post office outreach service for this particular service?

Base: All Respondents aware service is available - 86

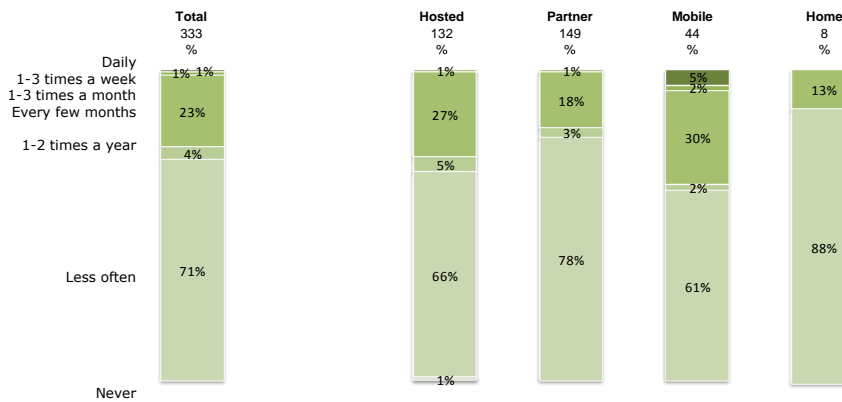
\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt:65 ]

Collecting or renewing of car tax is a service likely to be required less than 1-2 times a year by the majority of the sample; over 7 in 10 (71%) require the service this amount. This figure increases to almost 4 in 5 (78%) of partner service users and almost 9 in 10 (88%) of home service users (see figure 50).

Figure 50

## FREQUENCY OF CAR TAX RENEWAL AT OUTREACH



How often this service is required by you?

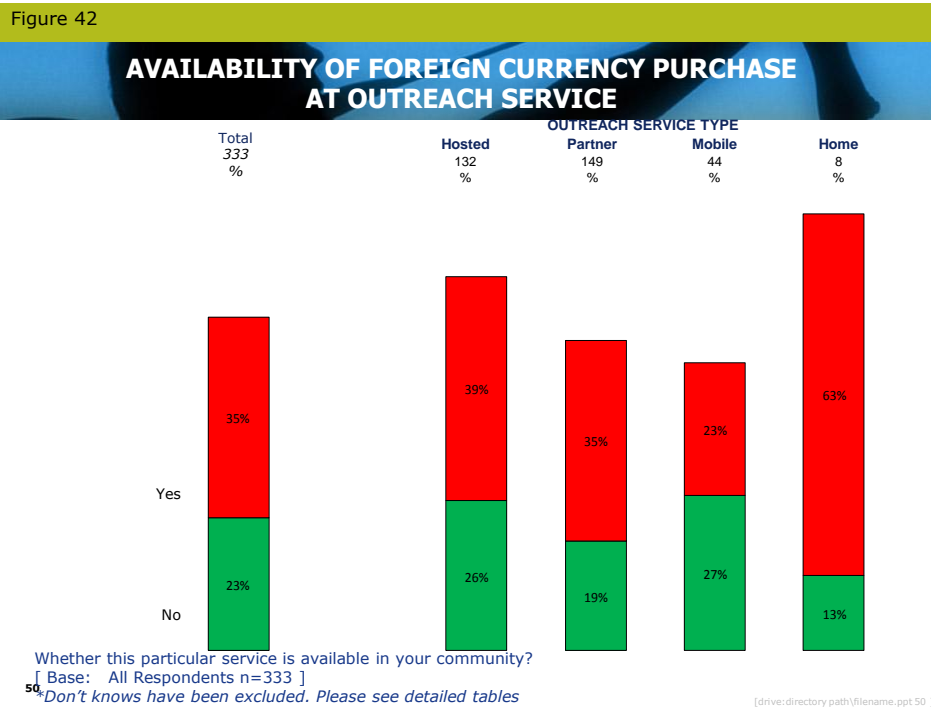
[ Base: All Respondents n=333 ]

\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt:41 ]

## Foreign Currency

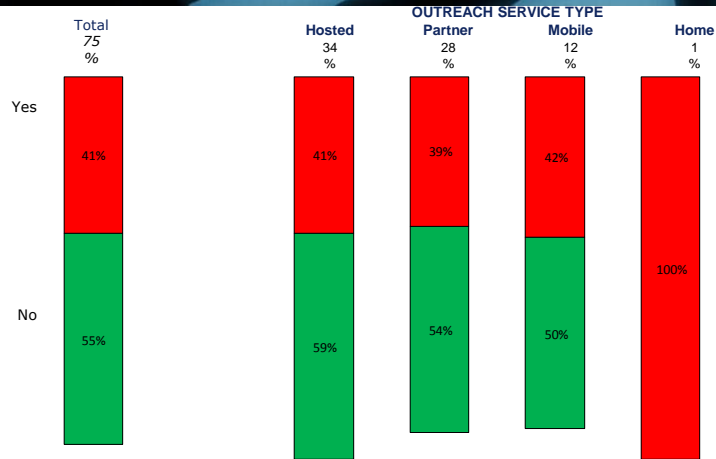
Availability of a foreign currency service at an outreach is also dependent on availability at the core branch. The opportunity to purchase foreign currency at outreach services is more limited with it being available in over 39% of hosted and 35% of partner services, compared to almost a quarter (23%) of mobile services.



Over 2 in 5 hosted (42%) and mobile (42%) service users purchase foreign currency from their outreach service, while just under 2 in 5 (39%) partner users do so.

Figure 43

## USE OF OUTREACH SERVICE TO PURCHASE FOREIGN CURRENCY



Whether you, yourself, use the post office outreach service for this particular service?

Base: All Respondents aware service is available - 75

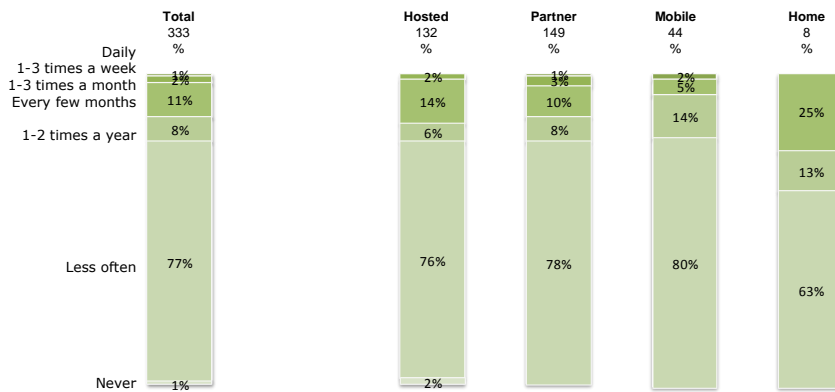
\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 62 ]

Purchasing foreign currency is likely to be required less than 1-2 times a year by over three quarters (77%) of the users surveyed. Almost 4 in 5 hosted (76%) and partner (78%) service users require the service this frequently, compared to 4 in 5 (80%) of mobile users. Almost two thirds (63%) of home service users felt they would use the service 1-2 times a year (figure 41).

Figure 41

## FREQUENCY OF FOREIGN CURRENCY PURCHASE



How often this service is required by you?

[ Base: All Respondents n=333 ]

\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

38

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 38 ]

## Insurance Products

Almost a fifth (18%) of hosted service users understand they can purchase insurance products from their local outreach service, compared to 14% of partner service users. Mobile users have the highest level of awareness of the service, with over 3 in 10 (30%) stating they have the facility available to them (figure 45).

Figure 45

### AWARENESS OF INSURANCE PURCHASE AT OUTREACH SERVICE



Whether this particular service is available in your community?  
 [ Base: All Respondents n=333 ]  
 \*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 51 ]

Overall, almost 1 in 5 (16%) users say they purchase insurance, this percentage being slightly higher for hosted (17%) and partner (19%) service users and is lowest among mobile users (8%) (see figure 46).

Figure 46

## PURCHASE OF INSURANCE AT OUTREACH



Whether you, yourself, use the post office outreach service for this particular service?

[ Base: All Respondents aware service is available - 58 ]

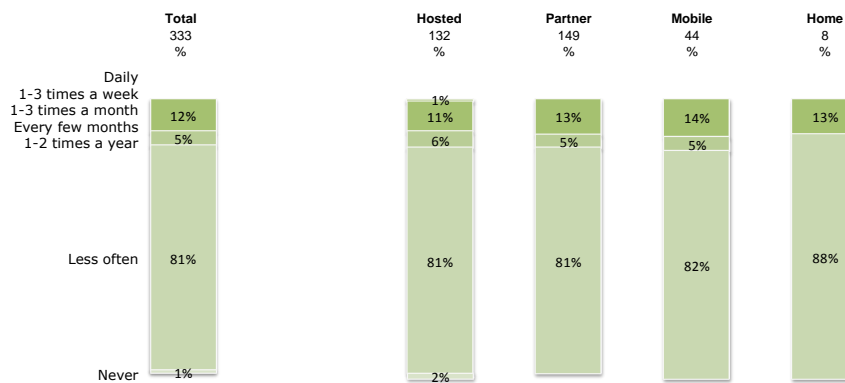
\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 63 ]

As is the case with foreign currency, purchasing insurance is likely to be required less than 1-2 times a year by the majority of the sample; over 4 in 5 users of all services require the service this amount (see figure 44).

Figure 44

## FREQUENCY OF PURCHASE OF INSURANCE AT OUTREACH



How often this service is required by you?

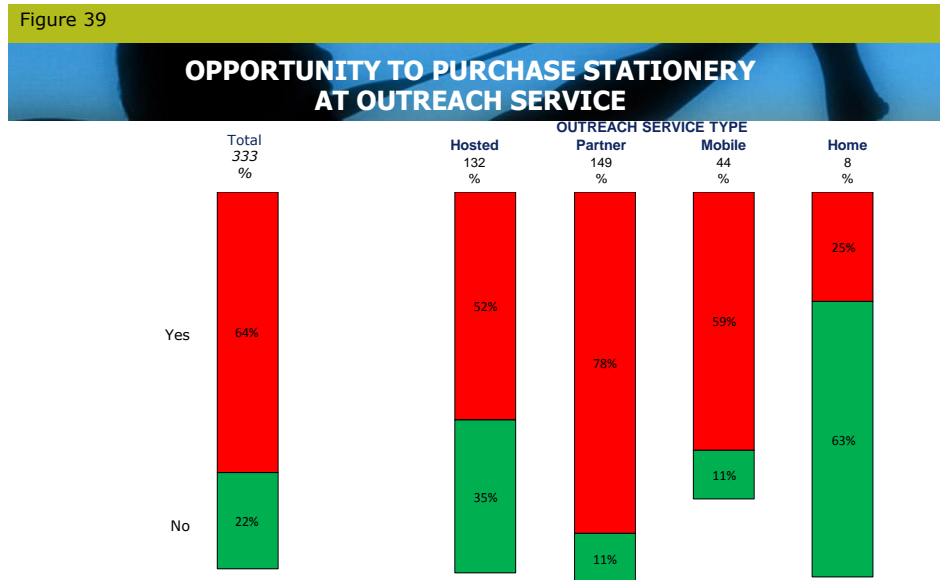
[ Base: All Respondents n=333 ]

\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 39 ]

## Stationery Purchases

The opportunity to purchase stationery is available in over 3 in 5 (64%) outreach services. More partner than any other outreach types have this service available (over three quarters – 78%), while over half of the hosted (54%) and mobile (59%) services stock stationery.

