

Witness Name: GRO
Statement No.: WITN0281
Exhibits: None
Dated: 3rd Feb 2022

THE POST OFFICE HORIZON INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF: GRO

I, GRO WILL SAY as follows:

INTRODUCTION

1. I am grateful to the Chair to be invited to provide a "human impact" statement, concerning the physical, psychological, emotional, reputational and financial consequences to me and my family of being held responsible for shortfalls shown by the Horizon IT system and Post Office Limited's actions toward me and my family. The initial paragraphs below provide a brief summary of my background, and provide context to the detail of the human impact of the Horizon scandal on me and my family. This statement does not reflect a full account of my experiences or those of my family and if necessary or required I will provide further witness statement evidence.
2. I go by my Christian name GRO
3. I separated from my family on 23 March 2018. The level of losses by Post Office Limited, the lack of training from the Post Office and not knowing how to switch off from my job and go back to my family life all had a major toll on my personal life.

4. I am now nearly homeless and sleeping in a sleeping bag on the floor of the post office premises I rented (it has been empty since 5 December 2019) because I have nowhere to go. Everybody is kind but nobody could help me when I lost my home. The last thing people want is a burden on themselves.
5. I have a 4 bedroom house. Due to my kindness I took on a lodger and signed a short 1 year tenancy but I now can't afford to get them out and they have kicked me out. Because of my mental health issues I give people too many chances. I want to help people because of my Christian values.

BACKGROUND

6. I was married for 11 years. I got married in 2010, separated on 23 March 2018 and then I got divorced in 2021. I was in the same relationship from 2005. It was a long relationship but the Post Office pressures and losses were major contributing factors to the breakdown of our relationship. There were times we were working the whole month free of charge due to the Post Office shortfalls, this put a lot of financial strain on us.
7. My son was born 14th April 2008 and my daughter was born 2nd October 2009. I do not get to see them anymore due to a difficult relationship by my ex-wife. I had a fantastic relationship with my children.
8. I am 61 years old, and my wife was 20 years younger, and so she was more playful, whereas I was more stressed out from work. There were issues at home but my children were well looked after.
9. I lived in a very big house that I built.

10. I had 3 interviews for the subpostmaster position. The first was with 3 Post Office representatives, the second was with 2 Post Office representatives and the third with 3 Post Office representatives. Because this was a very large post office, Post Office Limited wanted somebody they could work with. I was interviewed by Simon Smith and possibly by Garry Adderley, I cannot remember the name of the other Post Office representative who interviewed me.
11. Before taking on the post office, I was a general builder and property developer and I had a couple of restaurants. I was therefore experienced and successful in business.
12. I was self-employed, and the Post Office was looking for somebody out of the box with entrepreneurial skills and as I had a clear record and no debts I was hired. I believe that the Post Office wanted somebody they could manipulate.
13. I went to 2 or 3 Post Office Limited seminars, they showed the Post Office as a caring, friendly, honest and good government organisation. The Post Office was portrayed as a happy working environment, and my partner at the time and I looked at it and thought we could work it out, make a living and develop into a comfortable lifestyle.
14. The Post Office encouraged me to come get on board, but as soon as I signed my contract, the Post Office's attitude changed. The Post Office was nothing like how they had portrayed themselves in seminars, and I was left out in the cold.
15. I became a subpostmaster because during the Post Office seminars this particular post office, the Westbury on Trym Post Office, shined out to me. A Post Office representative informed me they were having problems with the subpostmaster for this post office for reasons I do not know.

16. My post office was available and it was the busiest post office in Bristol with 5/6 counters. I did not want a small corner shop, I wanted a post office which would be my main source of income.
17. I wanted to be part of a big organisation; I did not want to be at the bottom of the food chain, I wanted to be in the middle.
18. The driving force for my ambition was, that if I put the effort in, I could earn a good income.
19. As a parent, I wanted to develop the business structure and reputation of the post office to be able to leave an inheritance for my children.
20. I live in small snobbish village in Westbury. It is an upper class white dominated environment, and an expensive part of Bristol. As subpostmaster, I was supposed to be the pillar of the community.
21. Being a member of the community and having a large post office attracted me to the Post Office.
22. The business concept of the post office, the structure of the business and the level of income that was promised were all aspects that appealed to me.
23. During my interviews, I clearly said to Post Office Limited that I wanted a chain of 4 or 5 post offices, I wanted to expand.
24. I was an active person and I did not want to be stuck in one place.
25. When I applied for another post office, I had to undergo a further interview. The Post Office did not approve my application. Post Office Limited stopped my progress

and so I stopped applying for further post offices as I was not a 'yes man', which the Post Office seemed to be looking for.

