

Witness Name: Shaun White

Statement No.: WITN05820100

Date: 16/03/2023

POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF SHAUN PAUL WHITE

I, Shaun White, will say as follows...

1. This witness statement is provided following receipt of a Rule 9 e-mail request for the provision of a written witness statement regarding matters falling within Phases 2 and 3 of the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry, which I received on 7 October 2022.
2. I was employed by Post Office Limited from April 2000, working at the Network Business Support Centre in Cortonwood until July 2009. During this time, I held several roles, (I do not recall the dates of these roles) with differing responsibilities. The sequence of my roles is as follows:
 - 2.1. NBSC Tier 2 Advisor. My role involved working within the contact centre support team, responding to enquiries made from Post Office staff with regards to business procedure. This included advice and guidance enquiries related to navigation of the Horizon System and balancing procedures. All calls received were recorded on the support desk toolset 'Remedy'. Remedy

allowed advisors to look up process and procedure using the Remedy knowledge base. Details of the response provided would be captured within Remedy. This allowed for trend analysis, improvements to advice (knowledge base information) and an audit trail to be captured. Calls would be passed to the Horizon System Help Desk if related to a technical query.

2.2. Complaints Officer working in the small customer relations team investigating and responding to complaints raised by Post Office staff. Complaints ranged from those regarding staff within the NBSC, advice given, time for call back, to complaints about other sections of the business such as Cash Handling and distribution (incorrect remittance, failed/ late deliveries), responsible for delivering and collecting cash from Branches. I do not recall any complaints with regard to the weekly balance and only recall one complaint about the Horizon System, which was regarding the need for a satellite dish and its positioning on a listed building. This was because there was no suitable broadband or mobile cover where the branch was located.

2.3. Trainer providing training to NBSC tier 1 and tier 2 advisors in relation to products Services and procedures. The training was related to the launch of new products such as the banking products, home insurance, Parcel Force products, stamp revaluation and based upon the information published in Counter News and the counter user guides. There was no assessment of staff before or after training was given.

2.4. NBSC Team Leader. I was responsible for leading a small team of tier 2 advisors working on the NBSC.

2.5. Training Manager. I was responsible for a small team of trainers delivering training to tier 1 and tier 2 staff within the NBSC.

2.6. Problem Manager. I was responsible for the investigation of emerging and recurring issues, performing root cause analysis to minimise adverse impact. The role was varied and included investigation of issues that were proving difficult to resolve and impacting some Post Office branches. Most issues were related to repeated telephony and broadband issues which became problematic to resolve. This was because the Public Switched Telephone Network PSTN (phone line) into a branch could be owned by the sub postmaster, Franchisee or Post Office depending upon whether the branch was a Crown Office, sub post office or part of a franchise. The broadband for the Horizon initially ran on a discrete Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) but was later moved to broadband over the post office dedicated PSTN. This being the telephone line that was in place for Post Office business and eligible to all or some funding from the Post Office. The broadband was provided initially by Energis and later Fujitsu. Consequently, there were issues that resulted because of the mixed estate that was in place; including sub postmasters ordering broad band for their own use, which would result in the broadband for the Horizon System being disabled and a lengthy process to get it re-installed; Difficulty in obtaining engineer visits, because Open Reach would charge if asked to investigate a PSTN issue and then identify an issue with the broadband. Further complicated because Open Reach were unable to fix the broad band if they had been asked to investigate a PSTN fault, due to the broad band being provisioned by another supplier, any investigation of a broadband issue would have to be initiated by the broadband supplier (Energis/ Fujitsu). This sometimes resulted in lengthy waits after a PSTN commissioned engineer visit finding no

fault, then needing a broadband engineer visit, which may be resolved by the same engineer. Engineer appointments at that time were within a 40 working hour window. Additionally, I recall examples of weather-related issues such as the distribution point being exposed and exposed pairs which tended to result in intermittent issues such as noise on the phone line, loss of the Horizon System when the wind blew in a certain direction hitting the DP or water ingress to an exposed pair following heavy rain. There was also, internal office issues such as too much equipment sharing the telephone line, knocking the broadband out when certain equipment was used, old extension cabling causing interference, extra extensions and such which would be difficult to pinpoint from an initial fault call and resulted in protracted investigations that usually were passed to me. On occasion I would encounter issues related to the weekly balance, maybe 3 or 4 in total, from memory.

