

Witness Name: Joanne Scott-Ison
Statement No.: WITN06380100
Dated: 19 January 2023

THE POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

First Witness Statement of Joanne Scott-Ison in the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry

I, JOANNE SCOTT-ISON, WILL SAY AS FOLLOWS:

1. My name is Joanne Scott-Ison. I have been employed by Post Office Limited ("POL") (or its predecessors) since March 2007. During my time at POL I have also had the surnames Griffiths and Fish.
2. Except where I indicate to the contrary, the facts and matters contained in this witness statement are within my own knowledge. Where any information is not within my personal knowledge, I have identified the source of my information or the basis for my belief. The facts in this witness statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief. The Inquiry's request relates to my experiences as a trainer throughout my career at POL, which spans almost a decade. Many of the events the Inquiry has asked about took place many years ago. I have tried to recall my experiences to the best of my ability but in some cases I have been unable to remember the events being asked about in detail.
3. In this statement I use the term "Postmaster" broadly to refer to those people or entities that are responsible for operating Post Office branches (but excluding those individuals employed by POL), rather than with any formal definition in

mind. Nothing in this statement is intended to detract or differ from any definition adopted by POL.

4. This witness statement has been prepared in response to the request made by the Horizon IT Inquiry (the "**Inquiry**") pursuant to Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006, dated 25 November 2022 (the "**Rule 9 Request**"). This statement has been prepared (with the assistance of my solicitors, Herbert Smith Freehills LLP) over telephone and email. In this witness statement, I address each of the questions set out in the Rule 9 Request regarding my career background at POL and my experience of providing training to users of the Horizon IT System ("**Horizon**").
5. Where I refer to specific documents in this statement, copies of those documents are exhibited to this statement (as set out in the index below) and identified by the Inquiry's unique reference number for that document.

DEFINED TERMS

6. In this statement, I have used a number of acronyms and defined terms. I have set out a definition of each, as I have introduced them. However, for convenience, I also set out the definitions of these acronyms and definitions below:

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| BCF | Branch Contact File |
| BIT | Branch Insight Tool |
| BSC | Branch Support Centre |
| CTO | Counter Training Office |
| EPOS | Electronic Point of Sale |
| Horizon | The Horizon IT System |
| Inquiry | The Horizon IT Inquiry |

POL Post Office Limited

Rule 9 Request The Inquiry's request pursuant to Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006, dated 25 November 2022

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

Qualifications

7. I have been asked to set out by professional background and qualifications. I left college in 2003 having completed my A-Levels.
8. When I was a Quality Assurance & Training Lead at POL I did a People Management Fundamentals course as my role at the time involved managing delegates (i.e. Postmasters and their assistants) in a classroom training setting. This is a recognised qualification awarded by the Chartered Management Institute.

Work history and roles

9. After leaving college, between 2003 and 2007, I held several different customer service jobs, including in a music shop and a convenience store. I also worked in a betting shop and as a receptionist at a motor garage run by my father. Whilst working at the betting shop, I did a six week secondment travelling around the UK, training employees in the use of the new Electronic Point of Sale (**EPOS**) system.
10. I started working at POL in March 2007, when I became a Customer Service Consultant in the Truro Crown Office branch. I first worked at the philatelic desk selling stamps to stamp collectors, as well as lottery tickets. I served customers and assisted with a range of other transactions, such as post and parcels, business banking and car tax.