26. I was a Subpostmaster of Westbury on Trym Post Office, High Street, Bristol BS9 3EE from 26 June 2006 to 25 June 2018.
27. I do not recall what contract terms applied to my appointment, my employment contract over 100 pages and the premises lease was 109 pages.
28. In June 2006, my area manager and auditors came to my post office in the morning. They had the Post Office contract with them and told me where to sign, I was not given time or the option to go over and read the contract.
29. Whilst the auditors and my area manager were at my post office, the post office was closed and people were outside waiting to be served. It was demanding and pressured environment, which was controlled by Post Office Limited, and so I had no option but to sign the contract.
30. My solicitor, David Parkhouse solicitors, was dealing with the lease for the post office and its complications. My solicitor told me that he had not seen my employment contract.
31. All I knew from my contract was that I had to open the post office at 9am and close at 5.30pm six days a week.
32. I operated a retail business from the premises, namely a stationary retail business. We were not retail oriented, and it was more of a complimentary side line to the post office. It did not have major earning capacity.

33. I employed five assistants throughout the post office business, one person would be serving at the post office counter, and one person would be on the retail side; and every 2/3 hours they would change over.
34. I had a total of 5 assistants working at any time until 2014, when the Post Office started changing to be available online. My turnover fell by £20,000 in a year when the Post Office became available online.
35. I had three cash collections for SE4 security. I was sending out £50,000 on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The Post Office then reduced the money collection to Tuesday and Friday.
36. I was running the largest and busiest Post Office in Bristol, aside from the crown office. In 2008 -2009 my financial turnover was approximately £33M just from the post office workings.

TRAINING AND SUPPORT

37. When I took over the branch in June 2006, I received 5 days training from the Post Office. This included the basic operation of Horizon and product training.
38. During the training I raised specific questions regarding the operation of Horizon but I was told my questions were not relevant to the training at the time. I specifically remember this incident because I was very interested in the workings of Horizon.
39. I was told by the Post Office trainer that I was asking too many questions and everything would become clear when I commenced working. I believe the trainer said this because he himself did not know how to answer my questions.
40. The Post Office trainer was interest in showing us how to touch buttons, change the till roll and navigate the computer system. He did not have time to go into depth on

questions which were not his pay grade nor was he able to answer them. It was a quick rush job on 'press this to get that'.

41. I did not feel that I received sufficient training to operate Horizon.
42. After the initial training I simply had to learn as I went on. As a result, from the outset I was experiencing numerous losses for no obvious reason.
43. I only learnt how to use the Horizon system when I was hands on and serving customers by making mistakes and trying to reverse transactions, which was a nightmare. I had to go through a number of pages and windows to get to a transaction correction, some corrections had to be done in 2 hours or instantly. It was very time restricted.
44. When we were cashing up we were told how to do it by the Post Office trainers but it was not making sense from the very beginning.
45. The Post Office sent a number of people over a number of years for training when I would raise issues about losses but the trainers would come to give product training.
46. When product trainers would come to the branch, I would ask them to explain the shortages but they could not explain how there were shortages each week.
47. I stopped sending my staff for product training sessions because the Post Office would not pay my staff but I would have to. I had no confidence in the Post Office training regime as it appeared to be more of a coffee evening.
48. I would occasionally go to the product training sessions.

49. Because I had stopped sending my staff, the Post Office would send someone to my branch to train my staff on products. The system did not change and so I thought that there was nothing new for them to be trained.
50. I received no further training on Horizon.
51. We had a booklet called the 'branch focus' and any products would be shown on there and how to organise and navigate it.
52. I made sure that each member of staff did the product training, read the 'branch focus' booklet and completed the test at the end of the booklet. The pass rate was 8/10 questions.