Qualifications

3. 8 O levels and 1 A level. National Examining Board for Supervisory Studies and Chartered Institute of Insurance Financial Planning Certificate 1, 2 & 3. Information Technology Infrastructure Library Foundation Certificate.

Training Received

4. 3 weeks counter training and approximately 2 weeks training in NBSC toolsets and process at commencement of employment (April 2000).

Career Progression

5. I started as a Postal Officer and progressed to a CM3 Manager when I became a NBSC team leader, progressing to CM2 Manager level when undertaking the problem manager role.

Advice and assistance

6. My role as an NBSC Tier 2 advisor involved working within a contact centre answering telephone enquiries raised by Post Office branch staff. The calls were varied in nature and centred around business procedures such as how to enter a transaction onto the Horizon System, how to undertake the remittance procedure on Horizon and procedures for dealing with parcels for example.
7. All Post Office branches had to undertake a weekly balance. From memory this was at the close of business on Wednesday for most branches. Consequently, from mid-afternoon on a Wednesday there would be an increase in calls related to balance procedures. Towards the end of the day and Thursday morning the calls tended to be balance related.
8. My role within the Customer Relations Team involved telephone contact to understand the details of a complaint and responding to the complaint in writing once the investigation had completed.
9. My role as a problem manager involved some contact with Post Office branch staff when dealing with problem office issues. Problem Offices was the term used for issues that were specific to the branch network rather than product related. For example I would get involved with issues with mobile post offices being unable to receive broadband due to cable faults, issues with VSAT branches where the commissioning of the satellite was during Winter and the VSAT signal failed during the summer because there was a tree blocking the line of site to the

satellite, which wasn't an issue when there were no leaves on the tree, understanding why TransCash was being used with barcoded bills rather than scanning the bar code, issues with the Horizon System due to broad band connection problems as detailed earlier. This was usually by telephone to gather a better understanding of the issue and occasionally included a visit to the branch with representatives from Fujitsu and/or BT. A visit to the branch would be required when either BT or Fujitsu were adamant that the fault rested with the other party, after several engineer visits failed to resolve an issue, where an issue repeatedly returned following a fix. Branch visits have resulted in identifying issues with the internal telephony (extensions etc) within a branch, interference from Christmas lights impacting the broadband making the Horizon unusable, exposed distribution points because the cover had broken on the telegraph pole, overloaded telephone line due to there being too many extensions and equipment connected to the line such as fax machines, faulty telephone hand set such as DECT phones and also resulted in the compilation of a list of devices that when installed interfered with the broadband used for the Horizon System. These issues were generally seen as Horizon issues by branch staff as any loss in broadband connection would make the Horizon system unusable for online transactions which were becoming more prevalent.

10. I was responsible for providing advice and assistance to subpostmasters and Post Office Branches when I worked as a Tier 2 advisor at the NBSC. This entailed providing advice and guidance using the Remedy Knowledge base. The system allowed you to look up business process to provide advice and guidance.
11. Additionally, tier 2 advisors had access to various publications such as Counter news that were used as reference guides and to Horizon terminals that would

allow navigation queries to be answered. Any answer provided would be entered onto the Remedy system and retained to improve services and ensure that responses were accurate. This would allow other advisors to search advice given, should a repeat call be made or a member of staff question the advice given.

12. I have been asked how I escalated issues if they were raised. I don't recall raising any issues, but would seek guidance from a line manager, Product Manager or other escalation route if related to another side of the business. If a subpostmaster wanted to raise a concern these would be raised with their line manager. I think they were known as Retail Network Managers ('RNM') or something similar. From memory the name of the role changed several times.
13. Difficulties in relation to navigation of the Horizon System and how to input certain less frequent transactions, new transactions, change in procedures and stamp re-valuations were frequent. Wednesday PM and Thursday AM were predominantly calls asking for help with the balance. If a call was related to a Horizon issue such as a component failure the call would be passed to the Horizon System help desk.
14. Occasionally, a subpostmaster or RNM would suggest that the Horizon System was at fault if they had been unable to balance. On such occurrences the advice was to run a manual balance alongside the Horizon generated balance, I'm not sure if this was official Post Office advice or advice from Fujitsu. I'm not aware of any repeat calls where this was undertaken and an issue was identified. I'm unaware of what issues have been discovered with the Horizon System that resulted in this Public Enquiry but feel that running a manual balance in addition

to the Horizon balance could help identify if there was a potential system issue to investigate.