11. I transferred to the Newbury Crown Office branch in 2009 and continued to work as a Customer Service Consultant. I was there for one year before moving to the Cambridge Crown Office, in the same role. I then moved back to Newbury in 2012, still in the same role.
12. In February 2013, I applied to be a Field Support Advisor in the training and audit team. Practically speaking, I was in this role from 2013 to 2019, albeit the job title changed from Field Support Advisor to Network Operations Advisor in 2015, then again to Training and Audit Advisor in 2018. The responsibilities in the job were broadly the same under each of these three titles.
13. During this period (i.e. 2013 to 2019), the training and audit team, of which I was part, was responsible for every element of support provided to Postmasters. When I joined in 2013, management had relatively recently merged the previously separate training and audit functions together and hired around 160 – 180 new people to assist with the Network Transformation Project (whereby branches became either "main" or "local" and Postmaster remuneration became transaction-based, such that Postmasters were remunerated on a transaction-by-transaction basis, rather than receiving a fixed salary). My job consisted of **four** parts. The **first** was training delivered in the classroom (although in practice during this period I was rarely responsible for providing it). The **second** part was early days on-site support. I cannot remember exactly for how long support was provided to new Postmasters during this period but based on my recollection I would estimate it to be approximately one week. The **third** part was intervention training. This meant that, if it was identified that a branch was having a problem or a new product was being introduced in a branch, we would visit them and deliver a set amount

of training. For example, if a branch was having a new lottery machine installed, we would train them in how to account for lottery on Horizon. A common type of intervention visit was when a branch changed from a "local" to a "local plus" branch, which meant Postmasters needed additional training on end of day procedures for new categories of products. Another example would be where a discrepancy had been identified (most likely by the contract management team or the BSC) and we would visit the branch and pull off transaction logs to try to identify the cause. If the branch had CCTV, I would try to match the Postmaster's / assistants' interactions with customers on the CCTV with the transactions in the log. For example, on one occasion I remember I was able to identify that a withdrawal had been recorded on Horizon as a deposit, which resulted in an apparent loss when doing end of day cash declarations. At the end of an intervention visit I would fill in the designated intervention form recording the outcome of the visit. I cannot recall how often I carried out these visits. The **fourth**, and final, part of the job was audit.

14. I would note that as a Field Support Advisor, I spoke to the Branch Support Centre (**BSC**) regularly. I was required to call the BSC in my capacity as an auditor to leave an answerphone message informing them that a branch would be closed for a certain amount of time while the audit was conducted. Occasionally, I would contact the BSC on behalf of the Postmaster for other reasons, for example I recall one occasion where the branch needed to place an emergency order for stock, so I helped them to do that by calling the BSC. However, I would not say that I did this very often, as the BSC is principally designed to be used by Postmasters.

15. In January 2019, I understand that management decided that training and audit should be separated back out into distinct roles. I am not certain who specifically was responsible for making this decision. I have looked back at my calendar and can see that an in-person meeting took place on 24 January 2019, which was attended, amongst others, by the wider training and audit team as well as my line manager Stuart Scarle, and other more senior individuals including Lesley McNally and Judith Aubrey. As I recall, I think the meeting was led by Pam Heap. I think I was probably informed of the decision to separate the roles at this meeting.
16. My understanding is that the separation was prompted by developments in the Group Litigation, albeit I am not sure which developments exactly. Management also decided that the role of classroom trainer should be separate to the audit and on-site training roles and that it would become a management role, the title of which would be Quality Assurance & Training Lead. We were given the option of taking voluntary redundancy or being an on-site trainer or an auditor. I decided to apply for the Quality Assurance & Training Lead role instead and started in my new role as a classroom trainer in April 2019.
17. Broadly speaking, the Quality Assurance & Training Lead role, also referred to as a "classroom trainer", had two parts. The first was quality assurance which involved visiting branches to ensure that the training being delivered by on-site trainers was adequate. This part of the role was one of the reasons I applied for the job as I thought it would be interesting and a chance to make a difference to the experience of Postmasters. In practice, in my experience, these visits were not carried out very often; initially, the framework for conducting them was not yet in place, and then later we did not typically have the capacity alongside

delivering classroom training to undertake them. Furthermore, during the pandemic, there were fewer opportunities to undertake these kinds of in-person visits in any case as government restrictions prevented any non-business critical activities from taking place in-person.

