

Witness Name: Tracey Charles

Statement No.: WITN07810100

Dated 21 March 2023

## POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

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### FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF *TRACEY CHARLES*

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I, *Tracey Charles*, will say as follows...

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. I am a former employee of the Post Office Ltd and held a variety of positions with them.
2. This witness statement is made to assist the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry (the "**Inquiry**") with the matters set out in the Rule 9 Request dated 1 February 2023 (the "**Request**").

#### **PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND**

3. I started with the Post Office in 1991 as a Retail Assistant in the Post Shop based in Halifax.
4. After about two years I became a Postal Officer and worked on the counter. I was dealing with new recruits, and I would sit with them and show them the processes.

5. One of my colleagues told me about the role of HFSO and I decided to apply. I was successful getting the role straight away and did two sets of fixed term posts in the role. I think they were fixed term for about 6 or 12 months.
6. In between the roles, and after the roles ended, I came back to the branch as a Postal Officer.
7. I left the Post Office in May 2015.

#### TRAINING AND/OR INSTRUCTIONS

8. I cannot recall the training I received when I was in the first fixed-term post but on the second I recall we were sent laptops with a mock up system.
9. It was on laptops that we practiced the processes, but the system was set up in a way that you could only progress to the next stages/steps if you got the answer right. If you got the answer or the process wrong, you could not go further.
10. I asked to go the face-to-face session as it was too hard to progress if you did not have the correct answers. This was a one-day training session which took place in Chesterfield where you could access the mock system.
11. This was the totality of my training. I was trained to assist the migration onto the new system and help people in the Post Office. Some were already working through the modules themselves before we got there so had some idea about it. Some people found it easy to grasp and others did not. People learn differently, some got the gist and some needed assistance.

### **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF AN AVERAGE DAY**

12. Mondays were our admin days where we would do all our paperwork. We would receive a two-week rota which would detail where we were going to go in advance, and we would make contact with that branch in advance to run through what would be happening when we attended.
13. On migration day we would assist with the balancing and would transfer the figures onto the Horizon system and the sub-postmasters would check these.
14. We would then spend two to three days assisting with the transactions and answer any questions. As a follow up a team member would visit the office to assist with the first balance on horizon.
15. We were told not give out our telephone numbers as we would receive calls all the time asking for help as we would be busy needed to train the other officers. We told people to call the helpline if they had any queries.
16. Sometimes sub-postmasters would speak to other sub-postmasters who had been trained and would get information from them.

### **RESOURCES AVAILABLE**

17. We would have the helpline or would ask other people in our team if it was something we had not done before ourselves. The people who manned the helpline did not always understand what you were trying to tell them if it was unfamiliar to them. I am only assuming that they had a set flow-chart and if there was a query that deviated from the flow-chart, they could not answer it.

## **MANAGEMENT**

18. As I have already stated we had a two-week rota that assisted us plan. We had one-to-ones with our team leaders and sometimes they could come to the branch where we were assisting to see how we were working.

19. There was also a review sheet we asked subpostmasters to complete to comment on how we had performed. The Branch Manager would fill in the review sheet and this would be sent back to a mailing address. I do not recall receiving any feedback personally on anything sent through but do remember that the review sheets not being completed or returned often so we had to encourage this.

## **SUBPOSTMASTERS TRAINING**

20. I think the sub-postmasters were adequately trained to use Horizon, but this was dependant on the office. If there was a busy office, then you could show a variety of transactions but if the office was quiet then you could not. It was dependant on the customer base.

## **ADEQUACY OF ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE**

21. I do consider that I was able to provide adequate advice and assistance on Horizon to sub-postmasters.

## **KNOWLEDGE OF BUGS, ERRORS, OR DEFECTS**

22. I was not aware of any bugs, errors, or defects within the system. But errors would occur, and this would be based on human error by way of incorrect input.

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

23. Sometimes the migration was delayed. Everything was set to go on a Tuesday at an office. IT would always get there first in the morning to set up the hardware and occasionally there would be bad internet connection and the migration could not take place, but this was very rare.

**Statement of Truth**

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed: **GRO**

Dated: 21.3.23

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