

Witness Name: Kenneth Marsh

Statement No: WITN07740100

Dated: 13 January 2023

## POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

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### FIRST STATEMENT OF KENNETH MARSH

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I, Kenneth Marsh will say as follows:

#### INTRODUCTION

1. I was employed by Post Office Limited as a Horizon Field Officer between January 2000 and February 2001.
2. This witness statement is made to assist the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry (the 'Inquiry') with the matters set out in the Rule 9 Request dated 3 January 2023 (the 'Request').

#### BACKGROUND

3. I started at the Post Office Limited in 1995, as a counter clerk based at East Finchley main branch office and retired in 2006. In approximately October or November 1999 the branch received an internal memo advertising for a temporary post as a Horizon Field Officer. I applied and got the job and started on 17 January 2000 and worked in this role until approximately February 2001.

I then returned to my role as counter clerk at East Finchley branch and remained there until my retirement in 2006.

4. I attended a training session for 3 days in January 2000 and I think it was in St Albans, but I am not certain. Training was a bit of a struggle as I was provided with a huge manual. We also had a classroom type setting where we sat in front of a computer. After this training I went to a couple of branch offices with a more experienced Horizon field officer and shadowed them for up to another 6 days.
5. My responsibility was to train sub postmasters how to use the Horizon system. Most of the offices I visited were sub-post offices which could be a small post office in a convenience store.
6. I was one of about 100 Field officers who worked in teams of about 25. I was in the team that covered the North Thames and East Anglia area. We each received a mobile phone, a Peugeot car and a road map.
7. Before we were sent to a sub post office, we would receive a scheduling report for the following week that would provide us with the details of the office we were visiting, the name of the sub postmaster, how many staff worked there and what system was currently in place. We would also be informed of what service they offered, such as the lottery. This was so we knew what training needed to be offered. Most were still using a manual system at this time for post office transactions.
8. Hotels would be booked for the team in a particular area, usually about 3 or 4 of us would be sent to the same vicinity. I would Ring up the post offices on my schedule the week before to talk to people and to get an idea of what they were expecting from the training.

9. On the day scheduled for our visit we were required to arrive about 2 hours before the post office shut. Some of the smaller post offices closed half day so we could arrive anytime as long as it was 2 hours before closing time.
10. I would usually arrive at the post office early on the first day as there would also be a technical team attending to fit the hardware and software at the same time.
11. The first day was always hectic. The main balance day was always a Wednesday but all the post offices that were having their software and hardware fitted and a visit from a Horizon field officer had to do a balance of the books on the day of the visit. This is why I would arrive early on the visit day to assist the sub postmaster to balance the books.
12. I can remember having a few late nights staying with sub postmasters to balance their books. Once their books were balanced then I would enter the details on the Horizon system and make sure they balanced again on the Horizon system. We always managed to balance the books in the end.
13. Once the books had been balanced and the Horizon system was showing a balance then I would call the post office main office and say that the sub-post office was successfully migrated. Then the system would go live.
14. I would help with practical stuff and stand with the postmaster to help them to get on to the system. I would be there for two days to assist them.
15. I can only talk for myself but sometime if I felt the sub postmaster was struggling I would go back another day.
16. After the two days training another visit would be made the following Wednesday after the initial visit so that I could help with the sub postmasters doing the first Wednesday balance using the Horizon system.

17. I would leave my mobile number with the sub postmaster. Sometimes they would call me 6 months after the visit. They also had helpline numbers to ring. In exceptional circumstances they could be recommended for additional support. I never had a request for this, but I knew it was available.
18. There was no specific request for support from sub postmasters or complaints that I consider to be important to the Inquiry as they were usually just about daily transactions and all minor stuff.
19. The resources I had available to me in assisting and resolving calls for support were mainly provided by my team leader, John Dallimore. He was very experienced, and I had a mobile phone I could use to call him. I also had numbers I could call to get help. I was not office based so most of my contact with my team was by phone. Personally, I believe that there was enough support for me.
20. In my view sub postmasters did have adequate training and support to use Horizon.
21. I consider that I did provide adequate advice and assistance on Horizon to sub postmasters.
22. I was not aware of any bugs, errors or defects within the Horizon IT system when I was a field support officer.
23. It became apparent to me after a few months of being a field support officer and because of my experience working in a main branch post office that the Post Office needed a system in place to know where cash was. All the offices I visited had different systems.

24. Some would put money in a jar if their balance was incorrect and then see if it balanced the week after and would put the money in to balance the books. It was a bit of an eye opener for me.
25. Some of the offices had masses amounts of cash and security was lax. It was difficult for a lot of the sub postmasters when the Horizon system was installed as it was very different to how they were used to working.
26. I do remember that when we finished the temporary position, we all received a letter of thanks and a bonus of £900.00
27. Following my return to East Finchley Branch Office, neither me or any other staff members had any issues with the Horizon system, nor do I recall any other main offices reporting glitches or bugs.

Statement of Truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**GRO**

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

13/1/2023