18. The second part of the role was classroom training. This involved delivering a PowerPoint presentation over the course of two or three days. The content was fixed and my responsibility was to deliver the training in the right order and in the right way without missing any sections out. At the outset of the pandemic there was a period of approximately one month where we did not deliver any classroom training, but after that we resumed with social distancing measures in place. I do not recall ever speaking to the BSC in this role; as I was not interacting with branches directly there was no reason for me to do so.
19. Finally, in September 2021, I started my current job as a Business Support Manager. This role involves visiting branches and onboarding new Postmasters. I understand that this was another role which was created in 2019, in light of the issues that arose in the Group Litigation, in order to provide more support for Postmasters in the early days of taking over a branch. As a Business Support Manager, my responsibility is to act as a point of contact for new Postmasters, providing support in the initial six months. I am currently assigned to three area managers in the South East region, and four area managers in the Home Counties region, which together contain a total of 698 branches. Of the 698 branches, I am responsible for any which are either new or undergoing a transfer process, known as "early days" branches. There are currently fourteen "early days" branches within my region.

20. I am also responsible for interviewing prospective new Postmasters and assessing them against a checklist of five areas. The five areas are: Retail Business plan / relevance; Business development / growth for Post Office; Customer Experience; Staff Management; and Community.
21. I do not contact the BSC in my current role although I do sometimes recommend to Postmasters that they do so, for example when they need to make an emergency order for stock, or they need to temporarily adjust opening hours, or if they have an issue carrying out a transaction.

Experience working in IT roles

22. I have used computer systems, including EPOS systems in my customer service jobs prior to joining POL and, during my time at POL, Horizon in particular. Other than that I have not had any experience working in IT roles, whilst at POL or otherwise.

Experience acting as a trainer

23. The focus of my role as a trainer on Horizon has generally been to teach Postmasters and assistants how to use Horizon to account for the sorts of transactions that they deal with in-branch. I have also trained Postmasters on how to use a Paystation, which is the machine used for topping up electronic cards, electricity keys, etc.
24. Since I became a Business Support Manager, as noted above, my role has been to provide ongoing support to the Postmaster for their first six months in-branch, including in respect of Horizon but also in a broader pastoral capacity. I aim to make sure that Postmasters have the support they need to enable a branch to be capable operationally. In the past this has included training on how

to declare money left at the end of the day, on how to return money left in the safe or, in one instance, leafletting in the local community to drum up business for the branch.

Experience using the Horizon IT System

25. When I joined POL, I used Horizon directly in my role working on the counter. The only issue I experienced was that it was quite slow, I assume due to it being an old computer system. I do not think that this generally affected transactions with customers, but rather it slowed down the balancing process in the evenings. When I moved to Cambridge in 2010, I started working with Horizon Online which was generally faster. Most of my career was spent working with Horizon Online.
26. When I became a Field Support Advisor in 2013 and throughout my time in this role, rather than logging on to Horizon myself I would typically ask the Postmaster to log on. I would observe the Postmaster using the system and guide them through transactions to train them. In my experience this was standard practice for Field Support Advisors.
27. As Quality Assurance & Training Lead, when delivering classroom-based training, my interaction with Horizon was in a locked-down system which was used for training purposes. This system is reset for each training session and is loaded with "toy" money and stock to simulate the Horizon system in a branch. The training system behaves like the live version of Horizon which is used in-branch, but there are no real-life consequences arising from carrying out a transaction incorrectly.

28. Aside from the point I mentioned at paragraph 25 about the earlier version of Horizon being relatively slow, I personally do not recall encountering any issues with Horizon. This is, at least in part, why I felt confident when going out into the field that everything was fine with the system. I worked on the counter in POL branches for six years before moving into a training role and I do not recall seeing anything which gave cause for concern. Nor do I recall any of the Postmasters with whom I worked subsequently ever raising any concerns in relation to bugs or errors with me.
29. Where Postmasters were having issues with Horizon, it typically appeared to me that it was because of a lack of understanding that they had about how the system worked, as opposed to any issue with the Horizon system itself. Often when Postmasters experienced an issue, we as trainers were able to solve the issue because we understood the system in detail, and could explain how to rectify the issue. For example, it is possible to reverse certain transactions through Horizon. Postage transactions, however, cannot be reversed as there is a spoilt label process for these instead. Sometimes Postmasters would try to reverse a postage transaction without spoiling the label and would think that they had been successful. This would result in an issue when balancing as the postage transaction would not in fact have been reversed and the till would be down by the value of the postage transaction. The spoilt label process is now covered in training, and was covered in the Horizon user guides (if not also in training) previously, but due to the number of topics covered, Postmasters understandably struggled to remember everything.
30. I would note that POL did not (and has never) clearly or categorically explained to me, or to my knowledge, to the wider training team, what the issues with

