

Your guide to...

Bank Branch Closures



The Consumer Council

This guide outlines what to expect if you are affected by a branch closure, and what action you can take.

How will I know if I'm going to be affected?

- If your bank branch is due to be closed, your bank should write to you in advance, giving you two months notice of when the closure is due to take place.
- The letter should outline that your account will be automatically transferred to your nearest alternative location.
- The letter should also contain details of where to phone for help and advice, and where to find your nearest branch.
- A press statement should also be released with details of the closure and so it may receive some press coverage.

What other options do I have to carry out my banking?

1. Stay with your current bank: You can use the alternative location provided by your bank, or request a move to a different branch – perhaps one near where you work.
2. Register for online banking: The popularity of online banking has surged in recent years, and many people find it a convenient alternative to banking in branch. All Banks and Building Societies now have facilities to allow you to bank online, and many have special Apps that you can download to your phone or tablet to access banking on the go. Ask your bank for more details if you're not registered already.
3. Use telephone banking: Telephone banking will still be available if your branch closes, as most of this is carried out at specialised call-centres, rather than through local branches. This can allow you to carry out a wide range of tasks, including:
 - Checking your balance
 - Transferring money between accounts
 - Paying bills
 - Checking your latest transactions
 - Arranging an overdraft
 - Change address details

4. Make use of ATM Facilities: In many areas where a bank has been closed, the attached ATM is often still available. This should allow you to check your balance, print out mini-statements and receive cash. You can find your nearest ATM through the LINK search facility:
www.link.co.uk/ATMLocator

5. Consider using the Post Office: Some banks have an agreement with the Post Office to allow you to access certain facilities over the counter – it does though depend on what agreement your bank has set up. You can check on the Post Office website, or contact your bank directly:
<http://www.postoffice.co.uk/branch-banking-services>

6. Switch your Account: The ‘Switching Guarantee’ means that switching your account to another bank or building society is fast, free and easy to do. If having a local branch is important to you, it is worth checking if you can switch to a different bank or building society which still has a presence in your local area. Even if you are not personally affected by a bank closure, you may wish to have a look at other options out there: see our Switching Factsheet for further details:
http://www.consumercouncil.org.uk/images/uploads/languages/Switching_Bank_Guide_Long_Page.pdf

7. Consider joining your local credit union: There are a large number of Credit Unions throughout Northern Ireland. At present the majority do not offer Current Account facilities, however you may find them a useful alternative to start a regular savings account. Membership rules vary by branch. Find out more at:
<http://www.creditunion.ie/> and <http://www.ufcu.co.uk/>



- Most banks require you to register before you can use telephone or online banking – you may need to contact your bank to request a username and pass-code before you can proceed.
- Beware of emails which appear to be from your bank, asking you to log-on or provide your security details. Contact your bank if you are unsure if it is genuine
- If you have taken a complaint to your bank and if you are not happy with their response, you can go to the Financial Ombudsman Service for free help and assistance - 0800 023 4567.