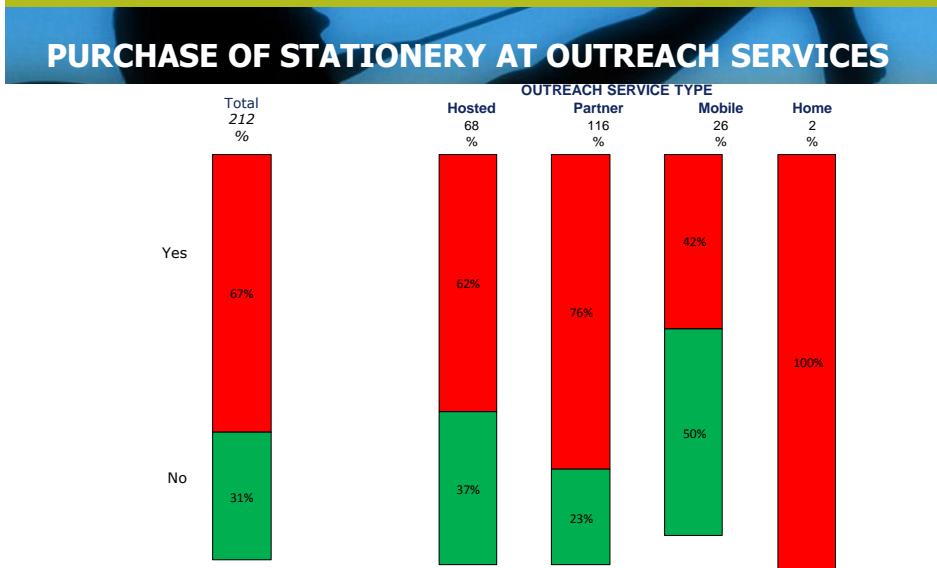


Whether this particular service is available in your community?  
 [ Base: All Respondents n=333 ]  
 \*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt:49 ]

Those who utilise the partner service within their community are most likely to purchase postal stationery with over three quarters (76%) claiming they do, compared to over 3 in 5 (62%) of hosted service users, and 2 in 5 (42%) mobile users(see figure 40).

Figure 40



Whether you, yourself, use the post office outreach service for this particular service?

Base: All Respondents aware service is available - 212

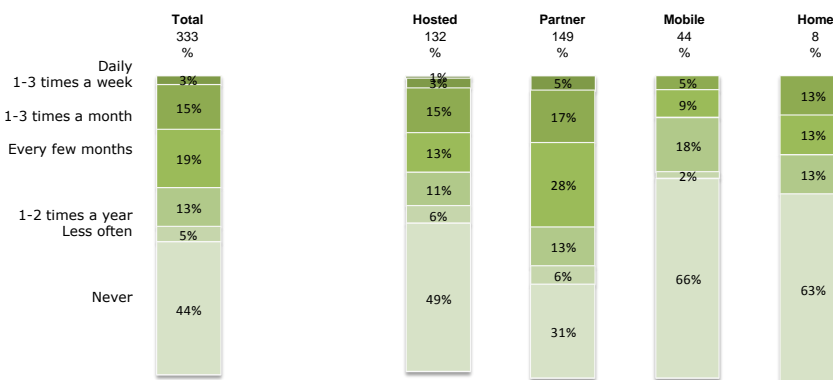
\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 61 ]

Purchase of envelopes / parcel / paper is commonly carried out every few months with almost 1 in 5 (19%) of all users mentioning this. This figure is highest among partner service users with almost 3 in 10 (28%) using the service this often and it declines to over 1 in 10 of hosted (13%) and home (13%) service users. Almost 1 in 10 (9%) of mobile service users require the service every few months (figure 38).

Figure 38

### FREQUENCY OF PURCHASE OF STATIONERY AT OUTREACH SERVICES



How often this service is required by you?

[ Base: All Respondents n=333 ]

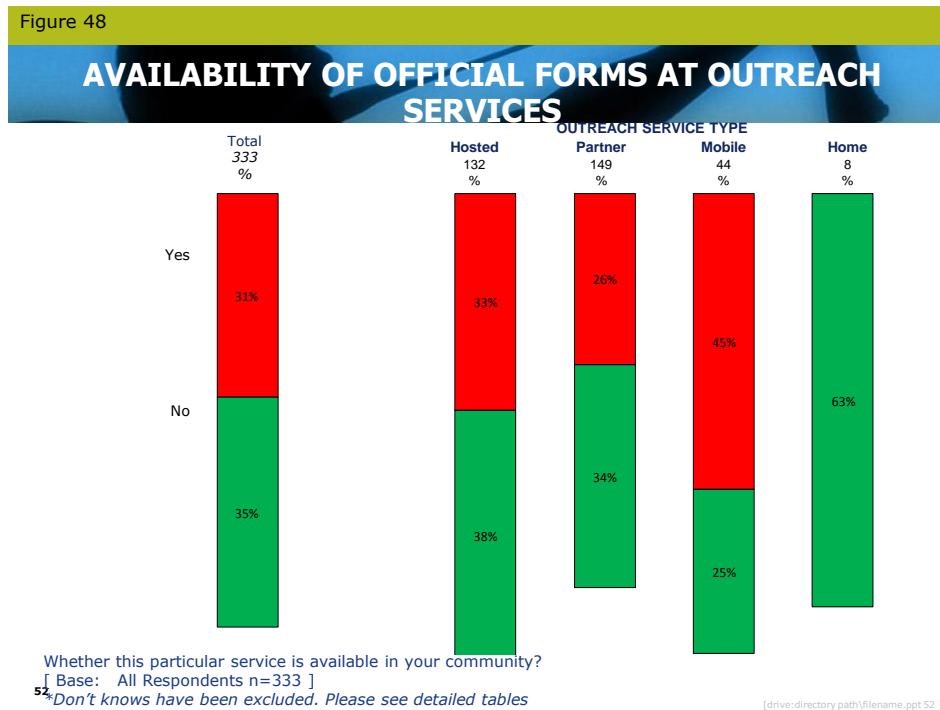
\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 37 ]

37

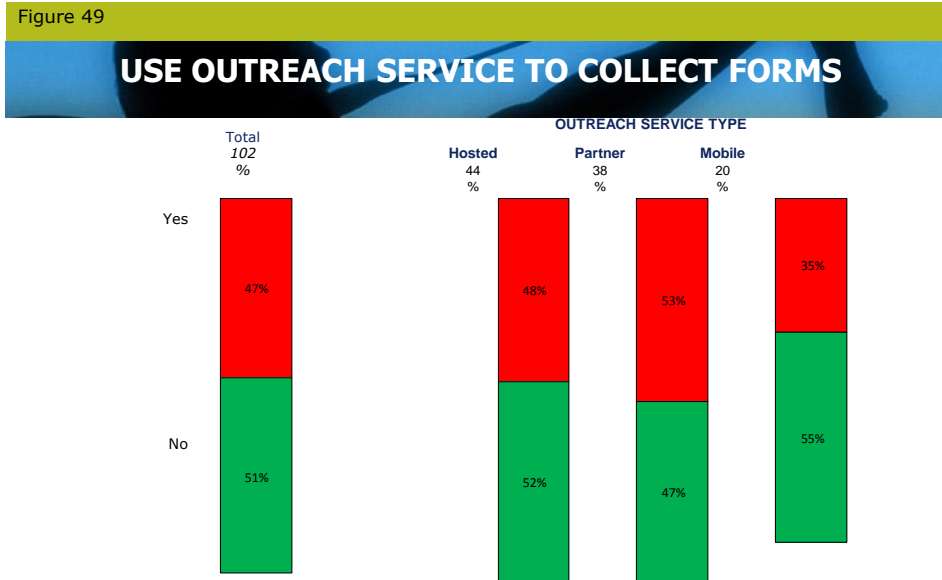
## Obtaining Official Forms

A third (33%) of hosted service users are aware they can pick up official forms from their local outreach service, compared to over a quarter (26%) of partner service users. To their knowledge, home services users cannot get forms via their type of outreach. Almost half (45%) of mobile users have the facility available to them (see figure 48).



Almost half (48%) of hosted service users say they can pick up forms at their outreach. The figure is slightly higher for partner service users (53%) and declines to almost 2 in 5 (35%) of mobile users (see figure 49).

Figure 49



Whether you, yourself, use the post office outreach service for this particular service?

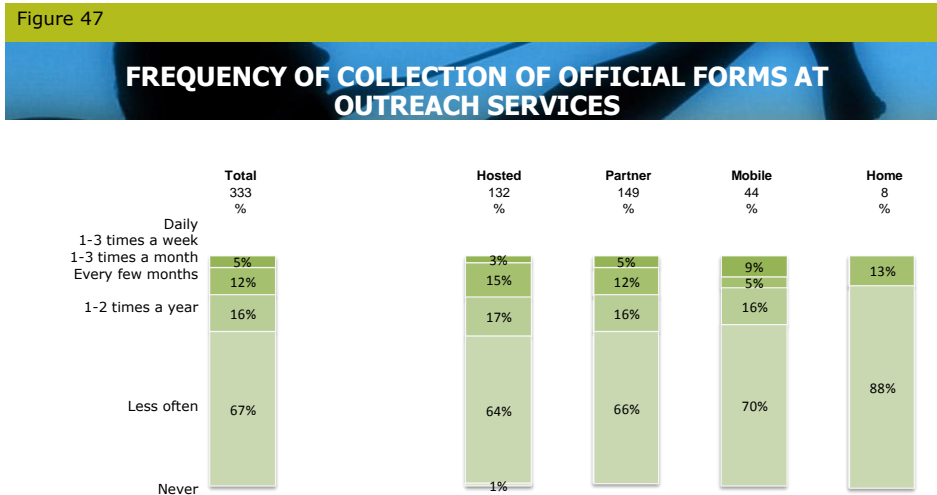
Base: All Respondents aware service is available - 102

\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 64 ]

Collecting official forms is likely to be needed less often than 1-2 times a year by the majority of the sample; over two thirds of all users (67%) require the service this amount (see figure 47).

Figure 47



How often this service is required by you?

[ Base: All Respondents n=333 ]

\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 40 ]

40

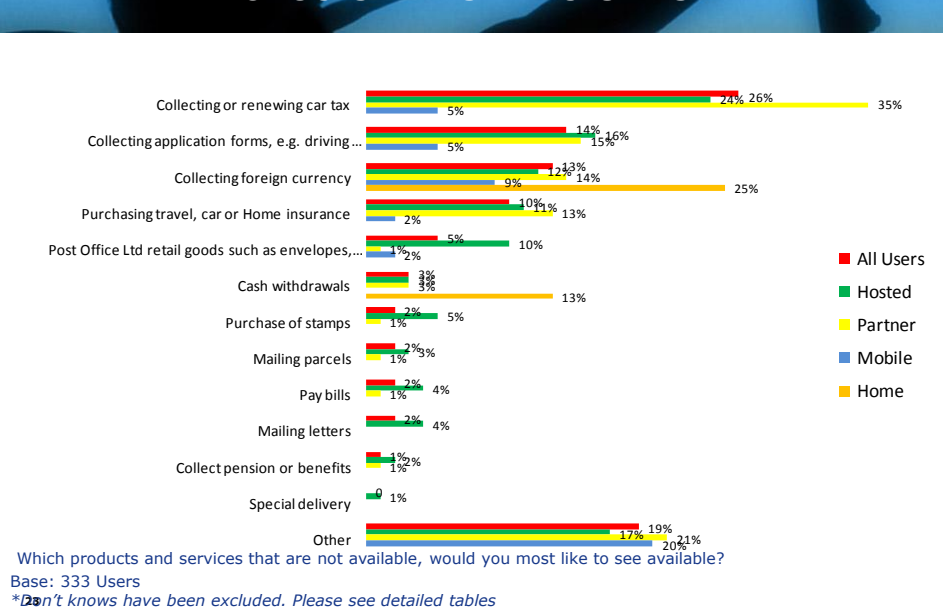
## Additional Services Required

In general, it would seem that services offered across the range of outreach types are consistent with the needs of their customers. However, during the focus groups some customers talked about having to use an alternative post office for things such as collecting forms or renewing car tax, which could have previously been done in their local post office.