Horizon were, or the timeframe within which any such issues arose. It was my understanding that the issues were alleged to have taken place prior to me taking on my first training role in 2013 and that by the time I had started in the role the issues that were alleged had ceased.

31. I recall that at some point during my first few years in the training role, around 2014 or 2015, I started to hear suggestions amongst people within the business that there had historically been issues with Horizon. Some members of the Field Support Advisor team (which sits within the training and audit team) were seconded to Project Sparrow. I understood this project to have been dealing with an investigation into the issues that were being alleged. I am not sure what role my Field Support Advisor colleagues were performing in the Project Sparrow team, but I think they were the first people to tell me about the allegations that were being made in relation to issues with Horizon. My understanding at the time was that the issues that people were describing typically related to audit - i.e. that in some cases, where the audit team had been called to investigate a discrepancy, the Postmaster would respond that Horizon was to blame. I had not personally experienced this during my time in audit - my experience of conducting audits found that in the infrequent instances where there had been a discrepancy at a branch, the Postmaster would typically volunteer information on where the missing money had gone.
32. Roughly around the same time that my colleagues in the Field Support Advisor team were seconded to Project Sparrow (i.e. 2014 or 2015), I recall being told that if someone asked me whether there was a problem with Horizon, I should respond that there were no issues with it. I assume this would have been communicated to me by manager at the time, Jane Rattue, although I do not

recall the specific conversation. As far as I am aware, this was also communicated to all Field Support Advisors both verbally and by email. I exhibit to this statement copies of the emails sent to me by Jane Rattue dated 11 September 2014 (**WITN06380101**) and Julia Marwood dated 14 August 2015 (**WITN06380102**) to pass on messages from the Communications Team in this regard.

33. I was led to believe that the instances of people having issues with Horizon had been extremely rare and, as noted in paragraph 30 above, I believed that in any case they had ceased by the time I started training in 2013. I did not raise the subject of potential issues with Horizon with Postmasters proactively and I do not remember a Postmaster asking me about it.
34. I believed the assurances that were provided to me around this time, because they were clear and came from people who were more senior than me, because I had not personally encountered problems with Horizon, and because I had not personally had any experience of a Postmaster raising any such issues with me.

TRAINING RECEIVED TOWARDS BEING A TRAINER

35. I have been asked to describe any training I received towards being a trainer for users of the Horizon IT system. When I took on the role of Field Support Advisor, I recall being asked to shadow a more experienced trainer for a period of approximately 2-3 months. I do not recall receiving any formal classroom training prior to starting the job. After this I was allowed to lead the training myself with someone shadowing me. I cannot remember how regularly we received training after this initial period. A few times a year we would have a "Work Time Learning" session where the trainers would gather in one of the

Counter Training Offices ("CTOs") to discuss subjects related to the training role. I cannot remember the content covered in these sessions. If I had a question in this role, I would ask one of my colleagues or my manager.

36. Whilst in this role, managers would visit the branch (usually on an unannounced visit) to observe the training being delivered. I cannot recall exactly how often these visits happened. I can only remember one instance where I recall receiving such a visit from my manager, following which I received positive feedback. An example of one of the things they observed was whether trainers were utilising role play to practice different transactions and scenarios in quiet periods (rather than simply waiting for the next customer to come into the branch).
37. When I moved into the Quality Assurance & Training Lead role in 2019 I received more formal training. I remember receiving specific training around the 10/20/70 training model used by POL (I understand this to be 10% online training, 20% classroom training, 70% on-site training). There was also an accreditation process operated by POL which required people to complete certain tasks and evidence them in order to become accredited. These tasks were set out in a PDF booklet and I would discuss with my manager how I was going to achieve each of them. I achieved an "intermediate" accreditation shortly before I moved into the Business Support Manager role in 2021. I exhibit to this statement the framework for this accreditation (**WITN06380103**). I was pleased to receive the accreditation, and I understand that I was one of the first POL employees to do so.

