

Witness Name: Amandeep Singh

Statement No.: WITN06660100

Exhibits: None

Dated: 13 January 2023

POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF AMANDEEP SINGH

I, Amandeep Singh, will say as follows...

1. I Amandeep Singh am an IT Consultant since graduating in 2003 with a BSc in Computing from University of Huddersfield. Since graduating I have worked for major Banks, Pharmaceuticals and Communications companies as an IT consultant. I worked on the Horizon helpdesk support desk, formerly ICL Epson support Desk. I was based in Wakefield, between October 2000 & September 2001. I Initially worked for ICL, then Fujitsu.
2. The Support Desk was split into various Squads of around 10 to 14 individuals, working different shift patterns and I represented Squad A. Each squad functioned in the same way providing support to Postmasters.
3. Prior to starting the role we received a few days' training. We got to look at the equipment and did some dummy transactions, before being given a booklet, similar to that given to the Postmasters. It was a basic how-to guide of transactions with screenshots of each stage of a transaction. This could be selling stamps, international money transfers, to balancing end of each week.

4. I wanted the Inquiry to know behind the scenes of supporting Horizon's systems and our daily experience. The support staff faced the initial challenge of basic training that was insufficient to fully support Postmasters and the full array of tasks that Horizon was setup for. As soon as the support desk opened, it was inundated with calls. It was soon apparent that many postmasters lacked the training needed to use the systems, some had never even used a PC.

5. The issues I wanted to raise were that many of my support colleagues who before provided Tech Support to IT savvy clients were now supporting quite the opposite people. Some Postmasters had never even owned a PC. They were now being asked to perform their entire day-to-day role through the EPOS terminals. For some, this was just too difficult, and we literally would have to describe the icons on the screen, as they would not know terms like "reboot" or "mouse". This in turn this caused many of the support colleagues to grow resentful of the role. They felt the prestige of supporting EPOS products and dealing with more complex IT related issues had gone. They were now supporting non-technical individuals, some were old and some were minorities with limited language skills, and this resentment grew over months.

6. The floor was quite a toxic place, and this manifested itself with colleagues openly mocking the role and complaining to management that the role was not what they were initially hired for. Many were desperate to leave and as soon as an option came to support another client, many jumped at the chance. Many of these colleagues were frustrated supporting these Postmasters, the toughest day was on Wednesday when it came to reconcile the weeks accounts.

Postmasters right from week one would be upset, crying frustrated as they struggled to reach equilibrium on the transactions. The floor on these days was most toxic with vocal characters in Squad A, unchallenged by managers who looked away as all Asians were called Patels, regardless of surname. Shouts across the floor could be heard, saying "I have another Patel scamming again". They mistrusted every Asian Postmaster. They mocked Scottish and Welsh Postmasters and pretended they could not understand them. They created a picture of Postmasters that suggested they were incompetent or fraudsters.

7. As for their reconciling issues, when we could not help them with their accounts this would mean we spent a few hours on the phone going through each transaction and trying to figure out where the financial discrepancy was. We would eventually give up, and we were advised to write off the loss as a "discrepancy". This was a word you could hear from every agent's calls. Postmasters would really worry about these discrepancies, and some would say they are putting in their own money every week to avoid them. The long-term impact of these discrepancies was not really a thought for any agent. I can't honestly say if any of the advice given to the Postmasters was incorrect, as we all had headsets on during our working day and the calls were relentless. I can only say what was said of the calls, which was mainly mocking insulting about the role and the Postmasters.

Statement of Truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed:

GRO

Dated: 13/01/2023