The products and services users would most like to see in their local outreach are highlighted in the chart below. The most commonly mentioned was collecting or renewing of car tax with over a quarter (26%) mentioning it. More partner service users than any other outreach type users would like to be able to collect or renew their car tax, with over a third (35%) citing this. Collection of application forms (passport and driving licence) would be a popular addition for over 1 in 10 (14%) users; including almost 1 in 5 hosted (16%) and partner (15%) service users. Over 1 in 10 would welcome the addition of foreign currency (13%); this increases marginally among partner service users (14%). The opportunity to purchase insurance is desired by 1 in 10 (10%) users, while over 1 in 10 hosted (11%) and partner (13%) service users would like to see this included within their outreach (see figure 59).

Figure 59

### PRODUCTS AND SERVICES DESIRED



[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 23 ]

In a number of the previous post offices, now closed, there was a cash machine and

for some people this was their main source of cash withdrawal and it was free and reliable. During the focus groups some respondents described how the shorter business hours of outreach meant that the cash withdrawal facility at the counter was less accessible and they now had, in some cases, to pay £1.95 to withdraw cash from ATMs within the local shop. And these cash machines seem to run out of money frequently and are therefore considered unreliable.

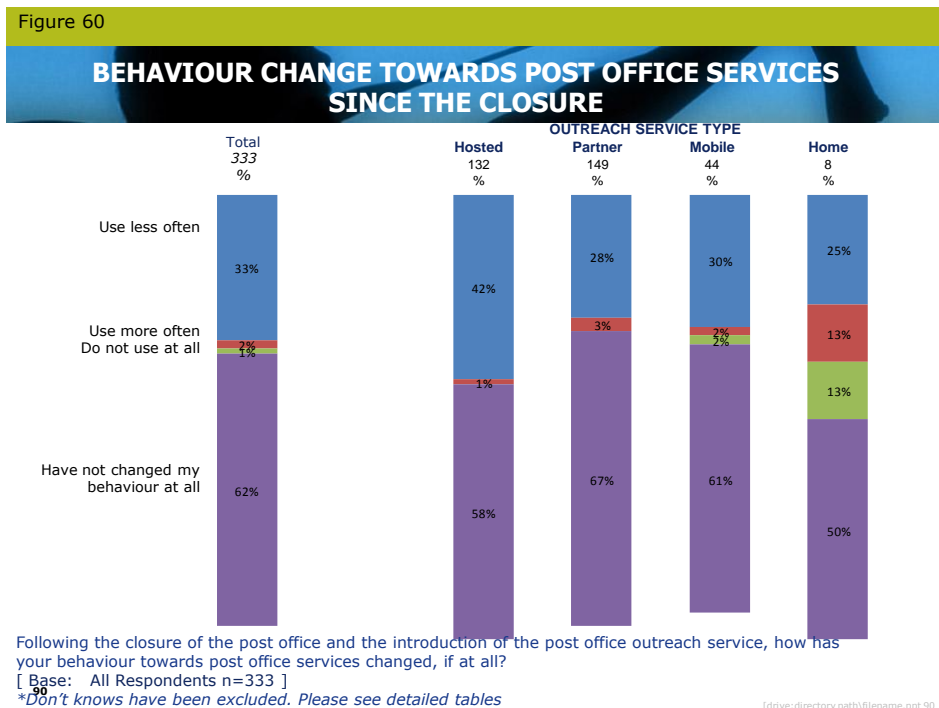
Some older people mentioned the importance of being able to get food essentials in their previous post office which was also the village shop. This was convenient for those relying on others for transport. In Kircubbin, the mums of the focus group talked about 'Christmas made easy' with the Christmas club service which was available in their previous post office. This is no longer offered in the PO Essentials outreach and is missed at that time of year.

## 10. USAGE OF OUTREACH SERVICE COMPARED TO POST OFFICE

An important aspect of the research was to investigate whether use of local post office services had changed in the transition from traditional branch to outreach service.

Overall, among the outreach users surveyed, almost two thirds (62%) say their use of post office services has not changed since their local post office closure, while a third (33%) claim they use the services less often, and with 2% making more frequent use.

Looking at the outreach types separately, almost 3 in 5 (58%) hosted service users, over 3 in 5 partner (67%) and mobile (61%) service users claim their usage has not changed. However, 42% of hosted service users, 28% of partner service users, and 30% of mobile service users claim to use the post office services less. Only 1 user of hosted and mobile outreach say they use post office services more frequently, whereas 4 partner service users take advantage of the services more often since the closure (see figure 60).



In terms of frequency of use, the survey reveals that almost two thirds (64%) use their local outreach service every week and this figure is consistent across hosted

(64%) and partner (64%) service users. An even higher proportion (66%) of mobile service users takes advantage of the service every week..

Overall, 1 in 10 of the sample uses the service 3 times a month (11%), as is the case with hosted service users (11%). Over 1 in 10 partner (13%) service users and just under 1 in 10 (9%) mobile users avail themselves of the service 3 times a month.

Similarly, overall, 1 in 10 uses an outreach service 1 to 2 times a month (14%), this figure remains the same for hosted users (14%). Partner (12%) and home (13%) service customers use their service 1-2 times a month, while almost 1 in 5 (16%) mobile users frequent the service this often (see figure 61).

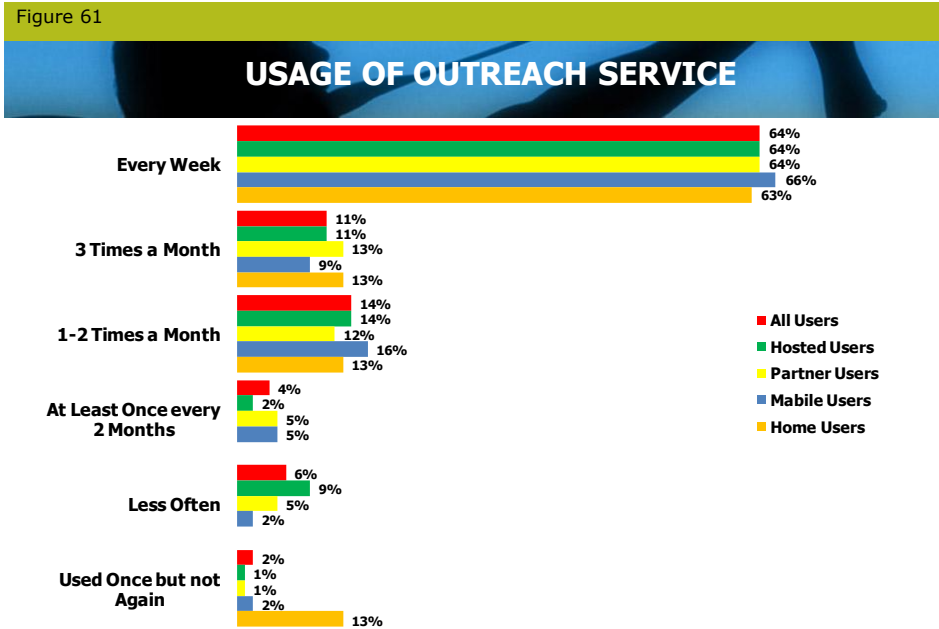
Only 2% used their available service once but not again, comprising 1 hosted user, 2 partner users and 1 mobile user. Of the 5 people who used the service once but not again, the reasons cited included:

- Products needed were not available (2 people)
- Use nearest post office instead (1 person)
- Did not like the service (1 person)
- Opening hours did not suit (1 person)

Since the closure of the previous post office almost half (49%) the non users interviewed during the quantitative phase feel their usage of post office services has remained unchanged. Almost 1 in 5 (16%) are using services less often and a further 3 in 10 (30%) no longer use any post office services.

Among current non users surveyed, 60% claimed to use the previous post office, while the balance stated they did not make use of the previous service either.

Figure 61



How often do you use the local post office outreach service?  
 Base: 333 Users  
 17

\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory\_path\filename.ppt 17 ]

The qualitative research suggested that, for many users, the hosted service is used to the same extent as the previous post office was. However, sometimes usage has to be topped up with a visit to an alternative post office because the customer has forgotten something urgent and the outreach service is closed.

Rumours of monitoring by Post Office Limited of the extent to which the service is utilised in some areas has, it was claimed, caused some non users to convert to using it.

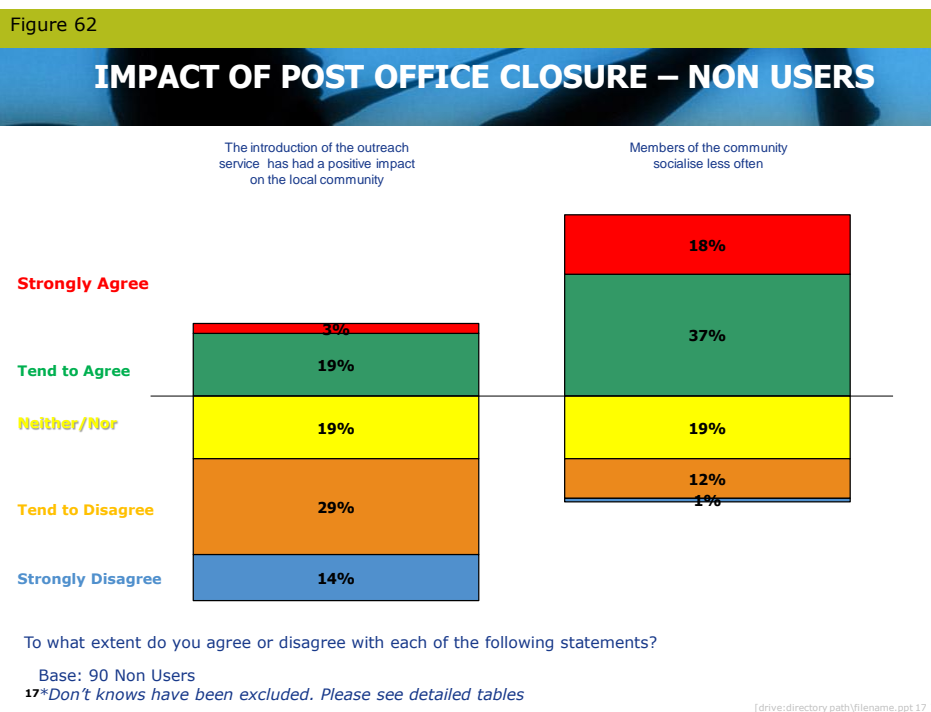
Where the mobile service is on offer, feed-back from focus groups suggested that there is a perception among some residents that services and products offered are limited. Consequently, in certain cases they travel to a branch further afield to ensure they get the service they require. However, more generally, the convenience of the local outreach service ensures most continue to use it.

There is some evidence to suggest the post office essential service provided to the Kircubbin residents is under utilized. Some members of the focus group suggested they only use it when they had to, due to concerns about a lack of privacy for sensitive transactions.

## 11. IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY OF REPLACEMENT OF PO BRANCH BY OUTREACH

In this section we try to gauge local residents' views on the impact on the community of replacement of a full-time branch by an Outreach service.

For those who choose not to use the Outreach service, the survey shows a strongly negative view of the changes. The quantitative survey revealed over two fifths (43%) of non-users tend to disagree or strongly disagree with a statement that the introduction of the outreach service has had a positive impact on their local community. Indeed, over half (55%) tend to agree or strongly agree that members of the community socialise less frequently since the closure of the permanent branch. (see figure 62).

