

Witness Name: Ann Cruttenden

Ref: WITN05620100

Dated: 16 March 2023

POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF ANN CRUTTENDEN

1. I, Ann Cruttenden, will say as follows:
2. In making this statement I would like to acknowledge the importance of the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry and offer my full co-operation to the Inquiry.
3. At the outset, I wish to confirm that I have been asked a number of general questions regarding the Post Office Horizon IT Project. I must point out that my recollection of the projects that I had any involvement with during the course of my career at the Post Office is limited given the passage of time. I have not been asked to comment on any specific documents and have not been provided with any documents by the Inquiry.
4. To confirm why I am providing this statement, on 24 August 2022 I received a written request from the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry for me to provide a written statement pursuant to Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006- Request 1, regarding issues with Horizon prior to roll-out. This Request contained 21 questions which the Inquiry asked me to address in my statement. For ease of reference, I have written out each question with its corresponding question

number. I prepared this witness statement with the assistance of my legal representatives, Mr Ian Manners and Ms Zoe Hunt of Ashfords LLP

BACKGROUND

Question 1: Please set out an overview of your role(s) within the Post Office.

5. My recollection of the exact dates and roles is not clear but the following is to the best of my recollection. Some of the role names and dates have been provided to me recently by Post Office's People Support Team.
6. After initially pursuing a career in nursing, I changed career and started with the Post Office commencing in 1985 when I began as a Counter Clerk in Brighton.
7. I cannot recall the exact timings but between 1985 and 1992 I was promoted to Assistant Branch Manager and then to Branch Manager.
8. Following a restructure and assessment process in 1992 I moved to London and between 1992 and May 2002 I worked as Retail Network Manager (RNM) and then as Retail Quality Manager (RQM) I do not have the exact dates but to the best of my recollection I spent 5-6 years as a RNM and then around 4 years as a RQM. As a result I would have been a RNM until 1997 or 1998.
9. As an RNM I was based in the Twickenham office and had responsibility for offices in outer London, such as Epson, Kingston and Caterham. It was a network facing role and I was responsible for supporting Crown Offices and sub post offices. To the best of my recollection, this was prior to the roll out of any Horizon systems.

10. I can recall that I had an assessment before I became RQM. This role was very different to the RNM role. I recall working with the Heads of Retail. I was also involved in supporting the development of RNMs working with more rural offices and identifying their training and development needs.

11. I recall that as an RQM I was involved in the majority of the quality activities such as Customer First and Business Excellence and I was the lead on achieving the Charter Mark' standard in a number of Crown Offices.

12. I have received information from People Support in relation to my roles at the Post Office between 2002 and my last day of service, 30 July 2011:

- 15 May 2002 – 31 January 2003: Transformational Change Manager
- 1 February 2003 – 30 April 2003: Management Admin
- 1 May 2003 – 24 September 2006: Operational Change Manager
- 25 September 2006 – 31 October 2007: Business Partner Network and Sales
- 1 November 2007 – 30 September 2010: Business Partner Operations and Network.
- 1 October 2010 – 30 July 2011: Operations and Market Solutions Manager.

13. My recollection is that as a Transformational Change Manager I was involved in a Branch Management Project. By way of brief explanation, the business was considering options for how Crown Offices could be managed looking at options for Senior Branch Managers. I was the lead within the project and worked with Human Resources to design and develop the restructure of

the Crown Office Management teams, including providing an assessment process to support their reorganisation. However this did not progress and I am unable to recollect why the business did not end up implementing the management structural changes.

14. According to the information provided, I then carried out a Management Administration role for around two months between February and April 2003 but I do not know what this role involved. I did seek clarification from the People Support Team but they were unable to provide any information.
15. Between 2003 and 2006 I worked as Operational Change Manager. My role was to help manage changes to the network and operations and ensure that there was steady flow in terms of the introduction of new developments. Over a year there would be approximately 1,200 changes, ranging from minor changes such as instructions to remove and return stock to brand new products or services, through to major changes such as the introduction of 'Chip and Pin'. The Network was the recipient of all of these changes and my role was to act as 'gatekeeper' and ensure that the changes were managed effectively into the network.
16. For example, I would help to avoid changes being implemented at peak periods in the business, trying to avoid branches having to deal with large changes at busy times in the month and the year. I would regularly do presentations to the Network lead teams, including the Heads of Retail, about upcoming changes. I can recall that Change Managers would go out and test with sub-postmasters and Crown Offices such things as communications and training. I believe that at a similar time to, or following the roll out of Horizon,

there was also 'Chip and Pin'. The actual technical project work and implementation was done by the programme teams.

