

Annual report and accounts 2021/21

In 2021/22, we continued to lead UK payments so they work well for everyone.

As the UK starts to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, we've taken action to make sure that payment systems help those that use them regularly – which is all of us.

This year we successfully concluded our first investigation under the Competition Act 1998: we put a stop to a cartel in the prepaid cards market and issued fines of over £33 million, making it clear that we won't tolerate non-compliance. We also improved protections for people making payments by expanding the coverage provided by the account-name-checking service Confirmation of Payee.

We developed our strategic approach to payments, laying the foundations for the future. We're shaping the future of payments with our work on open banking – an increasingly important part of the payments ecosystem – as well as the development of the UK's New Payments Architecture.

We provided more detail on our vision for the future by publishing the PSR Strategy. This sets out the outcomes we want to see in payments over the next five years, and the priority areas we'll direct our resources towards. We also set up a new Strategy, Analysis and Monitoring division, to ensure we focus our work on our strategic priorities, and make better use of data to support our work.

By building on our previous achievements, and continuing to refine our approach in areas such as stakeholder engagement, we will continue to play a key role in ensuring that payments work well for everyone.

How we made a difference in 2021/22

Effective enforcement

With our competition enforcement investigation, we put a stop to a cartel related to prepaid cards that are used by local authorities to distribute welfare payments to vulnerable members of society. We will act when we see non-compliance with the regulations we oversee.

Improving security

More people will have extra security when they make account-to-account payments, thanks to our specific direction expanding the coverage of the name-checking service Confirmation of Payee.

Fighting scams

We set out new measures in the fight against authorised push payment scams, which will let people see how their bank is doing in tackling scams, and help victims get reimbursed.

Maintaining cash access

It's vital that people can continue to access cash in an increasingly digital world – and we made sure this happens across the UK, working with other regulators, authorities and industry. Our new specific direction to LINK makes sure free cash machines are available across the country.

Foundations for the future

We made sure the UK's New Payments Architecture (NPA) will support effective competition and innovative new services. We reset Pay.UK's delivery programme so it's more efficient, and set out our future regulatory framework for the NPA.

The year in numbers

£33 million

Total fines for the companies found to be operating a cartel in the prepaid cards market

£246.8 million

Money returned to victims of authorised push payment scams

>1 billion

More than 1 billion Confirmation of Payee checks completed since July 2020

150

The number of payment service providers that now access payment systems after four more banks started offering indirect access.

An alternative to cards

We took the first steps in making account-to-account payments a realistic alternative to credit and debit cards – which will give people and businesses more choice and flexibility in the way they pay.

A strategic approach

Our five-year PSR Strategy set out the priority areas we'll focus on to achieve the best outcomes for everybody using payment systems. And our new Strategy, Analysis and Monitoring division will enhance our evidence-based approach so we can use our resources with maximum impact.

Helping merchants

We published plans to help merchants find the best service for accepting card payments, following the final report of our card-acquiring market review.



Read our annual report and accounts at the PSR website.