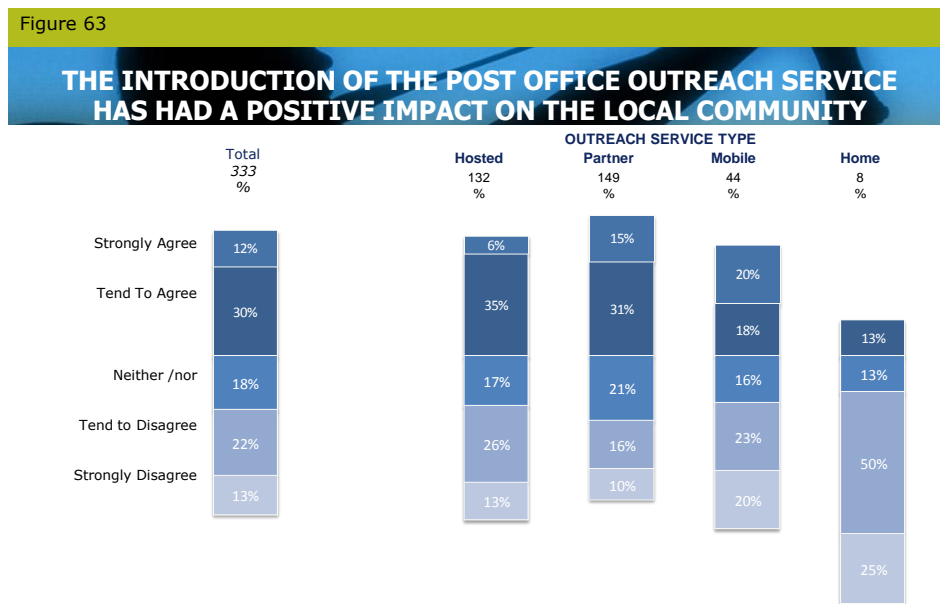


For non-users the main impact has been that they spend more time travelling to a post office elsewhere, with over 3 in 10 (34%) claiming this. More than a fifth (21%) feel they spend more on transport since the closure.

Users, on the other hand, feel they have been less affected by the closure with almost three quarters (71%) feeling they have not been affected. However, 17% spent more time travelling to the post office; and 1 in 10 (10%) spend more on

transport. A small number state they send fewer parcels (5%), use the internet more (4%) and write fewer letters (2%).

In relation to the outreach service having a positive impact on the local community, users surveyed during the quantitative phase tend to be quite positive with over 2 in 5 (42%) either tending to agree or strongly agreeing, while over a third (35%) tend to or strongly disagree. When analysing agreement by outreach type it is evident more users of the partner service either tend to or strongly agree, with almost half (46%) claiming this. Over 2 in 5 (41%) hosted service users and almost 2 in 5 (38%) mobile service users tend to agree or strongly agree, while only 13% of home users agree (see figure 63).



To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Base: 333 Users

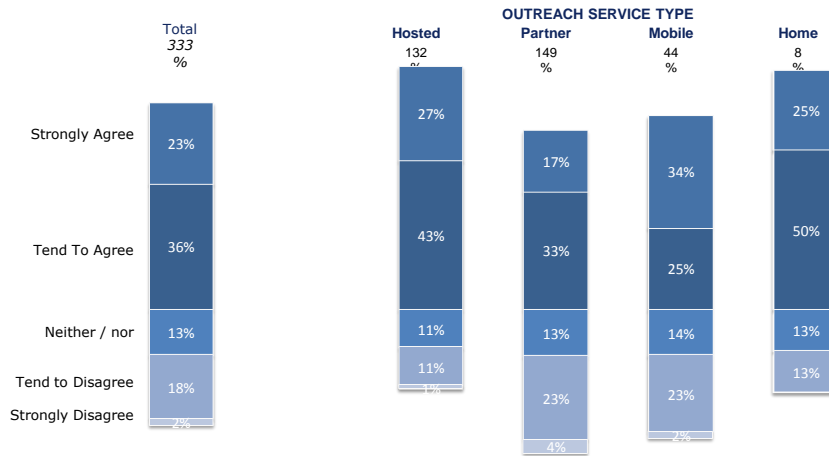
*92\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables*

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 92 ]

Almost 3 in 5 (59%) tend to agree or strongly agree that members of the community socialise less since the closure of the post office, while a fifth (20%) tend to disagree or strongly disagree. They are slightly less positive than non users. Hosted users are more likely than other users to agree that members of the community social less often following the closure, with 7 in 10 (70%) either tending to agree or strongly agreeing, compared to half (50%) partner service users and almost 3 in 5 (59%) mobile users. Although three quarters (75%) of home servicers users agree, the small sample should be taken into consideration (see figure 64).

Figure 64

## MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY SOCIALISE LESS OFTEN SINCE THE POST OFFICE CLOSURE



To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Base: 333 Users

<sup>93</sup>\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 93 ]

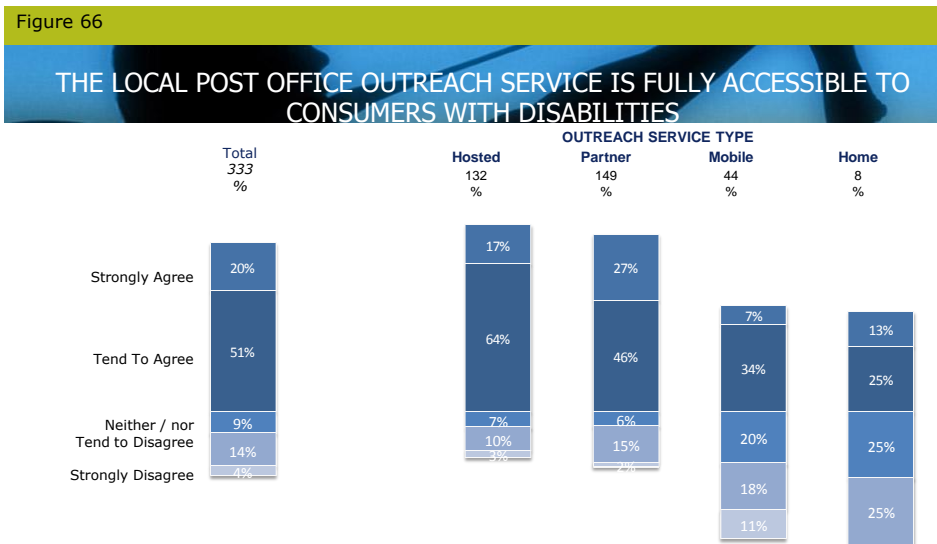
During the qualitative phase the impact in terms of additional expense associated with the post office closure was discussed. Travel to and from towns if respondents cannot use the service because of the reduced opening hours; or if they prefer to use another Post Office, incurs additional expense in the form of petrol and parking charges in town, and public transport if required. In some cases residents now have to pay to take their money out of ATMs within shops, whereas they previously used a service within the post office which is now not available. Some customers talked about feeling obliged to buy other goods at partner or post office essential services when using post office services. Typically these goods are more expensive than products they would normally purchase elsewhere.

## 12. ACCESS, PRIVACY & SAFETY

### Disabled Access

Given the nature of its customer base, it is important that post office services should be accessible to the infirm and the physically disabled. Since many outreach services are in premises which were not designed specifically for post office use, it was important that feedback was obtained on the experience of service users regarding the issue of physical access.

Users are generally satisfied with the accessibility of outreach branches, with over 7 in 10 (71%) strongly agreeing or tending to agree that the services are accessible to those with limited mobility. This figure increases to over 4 in 5 (81%) for hosted service users and over 7 in 10 (73%) partner service users. However the figure drops to only 41% for (41%) mobile service users, who seemed to consider the lifting ramp arrangement and small space available inside produced some access concerns for the infirm.



To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Base: 333 Users

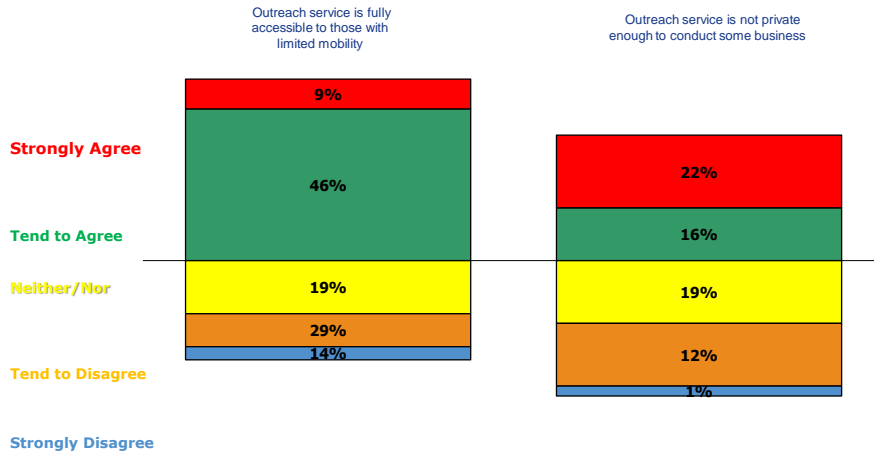
<sup>94</sup>\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 94 ]

Figures for non-users show that their judgement on accessibility is more severe than for users, since over half (55%) do not agree that the service is accessible to those with limited mobility.

Figure 65

## IMPACT OF POST OFFICE CLOSURE – NON USERS



To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Base: 90 Non Users

<sup>17</sup>\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 17 ]

### Privacy

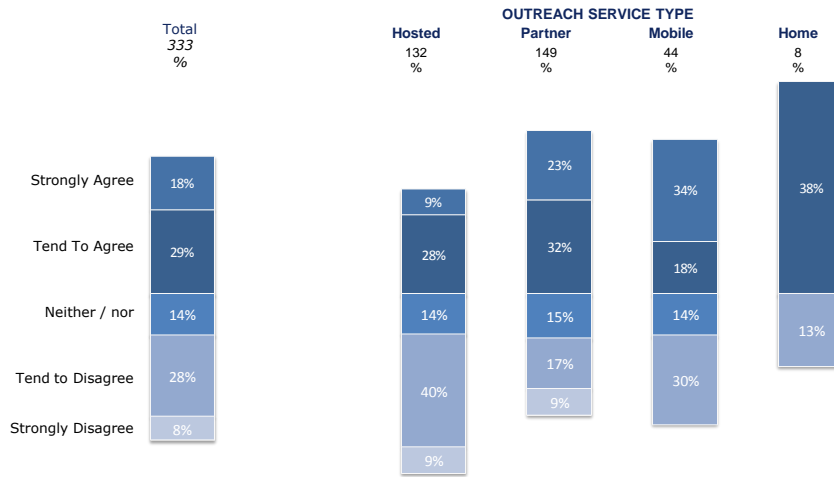
The importance of privacy in carrying out one's business is something which many customers consider very important and the issue was raised during the focus groups, with a view that many outreaches were inadequate in this respect.

The survey confirmed this as an issue since almost half (47%) of users strongly agree or tend to agree that the outreach service is not private enough to conduct their business. Privacy is particularly seen as an issue for partner (55%) and mobile (52%) service users with over half (55%) tending to or strongly agree with the statement. Almost 2 in 5 hosted (37%) users also showed their concern.

Non users also had negative opinions about privacy in outreach branches and 38% overall tend to agree or strongly agree that the outreach service is not personal enough to conduct their business. This was particularly the case for those living in an area serviced by a partner outreach where the figure rose to 48%.