HELPLINE

53. I contacted the helpline 2-3 times per week.
54. Every time I called the helpline they would try to advise me (and my staff) on how to reverse any simple errors that had accrued on a day to day basis (e.g. wrongly putting in telephone bills, council bills by staff).
55. When I called the helpline they would say that the 'cash will come back'. The helpline operators were not concerned with the shortfalls.
56. It would take most of my morning to go through the shortfall scenarios with the helpline, but even the helpline operators could not resolve the problems or explain the cause of them.
57. When the shortfalls arose, the helpline would put a correction on my account and I would have to pay back various amounts of alleged money being missing.

58. When it came to specific shortfalls that we were experiencing during the 'cash up', the helpline would always tell me that they would check the information centrally and come back to me.
59. However, by the time that the helpline did come back to me it would be the next day (or later) and the transaction error would have been entered onto the system, resulting in a loss on Horizon.
60. I was always told that any shortfalls had to be paid within the same week's accounts before the next week's transactions could commence. When I tried to discuss this with the helpline team on the telephone, they would baffle me with terminology that I could not understand.
61. I always felt that the helpline were trying to explain the errors as being my fault. I was never given any time to challenge their decisions.
62. I was constantly reminded by the helpline that if I did not pay the alleged losses, I would be in breach of my contract.
63. When I contacted the helpline, they always told me that under my contract the Post Office had the ability (and did) to take the money from my salary to cover the shortfall.
64. The helpline said that if there was not enough money in my salary to cover the shortfall, they would put a transaction correction on the system which I had to accept and pay before the next trading period (which was the monthly cashing up procedure).
65. I found it very difficult to pay the money to cover the shortfalls. I always double checked that my system was correct, but the system still found huge amounts of money owing to the Post Office.

66. I found the helpline only helpful for very minor issues.
67. When it came to shortfalls, the helpline were tight lipped and they would refer everything to the cash centre. They would send me around the houses and nobody would admit there was an error.
68. I believe that the helpline were reading from a script in front of them.
69. I can only assume the Post Office flagged up to the helpline that they should not admit to Horizon errors.
70. The helpline made it quite blunt to me all the time when I was on the phone to them that I was the only one experiencing problems with the system. This made me feel inadequate, that I was unable to work the system and my self-morale was blown away every time because I thought I was the only one experiencing losses in an organisations which had 11,500 post offices.

SHORTFALLS

71. In this section, I set out in very brief detail my experience of shortfalls arising from deficiencies in the Horizon IT System, and Post Office Limited's actions as a result. This is only a brief introduction to those matters, in order to provide necessary context for the explanation of the human impact which follows.
72. It was drilled into me on my first day that shortfalls had to be paid by me.
73. Losses were occurring from outset which were totally unexplainable. The shortfalls continued to arise. Right up until to June 2018 there were still Horizon IT losses occurring.

74. I would estimate that throughout my position in the branch, I paid (or Post Office deducted) in excess of £90,000. The majority of these alleged losses were experienced between 2006 and 2018.
75. I felt that I had no option but to pay the sums, which were either automatically taken from my wages, paid by cash upon their demands, or paid in instalments. On a number of occasions the demands were for significant sums in excess of £10,000 and I had to agree to repay this by way of instalments.
76. I would use cash from the retail to pay shortfalls but the retail was turning over small amount.
77. I would run around and beg and borrow money to pay for the shortfalls because if a cheque I gave to the Post Office to pay for the shortfalls bounced I would be in more serious problem.
78. My monthly income was £4,500 a month and I would agree to pay the Post Office £2,000 a month for large shortfalls. The Post Office gave me some flexibility to pay them back but I had to pay back regardless.
79. I disputed the shortfalls all the time but I was always told by the Post Office *'if you don't pay we have no alternative but to suspend you'* or that they could take back my post office and that I was contracted to pay the Post Office back.
80. The Post Office threatened to apply to court and deduct the shortfall amount from my house.
81. By 2014, it was known that postmasters were being prosecuted by Post Office Limited. We would hear rumours that the Post Office would take subpostmasters and mistresses to the cleaners, but nobody openly discussed it, as they were so scared.

