

Witness Name: Peter Holmes  
Statement No.: WITN07380100  
Dated: ~~23~~ March 2023

## POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

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### FIRST STATEMENT OF PETER HOLMES

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I, Peter Holmes, will say as follows...

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. I am a former employee of Post Office Limited ('POL') and held the position of Service Support Advisor with the Network Business Support Centre ('NBSC').
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 30 January 2023 (the '**Request**').

#### **BACKGROUND**

3. Prior to employment with POL I was employed as branch manager of a multiple news agency responsible for all aspects of staff, cash and security.

4. I joined post office Ltd in June 2000 as part of a new tier two level team of advisors for the rollout of the new Horizon system for NBSC helpline for subpostmasters, their staff and Crown offices. I left Post office Ltd team January 2013 to join Royal mail team within the same building, I left this position June 2013 to take early retirement.
  
5. I am not aware of what the training process was for subpostmasters or their staff.
  
6. To the best of my recollection. At the start of my employment, There was a full day induction course followed by 5 weeks of counter training in a training room at a nearby Crown Post Office set up with horizon systems set in training mode. We covered all aspects as if working on the Post office counter including balancing how to account for monies coming in and out and all security processes. This was followed by a further 4 weeks of training at NBSC on their systems how to deal and log calls from PMs entering calls on the system and finding information via the knowledge Base on the system.
  
7. Calls were logged by the tier one advisors if they were unable to answer the query or the caller wanted specific information the call would be transferred to ourselves on second tier, this could involve navigation on Horizon talking through which icons to use.
  
8. I had call monitoring through out my employment and extra training was given if needed.

9. Group Training was given at regular times for updates and when new processes were introduced.
10. Client managers were invited to NBSC to talk and demonstrate changes and their processes.
11. I was at various times also invited to Crown offices to observe processes thus increasing my knowledge.
12. First line (tier 1) came under Royal Mail, second line (tier 2) came under Post Office Ltd. Some years into my employment NBSC changed from Post Office Ltd to come under Royal Mail call handling process of calls but my contract stayed with the same terms as under Post office Ltd. We were advised this was done for better call handling practice as Royal Mail Helpline worked in a way different to Post office Ltd. I believe they worked on a more scripted process where tier 2 worked from the same knowledge base on the computer but also used own knowledge which affected the times spent on calls.
13. I cannot recollect the correct amount of time given to answer calls or if different tiers were given different times, I seem to recall a figure of 240 seconds to resolve the call but calls could take longer on second line (tier 2 ).
14. During my time at NBSC a new level of advisors was introduced called ESG, I was part of this team, the team was able to call offices back, spend longer time with them until a resolution was achieved be it cash or a transaction problem.

We could get further information from client managers who were responsible for clients like DVLA, UKPA, Banking, utilities etc.

15. Calls were taken when an office has entered the wrong amount on horizon for a customer on an e.g. AP or banking transaction. There was a set process we had where we could try to retrieve the error, sometimes offices would press zero and then double zero twice in error i.e. making a 20.00 transaction into 200.00. If this was not noticed a loss would occur.

16. I dealt with balancing queries sometimes spending an hour or longer, sometimes doing multiple trial balances, we would go through all aspects of cash and stock figures, even asking if they had countered in their cash rem they had that week, a few said no they don't count that as they believe it is correct as it has come from the cash centre, I advised all cash and stock should be counted on delivery as discrepancies can still occur.

17. Sometimes we were successful in finding the error to a satisfactory conclusion but if we couldn't find the discrepancy the office had to rollover with the discrepancy be it a gain or loss.

18. One example I remember was a Pm was showing £502 loss, after spending sometime and asking him about cash and stock and numerous trial balances the Pm finally said he was £500 up the previous week but believed that was his, advised he will have misbalanced last week and to put it back into Post office cash pm balanced to £2.

19. If the office has a discrepancy that cannot be found the correct process to follow is to go to trial balance and rollover showing the discrepancy even if it is only a few pounds or pence loss or gain and then to go to balance again altering the cash figures by the discrepancy to rollover again to a zero discrepancy. I found some offices went to trial balance to get the discrepancy, did not rollover to show this discrepancy but altered the cash figure go to trial and rollover with a zero discrepancy so not showing the office had a discrepancy no matter what amount. The cash account would always then show a zero balance,

20. The Horizon deals with stock units either Shared - where 2 or more use the same cash and stock Individual - where 1 person has their own cash and stock When some offices were on shared units with more than 1 member of staff and suffering losses I would advise to put each staff on individual units then would have a better idea of where any discrepancies would be when balancing , some office said no to this idea.

**Statement of Truth**

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed:

**GRO**

Dated:

23/3/23