Figure 67

THE LOCAL POST OFFICE OUTREACH SERVICE IS NOT PRIVATE ENOUGH TO CONDUCT SOME OF MY BUSINESS



To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Base: 333 Users

95\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

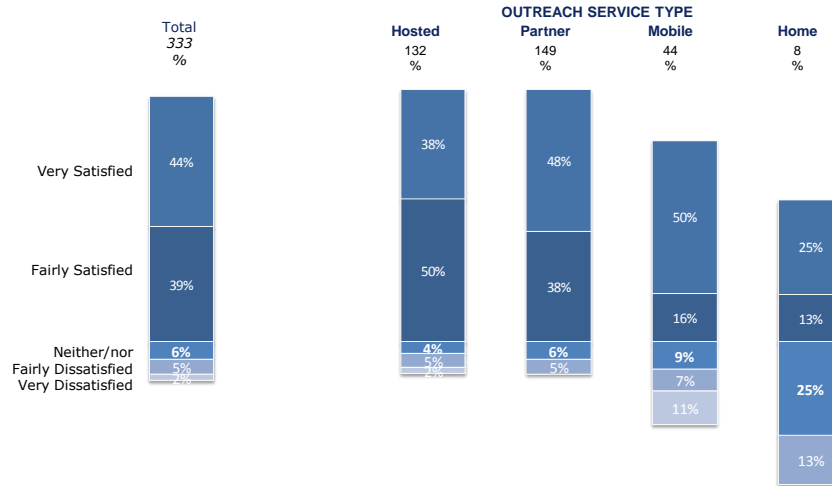
[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 95 ]

### Personal Safety

During the survey, respondents were also asked to rate their level of satisfaction with personal safety at their local outreach service. There was generally less concern here with, overall, 83% very or fairly satisfied with personal safety within their local outreach service. Almost 9 in 10 are very or fairly satisfied with their personal safety. This rose as high as 88% at hosted and 86% at partner outreach services. However the figure falls considerably for mobile outreach users, where only 66% are satisfied with safety – and this concern would appear from focus group feedback to extend to the welfare of staff operating the mobile branch as well.

Figure 68

## LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH PERSONAL SAFETY AT THE OUTREACH SERVICE



Thinking about your local post office outreach service, how satisfied or dissatisfied with each of the following?

Base: 333 Users

96\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

[drive:directory path\filename.ppt 96 ]

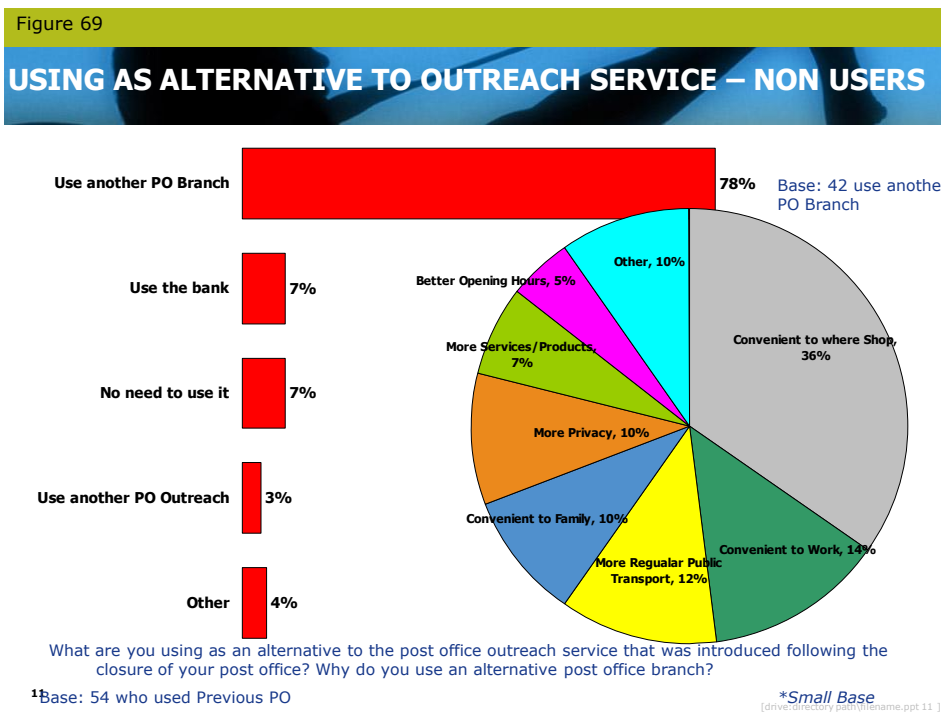
### 13. REASONS FOR NON USAGE

Since maintaining and increasing usage is an important goal for Post Office Limited in stabilising the branch network, it is essential to understand why some residents with outreach in their community choose not to use it.

The quantitative research among non users suggests that there are a number of reasons for this. Of those who used the previous post office (n=54) 78% are now travelling to another post office branch, rather than using the outreach service.

#### Use Branch Where They Shop or Work

The main reason cited for use of an alternative post office branch (n=42) is convenience to where they normally shop with 36% stating this. A further 14% use another branch because it is convenient to work, while 10% use an alternative due to convenience to family (see figure 69).



Of the 90 non users surveyed, the most commonly mentioned reason for non usage was use of another post office branch instead, with over 2 in 5 (44%) citing this (see Figure 12). This was endorsed among non users during the focus groups who were

inclined to use another branch because it was more convenient to work or where they shop.

'No need to use it' was the reason given by almost 3 in 10 (28%) (see Figure 12). During the focus groups it was established that people with access to transport tend to need local post office services less for a variety of reasons, including the fact that stamps can be purchased from shops and they are using banks elsewhere more often.

### **Limited Opening Hours**

Irregular opening hours was cited by almost 1 in 5 (16%) as a reason for non use (see figure 70). This was more commonly mentioned, during the qualitative phase, as a reason for topping up on their outreach service use elsewhere, rather than non use. But the biggest deficiency of the hosted service is considered to be the limited opening hours. The previous post office was open 6 days a week (2 of which were half days). The hosted service is now open, commonly, 3 half days a week. Residents talked about the fact they *'took it so much for granted'*. Some people have to rely on others to take them to the village and the reduced hours do not suit. On a few occasions they have had to get transport to an alternative post office. In some instances, people forget the service is not open at certain times and when they arrive they have to travel further if their need is urgent or wait until the following day:

*'I have gone a few times and forgot the hours were cut and have had to go the whole way to Cookstown.'*

The reduced opening hours is causing the post box to get full very quickly in some locations. In some cases (eg Dunamore) the post box is too small to cope with demand. During the focus groups there were several calls for a larger post box.

### **Inadequate Privacy**

Greater privacy at an alternative branch was cited as a reason by another 10% of respondents.

During the focus groups the main reason established for non usage of partner and post office essential service was the lack of privacy:

*'Too open'*

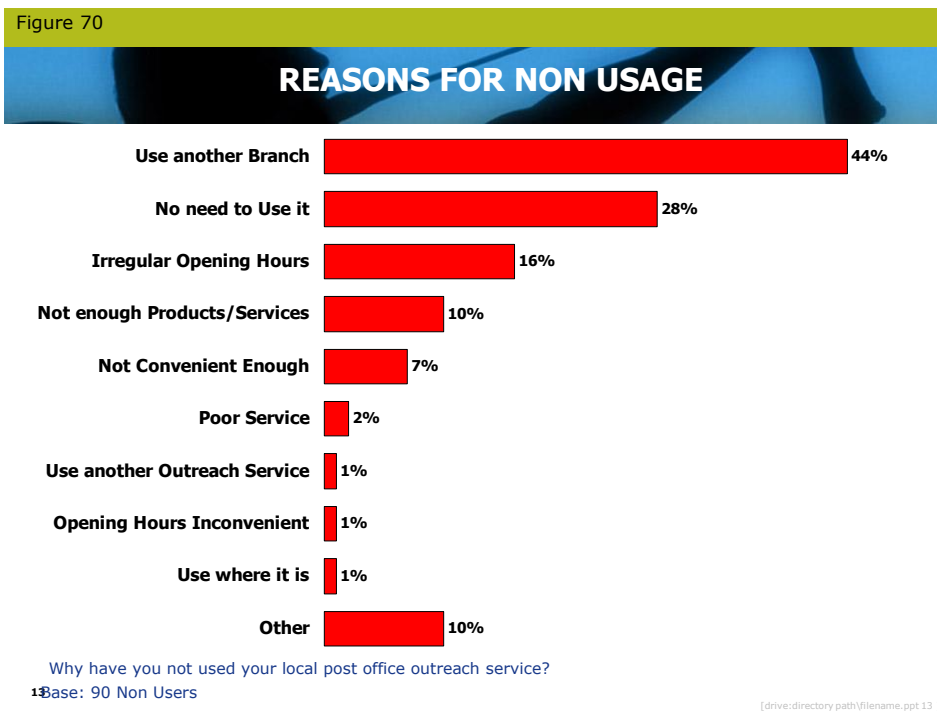
*'Everyone know your business'*

*'No confidentiality at all in there'*

*'Privacy is a big thing for the older generation'*

This was described as a problem for 2 reasons. Firstly, they do not want other members of the community knowing their business and secondly, they are concerned that strangers in the shop might overhear how much money they are withdrawing and attempt to rob them outside. Consequently, some with transport will travel to an alternative branch.

*'I only use it if I have to'*

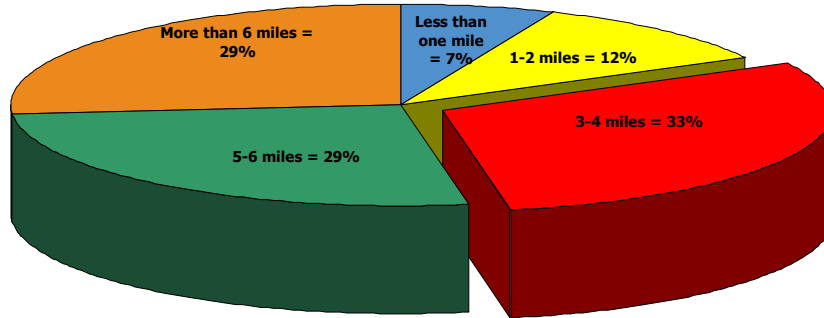


### Travel Distance to Alternative Branch

Of those non users who travel to an alternative post office instead of using the outreach (n=42), a third (33%) have 3-4 miles to travel. Almost 3 in 5 (58%) have 5 or more miles to go, while almost a fifth (19%) are closer to an alternative with 2 miles or less to travel (see Figure 71).

Figure 71

**DISTANCE TRAVELLED TO ANOTHER BRANCH – NON USERS**



How far away from your home is the alternative post office branch you currently use?

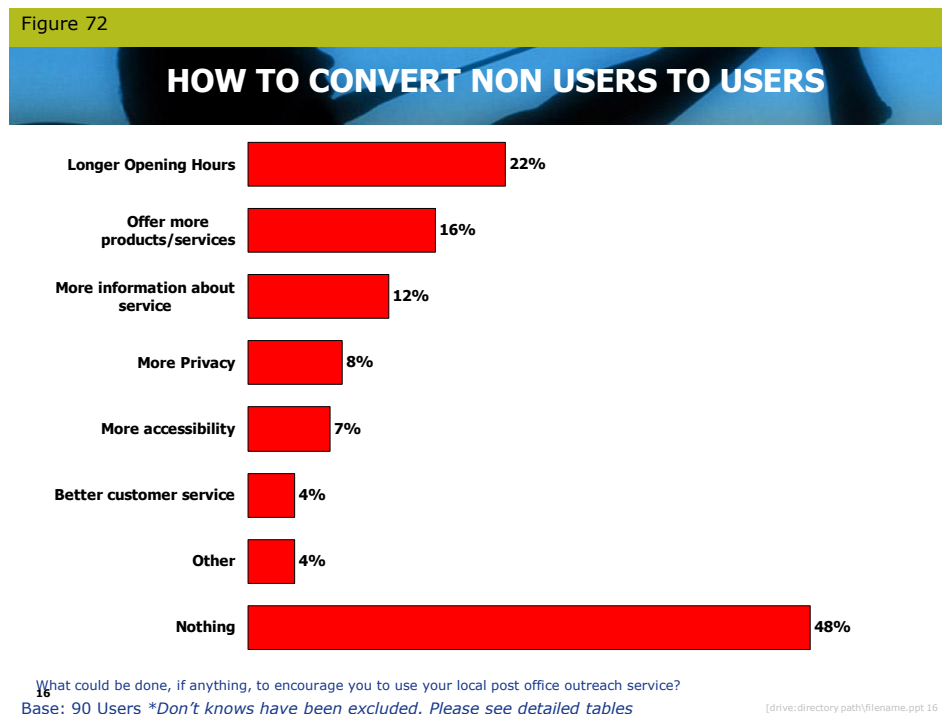
Base: 42 use another PO Branch  
\*Don't knows have been excluded. Please see detailed tables

*\*Small Base*  
[drive: /.../...name.ppt 12 ]

## 14. ENCOURAGING NON USERS TO CONVERT TO USER STATUS

If transaction levels at outreach services are to be increased, then significant numbers of current non-users need to be encouraged to start making use of them. The last section described the main reasons non-users give for not making use of outreach services and this section explores what alterations to outreach service might encourage greater use.

