

Witness Name: David Ian James

Statement No.: WITN07730100

Dated: 14 March 2023

## POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

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### FIRST STATEMENT OF DAVID IAN JAMES

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I, **DAVID IAN JAMES**, will say as follows...

1. I was employed by the Post Office after I left school starting in 1984 as a Postal Cadet for Royal Mail, then moving onto being a Postal Officer working on the counter at Bank Street PO Bradford from 1985 until 1991. I then worked in what was known as the rem unit dealing with cash distribution in the network for many years after this until I took voluntary redundancy in 2005. I went onto the Horizon project, but I am not sure of the exact date I started but I don't think it was at the beginning of the rollout. It was possibly in 2000. As this was 22 years ago, I don't have great recollection but will do my best.
2. I was employed as a Horizon Field Support Officer (HFSO) and whilst visiting sub offices my role was to migrate the figures from the final "pen and paper"

balance onto Horizon ready to go live the next morning. Then for the next two days I was there at the same office to assist with any transactional issues that the staff may have. I think the sub-postmasters had been and done their required system training in advance of this and I was to be there as support for staff during opening hours.

3. I was part of a team from Yorkshire and the North East. I think there were around 20 HFSO's on the team but can't be sure of the exact number. Our area was from North Wales up to Carlisle, across to the North East and down to the Humber and across Yorkshire. We must have had some training ourselves on using the system to be able to go train sub-postmasters, but I can't recollect when / where this was and how long it was for.
  
4. On arriving at a sub post office that had been allocated to me by the admin team the equipment had already been installed by IT engineers and was ready to use. Sometimes the engineers were still there finishing off on the same day I arrived. The migration of starting figures was done on a Wednesday after the post office was closed, and the usual weekly pen and paper balance had been completed. I had to key in the necessary figures that had been supplied on the balance sheet and then I think I had to call a helpline or support number to advise the migration was complete and successful. That was all that was required on a Wednesday evening.
  
5. My support was then on a Thursday and Friday and possibly Saturday

morning if the office was open although I can't be sure on this. A HFSSO went back to the sub office on the following Wednesday to assist with the first live balance. I don't remember whether we went back to the same office we had migrated or were allocated a different one to do as balance support.

6. I think each office also had a training manual for reference with screenshots of each step to take during a transaction.
  
7. I think that dependant on the size of the office, as in the number of counter positions, there may have been more than one HFSSO present. So, one HFSSO could manage an office with say 2 or 3 but if there were 5 or 6 positions then 2 HFSSO's may have been sent. I can't remember the criteria exactly, but this would seem reasonable.
  
8. I always did my best at every office I went to and was very patient with people as this was a totally new experience for them. Some took to it more naturally than others as is the case with technology. I think there may have been an option to flag up if anyone was really struggling but I can't recall ever having to do this. I think I felt that after leaving every office that had gone live, the staff were relatively happy and had a helpline to call and a manual to refer to if necessary. And that someone would be back the week after to help with the first balance.
  
9. I am not able to recall any issues of large discrepancies at any office or me ever leaving an office with issues unresolved, or any bugs in the system. It

was new to everyone and there are always going to be user errors when learning a new way of working. We did have a helpline to call for any IT issues, transaction support, user queries, log on issues, forgotten passwords, errors that needed correcting etc.

10. It became clear to me during the project that for family reasons I needed to spend more time nearer to home in Leeds. As the area we covered was so large this sometimes caused an issue for me so I remember asking my line manager if I could work more in the office in Leeds, which he agreed to whenever possible. The logistics of organising hotels and availability of pool cars for all the HFSO's was huge and so I remember spending a lot more time doing the admin side and arranging hotels and which sub office a HFSO was going to the following week. At the time the internet was new, and all this information needed printing / enveloping / posting out weekly, so everyone knew their schedule. I don't think there was an email option back then, so the paperwork side was massive.

11. I don't recall going to a great deal of offices to do support, other HFSO's will have been out and done a lot more. I had more involvement with the staff planning side and arranging of hotels and pool cars. For example, if someone was on holiday their pool car would need collecting or dropping off at another HFSO's address who was back from holiday. Cars had to be swapped about, dropped at garages, serviced, MOT'd and collected which all took a huge amount of organising on such a big national project.

12. I can't be sure of the exact date I finished as a HFSO and returned to my role as a Postal Officer in the rem unit. I remember there were around 19000 offices to convert to Horizon and as the completed figure got higher, then more people came off the project, so it was probably around summer 2001.

13. It was an enjoyable project to work on at the time and it's really sad to hear how it has turned out in so many cases. I always gave it my best and provided my full care and attention to sub offices, so they felt happy in the support they received from me.

**Statement of Truth**

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed: **GRO**

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_ 14.03.2023 \_\_\_\_\_