38. We were also observed by a manager on a quarterly basis, who would assess whether we were "competent", "competent with development needs", or "not competent" and provide feedback.
39. When I was in the Quality Assurance & Training Lead role, we also had weekly calls to catch up with other trainers. Every six weeks we would have a wider team meeting during which one trainer would deliver a 30-minute training session over Microsoft Teams to the other trainers, and the other trainers would provide feedback.
40. I have been asked to explain the training I provided to persons on the use of the Horizon IT system.

TRAINING PROVIDED TO PERSONS ON THE USE OF HORIZON

Training delivery

Field Support Advisor

41. In my role as Field Support Advisor, I delivered training in-branch. For the Postmaster, this training would have followed on from a period of classroom training which all new Postmasters received.
42. I would note that Field Support Advisors are typically responsible for training Postmasters, and Postmasters are then in turn typically responsible for training their staff, however we would often help train staff as well. Additionally, we provided Postmasters with resources to assist them with training staff.

Quality Assurance & Training Lead

43. As a Quality Assurance & Training Lead my role included delivering classroom training. I would teach a classroom of up to eight delegates who each had access to a training Horizon terminal. The training was offered to Postmasters

but they were always welcome to bring their assistants to the course as well. We always tried to make a minimum of two spaces per branch available on each course and in my experience these were usually filled. The training was held in CTOs across the country.

Business Support Manager

44. In my current role as a Business Support Manager, I provide early days support when a new branch opens or is transferred to a new Postmaster. I provide one initial visit when the branch first opens, followed by another visit one week later. After that I visit the branch once a month for the first six months. The visits can last up to a whole day depending on the level of support the Postmaster requires. In my experience, the emphasis of the Business Support Manager role is on the Postmaster receiving training and broader support on what he or she wants (such as if they have specific queries or areas where they want help), rather than it being limited to what the trainer would otherwise cover based on the transactions presented by customers on the day. As a Business Support Manager I now also have more options for resources which I can direct Postmasters to for additional support.

Training content

Field Support Advisor

45. As noted at paragraph 41 above, when I was a Field Support Advisor, training was delivered in-branch. This meant that the content of the training was often determined by the customers who visited the branch, and the transactions they wanted to carry out. This would cover points such as banking, postage, bill payments and travel. If the training was taking place in a new branch which had

not yet built up a customer base, there would more often be quieter periods during which we would discuss transactions in theory or act out transactions in role play. Towards the end of the day, I would train the Postmaster on end-of-day matters such as preparing for the postman and cash declarations.

46. I had a checklist of topics to cover, and I would try to use each on-site training session to cover as many as possible. These checklists were stored on SharePoint and could be printed off to use as a training aide. We were encouraged to download the most up-to-date version of the checklist each time we used one. I also had access to a bank of other resources and training materials including guides on how to account for the lottery, how to balance and how to do the accounting at the end of each day. These were stored on EASE, which was a site hosted by SharePoint. EASE was later called the Knowledge Centre. Certain guides were specific to either local or main branches.
47. Around 2015, the checklists became part of the branch contact files ("**BCFs**"), which were a more formal record of the training delivered on-site. Field Support Advisors were required to upload a BCF to SharePoint detailing the subjects that had been covered in training.

Quality Assurance & Training Lead

48. When I was a Quality Assurance & Training Lead, classroom trainers were provided with the PowerPoint presentation and the trainer notes, as well as the training Horizon terminals and other training aides such as mock parcels, mailsacks, labels etc. My timetable for providing this classroom training alternated between one week of onboarding for new Postmasters, and one week of optional refresher courses for existing Postmasters. These refresher

courses were documented in a training catalogue which was available to all Postmasters. Postmasters could approach their Area Manager and request to attend a particular course.