Almost half (48%) of non users stated in the quantitative survey that there is nothing that could be done to encourage them to use the local outreach service. However, over a fifth of respondents (22%) believe **longer opening hours** would encourage them to use it. A **greater range of products and services** might act as an incentive for almost 16%, while just over 12% felt that being provided with **more information** about the service would persuade them to become a user. Other motivators suggested included **more privacy** (8%), **better accessibility** (7%) and **improved customer service** (4%) (see Figure 72).



Factors mentioned by non-users in the focus groups which might persuade them to use the service were similar and included:

- Increased opening hours
- More privacy to carry out their business.

The general feeling in the groups was that post office services are 'special' and need the right environment and appropriate staffing. By contrast, it was suggested that in partner outreach having shop or garage staff serve at a post office counter was inappropriate:

*'Now it's just like buying a packet of cigarettes'.*

The garage and shop staff are all supposed to be trained to operate the post office service. This is not always thought by consumers to be the case:

*'Sometimes you go in to pay bills and you can't because the staff don't know how'*

*'I took a parcel in and they couldn't put the bar codes on it'*

*'Have to wait on some coming back from their tea break to do some stuff'*

Post office services are considered vital to the community and therefore staff are seen as needing to be fully trained and to treat the service and customers with the importance they deserve. Such concerns are heightened at times like Christmas, which was imminent at the time the research was being carried out:

*'I feel sorry for people wanting to send parcels abroad'*

Any unreliability in services urgently needed on the day is very discouraging, especially for older people who find it more difficult to get there or to find alternative ways of transacting their business.

As all outreach staff are supposed to be adequately trained to provide post office services, in partner and PO Essentials outreaches customers can be served by a number of different people. Most customers during the focus groups talked about feeling more comfortable being served by the same person, and one who was seen as specialist post office staff. In the previous full-time post office, staff often knew what the customer wanted before they approached the counter – and this made them feel valued.

Sometimes shop business in partner and PO Essentials outreaches is seen as taking priority and that post office customers have to wait:

*'People have to wait until the shop service dies down before the staff move to the post office till'*

## 15. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### Partner Outreaches

Awareness of the partner outreach services amongst local residents was high. Interviewers had no problem finding people who were aware of the service being offered. A total sample of 149 users and 39 non users of the partner outreach within their area was achieved. The focus group for partner service users and non users took place in Dunamanagh.

Awareness of the service was spread by the previous post office staff before closure and this was how most users and non users found out. If there is additional information to be communicated about the outreach, users would like to hear via current staff, while most non users would prefer a letter or leaflet to their home.

Overall satisfaction with partner services is high with almost 9 in 10 (88%) users either very or fairly satisfied. Over half (53%) strongly agree or tend to agree that their needs are currently being met by the available service.

Satisfaction with accessibility is high among users with almost 9 in 10 (88%) either very or fairly satisfied. Reliability of the service is very or fairly satisfactory among almost 9 in 10 (86%) users. For almost 3 in 5 (58%) of partner service users, their outreach is in the same location as their previous post office.

In total, 7 in 10 (70%) users claim they are very or fairly satisfied with the product range on offer. Collecting or renewing of car tax is the service most partner users would like to see on offer within their outreach with almost 2 in 5 (35%) citing this. The majority (67%) of users consider their behaviour towards post office services has not changed since the closure.

Almost half (46%) consider the service has a positive impact on the community, while half (50%) also agree the community socialise less as a result of its introduction. Over 7 in 10 (73%) users are in agreement that the service is fully accessible for those with limited mobility. Over half (55%) strongly agree or tend to agree that the outreach service is not private enough to conduct their business.

The main areas that need to be addressed in order to meet customers' concerns with this type of outreach service are as follows:

- Raise the level of privacy for customers when making transactions of a sensitive nature. This could be improved by more space being allocated for post office business, or for the counter itself. Some partner services users feel a separate entrance for post office customers would be an improving feature to the partner services.
- The opportunity to carry out car tax transactions and withdraw money from a cash machine would be welcome additions to the standard services on offer.

Longer opening hours would help improve the service for some users. The table below indicates the range of improvements suggested by partner service users; though more than a quarter (28%) of respondents were unable to suggest any improvements.

	Outreach Service Type Users
Base.	Partner
	149
	%
More privacy needed/more private area	15%
Facility to pay car tax/Car tax forms	13%
Longer opening hours	7%
Need more space in shop	6%
Mobile ATM machine/Cash machine	5%
Have a separate door to the office/separate area	4%
Providing more services/complete PO service	4%
Would like a return to the original service	3%
More items/products to be sold in PO	3%
Need a clerk in office at all times when open/too busy	3%
More pleasant/helpful staff/more professional staff	3%
Improve access	2%
TV license facility/Tv license stamps/swipe card	2%
Facility to post large parcels/Improve parcel facility	2%
Need a more personal service/help for older people to fill in forms	2%
Have access to all/giro payments in office/Bill payments	2%
Better/more consistent opening hours	2%
Open every day/more days	1%
Need more parking	1%
Keep the same staff/staff would get to know customers	1%
Passport forms available	1%
Put it in a permanent building	1%
Make foreign currency available	1%
Make it more accessible for people who work full time hours	1%
Driving license forms available	1%
More signs	1%
Parcel delivery	1%
Cash till	1%
Barcode system for bills	1%
If they could accept cheques for all bills and payments	1%

Provide facility for Mail Order payments	1%
Availability of £5 stamps for electricity etc	1%
Later mail collection	1%
More info about services/more advertising	1%
Other	1%
None	28%

## Hosted Outreaches

The hosted outreach service was found to be well-known and well-regarded in all areas where it is available, with the exception of Ardgarvan where the service was not operational at the time of the survey work. As a result, this area was excluded from the survey. A total sample of 132 users and 33 non users of the hosted outreach within their area was achieved. The focus groups among hosted service users and non users took place in Dunamore and Park. The service is so well utilised that in Dunamore it was not possible to find a non-user.

Awareness of this service among users was driven by the post office staff before closure, while more non users found out from friends or family. Users felt that any relevant information about the service should be communicated to them by outreach staff, with the majority favouring this form of communication. Most non users of the hosted service would prefer a leaflet delivered to their home.

Overall satisfaction with hosted services is high with over 4 in 5 (82%) users either very or fairly satisfied. Over 3 in 5 (62%) strongly agree or tend to agree that their needs are currently being met.

Almost 9 in 10 (86%) users are very or fairly satisfied with the accessibility of the service. Reliability of the service is very or fairly satisfactory among over 4 in 5 (82%) users. Opening hours of the hosted service are less satisfactory than with the other outreaches with almost 2 in 5 (38%) very or fairly satisfied. For almost three quarters (71%) of hosted service users their outreach is in the same location as their previous post office, which is liable to be a contributing factor to their level of satisfaction.

Over 7 in 10 (72%) users claim they are very or fairly satisfied with the product range on offer. Collecting or renewing of car tax is the service most hosted service users would like to see on offer within their outreach, with almost a quarter (24%) citing

this. The majority of users (58%) state their usage pattern of post office services has not changed since the closure of the permanent branch.

Over 2 in 5 (41%) agree that the service has a positive impact on the community, while 7 in 10 (70%) consider that the community socialises less as a result of its introduction. Over 4 in 5 (81%) are in agreement that the service is fully accessible for those with limited mobility. Almost 2 in 5 (37%) strongly agree or tend to agree that the outreach service is not private enough to conduct their business.

Recommendations for improvements to hosted outreach services include:

- Longer opening hours on opening days (the main improvement requested)
- Increasing the number of days the service is open
- Increased privacy for sensitive transactions to help put customers at ease.
- Augmenting the product and service range, particularly the introduction of car tax facility.

The table below is the full list of improvements as suggested by hosted users. Almost a quarter (23%) of hosted users were unable to suggest any improvements.

	Outreach Service Type
	Hosted
Base.	132
	%
Longer opening hours	42%
Open every day/more days	24%
More privacy needed/more private area	9%
Better/more consistent opening hours	8%
Would like a return to the original service	7%
More items/products to be sold in PO	6%
Facility to pay car tax/Car tax forms	4%
More info about services/more advertising	4%
Providing more services/complete PO service	4%
Need more space in shop	2%
Make it more suitable for older people	2%
Improve access	2%
Put it in a permanent building	2%
Keep the same staff/staff would get to know customers	2%
Passport forms available	2%
Make it more accessible for people who work full time hours	2%
Make sure post master has sufficient cash	2%
Make it more visible/so more people could see it	2%
Put it closer to where old PO was	2%
Other	2%
Make foreign currency available	1%

Need more parking	1%
Have a separate door to the office/separate area	1%
Mobile ATM machine/Cash machine	1%
TV license facility/Tv license stamps/swipe card	1%
Somewhere dry to queue up	1%
More signs	1%
More reliable service	1%
None	23%

**Mobile Outreaches**

The mobile outreach services were also well known within the areas where they are available. This seems to be driven in part by their visibility within these small communities. A total sample of 44 users and 13 non-users of the partner outreach within their area was achieved. The focus group for users and non-users of the mobile outreaches took place in Jerrettspass.

Awareness of the service was largely raised by the former post office staff before closure, as this was how most users and non-users found out about it. Most users and non-users of the mobile service favour a letter to their home as a means of communication about any new information regarding the outreach.

Overall satisfaction with mobile services is high with over 4 in 5 (84%) very or fairly satisfied users either very or fairly satisfied. Half (50%) of users strongly agree or tend to agree that their post office needs are being met.

Over three quarters (77%) are satisfied with accessibility at the mobile services. Reliability of the service is very or fairly satisfactory among over 4 in 5 (82%) users. For over three quarters (77%) of mobile service users, their outreach is in a different location as their previous post office, however the qualitative research revealed there is little difference in travel time to reach it.

Three quarters (75%) are very or fairly satisfied with the product range on offer. Providing foreign currency is the service most mobile users suggested they would like added, with almost 1 in 10 (9%) mentioning this. Over 3 in 5 (61%) users claim their usage of post office services has not changed since the closure of the former post office.

Only 2 in 5 (38%) consider the introduction of the service has had a positive impact on the community, while almost 3 in 5 (59%) maintain that the community socialise

less as a result.

Only 2 in 5 (41%) are in agreement that the service is fully accessible for those with limited mobility. Over half (52%) strongly agree or tend to agree that the outreach service is not private enough to conduct their business.

Recommendations for improvement of the mobile service are as follows:

- Park it in a safe or less busy location.
- Improve its accessibility to make it more suitable for older people.
- Make the opening hours longer and more consistent.
- As with the other services, increase the unit's privacy.
- Broaden the services available, particularly by adding a foreign currency service.
- Provide more parking adjacent to the mobile unit.

A full list of suggested improvements has been included below. A fifth of users (20%) were unable to suggest any improvements.