82. I did not want to be in the category of being prosecuted by the Post Office. We postmasters were honest people who came to do honest work for an honest wage. We were mistreated because of our honesty and we were gullible, because we did not want to fight a 200 year old organisation (the Post Office).
83. My staff would not be losing from their wages if there was a shortfall and it was not their fault if there was a shortage as none of my staff were stealing. I can put my hand on my heart and say they were honest, hard working part time staff and it was the IT system that was at fault. I would monitor all staff and their cashing up procedure, as I was worried they were making faults but I do not think they were stealing.
84. I was a member of the National Federation and I would go see other subpostmasters and mistresses, most of them also had shortages which they could not explain.
85. When I went to help other subpostmasters and mistresses who were experiencing shortfalls, they told me that they were also told by the Post Office that they were the only ones with shortfalls. I would tell the National Federation about this, but they were not inclined to help, as they were in denial. The National Federation was a boys club and I think that they behaved improperly. The National Federation were of no use to postmasters.

AUDIT AND INVESTIGATION

86. There have been many audits during my time employed as a Subpostmaster, I would have at least one a year.
87. There were at least about 12 auditors in the South West region and as a result I cannot remember the names of the auditors. The auditors were a mixture of males and females and would come to my branch in sets of three.

88. I had to put the stock figure of cash into the system by close of day in the evening. Eventually, I started putting in £0, as it was my only way to get Post Office Limited's attention. I had no interest in stealing from the Post Office. I told my staff to cash up and make a note of the shortfall in an in-house book of the shortfall and then put £0 in on the till. After we did this, the Post Office would send an auditor on Thursday morning.
89. The Post Office auditors would always come at their convenience and I was never informed in advance of their arrival.
90. The auditors would always come on a Thursday because on a Wednesday we would cash up for the week.
91. After the auditors had done an audit check they would always reassure me that they would come back to me on any issues.
92. I would always ask lots of questions of the auditors but they would say that they could not discuss the questions with me and that I would need to talk to my contracts manager or branch manager. I had two contracts managers, Colin Burston and Gary Adderley.
93. My contracts manager, Garry Adderley, was only interest in how I would pay the shortfalls and would threaten to sack me if I did not pay the shortfall. This put more pressure on to me, my family and my lifestyle.
94. There was never any alternative once the auditors come and gone. They would tell me how much money was lost and I had to take their word for it. There would be 3 or 4 auditors in my post office and I would have customers waiting so I had no alternative other than to accept what the auditors said.

95. I have never been given or seen a report following the audits / investigations. I have not had access to data collected,
96. I was assured, and believed, that an investigation was being conducted at the time.

SUSPENSION AND TERMINATION

97. In December 2007 I was suspended for 10 days following an audit.
98. I was reinstated 10 days later after I got in touch with Mark Baker of the Federation of Subpostmasters and he assisted with my reinstatement.
99. I was suspended as I had not renovated my post office and allegedly, part of my contract was that I had to spend my money to renovate Post Office Limited's property and brand.
100. The Post Office trapped me and made me spend £86,000 on renovating their flagged ship, with no contribution by them at the time.
101. I was also suspended because there was a shortfall. This was a very shameful feeling for me. The Post Office then reinstated me for no reason other than I had agreed to keep quiet and carry on.
102. In 2018 I was suspended GRO
GRO The Post Office claimed that I had brought the Post Office into disrepute and damaged and tarnished their reputation.

103.

GRO

GRO

104. In the end I was given a choice by the Post Office to either be suspended because of a £9,000 shortfall found by the auditors or be suspended for bringing the Post Office into disrepute. **GRO** I could not live with the community thinking I was putting my hand in till as I lived in a white upper-class close-knit community, so when my contract manager gave me the option of which reason I would be suspended for I went for latter as I knew the shortfalls were not my doing.
105. I was told that I would be suspended regardless of the reason.
106. While I was suspended, I was not allowed into the branch even though at the time my staff were still running the branch on my behalf. My manager was left in charge at the time of my suspension.
107. The Post Office informed me that a temporary subpostmistress was available but she was never appointed, as I insisted my staff and my manager were capable of running the branch in my absence.
108. I was relieved when I was suspended and I thanked the lord Jesus Christ.

CIVIL AND CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS

109. The Post Office did not pursue civil or criminal proceedings against me. However, I was always fearful they would as I had heard through different channels that they were taking subpostmasters to court.
110. The Post Office had threatened me with legal proceedings. I am surprised and shocked the Post Office never pursued me but I was still paying my losses so I suppose they could not take any legal proceedings.