49. There was a limited number of topics which could not be covered in the classroom but had to be taught on-site, for example MoneyGram.

Business Support Manager

50. In my current role I do not generally provide training directly as this is provided by classroom trainers and Field Support Advisors (now called on-site trainers) as set out above. In my first visit to the branch, I explain what tools are available to help Postmasters manage their business. This includes e-learning, refresher classroom training sessions, and how-to videos which are available on the branch hub and cover a range of topics.
51. During my visits I assess what the Postmaster is doing well, and what they are not doing so well and need further support on. I also review the relevant Branch Insight Tool (**BIT**) in advance of the visit to check whether they are managing their cash accurately. However, the main priority of the visit is to speak to the Postmaster and ask how they are doing and what support they require. One example of an issue I occasionally deal with is when a Postmaster accidentally presses the "Declare Stock" button on Horizon. This button overrides the automated stocklist in Horizon and prompts a Postmaster to input their stock manually for the rest of the trading period. Due to the number of items listed for selection, Postmasters usually make an error when recording stock manually, causing discrepancies. As mentioned in paragraph 73 below, I suggested this button be removed. Other examples of typical activities I carry out with the

Postmasters include processing remittances for stock, or resolving mail segregation errors.

Balancing

Field Support Advisor

52. When I was a Field Support Advisor, the amount of training delivered on balancing varied from branch to branch. It depended on the Postmaster's own availability and how much support they required. I would always try to include at least two sessions on balancing with each Postmaster in on-site training and I would also visit the branch on the first Wednesday after the initial training, after branch opening to assist with a Trading Period Balance. If it seemed as though a Postmaster was struggling, I would always try to offer them more support. In my experience (across the three training roles I have held) Postmasters did not find balancing to be a particular issue (i.e. relative to other areas of the training that I deliver). However, a balancing error has consequences in a way that other parts of the job do not and it is therefore important that Postmasters ensure they understand it.

Quality Assurance & Training Lead

53. When I was a Quality Assurance & Training Lead, all delegates received at least two sessions on balancing as part of their classroom training. Mains branches typically had an additional day of training, which featured a third session on balancing.

Business Support Manager

54. In my current role, I can recommend training on balancing to Postmasters who are struggling. This could be refresher classroom training, or e-learning. In my

experience, not all Postmasters can find the time to attend an in-person course around running their branch(es), so we try to make other resources available to them as well.

Identifying the cause of discrepancies

Field Support Advisor

55. As a Field Support Advisor, in my experience, training on identifying discrepancies was not typically provided. I do not think it was the case that it was avoided, but the training was typically reactive to what was happening in the branch on any given day, so unless a discrepancy actually arose, how to identify or investigate it would not be covered. In my view this meant that Postmasters did not get enough training on this subject, and in my subsequent role I was involved in improving this (see paragraph 57).
56. We would sometimes give Postmasters hints and tips on how to deal with discrepancies if they came up – for example, we would tell them that if a discrepancy was divisible by nine, then it was probably caused by a transposed figure (this is where the numbers in a figure are reversed, for example 52 instead of 25 - the difference between the two figures (27) is always divisible by 9; I learnt this from more experienced staff when I was working in-branch). Other than that, I would often advise Postmasters that if they encountered a problem, they should report it to the BSC immediately.

Quality Assurance & Training Lead

57. Prior to starting in the Quality & Assurance Training Lead role in 2019, I was not aware that specific training on identifying discrepancies existed, however we would cover it on an intervention visit. When I applied for the role of Quality

Assurance & Training Lead, as part of the interview process, I was asked to prepare a presentation on a topic that I thought Postmasters should learn about. I chose to present on investigating discrepancies, based on the experience that I had in audit (as well as training). As an auditor, we would print certain Horizon reports in a certain order to find the cause of the discrepancy. I thought it would be useful for Postmasters to know how these reports worked so that they could look for the cause of the discrepancy themselves. I wanted them to have the skills that they needed.