		Outreach Service Type Users
		Mobile
	Base.	44
		%
	Mobile should be parked in a safer/less busy location	16%
	Make it more suitable for older people	14%
	Better/more consistent opening hours	9%
	Longer opening hours	9%
	More privacy needed/more private area	9%
	Open every day/more days	7%
	Need more space in shop	7%
	More info about services/more advertising	7%
	Make foreign currency available	7%
	Need more parking	7%
	Mobile ATM machine/Cash machine	5%
	Improve access	5%
	People with no transport are unable to use service	5%
	Would like a return to the original service	2%
	More items/products to be sold in PO	2%
	Put it in a permanent building	2%
	Need a clerk in office at all times when open/too busy	2%
	Keep the same staff/staff would get to know customers	2%
	Make it more accessible for people who work full time hours	2%
	Somewhere dry to queue up	2%
	Put it into local shop	2%
	Make PO staff in van less vulnerable to attack/robbery	2%
	Provide a more permanent service which meets needs of people	2%
	Other	2%
	None	20%

### Home Service Outreaches

Evidence from the survey suggests awareness of the home service is at a very low level. Interviewers found it impossible to achieve their user and non-user targets, particularly in Carnalbanagh, Dunseverick, Ballintoy and Ballycassidy, where they were unable to find anyone aware of the home service available to them. As a result, only 8 users and 5 non-users were included in the quantitative sample. A focus group was not conducted among home service users as it proved impossible to recruit within one area and respondents were unable to travel to one single location for a number of reasons including limited mobility and no access to transport.

Consequently, findings from the survey for home service users must be treated with considerable caution.

The majority of those users aware of the service heard about it from post office staff before the closure. Most non-users found out via word of mouth. Although the sample

of home service users is too small to draw firm conclusions from, the majority claim they would like to get information about the outreach service from their local paper.

Almost two thirds (63%) are very or fairly satisfied with the overall service they receive from the home outreaches, although the small base should be taken into consideration. Of the 8 home service users, 5 (63%) tend to agree that their needs are currently being met.

Almost 2 in 5 (38%) users are satisfied with the accessibility at their home service. Reliability of the service is very or fairly satisfactory among almost 3 in 5 (63%) users. For three quarters (75%) of home service users, their outreach is in a different location than the previous post office.

Only a quarter of users (25%) state they are very or fairly satisfied with the product range on offer. A quarter (25%) of home service users would like to see the purchase of foreign currency added to their outreach portfolio. Since the post office closure, half (50%) of the home service users in the sample claim their usage of post office services has not changed.

Only 1 in 10 (13%) agree the service has had a positive impact on the community, while three quarters (75%) feel the community socialise less as a result. Almost 2 in 5 (38%) are in agreement that the service meets the needs of those with limited mobility.

The suggested improvements mentioned by the home service users are highlighted below. With the exception of a return to the original service, the most commonly cited improvements include the provision of more publicity about the service.

		Outreach Service Type Users
		Home
	Base.	8 %
	Would like a return to the original service	25%
	More info about services/more advertising	25%
	Put it in a permanent building	25%
	Longer opening hours	13%
	Better/more consistent opening hours	13%

Make it more suitable for older people	13%
Other	13%
None	13%

### Post Office Essentials Outreach

A focus group was conducted among a mixture of users and non-users from Kircubbin, which is the area serviced by the post office essentials outreach. This community were less informed of proposed plans following the closure of their post office; however news of the post office essentials outreach service spread via word of mouth and also people noticed the service within the garage. A preferred personal approach to finding out more service information was expressed in the focus group, with all wishing to receive information in a letter to their home.

Evidence suggests that overall satisfaction with the post office essentials outreach service is at a lower level than with the other outreach types. This is driven by a number of factors including lack of privacy and staff not (reportedly) being fully trained in all services offered. Among these users there are some concerns that the current location is more inconvenient for those who are less mobile as it is situated at the other end of the village compared to the previous post office.

There were calls for a Christmas club to be added to the service as this was well utilised in the previous post office and is topical given the time of year in which the research took place. Among users there is awareness that the outreach does not offer the full services of the previous post office.

There is evidence to suggest the post office essential service is under utilised. Respondents commented it is only used when they have no alternative. This is due largely to the current lack of privacy for sensitive transactions.

The principal improvements to this service that customers would like to see would include:

- adequately training staff,
- limiting the number able to service at the post office counter
- increasing of privacy
- Increasing the range of products and services on offer to include the Christmas club and facility to tax cars.

## Non Users

The most common reason given for non usage of the available outreach service is the fact that another branch can be more satisfactorily utilised, with over 2 in 5 (44%) mentioning this. For most, the alternative branch is convenient to where they shop.

Almost half (48%) of non-users feel there is nothing that could be done to encourage them to convert to user status, but over a fifth (22%) believe longer open hours would encourage use.

The most common suggestions from non-users for improvement among non users were in order of popularity:

- longer opening hours
- an increase in privacy.
- having more products and services available.

Some non users feel the post office service requires its own space and potentially a separate building. Almost a quarter (24%) were unable to suggest any improvements. The table below provides a full list of suggestions.

	<b>Non-users</b>
<i>Base:</i>	90
	%
Longer opening hours	17%
More privacy needed	16%
More services/products	10%
Needs its own space/own building in the area/permanent fixture	7%
Bring back the original PO	7%
More info about services/opening times/to advertise more	6%
More pleasant/helpful staff/more professional staff	6%
Open more days in the week	6%
Need more space/too cramped/too crowded	4%
Better opening hours/different times/day of work	3%
Facility to pay car tax/Car tax forms	3%
Have a less busy venue	3%
More items for sale in PO	2%
I'm not interested	2%
Shorter waiting time	1%
Better/more consistent delivery service	1%
Foreign currency	1%
If it was closer/easier to get to	1%
More than one collection per day	1%
Other	9%
None	24%

## General Recommendations

A wide range of other issues were highlighted during the research that should be addressed to improve existing services and which would encourage non-users to utilise the outreach service available to them. These suggestions included:

- Sending letters informing all residents of products and services available within the outreach service as there appears to be confusion and limited knowledge in some cases
- Sending personalised letters to customers to inform them of any changes to service
- Providing customers with a leaflet of opening hours, ensuring it is readable for those who are visually impaired, and something they can pin up at home or put in their wallet or purse.
- Installing larger post boxes to cope with demand, particularly in run up to Christmas
- Ensuring free-to-use cash machines are available either inside or near outreach service
- Providing shelter outside mobile outreach services to maintain privacy inside during winter months
- Constructing better access and more sturdy steps up to mobile outreach service
- Providing clearer printouts and receipts for those visually impaired
- Moving post office counters away from shop till or installing adequate partition for privacy
- Training staff better to work at outreach service
- Limiting the number of staff who can work at post office counter - this could help customers feel their transactions are confidential

## APPENDIX

441012385 (1-4)  
Final 02/09/09

### POSTAL SERVICE - USERS

				9/1
(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	

**Good morning/afternoon. I am ... from Millward Brown Ulster. We are conducting a short interview about the postal service in this area.**

In October 2007, Post Office Limited began the closure of Post Offices under the 'Network Change Programme'. Some of the Post Offices' were replaced with post office outreach services of which there are now 54 in Northern Ireland. These post office Outreach services are intended to help reduce the impact of the Post Office closures.

Q.1	There are 4 models of post office outreach services namely mobile, hosted, partner and home. Is there a post office outreach service in your community?	Yes ..... 1 - CONTINUE No ..... 2 - CLOSE Don't know ..... 3 - CLOSE	(10)
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**IF NO THANK AND CLOSE, IF YES CONTINUE:**

Q.2a	Is the place where you now have the post office outreach service in the same location as the original Post Office that you had in your community, or is it in a completely different location?	Yes in same location..... 1 No in different location..... 2	(11)
Q.2b	Have you ever used your local post office outreach service?	Yes ..... 1-CONTINUE No ..... 2-SEE INSTRUCTION	(12)

**IF NO AT Q.2b GO TO NON USERS QUESTIONNAIRE, IF YES CONTINUE:**

Q.3	Can you tell me what services and facilities there are within your community or local area? DO NOT PROMPT	Pub ..... 1 Post Office service ..... 2 Shop ..... 3 Village hall ..... 4 Church ..... 5 Doctor ..... 6 Dentist ..... 7 Vet ..... 8 School ..... 9 Petrol station ..... 0 Other Specify:  V Don't know ..... X	(13)
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Q.4	How would you describe the area within which you live? PROBE TO PRECODES	Small town (4,500 and under 10,000) ..... 1 Town ..... 2 Intermediate settlement (2,250 and under 4,500) ..... 3 Village (1,000 and under 2,250) ..... 4 Small village / Hamlet (Less than 1,000) ..... 5 Open countryside..... 6 Other <b>Specify:</b>  7	(14)
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Q.5 Can you tell me what the focal point within your community or local area is? DO NOT PROMPT

	(15)	(15-16)
Pub .....	1	
Post Office service .....	2	
Newsagent .....	3	
Village hall .....	4	
Church .....	5	
Doctor .....	6	
Dentist .....	7	
Vet .....	8	
School .....	9	
	(16)	
Petrol station .....	1	
Other <i>Specify</i> : .....	2	
There isn't one .....	3	
Don't know .....	4	

Q.6 How did you hear about the local post office outreach service within your community? DO NOT PROMPT

		(17)
From post office staff before closure .....	1	
From post office outreach service staff.....	2	
Local paper .....	3	
Seeing it.....	4	
Advertising outside local facilities / services.....	5	
Poster.....	6	
Leaflet through the door.....	7	
Leaflet picked up in post office pre closure .....	8	
Heard about it from friends / family / Word of mouth.....	9	
Community bulletins/Newsletters.....	0	
Post Office Limited Website.....	V	
Other <i>Specify</i> : .....	X	

Q.7 If your local post office outreach service had information they needed to share with you, what would be your preferred method of communication? DO NOT PROMPT

		(18)
Informed by post office outreach service staff .....	1	
Article in local paper .....	2	
Advertising outside local facilities / services.....	3	
Poster.....	4	
Leaflet through the door.....	5	
Leaflet picked up in post office outreach service.....	6	
Community bulletins/Newsletters.....	7	
Post Office Limited Website.....	8	
Letter .....	9	
Email .....	0	
Other <i>Specify</i> : .....	V	

Q.8 Can you describe the post office outreach service that is available within your community? PROBE FULLY BUT DO NOT PROMPT – CHOOSE CODE THAT BEST FITS WITH RESPONDENTS REPLY

Mobile Service: Vehicle with a post office counter and equipment .....	1	(19)
Hosted Service: Staff from a nearby post office comes to a fixed location on a specific day And time of every week.....	2	
Partner Service: Post office service run from a local business e.g. retail shop, petrol station with a computer terminal next to a till .....	3	
Home Service: I can contact nearby post office and they come to my house or nearby .....	4	
Post Office Essential: Operates from my local shop with computer terminal next to the till .....	5	
Other <i>Specify</i> : .....	6	

Q.9 How often do you use the local post office outreach service? PROBE TO PRECODES	Every week .....	1	} GO TO Q11	(20)
	3 times a month .....	2		
	1-2 times a month .....	3		
	At least once every two months.....	4		
	Less often .....	5		
	Used once but not again.....	6-ASK Q10		

**ASK Q.10 OF THOSE WHO USED SERVICE ONCE BUT NOT AGAIN – OTHERS**

**GO TO Q.11**

Q.10 Why did you use the service once but never again? PROBE TO PRECODES	Use nearest post office .....	1	(21)
	Didn't like the service .....	2	
	Opening hours didn't suit .....	3	
	Products I need not available.....	4	
	Other <i>Specify:</i> .....	5	

**ASK ALL**

Q.11 Is your usage of the local post office outreach service for your personal use only?	Yes .....	1- <b>GO TO Q14</b>	(22)
	No.....	2- <b>ASK Q12</b>	

**ASK IF NO AT Q11**

Q.12 Do you also use the local post office outreach service for business purposes?	Yes .....	1- <b>ASK Q13</b>	(23)
	No.....	2- <b>GO TO Q14</b>	

**ASK IF YES AT Q12**

Q.13 Is this a business you run from home?	Yes.....	1	(24)
	No .....	2	

**ASK ALL**

Q.14 I am going to read you out a number of services that may be available from the post office outreach service in your community, for each, I would like you to tell me.

