

Witness Name: Michael Denison

Statement No.: WITN07330100

Dated: 13 January 2023

POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF MICHAEL DENISON

I, MICHAEL DENISON, will say as follows...

1. I have prepared this statement based on my memory of a period of employment that was more than twenty years ago. Specific knowledge is limited and any opinions made are my own.
2. I was employed at the Post Office between December 1971 to March 2005, predominantly working in the Post Office Counters business. For the purposes of this statement, I have concentrated on the period from the 1990's to 2005. In the mid 1990's I was a Retail Network Manager responsible for the operational performance of mainly urban Post Offices in a defined area of Bradford. Horizon was rolled out in my area during the 1990's as far as I remember, but I cannot be more specific. I was never involved in the development of Horizon or with the ICL Pathway/Fujitsu contract negotiations.
3. I have been asked to describe any training and/or instruction I received in relation to the Horizon IT project and/or when working in the NSBC. At some

point I must have received training on the Horizon system, but I cannot remember when, or the details of the training. I was familiar with the paper accounting procedures prior to Horizon, so I was best placed to support post offices through the transition. Formal training of subpostmasters was carried out by a dedicated team. I think this was carried out on a 1 to 1 basis possibly in Post Offices. Retail Network Managers [RNMs] supported the initial roll out by providing assistance on balancing days where required. This was targeted to offices that had been identified as having difficulties.

4. Sometime around the early part of the 2000's I was seconded to NBSC. I have been asked to describe my experiences working in the NBSC, including my responsibilities and any projects I was involved in. A small team of RNM's were tasked with developing process maps with technical support to allow a review of the RNM role. Support normally provided by RNM's locally would eventually be provided by NBSC call centre staff remotely, using the process maps. I cannot remember when this work took place, or when it was rolled out operationally.
5. I was recruited to manage two teams in NBSC with specific responsibilities to improve quality and accounting performance. One team dealt with the improvement of quality of work provided to our clients (DWP, Girobank, and NS amongst others). A second team was responsible for providing support in respect of accounting issues. Both teams had their own manager, working to myself. Statistics were provided to the Retail Line. My teams challenged poor performance and helped post offices with improving their quality and correcting their accounting errors.

6. NBSC was in operation before I joined the planning team. Their role was to field queries from post offices and contact RNM's to resolve them. After the review was introduced, the call centre staff dealt with the queries remotely using the process maps provided. In the main, my staff made outgoing calls to raise issues with Post Offices about their performance. They may also have had incoming calls requesting assistance, but I can provide no details of what they were.
7. I have been asked if there were any specific requests for support or events that I consider to be important to the Inquiry's terms of reference. I don't recall any specific request for support from the NBSC teams. Retail Line support was provided in terms of monthly statistical information, as far as I can recall.
8. I have been asked what the most common types of calls I received were, and how they were resolved. As stated above, interaction with Post Offices was mainly outgoing calls. I have no information on the types of calls received by my team.
9. I had two teams working for me, at two different locations. Each team had a line manager. I cannot remember the strength of staff working in these teams. As far as I am aware the resource was adequate.
10. I dealt with issues which resulted from my team's workload. I liaised with Heads of Retail Network by providing advice backed by statistical information.
11. I have been asked about the attitude of members of the NBSC to subpostmasters. As far as I am aware, my staff dealt sympathetically with Post

Office staff queries, but they had sometimes to deliver difficult messages by reminding Postmasters of their obligations to improve quality, and to correct accounting errors promptly.

12. I cannot speak for the NBSC call centre helpline, but as far as I am aware, my teams provided adequate assistance.
13. I was not aware of any bugs, errors or defects with the Horizon Accounting System when I was an RNM or when I worked at NBSC. The high volume of accounting errors, large and small, following the introduction of Horizon was raised at team meetings with our Head of Retail Network (I can't recall his name). The official line from Post Office Counters appeared to be that there were no known issues with the Horizon IT System. RNMs were aware of poor accounting records because we checked accounts when we visited offices when error notices were not brought to account promptly, from audit reports.
14. I was at NBSC for around 18 months, after that period I joined another planning team, reviewing the size of the network. I retired at the end of this project in March 2005.
15. I want to emphasise that the Retail Line were given assurances by Post Office Counters management that there were no issues with the Horizon IT system. It came as a complete shock to me that this has been proven incorrect. In retrospect I believe that Horizon technology was rushed through too quickly without sufficient evaluation before rollout.

Statement of Truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed:

GRO

Dated:

13 January 2023