Witness Name: Sandra McBride

Statement No.:WITN05310100

Exhibits: WITN0531_01/1 to WITN0531_01/5

Dated: 12 December 2022

POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

_____

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF SANDRA MCBRIDE

_____

I, *Sandra McBride,* will say as follows...

1. I joined the Post Office in May 1986 as a counter clerk at Colchester Branch Office, this involved serving customers. After approx. 3 years I moved to the Area Office in an admin role. In 1993 I moved to the Training Team as a subpostmaster trainer, which involved visiting new postmasters in their branches and training them on how to run their post office. In 1997 I was promoted to a CM2 manager as a Transactional Knowledge Manager, which involved organising and delivering a computer based transactional knowledge quiz to subpostmasters in the evenings and branch office staff during the day. When this role dissolved, I was trained to deliver classroom new entrant counter training for new branch office staff, which I did until my maternity leave in May 2000. I returned to work in approx. November 2000 and took up an admin role which involved maintaining the New Entrant Counter Training Course materials. To enable me to do this I organised a working group (consisting of Trainers, Training Managers and a Trainer Coach) who met regularly to discuss changes that were required to the training course and

materials as a result of changes to products and services communicated by the Business. My role was to ensure agreed changes were made to training course materials and the course Training Brief. When the audit team merged with the training team, I also was involved in maintaining audit documents and tools again with the assistance of auditors and audit managers. I also assisted in the development of online training for new entrants. I remained in this type of role until I was made redundant in September 2016. From November 2000 to September 2016 my role (including my job title) and responsibilities changed on a number of occasions and I had different line managers. It's difficult to recall my exact roles and responsibilities given that this was over a period of almost 16 years. As I left the Post Office over 6 years ago, I have no access to any systems/documents which may have helped me remember things in more detail.

2. As far as I recall I used a training Horizon system (not live) during occasional classroom training I delivered prior to my maternity leave in May 2000. I also used the training Horizon system (not live) to identify if training barcodes, swipe cards, etc. worked for the New Entrant Counter Training Course as part of my role. I also used the live Horizon system occasionally when supporting branch offices at Christmas.

3. I was not involved in the initial roll out of the Horizon Training Programme. As part of the New Entrant Counter Training Course, the use of Horizon was taught on a training Horizon system and as part of my role I maintained the training materials for this course. Any changes to the training materials/course were discussed and agreed by the working group mentioned in section 1, but I can't recall the name of this group. These

changes would include any changes to products/processes which the Business was making.

4. I have been asked several questions about my experience as a trainer, which I address below. I was originally appointed as a subpostmaster trainer in 1993 following a business reorganization.

5. I believe I was appointed as trainer in 1993 because I had counter experience and some training experience e.g., training local subpostmasters on a system called CAPTURE and on the new Royal Mail barcoded labels.

6. I have been asked how much experience I had using the Horizon IT System prior to training others on how to use it. As far as I recall I received the standard 2 days Horizon training which I believe was delivered by external trainers.

7. I have been asked what training I received before I first trained another to use the Horizon IT System. I shadowed another trainer delivering the New Entrant Counter Training Course on a few occasions before I delivered the course myself and was then shadowed. This course used a training Horizon system, once Horizon was rolled out to the Counter Training Offices (CTOs), and was not live. I did not train anyone on a live Horizon system as far as I can remember.

8. I have been asked during which period I trained others to use the Horizon IT System. I delivered a few of the New Entrant Counter Training Courses from approx. the end of 1999 until May 2000. I cannot recall if these classroom courses had the training Horizon system.

9. I do not recall receiving any "updating or refresher training"

10.I have been asked whether I can recall any specific feedback that a subpostmaster, counter manager, counter assistant or trainee gave to me regarding the Horizon IT System or the training programme. No, I don't recall any specific feedback.

11.I have been asked whether I can recall the gist of any positive or negative feedback that subpostmasters, counter managers, counter assistants or trainees made regarding the Horizon IT System or the training programme No, I don't recall this.

12.I have been asked whether any changes were made to the training programme as a result of feedback given by subpostmasters, counter managers, counter assistants or other trainees. As far as I recall the working group mentioned in Section 3 above, received a summary of feedback from both new entrant classroom and onsite training. Part of the group's role was to review the feedback and agree if any changes were necessary.

13.I have been asked several questions about my experience as a supervisor of trainees, which I address below. I supervised a team of trainers on a couple of occasions for a period of time after 2000. I cannot recall the exact dates.

14.I believe I supervised 5 trainers in the East Anglia region for a period of time. I also supervised 2 trainers one based in Chester and one based in Portsmouth.

15.I have been asked what my responsibilities were as a supervisor of trainers. I was responsible for conducting 121's with the team members and discussing

performance feedback from people they trained. I was also responsible for cascading any relevant business/team information at team meetings. I was also required to visit team members whilst they were training e.g., in the classroom or onsite.

