

Witness Name: Joanne Collier

Statement No.: WITN07940100

Dated: 23 March 2023

POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF JOANNE COLLIER

I, **JOANNE COLLIER**, will say as follows:

INTRODUCTION

1. I am a former employee of Post Office Ltd and held the positions of, Horizon Field Support Officer (HFSO) from 2000 to 2001 which involved the on-site migration of accounting data from a sub-postmaster's existing accounting system to the Horizon system, on-site support to staff during the first two days following go-live and on-site support to the sub-postmaster for the first weekly balance on Horizon. Service Support Advisor at the Network Business Support Centre (NBSC) from 2001 to December 2005, providing Tier 2 support to Post Office branches on the provision of Post Office products and services and the production of the end of week accounts.

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 3 January 2023 (the “ Request”).

BACKGROUND

3. I have been asked to describe the training/instruction received and experiences of the Horizon IT project, working in the NBSC and as a HFSO, the training and advice/assistance provided to sub-postmasters, and whether I was aware of any bugs, errors or defects within the Horizon IT system.
4. It should be noted that it is seventeen years since I left Post Office Ltd and the details of my employment have faded and are no longer as defined as they once were. I have, however, responded to the Request to the best of my ability and the areas I cannot recall have been stated.
5. In respect of training/instruction received and experiences of working as a HFSO and later, in the NBSC. The training for the HFSO role took place over a two-week period and covered the use of the Horizon IT system for every day transactions and the end of day and end of week accounting procedure, as well as training on HFSO-specific tasks, such as the procedure for the migration of data. Instruction was also provided on the administrative requirements such as receipt of weekly work pattern, initial office contact, timesheets, expenses etc.
6. HFSOs were part of a team covering a set geographical area and were managed by a team leader. As stated above, the work of a HFSO centered around the branch migration from the existing accounting system to the Horizon system, two

days on-site support following migration and on-site support with the first weekly balance. Generally speaking, the HFSO who had migrated the branch would also provide the on-site support, but not always. A different HFSO would attend the following week to provide support for the end of week balance. For on-site support the HFSO had a copy of the Horizon User Guide and access to the NBSC, as well as contact with team members and the team leader.

7. Working patterns varied and could change at the last minute. For example, one week may include a team meeting on Tuesday, balance support on Wednesday lunchtime, a migration on Wednesday evening followed by on-site support on Thursday and Friday. Equally, there could be a migration on Monday night, on-site support on Tuesday and Wednesday (this would also incorporate the first end of week balance support), another migration on Thursday followed by on-site support on Friday and Saturday. There was no typical week. A pre-migration call would also be made to the office(s) the HFSO would be visiting the following week.
8. I can only remember one occasion where a sub-postmaster told me he would not open his branch without further on-site support. This was following an extremely busy two days with a lot of pre-Christmas footfall. I escalated this request but I now cannot be certain who to, but it would have been either the team dealing with HFSO attendance or my team leader. I do not know the outcome.
9. There was no additional Horizon training for working in the NBSC but instruction was given on the use of the call logging system and the knowledge base support tool used to assist in call resolution.

10. As with HFSOs, Tier 2 advisors were grouped in teams with the oversight of a team leader. Calls received at Tier 2 were ones for which there was no immediate answer and/or required further investigation and as such could not be resolved at Tier 1. I seem to remember that the majority of these were in relation to products and services or balance queries. As well as the knowledge base, a Tier 2 advisor would have access to more experienced team members and colleagues in other disciplines for advice and guidance.

11. I do not recall receiving any calls relating to requests for additional Horizon support.

12. In respect of the training and advice/assistance provided to sub-postmasters, I do not know how much training was provided. However, during time spent as a HFSO, a number of postmasters felt the length of time between training and go-live was excessively long.

13. In respect of any bugs, errors or defects within the Horizon IT system, I can recall only one call from a sub-postmaster regarding a misbalance of a significant loss. After completing a number of checks and double-checks, the sub-postmaster was asked to send in copies of the final balance report from the previous week and the trial balance from the current week, along with a number of other reports. It transpired that the total value of cash and stock in the office the previous week had not been carried over to the current week, resulting in the misbalance in the following week. This was cascaded to the Horizon helpdesk and a manager/team at NBSC. I did not hear anything further regarding this.

14. With regard to anything else of which the Chair should be aware of, I cannot bring to mind any further information which would be of benefit.

Statement of Truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed:

GRO

Dated: 23 March 2023