LOSSES

111. I repaid approximately £90,000. I was led to believe that I had no alternative but to pay the shortfalls and I believed that a thorough and fair investigation had determined that payment was due
112. I was not paid for the 10 days in which I was suspended in 2007. Based on my average monthly remuneration in that year of £7,500, I estimate I lost in the region of £2,419.
113. I have had two heart operations, numerous other operations and also gastric bypass surgery during my time in charge of the branch. I feel that my ill health has come about partially due to the stress and the anguish that the Post Office has put upon me and my family.
114. I am not the only subpostmaster whose mental health suffered and whose relationship was broken up and stretched to the limit. The Post Office is the main cause off my issues. I was never given training on how to switch off from being a subpostmaster.
115. Before the Post Office, my now ex-wife and I had a strong relationship.
116. Whilst running the post office, my ex-wife and I would restock and recount our cash and stock repeatedly. Despite this we could never understand where the shortages came from.
117. I have tried to sell the branch since 2011, but the Post Office have always prohibited it or told me that the branch could not be allocated to another Subpostmaster.

118. I have applied and tried to come out of the branch since 2011. Since 2013, I have signed up to "opt out" through the network transformation program and whilst other subpostmasters locally and across the country have successfully come out of the Post Office through the network transformation program, the Post Office would not allow me to be released from my contract.
119. I am aware that there have been a number of people who have applied to the Post Office to take over my position but for some reason the Post Office have not allowed me to be released. I specifically knew that one of my employees, **GRO** was interested in taking over the branch but the Post Office were not responsive to his attempts to purchase the Branch.
120. **GRO** was a capable young man, I knew him well and our families went on holidays together. **GRO** had applied to be a subpostmaster but the Post Office found him inadequate. I believe that it came back to the Post Office thinking I had given them a hard time so they would give me a hard time.

HUMAN IMPACT

121. I suffered severe, repeated and continuing shortfalls in the Horizon system. I was required to make up these shortfalls and deductions were regularly taken from my salary. I estimate that I paid the Post Office some £90,000 in relation to alleged shortfalls.
122. By 2006, I was raising questions about the Horizon system. By 2012/2013 I was raising these questions with the NFSP, who were picking me out as the difficult one who asked too many questions. I blame the Federation as they were under the same quilt as Post Office Limited at the time.
123. I raised concerns repeatedly with the Post Office and was deemed "*hard to work with*" by a number of managers who told me openly '*its talked about that you are difficult to*

work with **GRO**, it was alleged I was *"the most difficult person to work with"*. It made me feel angry, disheartened, and inadequate being told this openly and yet I was still the busiest post office in Bristol and West Country with a large turnover. I think I was viewed as difficult way because I was not a 'yes man' and because I would question the shortfalls.

124. I was friendly with one of the new managers who came to my post office, and he told me *"I don't get why they branded you as a difficult one because I work with you fine and you give me the results fine"*. I think that I was backlisted by Post Office Limited because I was speaking out about problems with Horizon.
125. It is customarily thought that Asian people are 'yes sir, no sir, three bags of coal sir'. However, I was raised to ask question, to know why so I that do not make the same mistakes again. Because of this I became perceived as being 'difficult' and 'hard to work with'.
126. There was no pride given to me when I left the Post Office, I deserve some. My reputation was tarnished and 90% of my health issues are contributed by the Post Office.
127. Being the busiest Post Office in Bristol, I had to deal customers every day for organisations (Royal Mail and Post Office Ltd) that I had no control over, for example I would have complaints about postmen.
128. I am now divorced, nearly homeless, have mental health issues and I am not able to see my children, as I have been deemed a bad father. This is as a direct result of the impact of working for the Post Office impact because postmasters weren't trained on how to switch of from customer services and go home, after their very demanding job. Post Office Limited had a responsibility, they had to train us and support.