16. I have been asked whether I can recall any specific feedback on the training programme, or the gist of the same. No, I don't recall any specific feedback.

17. I have been asked several questions about the training programme itself, which I address below. I was involved in the New Entrant Counter Training Course (classroom and onsite) and my role included maintaining the training materials. The training course changed in length and content over the years. Initially the classroom course was only available to Branch Office staff but after making changes it was offered to subpostmasters. I don't know why subpostmasters were not initially included in the classroom training. I don't recall why this was changed nor when this was. At one point the classroom course was up to two weeks, with the first week covering the basic transactions, end of day procedures and balancing. The second week covered specific additional transactions e.g., Car Tax, Passports, which were only available at a small number of branches. As far as I can recall (when subpostmasters also attended the course), all subpostmasters were invited to attend the first week of classroom training and then received a number of days with a trainer onsite at their branch plus support by a trainer onsite with their first balance. Subpostmasters were invited to attend the parts of the second week of the course according to which additional transactions they were allowed to transact at their branch e.g. Car Taxes & Passports.

18. As far as I recall the design of the New Entrant Counter Training course was agreed by the Working Group mentioned in Section 3.

19. I have been asked whether the training delivered diverged from the design of the training programme. Training Managers were required to spot check their teams' delivery of both the classroom and subpostmaster onsite training and to address any shortcomings. I can't recall the frequency of this.

20. The New Entrant Counter Training Course and subpostmaster onsite training was running when I joined the Post Office in 1986 and when I left in 2016. The format and content of which changed over the years.

21. New entrant training was offered to all new subpostmasters although was mandatory for Branch Office staff.

22. The New Entrant training was arranged for a date as close as possible to a new entrant/subpostmaster starting at/taking over their branch.

23. Counter Training Offices had either 6 or 8 Horizon positions, which limited the number of attendees. I don't know the average or range of the numbers attending the course. The Scheduling Team based in Salford would have had this data.

24. I have been asked about the content of the training programme and how much was focused on the Horizon IT System.. I have provided an overview of the content of the New Entrant Counter Training course at paragraph 6. As far as I recall the sessions were a mix of product knowledge and use of the Horizon IT system. Training materials were obtained for the trainees to practice transactions on the Horizon IT system.

25. The New Entrant Training Course had a timetable plus training notes (Training Brief) which told trainers what to cover during each session. The timetable showed how much time was allocated for each session of the course. This included sessions on most transactions as well as daily accounting, balancing the stock and cash and discrepancies. The trainees were given handouts which detailed the end of day process and the weekly balancing process. These handouts also included contact details for the Helpline/NBSC. I don't recall how much time was allocated for each session.

26. The trainees would be encouraged to ask questions during their training and the trainer would answer.

27. I have been asked whether, and if so how, the competence of trainees to use the Horizon IT System was tested at the end of the training programme Trainees' competence was tested by way of a practical test at the end of week one and week two, where they completed a set of transactions and a balance on the training Horizon system. This was checked by the classroom trainer.

28. I have been asked whether I considered that the training programme was adequate to enable trainees to use the Horizon IT System generally. My answer is yes based on my recollection of the course feedback.

29. I have been asked whether I considered that the training programme was adequate to enable trainees to balance and investigate the cause of discrepancies or shortfalls. My answer is yes based on my recollection of the course feedback.

30. I have considered the Counter Training Offices Strategy dated 27 November 2002 [FUJ00001703] and a document titled "Horizon Upgrade — December 2002" [POL00032429]. These documents are over 20 years old so it's very difficult to recall full details of my role at the time. As Training Manager, I was involved in communicating changes to the training Horizon systems to the wider Training Team. I was also involved in ensuring that the support materials e.g., paper copies of barcoded bills, were available for use in the classroom training courses.

31. The CTO's were used for delivering the classroom aspect of the New Entrant Counter Training Course.

32. I can recall that the training Horizon systems in the CTO's were not always up to date so trainers had to talk through some transactions that could not be completed on the training Horizon system. When we first received the training Horizon systems I don't recall us having input into what was on the systems.

33. I don't recall the process for updating the training systems in the CTO's. Apart from upgrade mentioned in the document titled "Horizon Upgrade — December 2002 [POL00032429], I can't recall any further examples.

34. I don't know why the upgrade in December 2002 was the first in two years. The lack of an upgrade to the system would have made it more difficult for the trainer to show trainees how to complete certain transactions on the training Horizon system. These transactions would be talked through by the trainer in the CTO and explained and/or shown in more detail during the onsite training in branch.

35. I don't know why it wasn't possible to scan P&A books in normal mode. Workarounds were developed, i.e. using Training Mode as described in the document.

36. I have been asked whether, aside from reference data, there would ever be differences between the software on the training systems in the CTOs and those used in the live estate. There probably were differences between software on the training systems in the CTOs and that used in the live estate as the training Horizon system was not live, but I don't recall any details. As far as I recall my role did not include any involvement in the Horizon software nor is this an area I have any expertise in.