15. I don't recall any specific concerns being raised that were not addressed. I did feel that more support should have been provided to some subpostmasters when they were repeatedly having difficulties with the weekly balance. It was very difficult to provide support over the telephone when you could not see all the information needed to properly check the balance and it would have been better if on-site support was available. I believe additional training was available at a cost, but I'm not sure what other help was available.

16. I'm not sure if anyone could have done more to assist or make things better. I feel that the RNM team would be best place to answer as they are more aware of the support available.

Training

17. I have been asked if I was responsible for managing the contracts of subpostmasters. I was not responsible for managing the contracts of subpostmasters.

18. If someone said that they were not wholly confident with using Horizon, I would advise them to seek further training or discuss with their RNM.

19. I have been asked whether I thought that any improvements could have been made to the training received by subpostmasters. As part of my training I undertook a 2 or 3 week counter training course before further training within the NBSC. This was a closed course with dummy transactions within the counter training unit. I would not have been confident being responsible for a branch following that level of training, despite the best efforts of the trainer. The

transactions undertaken were quite complex and varied. Some transactions were less frequent than others and varied dependent upon office location and type.

Errors or issues with Horizon system

20. I was not aware of any errors or issues with the Horizon system. From memory we were assured by Fujitsu that the system was fully tested and forensically secure. My work dealing with problem branches involved working with Fujitsu to resolve issues.
21. Occasionally, an issue might be escalated, and I would request that one of 2 Fujitsu specialists would investigate. This usually entailed a site visit where the Fujitsu representative would shadow the subpostmaster for a period. I don't recall any such activity identifying a fault with the Horizon System, during my time with the business. The types of IT problems I dealt with were as disclosed earlier, problems with the telephone line/ broadband other equipment causing the Horizon System to lose connection, VSAT branches with unstable broadband connection, issues with mobile post office branches due to the extra wear and tear on the Horizon System causing terminals to fail, loss of broadband connection, printer problems, issues related to certain counters, not balance impacting, routing of power cables for the Horizon System due to the install of attack screens in open plan branches and power issues with regards to the Uninterrupted Power Supply for the Horizon terminal. Usually, the outcome of the site visits was the resolution of the issue due to the correct engineer being appointed or a fix at the time of the visit if possible due to replacement equipment being carried by the Fujitsu representative. I was made aware of the outcome of

any visit that I had instigated. I'm not aware of any action being taken against a SPM by POL as a result of a visit by Fujitsu.

Resolution of disputes

22. I have been asked to explain whether I was involved in or party to any disputes between the Post Office and subpostmasters regarding any alleged shortfalls of money. Occasionally, I would be contacted by Contract Managers asking if I was aware of any issues with the Horizon System as they were dealing with a dispute. As mentioned earlier I was unaware of any issues being found with the Horizon system and suggested undertaking a manual balance alongside the system generated balance to confirm if there was a system issue.
23. I do not recall any names of individuals to have been involved. My involvement was minimal.
24. I have been asked to describe whether I was aware of any contact or input from Fujitsu in the resolution of any disputes. I am not aware of any specific disputes that received input from Fujitsu. However, my work within problem management involved informing Fujitsu of any Post Office branch that encountered continuous issues with IT, either due to repeated loss of broadband, repeated engineer visits failing to resolve an issue or where further investigation was required to resolve an issue. I had 4 or 5 contacts for such activities. Unfortunately, I'm unable to recall all names except for Nick Crow, who would visit a Post Office branch and spend several days shadowing staff and troubleshooting, and Leighton Machin, who managed a team of Fujitsu staff who acted as escalation for Post Office branch issues.

25. I do not recall any Fujitsu input with regards to the resolution of any disputes, but as mentioned earlier Fujitsu would investigate any issues where there was strong evidence to suggest an issue with the system.

26. I feel more support should have been provided from a training perspective. In addition to this a team that could attend Post Office branches in person to help identify issues where repeated misbalances had been experienced would also have been a massive improvement.

27. These should have been implemented by the Post Office board. With regards to the support with repeated balance type issues, this should have been a regional team and working closely with the RNM and Contract Managers.

Statement of Truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed:

GRO

Dated: 16 March 2023