129. I had a post office lease from Royal Mail Ltd which ends 2022. The post office had been relocated to another place, but they are still chasing me for £40,000 and I have an empty premises. This is all part of the Post Office scandal.
130. The Post Office know what they are doing. There is a charge on my property but the property is in my ex-wife's name.
131. I was threatened with suspension and prosecution if the shortfalls were not paid by the Post Office.
132. The stress caused me significant health problems; I began to overeat as a result of stress and I gained weight. I subsequently developed diabetes and I was forced to have gastric bypass surgery.
133. I now have a pace maker and I am awaiting further heart surgery. Last year I was rushed to hospital a number of times with heart issues.
134. I consider that the stress I experienced led to the breakup of my marriage.
135. Sometimes I want to do something drastic and end my life. It is the way the world is, there are no humans, all machines and computers.
136. From 2019 - 2020 I have had had 11 blackouts and my memory not so good and my skills are not so good anymore. I am in a complete and total mess. The problems have been humanly created by other forces.
137. I lay all of the blame for my mental health and deterioration on the Post Office.
138. I have had 11 callouts for ambulance (distinct from the 11 blackouts). Two of these occasions I was given 2 heart operations.

139. I am a diabetic and my diabetes is terrible due to stress.
140. I had gastric bypass surgery but I still can't control my weight.
141. My ill health is a reflection on the ill way I have been treated by the Post Office and their lack of help and interest.
142. I am about to begin mental health consulting support on 17th January 2022.
143. Whilst working at the Post Office, I was on insulin twice a day before and after work and my doctors wanted me to go on insulin 3 times. I would eat nothing, but my sugar levels were very dangerous.
144. I would be taking a blood sample reading and before even touching food I would have high blood sugar because of pressure from my job.
145. The Post Office is the most terrible job and organisation I have ever known. If I raised questions there were only two alternatives, either the Post Office would suspend me or I would have to keep quiet and carry on.
146. My mental health has suffered. I have thought about taking my life many times, as I have been in a very dark place. These feelings are not nice.
147. Even when I was working for the Post Office, I had a lot of dark moments.
148. I was clinically depressed and clinically obese.
149. I come from an Asian background and our moto is honesty and hard work, and I was being both, but taken advantage of by the Post Office. I am so saddened by this.

150. I think that 99% of subpostmasters and mistresses have come into this business not to cheat the organisation or to have ill intentions, but with the intention to serve the public and earn an honest wage.
151. My background and upbringing was religious and I believe in Christian values of honesty and kindness.
152. We postmasters have been abused for our honesty and loyalty to the Crown and the Post Office reputation. The Post Office used this honesty and loyalty as a whipping stick. Postmasters were never given an alternative as the Post Office had the money and power to prosecute us.
153. I took the Post Office to court around 2009/2010 and lost the case. I was told by a number of barristers and lawyers that they understand the case and see the merits but regardless I would not win because judges will not go against crown.
154. I believed in justice system, I had evidence and I was fighting against the system.
155. I was shocked that the Post Office was found not guilty. This made the Post Office think I was really difficult and that they had to handle me.
156. All I was doing was arguing that what I was doing and what was right, it was not principle and pride. The Post Office was wrong and guilty and it was common knowledge, it was also common knowledge that I would not win and I did not. I have since found out others have taken the Post Office to court and not won.
157. My whole life has been ruined by the Post Office IT system.
158. I was party to the group litigation against Post Office Limited, and as such I am excluded from the Historic Shortfall Scheme.

159. There were a number of consequences to being required to make good shortfalls. My salary and my savings had to be used to pay the shortfalls that had arisen..
160. Before, I would pay rent from my salary but once the shortfalls started I never had enough money so I had my rent deducted from my account from the day I received my salary to put it aside for my rent to ensure it was paid. I had to make these special arrangements as the shortfalls were not going away.
161. I could not leave the post office unless I had somebody else who could take over and pass all the interviews. It was not a case of giving one months' notice and saying I'm leaving.
162. I was duty bound to find someone the Post Office thought was adequate, the onus was on me to find suitable person. It was not an easy contract to get out of.
163. I felt that I could not do this as I would be leaving the potential postmaster in the same predicament I was in. There was only one person I thought of as he knew about the shortfalls, **GRO** The Post Office told him that the shortfalls were due to my managerial skills but he did not pass interviews.
164. As I have said, the Post Office would not release me or allow me to sell. As such I am trapped. It feels like the Post Office were conducting a vendetta against me.
165. **GRO**, the Post Office had broken me. I was tearful, shaken, my marriage was ruined, I could not see my children and there were still shortfalls arising.
166. I had become angry man due to the stress.
167. I became more angry and frustrated and I did not know how to unload it.

