

Our annual report and accounts 2019/20

We've published our annual report for 2019/20, covering our activity from 1 April to 31 March. Last year we made a genuine difference in protecting people and delivering good outcomes for consumers, whether we were looking at new protections against scams or ensuring effective competition in payment services.

A year of significant progress

We've been involved in a number of important steps forward in the development of the UK's payments markets. The launch of the Confirmation of Payee service this year has introduced a vital new protection for everyone against payment scams. We've led industry conversations about access to cash, helping to make sure people continue to have a choice of payment methods that suit them. Our market review of card-acquiring services will help us make sure this crucial part of the card payments process works well. We continue to scrutinise the development of the New Payments Architecture, making sure it can deliver the benefits of competition and innovation in everyone's interests.

Of course, COVID-19 forced us to reassess the schedule for some of our work in March. But it's work that's more important than ever, and we continue to dedicate our efforts to making sure payment systems work well for everyone.



Key projects in 2019/20

Authorised push payment scams and Confirmation of Payee

This year saw the launch of two major, ground-breaking industry initiatives we've been leading to combat authorised push payment scams. These are scams where a fraudster tricks you into making a payment to an account that they control.

The Contingent Reimbursement Model Code sets out what steps banks should take to help prevent scams, and the circumstances under which victims should be reimbursed.

The Confirmation of Payee service now allows people to check that they are paying money to the person they intended – making it harder for scammers to trick people, and reducing the number of accidentally misdirected payments.

Access to cash

Although digital payments are increasingly dominant, cash remains an important method of payment for many. Our aim is to ensure that cash remains a viable option for everybody who wants and needs to use it.

We published research on how people access and use cash in the UK, revealing a widespread need for it. We led industry work aimed at maintaining access to cash wherever people need it, including through local engagement programmes and the LINK ATM network. We also joined the Joint Authorities Cash Strategy group, working with other authorities to consider and coordinate work to address cash system issues.

The New Payments Architecture

The New Payments Architecture (NPA) is a blueprint for a new payment system that's being developed by Pay.UK to process retail interbank payments in the UK. The NPA is the biggest change in UK payments in a generation, and will fundamentally change the way interbank systems work for the foreseeable future – so it has to be done right.

Last year we publicly set out our thinking about the potential risks and issues in relation to competition and innovation within the NPA – the important issues at the heart of the development. We also gathered stakeholders' views through a call for input, to inform our future regulatory approach and help us provide greater clarity to the industry before the NPA goes live.

Card-acquiring market review

Card payments are critical to the smooth running of the UK economy. They are a popular way for people to pay for goods and services, and their use is growing. For merchants to accept card payments, they need to buy card-acquiring services. The costs of these services may affect the prices and services they offer to their customers.

We continued our market review of the supply of card-acquiring services, to find out if this essential area of card payments is working well for merchants and, ultimately, consumers.