58. I continued to raise the need for this training with my manager at the time, Maree Young, in one-to-one sessions after I was appointed to the role. She was supportive of my suggestion to introduce the identifying discrepancies training and seemed to want to carry the idea forward. She asked me what format I considered would be best, to which I responded classroom training. Ultimately, the presentation I prepared went on to be used in the development of classroom training for Postmasters on investigating discrepancies, which was rolled out in summer 2020. This "Investigating Discrepancies" training session was a non-compulsory half-day (3-hour) course in a classroom. As covered in paragraph 75 below, I would have liked the course to be compulsory. In my experience of delivering the session, each of the eight Horizon terminals in the classroom would have been set up with three discrepancies built in prior to the Postmasters arriving. The first discrepancy was the same across all eight terminals, the next two discrepancies were different for each of the eight terminals. The Postmasters would then have to work to resolve the discrepancy with support from the trainer. I am not sure whether the format of the course is still the same now.

Business Support Manager

59. In my current role I am able to recommend training on identifying discrepancies to Postmasters. This training could take the form of classroom training or an e-learning module. I can also request an intervention where issues have been identified. This could be a phone call or a visit from a trainer in order to deliver additional training on an area that the Postmaster has demonstrated having difficulty with. It could also be a support visit from a member of the audit team to find the source of the discrepancy, which is intended to provide support to (rather than to investigate) the Postmaster.

FEEDBACK RECEIVED FROM TRAINEES

60. I have been asked to set out my recollection of any specific or general feedback I received from trainees on the training available, and what I did with such feedback.

Field Support Advisor

61. In my role as Field Support Advisor, after the end of a training session in the branch, we would leave a feedback form with the Postmaster. This was left with a prepaid envelope for the Postmaster to complete and return in their own time, after the trainer had left the site. The feedback was always anonymous and asked Postmasters to rate different aspects of the training on a scale of 1-5. During this period an external organisation called Kendata was responsible for gathering the feedback, which would then be passed on to the POL managers. Feedback was not normally passed on to the trainer as a matter of course, so I would tend to assume that a lack of feedback indicated that I had done a good job. On the other hand, if one trainer regularly received the same piece of

negative feedback, this would be passed on. We had to reach a certain feedback score for our manager to be satisfied. I do not recall ever receiving any specific negative feedback on my own training.

62. In addition, I understood that my manager would sometimes contact the Postmaster by telephone after a training session to ask whether the Postmaster was satisfied with the training that had been provided.
63. Postmasters did not generally share their views on the content on the training with me, beyond saying that they were happy with the training received. Considering they were new to the job, and new to Horizon, it was difficult for them to be aware of areas on which they may have liked further training. They may have formed views on the training content later, with the benefit of hindsight, but I do not recall any occasion where a Postmaster shared such views with me.

Quality Assurance & Training Lead

64. In the Quality Assurance & Training Lead role we had a similar form for requesting feedback, which we would leave on the desks of the delegates on the last day of training. The responses would be input into Microsoft Forms, along with a photo of the paper form, which would be saved onto a database. As far as I am aware, a new procedure for gathering feedback has been introduced since then, but I am not aware of the details.

Business Support Manager

65. In my current role, there is no formal process of requesting feedback however I encourage people to share their views with me by being generally open and honest.

AWARENESS OF BUGS, ERRORS OR DEFECTS IN THE HORIZON IT SYSTEM

66. I have been asked if I was aware of any bugs, errors or defects in the Horizon IT System when I provided training, and if not, to explain whether my approach to training would have differed if I were aware that Horizon IT System had bugs, errors and defects.
67. I was not aware of any bugs, errors or defects in Horizon. In my own experience working in a branch, I do not recall experiencing any issues (apart from the point I note at paragraph 25 above about the earlier system being quite slow). In my later role as a trainer, I was assured by people in more senior positions, whom I trusted, that there were no issues, as noted at paragraph 34 above. The rumours that I had heard did not impact on the training that I delivered because I was confident on the basis of my experience and what I had been told that Horizon was not a faulty system.
68. If I had believed there were issues with the system, especially issues which would affect people in the ways that have later become apparent, I would not have wanted to continue working for POL, either as a trainer or in any other capacity. I trusted when I was told by the business that the system was robust and that there were no issues that this was the truth.

