

Witness Name: Anne Cox

Statement No.: WITN07960100

Dated: 1 February 2023

POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF ANNE COX

I, Anne Cox, will say as follows...

1. In 1995 I was employed at the Bridlington Branch Post Office as a counter clerk. I had 6 weeks' training in Leeds at the POL training department. My role included working on the counter and covering for the branch manager when required.
2. I then progressed to managing the Bransholme branch Post Office. On the 9th September 1999 I started 2 weeks' training at the Jarvis Hotel in Leeds for my role as a Horizon Field Support Officer [HFSO], where I started migrating offices in our region. I completed the project in circa April 2001.
3. I then began my role as a Tier 2 team leader at the NBSC in Barnsley straight after finishing on Horizon - I completed my role as a Horizon Field Officer as the role out was complete in my area. I received ITIL training and passed the exams relating to call centre management. I then moved to "Problem Management" within the NBSC, a role that involved looking at and trying to correct the issues

raised by subpostmasters. I liaised between POL, Fujitsu and Royal Mail to find a solution to the issues raised. In January 2004 I applied for voluntary redundancy and left POL.

4. The 2 weeks' training in Leeds, beginning on the 9th September 1999, involved being shown how to migrate the stock and cash onto the new Horizon system and balance the migration. There were 8 of us to be trained by ex-army instructors. We then started to migrate Post Offices and were shadowed by one of the members of the "Live Trial" team, who stayed with us for several weeks. When I began my role as Team Leader at the NBSC I went on several Management courses and an ITIL course. I passed my exams relating to call centre management.

5. I have been asked to describe my experience working as an HFSO. My responsibilities as a HFSO were to arrive at the Post Office, introduce myself, and give the subpostmaster an overview of the migration, training and how long it would take. We received the paperwork a week in advance for the offices I was due to migrate. Some offices closed at mid-day on a Wednesday for balancing so I would always be there 1 hour before closing and wait for the Fujitsu representative to arrive, and then for the sub postmaster to complete the balance. Once I received the balance sheet I could migrate the stock and cash onto the new Horizon system. On day 2, I would set up log-in usernames for all the staff and give them the training required to help them navigate the system. Day 3 would be giving more training on "end of week" cut offs for the different

reports, and how to send them to the correct agencies. When I arrived at the Post Office designated to me I would wait for the Subpostmaster to complete his/her balance. I would then migrate the stock and cash onto the Horizon system and would stay to answer any questions. I would spend all day at the same branch training and supporting the staff.

6. As a HFSO we would advise the subpostmaster to rely on the NBSC for help, and if I felt that the office was not fully understanding the Horizon system, I flagged it up with the Horizon team back in Leeds to give them extra training.

7. As HFSOs we had a team leader and had regular "one-to-ones", where we would meet somewhere convenient to discuss our progress any issues we had.

8. I have been asked to describe my experiences working in the NBSC, including my responsibilities and any projects I was involved in. At the NBSC I was responsible for a team of Tier 2 call handlers, who tried to resolve any calls that could not be closed at Tier 1. To reinforce the quality of their service I would listen in to the calls to make sure they were giving the correct information to the subpost- masters. I was responsible to my manager for the conduct and professionalism of my team. In my role within Problem Management a problem arose around the new benefits (purple) card issued by DWP, as subpostmasters were completing and submitting the form incorrectly, which caused issues, so I created a team of people who went out to these offices to give further training to resolve these issues.

9. The NBSC was created specifically to support subpostmasters to navigate the new Horizon system. The ITIL process involved the call coming in from the subpostmaster, answered by Tier 1 and looking for the answer on the database. The database was created to use within the I.T.I.L. process by the NBSC and it contained information to help Subpostmasters navigate the Horizon system. If there was no solution, it was passed to Tier 2. If Tier 2 couldn't resolve the issue, it was passed on to "Problem Management" who worked with all the different agencies that used Horizon to find a fix. The agencies that involved in finding a fix would be Fujitsu, ICL Pathway and the Post Office. It was then passed to "Change Management" to alter the database with the correct information, so that if any other subpostmaster phoned the NBSC with the same problem, it could be resolved at Tier 1 level. When the solution was found in Problem Management, the solution was passed to Change Management to alter the NBSC database. These were procedure type problems e.g. a Subpostmaster would receive "special delivery" items that needed to be delivered by 1pm from a postman that had had no response at the address. An icon had to be created to enable the special delivery item to be scanned back into the system. Once the solution had been added to the database, it was then able to be resolved at Tier 1 level. I did have calls relating to Post Offices that could not balance. On Tier 2, as I had been on Horizon project, I was passed the call to try and help these people look for the misbalance.

10. I have been asked what the most common types of calls I received were, and

how they were resolved. The most type of calls received related to balancing, mainly to give help on producing "end of week" reports to DWP etc. I would call it "hand holding" and giving reassurance that they were doing it correctly. It was usually resolved within the ITIL process, but we had extra staff for balancing days as we knew that the level of calls would increase on that day. We had the database which was updated as the knowledge library grew. We also had a Horizon terminal on Tier 2 so that we could help to understand the problem. We could escalate system problems through to Fujitsu if we thought it was a system problem or problems with the kit. With the ITIL process in place the problems should have resolve themselves. In my opinion, the resources were there to resolve the "day- to-day" problems that we incurred.

11. In Tier 2 there were 6 teams of advisers and as team leaders we had a manager with whom we had "one to one" meetings on a personal level. We had a Team leaders meeting every week in which we discussed staff problems and any issues that had come across in the calls that we thought were unusual or hard to resolve. Our manager was extremely supportive and was always available to talk to.

12. I have been asked about the attitude of members of the NBSC to subpostmasters. Overall, in my opinion, the advisers at the NBSC, particularly in my team, had a good relationship with the majority of subpostmasters and treated them with the utmost respect.

13. During my time on Horizon several subpostmasters asked for extra training.

Whilst at the NBSC, we highlighted offices that were struggling and escalated that to my managers, as well as to the area managers for that specific office.

I would highlight any further training that, in my opinion, was required in a branch, I fed that information back to our support team in Leeds. It was then their role to assign further training.

14. In my opinion, the majority of subpostmasters had adequate training. There were a very few who due to their age or capacity to take on board the skills required to operate the Horizon system, were struggling. In these cases, I flagged in writing in my report that I completed for every office the problems that they were having.

15. In my opinion I delivered the training in a professional, friendly, approachable manner. I had a 100% migration rate success and I considered myself to have given the subpostmasters good training and good support.

16. When I was a HFSO I was also learning the system in detail and getting a depth of knowledge that helped others. When I was at the NBSC I was aware of problems with the Horizon system that had been escalated to Fujitsu. They were passed to Fujitsu for further investigation because we did not have the skill set to resolve these issues. The problems that I came across were mainly equipment failure, printers not working, screen freeze, having to re-boot the equipment, lack of signal in some areas.

17. My responsibilities were to look at and try to resolve issues raised on Tier 2

- a. The type of problems included procedure errors such as when the new card account was launched and a proportion of sub postmasters were sending in application forms incorrectly filled in.
- b. I would phone Fujitsu nearly every day to get an update on any problems assigned to me that they were involved with.
- c. When a problem was resolved then I would liaise with Change Management and then it was their role to pass that information on to the NBSC.

18. I am not aware of anything other than the points I have raised.

Statement of Truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed:

GRO

Dated:

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