37. I have considered a PowerPoint presentation titled "Outlet Field Team HYS Issues and Updates" [POL00032430]. I think the specific issue may have been that when a call was made by a trainer to the Horizon Helpdesk to report a faulty processor/keypad it was not always established that this hardware was for a training office. Therefore, the engineer would bring live estate hardware rather than a training one and may not have been aware of the difference.

38. I believe I would have raised this issue with Fujitsu using specific examples provided by the team. I would have expected Fujitsu to update their Helpdesk staff to ensure that they understand the difference between a live branch and a CTO. I don't recall exact details of this.

39. I have been asked whether further training was available to subpostmasters, counter assistants or other trainees who, following the training programme, requested it or were deemed by the Post Office to require it. As far as I recall

new entrants could request further training if required via the NBSC/Helpline. I believe there was also a team based at Dartford who would provide telephone support for SPMs with issues.

40. I don't recall having contact with subpostmasters or managers and assistants beyond training.

41. I have been asked a number of questions on whether I provided advice and assistance to subpostmasters, counter managers or assistants beyond training. As far as I recall I was not responsible for providing subpostmasters or Post Office branches with advice or assistance

42. I have been asked whether I was involved in or party to any disputes between the Post Office and subpostmasters regarding shortfalls. I was not involved in or party to any disputes between the Post Office and subpostmasters.

43. I have been asked about the process for raising and resolving such disputes. Iam not aware of the detailed process but I believe the first point of contact was the NBSC/Helpline.

44. I have been asked whether I am aware of Fujitsu having any contact or input within this process. No, I am not aware.

45. I have been asked several questions concerning the process of auditing branch accounts. As far as I recall the Audit Team were responsible for conducting audits. I don't know the minimum levels of qualifications or experience. The Training Team were merged with the Audit Team and auditors were trained to be trainers and vice versa. I do not recall when this took place.

46. Prior to the Audit Team merging with the Training Team I do not know what training was given to auditors. After the merger I believe trainers were given training on how to use the audit tools and then shadowed auditors onsite and were then shadowed by auditors.

47. I believe new subpostmasters were audited after a certain period of time following their new entrant training. I do not recall other circumstances in which Post Office would decide to carry out an audit of a branch.

48. The process that auditors had to follow to carry out an audit was detailed in the Audit Process Manual. 1 do not recall the content of this manual.

49. I am not aware of what information an auditor had access to or could access.

50. I am not aware whether auditors had special privileges to insert or modify data in Horizon.

51. As far as I can recall the Team Leaders were responsible for supervising auditors. I don't recall what training the Team Leaders received.

52. I don't recall the process by which policies on auditing would be reviewed.

53. I have considered a PowerPoint presentation titled "Audit Review Cascade" and dated 28 September 2011 [POL00085658]." I don't recall the context or who commissioned the review and why. I believe this question should be addressed to Sue Richardson.

54. 1 don't recall my work on this review

55. As far as I was aware the audit processes were adequate.

56.1 don't recall what changes were made as a result of this review other than those actions mentioned in the document.

57.Other than the example given in section 35 regarding the training Horizon system, I was not aware of any bugs, errors or defects within the Horizon system.

58.1 have considered a document titled "Global User Accounts" [POL00002841]. As the document states there were two types of Global User Account. Trainer & Audit. The Trainer Global User allowed trainers to reset the Horizon Training systems in CTOs. The Audit Global User allowed an auditor to add themselves to a branch Horizon system when conducting an audit (if no one at the branch had manager level to do this) so that they could print off reports required for the audit. I don't know if this allowed the user to insert, modify or delete data within branch accounts.

59. As the Global User Accounts document states, I maintained the list of Global User Accounts for the Outlet Support Team (previously known as the Training Team). This means that I requested and approved Global User accounts to be opened and closed for the Outlet Support Team e.g., when a new member of the team joined or left.

60.1 have been asked to describe what, if any, security measures and / or audit measures were in place in respect of Global User Accounts. Each month I received a list of the Global User Accounts for the Outlet Support Team, which I checked against the current team members to ensure that new accounts had been added and old accounts had been closed. As far as I can recall there were no audit measures in place in respect of the Trainer Global

User Accounts as these could only be used in the CTOs. The Audit Process

Manual would have detailed how the Audit Global User Account should be

used during an audit. I don't recall what this content was.

61. There are no other matters of which I consider the Chair of the Inquiry should

be aware.

Statement of Truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed: GRO

Dated: 12th DECEMBER 2022

Index to First Witness Statement of Sandra McBride

No	Document URN	Document Description	Control Number
1	FUJ00001703	Counter Training Offices Strategy dated 27 November 2002	POINQ0007874F
2	POL00032429	Horizon Upgrade – December 2002	POL-0029364
3	POL00032430	Outlet Field Team HYS Issues and Updates	POL-0029365
4	POL00085658	Audit Review Cascade	POL-0082716
5	POL00002841	Global User Accounts	VIS00003855