ADEQUACY OF TRAINING ON HORIZON

69. I have been asked to consider whether, in hindsight, I consider the training on Horizon to have been adequate.

Balancing and the general use of Horizon

70. Generally speaking, I believe that the training provided was adequate. However, everyone's needs are different and what may have been adequate

for one person may not have been adequate for someone else, for example someone with less business experience may struggle to grasp the concepts being explained as quickly as others. I would have liked to see a wider training offering being made available for those who needed it.

71. I would note that the length of time new Postmasters spend in classroom training when acquiring a branch has reduced over time. When I first joined POL, this phase of training was two weeks; as I understand it, it is now 2-3 days. My understanding is that one reason behind this is to reduce the cost to the Postmaster (i.e. by reducing the amount of time they are away from their branch). On a related note, one other point to bear in mind is that in my experience, when a Postmaster has recently opened a new branch they have often bought a new retail business alongside it and they have multiple responsibilities demanding their time and attention (including e.g. putting retail stock on the shelves, meeting and training new staff, learning the retail till system, etc). Horizon training is, of course, important, but it is not always the number one priority for Postmasters.
72. I believe that classroom training is becoming more structured, which helps to ensure that Postmasters receive adequate training. In 2019, I am aware that a checklist of "non-negotiables" for setting up the classroom were introduced. My understanding is that this was implemented in order to address some of the issues that arose in the Group Litigation (again, I am not aware of which ones). Balancing was included as a standalone session on the classroom training agenda.
73. Turning to a specific example of how training could be improved, as indicated in paragraph 51 above, the "Declare Stock" button caused significant issues

with balancing for Postmasters. As far as I am aware, trainers suggested on more than one occasion that the button be removed. I understand, however, that the button is involved in certain back-end processes in Horizon and cannot be changed, and also that it would be expensive for Fujitsu to make this kind of change to the system. Furthermore, when I was in the Quality Assurance & Training Lead role as a classroom trainer, there was nothing in the guides that were provided to Postmasters to tell them not to press this button. I used to tell people to write it in their guides themselves. I am not sure whether this instruction has since been included in the guides given to Postmasters.

Identifying the cause of discrepancies

74. In the first six years of my time as a trainer with POL, in my experience, there was not enough training on identifying the cause of discrepancies. That is why, when I applied for the Quality Assurance & Training Lead role, I said I wanted to see more training on this subject and prepared the proposal that I refer to at paragraph 57 above.
75. As noted above, the course is optional. I would have liked to see identifying the cause of discrepancies as part of the basic training package, but it is not. As a Quality Assurance & Training Lead, I used to encourage all the branches who attended a classroom training course with me to book to attend the session after the branch has been open for three months. In my current role I still occasionally recommend this course, but less frequently as it will usually have been recommended to Postmasters by someone else during the formal training sessions (i.e. classroom training or in-branch training provided by a Field Support Advisor, now called an on-site trainer). If it appeared that a branch was

encountering problems and I thought they needed the training, I would definitely recommend it.

Statement of truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed: **GRO** _____

Dated: 19 January 2023

Index to the First Witness Statement of Joanne Scott-Ison

| No. | URN | Document Description | Control Number |
|------------|--------------|---|-----------------------|
| 1 | WITN06380101 | Email from Jane Rattue dated 11 September 2014 | POL-0104294 |
| 2 | WITN06380102 | Email from Julia Marwood dated 14 August 2015 | POL-0104295 |
| 3 | WITN06380103 | Quality Assurance & Training Lead Accreditation Framework (February 2020) | POL-0104296 |

Witness Name: Joanne Scott-Ison
Statement No.: WITN06380100
Dated: 19 January 2023

**THE POST OFFICE
HORIZON IT INQUIRY**

**WITNESS STATEMENT OF JOANNE
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