

# Access to banking

The way we do our banking has changed a lot. Once it meant going to a branch and writing out cheques. Nowadays, in the digital age, the range of banking services is wide.



## Bank services

It is important for banks to ensure that customers can continue to access banking products and services and operate them safely.

Alternatives for branch services offered by banks include:

- **Phone banking:** This enables customers to securely check balances, transfer funds and make payments by phone.
- **Internet banking:** This enables customers to make a range of electronic transactions through the website of their bank.
- **Mobile applications:** These allow customers to make financial transactions using a mobile device, such as a smart phone or tablet.
- **Smart ATMs:** These differ from standard ATMs by offering additional services, such as depositing funds, opening accounts and transferring funds.
- **Regional banking hubs:** These hubs, a collaboration between six banks, provide basic banking services through smart ATMs and support staff. They are currently being trialled in Twizel, Stoke, Martinborough and Opunake.

## Payment methods

There are many ways to make payments nowadays, including:

- **Automatic payments:** These are regular payments of the same amount that are set up and controlled by you, and can have specified end dates or go on indefinitely.

- **Direct debits:** These give someone else approval to take payments from your bank account electronically. You don't have to do anything. Direct debits reduce the chance of missing a payment.
- **Bill payments:** These provide the flexibility to make payments when it suits you, to pay bills or transfer funds to family and friends.
- **Credit card payments:** These are an efficient way to make purchases in person or online. If the balance is paid off each month, you pay no interest.

For more information, see our [Payment methods guide](#).

## Banking support

Banks must ensure customers can securely access and operate banking products and services. Bank support and guidance include:

- **0800 numbers** that can put you through to a contact centre team. Some banks offer specific phone lines for older customers. They also may offer an automated phone banking service.
- **Guides and how-to videos** to help customers with new technology.
- **Workshops** to improve customers' skills and help them make the transition to new forms of banking.

If you need extra assistance to access banking products and services, there are options to have a trusted person help manage your finances:

- **An authority to operate** gives a person the authority to use your bank account on your behalf.
- **A power of attorney** is an authority you give to someone you appoint to help look after your affairs. You can choose the extent of the assistance. You may give the person you chose the power to look after all your property or just to manage your bank accounts.
- **An enduring power of attorney** is an authority you give to someone you appoint to act for you even if you lose mental capacity. You can give a person a general power to deal with all property, or you can limit the power to dealing with, for example, a particular bank account. You can also say whether the person can start using this power and make decisions straightaway, or only if and when you lose "mental capacity". It can be very useful in helping to protect your future finances. See our [power of attorney quick guide](#).
- **Joint accounts** are bank accounts that two or more people share. Each person generally has access to it as though it were his or her own account. See our [joint account quick guide](#).

## Complaints about access to banking

We can investigate individual complaints and consider whether the bank treated you fairly. However, there are limits to what we can investigate. Banks can make commercial decisions, including on whether to offer or remove products or services. Under the Code of Banking Practice, banks must do their best to meet the needs of all their customers, and to help meet the needs of customers who are older or have disabilities. If you have concerns, talk to your bank or raise them through your bank's complaint process.

## Further information

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- The Code of Banking Practice outlines banks' obligations and is available [here](#).
- The New Zealand Bankers' Association has guidelines to help banks meet the needs of older customers and customers with disabilities, and these guidelines are available [here](#).