

Witness Name: Lynda Margaret Howarth

Statement No.: WITN07930100

Dated: 15/03/2023

POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

FIRST STATEMENT OF LYNDA MARGARET HOWARTH

I, **LYNDA MARGARET HOWARTH**, will say as follows...

1. I Lynda Howarth worked for the Post Office from July 1968 to 31 January 1979 in full time working and returned to part time in April 1985 going back to full time in August 1999 to leaving in December 2010.
2. I started working at Post Office Telephones in the accounts department, and then did training for Post Office Counters working on the counter, accounts, staffing and general office duties.
3. In August 1999, I did two weeks HFSO training on how to migrate information onto the Horizon system including the same two days training that postmasters and counter staff had on how to use the Horizon system. I went to work at the NBSC in March 2001

4. At the NBSC I did, some work on the helpline for a short while then moved to the department putting the information on the Helpline computers for a few years and finished on the Complaints department. I had two spells away from the NBSC helping postmasters with the Post Office Card Account training and auditing. I never went back to serve on a post counter or worked on the Horizon system.
5. Most of the calls to the NBSC helpline was for guidance in doing transactions and putting through transactions on the Horizon system, how to correct errors they had made and balance support. Any technical issues they had with the system went through to the Horizon/Fujitsu team. The postmasters were given both Helpline telephone numbers when they migrated onto the system.
6. NBSC helpline had all the information they required on their computers, which was updated twice a week with information received from the Post Office or Horizon. They all received emails and paper copies of important changes and training on changes/new products. They could pass on issues to team leaders to get the required answers from the product managers in London, Horizon or Retail Managers.
7. As an HFSO our first job was transferring the information from the postmaster's balance sheet onto the Horizon system called a migration. The HFSO did not check any stock, dockets or figures on the balance sheet that the postmaster had prepared. A copy was made of the balance sheet and the Horizon reports printed out during and after migration were posted to the office in Leeds next day. The next morning the HFSO put the user names on the system and turned away when the staff put in their own passwords. The HFSO never touched the system or any stock but just stood back to watch the

postmaster put things through Horizon, including how to find the icons and do the transaction if help was required. Talked through with the postmaster how to do end of day reports and input the cash every night. We usually did two balance supports each week one at lunchtime and the other on an evening balance if not on the migration two day support.

8. If HFSO's had any issues, they could contact the team leader or the Leeds office. Somebody was always available to help straight away or get back to you with the information required.
9. The duty rotas came out from the Leeds office and we contacted the postmasters concerned about the arrival time for the migration or balance support answering any questions they might have. I would also ask them the best place to park on the night and maybe directions to get there on the day, which they were all very good about.
10. Sub Postmasters had two days training on Horizon, then the HFSO stayed with them two days after migration and they always had a first balance support by an HFSO. They could also contact the Helpline for guidance.
11. The training was good for most people and using the system at first would have been strange if the office did not use a computer before Horizon, but by the end of the first day staff seemed fine with things and the nerves had gone. I tried to go through all transactions with them on the two days support so they knew what to do when they finally got that more unusual transaction. I would make sure that they rang the helpline at least once with a query to get them used to that also while I was still there. I believe I was able to give adequate advice and assistance on Horizon to postmasters.

12. I do not know of any problems with Horizon when I was an HFSSO or when working at the NBSC, which was mainly an admin job. I cannot think of any other information I can give you.

Statement of Truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed: **GRO**

Dated: 15/03/2023