

Witness Name: Nicola Reeves
Statement No.: WITN07300100
Dated: 10 April 2023

POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF *NICOLA REEVES*

I, *NICOLA REEVES*, will say as follows...

INTRODUCTION/ PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

1. 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 4th January 2023 (the "**Request**").
2. I had various Post Office Counters Ltd branch office roles from May 1995 to August 1999, including managerial roles. In August 1999 I moved to the role of "BSM Trainer" for the Network Business Support Centre (NBSC). The Horizon project was still in progress at that time, with the roll-out expected to

start later that year. I retained the BSM Trainer role until I left Post Office Ltd in April 2003.

TRAINING AND/OR INSTRUCTIONS RECEIVED IN RELATION TO HORIZON IT PROJECT AND NBSC

3. I received the standard Horizon training, which was delivered face-to-face over several days.
4. After that, I was part of the project team to enable the support/operations of Horizon (rather than management of the Horizon system or any supporting infrastructure). Over a few months, I was embedded in the project and spent that time preparing for the start of the training for NBSC staff, to support the Horizon roll-out to the post offices. There were "dummy" Horizon terminals for project members to experiment with.
5. The NBSC was a new structure, somewhat initially staffed by members of the regional help desks, which were to be replaced by the NBSC. I worked closely with colleagues on the design and implementation of the various processes and systems which would be used by the NBSC: IT Service Management (ITSM) processes, such as incident management and problem management; call handling procedures; the ITSM ticketing/management system (Remedy); and the telephony system. There were probably other categories and examples of processes and systems with which we worked; the ones I have listed are the main categories which come to mind.

WORKING IN THE NBSC

6. The NBSC had two tiers of support for post office staff: "Tier 1" and "Tier 2".
7. The Tier 1 function was the first point of contact for post office staff and was outsourced to a third party, SSC. The queries which couldn't be resolved by the Tier 1 function were escalated to Tier 2, which was a function retained by Post Office Ltd and staffed by Post Office Ltd employees as part of the NBSC.
8. I was responsible for the training of the Business Service Management (BSM) business unit as a whole. Most members of staff in BSM were part of the NBSC, and the training activities were focused on the NBSC, and on the Tier 2 function in particular.
9. I soon had a small team of two additional trainers, and we organized and provided the full training for Tier 2 staff, including:
 - a. Post Office Counters training: the full three-week course which all Post Office Counters branch office staff (but not sub post office staff) had to attend. This was to ensure that Tier 2 staff understood all the transactions and paperwork involved in running an office, and how to balance a stock.
 - b. Horizon training: this was provided in-house by me and my team. There were "dummy" Horizon terminals in the training rooms and throughout the NBSC.
 - c. Call handling procedures: again, in-house training, which covered the transfer of calls to and from Tier 1.

- d. ITSM system training: in-house training which covered the use of the Remedy system to create tickets for incidents and other events.
 - e. Soft skills training: in-house training on how to deal with post office staff who were upset or distressed, and who needed particular care. This was an important part of the training: most post office staff who contacted the NBSC did so because they were experiencing difficulties.
10. After this initial training, Tier 2 staff received weekly training on subjects such as new Post Office products/services, changes to Horizon, and on areas of work which could be improved (determined by systems/records analysis and observed behaviour). This training consumed up to four hours per week.
11. All training materials were fully developed, standardized and authorized by NBSC management. The Kirkpatrick method of evaluation was used to ensure that the training was effective.
12. I was involved in various small projects, as continual improvement was at the heart of BSM and the NBSC. The only large project I was involved in was the "Banking" project, which enabled post offices to pay benefits/allowances to customers by means of debit card withdrawal (including the Post Office Card Account), and for that same functionality to be used for customers who wanted to pay for services in post offices by card. I worked on this project from February 2002 until I left in April 2003. Again, the focus was on preparing the NBSC for the operational support of these changes, rather than on the Horizon system itself.
13. Another activity I performed was to assist the Post Office Ltd legal team with their preparations for prosecutions of subpostmasters. This assistance was in

the form of giving advice on the operation of the Horizon system (as I was an experienced user) and finding and commenting on incident records which related to the sub-post office under question.

SUBPOSTMASTERS REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT

14. For clarification, the NBSC supported all types of post offices, including branch offices as well as sub post offices. Branch office staff were employed directly by Post Office Counters Ltd/Post Office Ltd.
15. Post Office staff had a single telephone number to request support. 70% of the calls were routed to the NBSC office at Dearne House (Barnsley) and the rest went to the NBSC office at Doxford. All calls were initially handled by Tier 1. Incidents/requests which could not be resolved by Tier 1 (either at Dearne House or Doxford) were routed to Tier 2, which resided at Dearne House. The corresponding records/tickets in the Remedy system were also transferred.
16. Usually, the transfers were "live", meaning that the caller was asked to hold while the call and information were transferred to Tier 2. At busy times, the callers were told that they would be called back by Tier 2. Tier 2, with its team leaders, was the final line of support. There was nothing left unresolved by this function.
17. Occasionally, other teams were asked to contribute to the support with their expert knowledge, but Tier 2 remained the owner of the incidents and were

accountable for their resolution. Rarely, incidents were passed to ICL Pathway/Fujitsu for resolution.

18. Tier 2 knowledge, in addition to the training, was supported by a comprehensive knowledge base which was continually worked on by a team of several people and which was maintained under strict change control. Knowledge articles were linked to incident categorisations and this way of working was crucial to the standardization and quality of incident resolutions provided by Tier 2.
19. I was not responsible for the management of the Tier 2 function or any of its staff. These are the salient parts of the organization of Tier 2 in relation to my role of BMS Trainer.
20. I was not responsible for the support provided to Post Office staff.
21. I was not responsible for managing or resolving the calls.
22. The attitude of the NBSC members was the same to all Post Office staff who needed support, regardless of the type of post office in which the staff worked.
23. The NBSC Tier 2 staff were selected, trained and continually coached to provide the best quality of staff to callers. The Tier 2 staff were hard-working, dedicated and caring people who were interested in the success of Post Office Ltd as a whole, which included all types of post office. NBSC staff worked many hours of unpaid overtime to support the post office staff, particularly on Wednesdays, when the weekly balancing in the post offices took place.
24. The support provided by Tier 2 was excellent.

25. It should be noted that subpostmasters often had great difficulty in balancing and sometimes did not understand the basic premise of a receipts and payments balance. This was not an issue of Horizon knowledge but more the rubrics of performing a weekly balance. The Tier 2 staff worked tirelessly to support such subpostmasters who had very basic knowledge of how to run a sub post office.

KNOWLEDGE OF BUGS, ERRORS, OR DEFECTS

26. I do not recall any significant bugs, errors or defects.

FURTHER INFORMATION

27. There is nothing else that comes to mind which is pertinent to the role I held.

Statement of Truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed:

GRO

Dated: 10.04.2023