17. Between 2006 and 2007, my job title was 'Business Partner Network and Sales' and then between 2007 and 2010, my job title was 'Business Partner Operations and Sales'. Both roles were within operations, and specifically the IT and Change Team from 2007. My focus was on change and not IT as I had no technical background in IT. There were stakeholders in all of the teams who would review and feed into the plans for changes, including the impact that these changes would have and what needed to be done. Sales teams were seeking to deploy new products and services whereas the Operational and Network teams were stakeholders to ensure these changes were managed into the network ensuring the support functions were also prepared.

18. My role as Operations and Market Solutions Manager was my last role at the Post Office. However, I was only in the role for a few weeks as I was off for over 4 months from the end of October 2010 until around March/April 2011 due to having major surgery. When I returned I took voluntary redundancy and spent my remaining time handing over before I left in June 2011.

Question 2: Please describe any qualifications you had.

19. At school I obtained GCSEs and any qualifications after that would have been internal and external courses which I completed during my career with the Post Office. I completed courses in Business Management and Client and Customer Relations at the Open University, as part of the training support

provided to me by the Post Office.

Question 3: Please set out any training you received.

20. At the Post Office I can recall that I completed the following courses:

- Coaching Performance
- Prince 2 Project Management
- Change Management
- Assessor Training
- Trauma Training
- Harassment Investigator Training
- Health and Safety
- I completed many more courses but I am unable to recollect and People Support have been unable to provide any details.

Question 4: Please describe any career progression within the Post Office.

22. Please see my replies to questions 1 – 3.

ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

Question 5: Please provide an overview of what contact you had with subpostmasters or managers and assistants working in Post Offices, if any.

23. As described above, as an RNM my responsibility was to support my network of offices, including with sub-postmasters, managers and assistants working in branches. I would provide assistance in relation to any problems which they may encounter as raised, such as problems with stock, mail pickup, new transactions or balancing issues. However, as far as I can recall this was

prior to Horizon and I cannot recall any of the businesses within my network being involved in any testing of Horizon systems.

24. As Operational Change Manager, my role was focused on the implementation of changes to the network but my direct contact with the network during this time was limited to a small number of events where I was involved in presenting to groups of branch representatives about upcoming changes. For example, I can recall presenting at an event in Scotland but I am unsure when this was and what it was for. They could have been something to do with Horizon systems or 'Chip and Pin' or for another reason.

25. I was relatively well-known within the business and the management teams within the network. So whenever I did do anything network facing, we would be asked questions and would deal with issues individual offices may have been having. For example, a sub-postmaster might contact me about a question concerning logistics I would then speak to the relevant person in logistics and relay the information to the sub-postmaster who had posed the question, letting them know what I had done. I would always try and leave them with the contact details for the correct person to contact if they had any further issues and I would contact their RNM on their behalf and advise what I had done. However, most branches would raise issues with their RNM or through the Helpline.

Question 6: Please describe whether you were responsible for providing subpostmasters or Post Office branches with advice or assistance.

26. Providing sub-postmasters or branches with advice or assistance was part of my role as an RNM (around 1992 – 1997/8). I was responsible for a designated area and would visit offices regularly and provide support and

advice.

Question 7: When issues were raised, how did you escalate these difficulties?

27. During my time as RNM, in general I can recall branches and offices having issues with things like stock, balancing, mail, abusive customers and transactions. These were all standard issues that the sub-postmasters would raise and I would assist them in sorting those out, by raising issues with relevant departments within the Post Office and Royal Mail and visiting for more direct support. Offices were visited regularly to see how they were getting on and if sub-postmasters were new, they would be visited more regularly.

28. I have explained above that during my later roles involved in delivering changes, my direct contact with branches and offices was limited. Any issues to do with communications and training would be dealt with by the relevant project teams and we would feed into the plans. Network trainers were stakeholders pre-deployment of projects/programmes.

Question 8: Please specify, if you have not already done so, how often any difficulties in the Horizon system?

29. As my RNM role, which was when I had most direct contact with the network, was pre-Horizon, I was not dealing with any Horizon difficulties during that time. During my roles after that, I did not become aware of any particular issues with Horizon, whether that be difficulties experienced by branches or difficulties reported to me by other parts of the business. I do not remember anyone on the network side saying that there were a lot of Horizon problems

nor do I recall any colleagues involved in change projects telling me about problems.