**ASK QUESTIONS 14a-d FOR EACH SERVICE IN TURN**

Q.14a How often this service is required by you? PROBE TO PRECODES

Q.14b Whether this particular service is available in your community?

Q.14c Whether you, yourself, use the post office outreach service for this particular service?

Q.14d Where else you may get these services?

READ OUT	Q.14a How often required							Q.14b Provided in Village			Q.14c Use village			Q.14d Where else get services from					
	Daily	1-3 times a week	1-3 times a month	Every few months	1-2 a year	Less often	Never	Yes	No	DK	Yes	No	DK	Nearest Post	Nearby Village	Where work	Internet	Phone	Other
Purchase of stamps	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Mailing letters	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Special delivery	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Pay bills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Collect pension or benefits	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Post Office Ltd retail goods such as envelopes, parcel paper	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Collecting foreign currency	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Purchasing travel, car or home insurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Collecting forms e.g. driving licences or passports	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Collecting or renewing car tax	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Mailing parcels	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Cash withdrawals	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
	(25) – (36)							(37-48)			(49-60)			(61-72)					

**ASK ALL**  
 Q.15 Which products and services that are not available, would you most like to see available? DO NOT PROMPT

Purchase of stamps .....	1	(10)	(10)
Mailing letters .....	2	-	(11)
Mailing parcels .....	3		
Special delivery .....	4		
Pay bills .....	5		
Collect pension or benefits .....	6		
Cash withdrawals .....	7		
Post Office Ltd retail goods such as envelopes, parcel, paper etc .....	8		
Collecting foreign currency .....	9	(11)	
Purchasing travel, car or home insurance .....	1		
Collecting application forms, e.g. driving licenses or passports .....	2		
Collecting or renewing car tax .....	3		
Other <i>Specify:</i> .....	4		

**SHOWCARD 1**

Q.16 Thinking about your local post office outreach service, how satisfied or dissatisfied with each of the following: **SINGLE CODE ON EACH ROW**

READ OUT↓	VERY SATISFIED	FAIRLY SATISFIED	NEITHER SATISFIED NOR DISSATISFIED	FAIRLY DIS-SATISFIED	VERY DIS-SATISFIED	DON'T KNOW	
The level of overall service provided .....	1	2	3	4			(12)
The reliability of the service .....	1	2	3	4			(13)
The product range on offer 1 .....	2	3	4	5			(14)
The accessibility of the outreach service .....	1	2	3	4			(15)
The opening hours .....	1	2	3	4			(16)
Personal safety at outreach service .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	(17)

**ASK ALL**

**SHOWCARD 2**

Q.17 I am now going to read out a number of different aspects to the Post Office outreach service that is now provided. For each I want you to tell me how important this aspect of the service is to you. Do you consider it vitally important, important, or not particularly important? **SINGLE CODE ON EACH ROW**

READ OUT↓	VITALLY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NOT PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT	DON'T KNOW	
The service must be in a convenient location .....	1	2			(18)
The service must provide a range of services that meets my needs .....	1	2			(19)
There must be ease of access to the service .....	1	2			(20)
The service must have a good range of opening times .....	1	2			(21)
The service must provide a constant, reliable and dependable service .....	1	2			(22)
The service must be available on a wide range of days of the week and times, so I can use it when I want to .....	1	2			(23)
The service must always be well promoted and Communicated so everyone knows it exists .....	1	2			(24)
It must provide a high level of quality service .....	1	2			(25)

Q.18 Where is your nearest post office outreach service located? READ OUT

Less than one mile away .....	1	(26)
1-2 miles away .....	2	
3-4 miles away .....	3	
5-6 miles away .....	4	
More than 6 miles away .....	5	
Don't know.....	6	

Q.19 Following the closure of the post office and the introduction of the post office outreach service, how has your behaviour towards post office services changed, if at all? READ OUT

Use less often.....	1	(27)
Use more often .....	2	
Do not use at all .....	3	
Have not changed my behaviour at all .....	4	
Don't know.....	5	

**SHOWCARD 3**

Q.20 To what extent do you agree or disagree with each following statements?

	<b>STRONGLY AGREE</b>	<b>TEND TO AGREE</b>	<b>NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE</b>	<b>TEND TO DISAGREE</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE</b>	<b>DON'T KNOW</b>	
The introduction of the post office outreach service has had a positive impact on the local community .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	(28)
Members of the community socialise less often following the post office closure.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	(29)
The local post office outreach service is fully accessible to consumers with disabilities.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	(30)
The local post office outreach service is not private enough to conduct some of my business .....	1	2	3	4	5	6	(31)
All my needs are met by my local post office outreach service.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	(32)

Q.21 I am going to read out some different ways that the arrival of a post office outreach service may affect people? Which of the following apply to you? **READ OUT AND CODE THOSE THAT APPLY**

Spend more time travelling to the Post Office .....	1	(33)
Spend more on transport costs .....	2	
Write fewer letters .....	3	
Send fewer parcels .....	4	
Use internet more .....	5	
Don't know .....	6	
None of these .....	7	

} DO NOT READ OUT

**SHOWCARD 4**

Q.22 Taking everything into consideration, given that a decision was made to close the Post Office and to put in place an alternative service, how satisfied would you say you are with the current postal service arrangements provided for your village, would you say that you were ...

Very satisfied .....	1	(34)
Fairly satisfied .....	2	
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied .....	3	
Fairly dissatisfied .....	4	
Very dissatisfied .....	5	
Don't know.....	6	

Q.23 Has the closure of your village Post Office branch meant that you now have more access to Post Office services, the same access that you have always had, or less access to Post Office services? READ OUT

More access to Post office services .....	1	(35)
About the same level of access to post office services.....	2	
Less access to post office services.....	3	
Don't know.....	4	

Q.24 Can you tell me what improvements, if any, you feel could be made to your local post office outreach service? **PROBE FULLY AND RECORD VERBATIM**

(36)	
(37)	



Doctor .....	6
Dentist .....	7
Vet .....	8
School .....	9
(16)	
Petrol station .....	1
Other (please specify) .....	
.....	2
There isn't one .....	3
Don't know .....	4

Q.6 Can you describe the post office outreach service that is available within your community? PROBE FULLY BUT DO NOT PROMPT – CHOOSE CODE THAT BEST FITS WITH RESPONDENTS REPLY

Mobile Service: Vehicle with a post office counter and equipment .....	1	(17)
Hosted Service: Staff from a nearby post office come to a fixed location on a specific day and time every week .....	2	
Partner Service: Post office service run from a local business e.g. retail shop, petrol station with a computer terminal next to a till .....	3	
Home Service: I can contact nearby post office and they come to my house or nearby .....	4	
Post Office Essential: Operates from my local shop with computer terminal next to the till .....	5	
Other <b>Specify:</b> .....	6	

Q.7 How did you hear about the local post office outreach service within your community? DO NOT PROMPT

From post office staff before closure .....	1	(18)
From post office outreach service staff.....	2	
Local paper .....	3	
Seeing it .....	4	
Advertising outside local facilities / services .....	5	
Poster .....	6	
Leaflet through the door.....	7	
Leaflet picked up in post office pre closure .....	8	
Heard about it from friends / family / Word of mouth .....	9	
Community bulletins/Newsletters.....	0	
Post Office Limited Website.....	V	
Other <b>Specify:</b> .....	X	

Q.8	If your local post office outreach service had information they needed to share with you, what would be your preferred method of communication? DO NOT PROMPT	Informed by post office outreach service staff.....	1	(19)
		Article in local paper .....	2	
		Advertising outside local facilities / services .....	3	
		Poster.....	4	
		Leaflet through the door.....	5	
		Leaflet picked up in post office outreach service.....	6	
		Community bulletins/Newsletters.....	7	
		Post Office Limited Website.....	8	
		Letter .....	9	
		Email .....	0	
Other <b>Specify:</b>				
.....		V		

Q.9	Did you use your local post office before the closure?	Yes .....	1- CONTINUE	(20)
		No .....	2- GO TO Q13	

Q.10	What are you using as an alternative to the post office outreach service that was introduced following the closure of your post office? DO NOT PROMPT	Use another Post Office branch .....	1-CONTINUE	(21)
		Use another post office outreach service .....	2	
		I use the internet .....	3	
		I use the bank .....	4	
		Use local retailers .....	5	
		Send less letters .....	6	
		No need to use it.....	7	
		Other <b>Specify:</b>		
.....		8		

**ASK Q.11 OF THOSE WHO USE ANOTHER BRANCH CODE 1 AT Q.10 –**

**OTHERS GO TO Q.13**

Q.11	Why do you use an alternative post office branch? PROBE TO PRECODES	It is convenient to work .....	1	(22)
		It is convenient to family .....	2	
		It is convenient to where I shop .....	3	
		Public transport operates more Regularly in this area .....	4	
		Other <b>Specify:</b>		
		.....	5	

Q.12	How far away from your home is the alternative post office branch you currently use? READ OUT ▶	Less than one mile away.....	1	(23)
		1-2 miles away .....	2	
		3-4 miles away .....	3	
		5-6 miles away .....	4	
		More than 6 miles away .....	5	
		Don't know.....	6	

Q.13	ASK ALL Why have you not used your local post office outreach service? DO NOT PROMPT	Use another Post Office branch .....	1	(24)
		Use another post office outreach service ..	2	
		I use the internet .....	3	
		Send less letters.....	4	
		No need to use it .....	5	
		Not enough products / services .....	6	
		Not convenient enough .....	7	
		Irregular opening hours .....	8	
		Other <b>Specify:</b>		
.....		9		

Q.14 What could be done, if anything, to encourage you to use your local post office outreach service? DO NOT PROMPT	Offers more products / services.....	1	(25)
	Longer opening hours.....	2	
	Better customer service.....	3	
	More accessible.....	4	
	More information about service.....	5	
	Nothing.....	6	
	Other <b>Specify:</b> .....	7	

Q.15 Where is your nearest post office outreach service located? READ OUT ▶	Less than one mile away.....	1	(26)
	1-2 miles away.....	2	
	3-4 miles away.....	3	
	5-6 miles away.....	4	
	More than 6 miles away.....	5	
	Don't know.....	6	

Q.16 Following the closure of the post office and the introduction of the post office outreach service, how has your behaviour towards post office services changed, if at all? READ OUT ▶	Use less often.....	1	(27)
	Use more often.....	2	
	Do not use at all.....	3	
	Have not changed my behaviour at all.....	4	
	Don't know.....	5	

**SHOWCARD 1**

Q.17 To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	<b>STRONGLY AGREE</b>	<b>TEND TO AGREE</b>	<b>NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE</b>	<b>TEND TO DISAGREE</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE</b>	<b>DON'T KNOW</b>	
The introduction of the post office outreach service has had a positive impact on the local community.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	(28)
Members of the community socialise less often following the post office closure.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	(29)
The local post office outreach service is fully accessible to consumers with limited mobility.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	(30)
The local post office outreach service is not private enough to conduct some of my business.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	(31)

Q.18 I am going to read out some different ways that the arrival of a post office outreach service may affect people? Which of the following apply to you? <b>READ OUT AND CODE THOSE THAT APPLY</b>	Spend more time travelling to the Post Office.....	1	(32)
	Spend more on transport costs.....	2	
	Write fewer letters.....	3	
	Send fewer parcels.....	4	
	Use internet more.....	5	
	Don't know.....	6	
	None of these..... OUT	7	

Q.19 Can you tell me what improvements, if any, you feel could be made to your local post office outreach service to encourage you to use it? **PROBE FULLY AND RECORD VERBATIM**

	(33)
	(34)