

Witness Name: Stella Saunders

Statement No.: WITN06410100

Dated: ~~XX~~ February 2023

## POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

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### FIRST STATEMENT OF STELLA SAUNDERS

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I, Stella Saunders, will say as follows...

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. I am a former employee of Post Office Limited ('POL') and held the position of trainer as a Field Support Advisor ('FSA') in 2012 until 2016.
2. This witness statement is made to assist the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry (the '**Inquiry**') with the matters set out in Rule 9 Request dated 19 January 2023 (the '**Request**')

#### **BACKGROUND**

3. I joined Post Office in May 1998 as a retail assistant. I was then sent on a 6 week training course to become a Counter Clerk in 1999. Was promoted to Assistant Branch Manager 2011. Joined the Network Support as a Field Support Advisor in 2012 until 2016 when I left taking voluntary redundancy.

#### **Horizon IT system**

4. I was a counter clerk when Horizon was introduced we had two colleagues attend training to show us in the branch as well as all staff attending a days course. When I became an ABM I then got to know more of the system as had to learn the back office . As an FSA I would use Horizon for
  - a) Classroom Training
  - b) Training on site
  - c) Audits and Burglaries

When I became an FSA the requirements for the role was to have a good knowledge of Post Office products, Branch procedures and Branch Accounting. All of which I had with my roles within the Post Office especially as my role as an ABM using the back office with losses and gains and rolling the office into the next balance period .

#### **Training Delegates**

5. I have been left for 6 years so I cannot remember a lot of the contents I have no records to help me so I will try my best .
  - a) Classroom trainingWe would usually have 6-8 delegates which would be a full 2 weeks course.

We would show them the horizon system how to navigate it , user ids, how to cash up how to do dailies every day on wednesdays how to balance do weekly's. All products were shown and practiced daily we did role play with them . Gave them all necessary handouts of dailies and balancing procedures and losses and gains. We would send a report to the crown branch if a delegate was from there or to the on-site trainer for sub-postmaster showing what had been covered. The crown staff would have someone shadow them in branch for a further 2 weeks if possible. Sub postmaster would have a trainer on site for 2 weeks which could be extended if needed if bodies available. Within that time 2 balances would have been completed and if loss or gains were present that would be dealt with guiding them how to find it and always stressing to them when we were not present they must ring NBSC for help and support .

**General feedback**

6. Sub postmasters were always great to work with as they were so glad to have had 2 weeks classroom and 2 weeks on-site training with us by then they were more than confident with all aspects of running their Post Office. We had to leave kendetta forms on how they felt the training had gone so our Field Team Leader would share with us and I do not recall ever having a bad report so presumed they were pleased with our training. The only negative feedback I was aware of would be from staff in branches of Co-ops, McCoys can't remember some of the shops but they would not be happy to have to train on the horizon as they felt it was being forced on them and they were happy just to be serving on their tills not Post Office tills but we usually were able to gain their confidence to enable them to take it on board .

**Bugs , Errors and Defects**

7. I was never aware of anything wrong with the horizon system if we ever had a loss or a gain would always believe it to be a human error. As in the Crown we never really experienced huge losses well not that I was aware of obviously within the sub postmasters I did become aware of losses which could not always be resolved. However I was fortunate never to experience this with any on-site training I delivered.

**Horizon IT Training**

8. The training given to sub postmasters in my experience was more than adequate for them to feel adequate and confident to run their branches professionally to enable them to follow the balance procedure and if they experienced a discrepancy in knowing how to look for it using the handout, transaction logs and then to ring NBSC.

**Statement of Truth**

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed:

**GRO**

Dated:

*8<sup>th</sup> February 2023*