30. I assume that during the time of my Operational Change Manager role there would have been IT developments which were related to Horizon but I have no specific recollection of them. There was a lot of change happening within the business, all with their own project teams and managers, and we were assisting in ensuring that the pipeline of change being delivered to the network was manageable and easy to use by branches.

Question 9: Were there any steps that you thought should have been taken in response to any concerns that you raised that were not?

31. As I have mentioned above, I do not recall any Horizon related concerns being raised. I was not aware that there were major balancing issues happening post-Horizon. My focus would have been managing further changes as there was always continuous change.

Question 10: Was there anyone who you felt could have done more to assist or make things better for subpostmasters?

32. I cannot think of anyone who I felt could have done more to assist or make things better for sub-postmasters.

TRAINING

Question 11: If you were responsible for managing the contracts of subpostmasters, set out what steps you took to ensure that individuals felt confident when using Horizon.

33. I was not responsible for managing sub-postmasters' contracts following the roll out of Horizon.

34. I would have been responsible when I was RNM but not past 1997/8 so not when Horizon was happening. I did not manage their contracts apart of my role as an RQM. I did dismiss one sub-postmaster during the course of my role as an RNM - this related to an admitted case of theft following a routine audit.

Question 12: If someone said that he or she did not feel wholly confident with using Horizon, what steps did you take to assist them?

35. Please see above. No Horizon issues were brought to my attention. I have described above the steps I took to support the network during my role as an RNM and later when working as Operational Change Manager.

Question 13: Please explain whether you thought that any improvements could have been made to the training received by subpostmasters

36. As I was not aware of any difficulties being experienced by subpostmasters regarding Horizon, and I am not in a position to comment specifically in relation to Horizon related training improvements. I am aware that generally training was usually by way of trainers going out into the business and information being given, often through manuals and updates using Ops publications. Helplines were also available and branches would be able to contact their RNM in the event of any difficulties. When I was an RNM I would give sub-postmasters extra support as needed. Overall I felt that this was a

system which worked

37. As part of the Operational Change process training needs associated with changes were part of the process, as was communications I do recall some discussions around training in relation to the 'Post and Go' project but do not recall anything specific relating to Horizon or other projects as training materials and support was something we always fed into on projects.

ERRORS OR ISSUES WITH HORIZON SYSTEM

Question 14: Please explain whether you were aware of any issues or problems with the Horizon system.

38. I do not recall being aware of any issues or problems with Horizon. I expect any issues experienced by sub-postmasters would have been raised with their RNM or the Helpline following the roll out. As far as I am aware, the Horizon project had its own Change Managers in situ.

39. I cannot recall that anyone ever came to me and told me that there was a problem. Given my previous role as an RNM, I remained quite protective of the network and I believe that I would have become aware of issues from discussions with colleagues.

40. During my time working in operational change I was aware of balancing problems within one branch but also that this had been a longstanding problem for this branch. In that case, I believe auditors came in and looked at it but there was never any mention of the problem being due to Horizon as far as I am aware.

Question 15: If so, please set out who you received this information from or how you came to be aware of these issues and how widely known you consider them to have been.

41. Please see above my response to question 14.

Question 16: How did this knowledge impact upon how you dealt with subpostmasters or Post Office managers or assistants working in Post Office branches.

42. Please see above my response to question 14.

RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES

Question 17: Please explain whether you were involved in or party to any disputes between the Post Office and subpostmasters regarding any alleged shortfalls of money.

43. Aside from the incident I have described at paragraph 34 above, I had no involvement in disputes.

Question 18: If so, please describe the process by which any disputes were raised and resolved. Please specify any individuals you know to have been involved.

44. From my recollection and based on the incident I have described above which is my only experience of dealing with a dispute, issues in relation to shortfalls of money would come from the audit team. I recall that there would then be a process of suspension and investigation and interviews.

Question 19: Please describe whether you are aware of any contact or input

from Fujitsu in the resolution of any disputes. If so, please provide details including the names of relevant individuals from Fujitsu.

45. I am not aware of any contact or input from Fujitsu in the resolution of any disputes.

Question 20: Please give your view on whether there could have been any improvement in this process. Please identify who would have been responsible for implementing any improvement you suggest.

46. Given my very limited experience of any dispute process, I do not feel like I am in a position to express a view in relation to improving the process or who would have been responsible for implementing such improvements.

Question 21: Are there any other matters that you consider the Chair of the Inquiry should be aware of?

There is nothing which I think that I can usefully add to what I have said above.

Statement of Truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

GRO

Signed:

Dated:

16.3.23