168. I was always scared to leave premises as the post office dealt a lot with the council estates and the residents were threatening and violent.
169. I would have to change my travelling route to and from work. I would also come to work at different times as I was frightened an angry customer might attack me.
170. I even installed CCTV at my house and at the post office building. I did everything to safeguard myself and my staff.
171. I was threatened at the post office at least once a week for various reasons.
172. I do not think it is appreciated how stressful the job of postmaster can be. I felt inadequate, like I could not be trusted, that I was unable to do my job correctly. I had emotional mental issues as a result of being accused to be responsible for the shortfalls.
173. I was demeaned in my role and there was no respect for me. The post office was a respectable job when I came into the contract and that was how it was sold to me by Post Office Limited. However, it turned out that I was nothing more than the Post Office's little man that they could push around.
174. I was always belittled by the Post Office and that is not why I came into this business and post office.
175. My children were too young at the time to understand the problems with the Post Office.
176. My wife at the time came to believe that the shortfalls arose because of failings by me. This loss of trust from her caused me to become more angry and later to prove myself correct and not responsible for shortfalls.

177. Even my ex-wife started thinking negatively. She thought this 200 year old organisation (Post Office) and clever IT people could not be wrong. I must be at fault
178. I became ill and bedbound as my diabetes was out of control due to the stress and I was given the option to have gastric bypass surgery. As a result, in 2013, 2014 and 2015, my ex-wife ran the post office. However, she did not have a contract with the Post Office, she was a member of staff. When my ex-wife was running the post office there were still loses which made her realise there was an issue with the Post Office.
179. We started thinking because we were not IT experts, that maybe from the back office the Post Office were purposely tweaking and adjusting my finances as my monthly earning was £4,500 after taxes, which was a handsome wage. This was all we could think of as a reason for the shortfalls.
180. It was part of my contract clause that postmasters couldn't go to the media or press and speak badly about the Post Office brand and so I could not speak out about the shortfalls.
181. My staff were put under a lot of pressure but they were honest people.
182. I would be balancing correctly and by the end of week I would still have a shortage but the Post Office would never tell us how and on which day the shortfall arose. I kept a daily book to track the shortages. I was at my wits end.
183. I only wanted to serve the public and live an honest lifestyle.
184. Since 2006 I have been shouting and screaming that there was an IT problem but no one listened.

CONCLUSION

185. I have been left a broken person. I used to be a happy bubbly outgoing man and I was living my life for every day.
186. I feel that my only mistake was that I was asking questions of the Post Office.
187. My staff were left feeling untrusted.
188. I hope postmasters get proper compensation and that it is put in the media how we postmasters were ill-treated.
189. It was inhumane how we postmasters were treated, we were mentally scarred and bullied by Post Office Limited.
190. I was stuck in my position as subpostmaster and I was a slave to the Post Office organisation.
191. I am now divorced and unable to see my children. I miss seeing my children, I have not seen them for 4 years.
192. I suffered a huge amount of health issues due to post office.
193. I absolutely hate the Post Office brand for what they have done to me. I hate the organisation and hate the people in the organisation.
194. These high ranking Post Office managers got to their positions because they got friendly with somebody and got promoted.
195. In the Post Office, there is a long mentality of bullying culture. Postmasters were bullied everyday by my employers. I was not able to come out and say the Post Office bullied me because I was gagged by Post Office Limited.

196. I would like the inquiry to implement a complete new structure of management people in the Post Office organisation.

197. I think that any new postmaster should have at least 6 weeks to read the Post Office contract and be able to have legal advice and get answers to questions regarding their contract in writing.

198. Subpostmasters and mistresses should be able to voice their feelings and not be gagged, there was nothing secret we were doing, we were just serving public.

199. I want the Inquiry to illustrate how badly postmasters have been treated by Post Office Limited and to clear our names and say that Post Office Limited was a bullying organisation.

200. I am committed to helping subpostmasters and mistresses in similar position to me.

STATEMENT OF TRUTH

I believe that contents of this statement to be true

GRO

Signed.....

Dated.....

3rd Feb 2022

GRO