

WITNESS: TRACY FELSTEAD
STATEMENT NUMBER: WITN0HFJ_01
EXHIBITS: None
DATED: 15th February 2022

POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF TRACY FELSTEAD

I, Tracy Felstead, will say as follows:

1. My name is Tracy Felstead, I was a Crown Post Office counter clerk until 2001.
2. From 26 April 2002, the next 20 years of my life were effectively ruined – I am now 39 and I will never get over what was done to me by people who worked in or for POL.
3. Following a trial in the Crown Court at Kingston upon Thames in front of Judge Thomas and a jury, I was convicted of the theft of £11,503.28 and two counts of false accounting (I still believed at this stage someone was going to find out what had happened, and this nightmare would be over). I denied any wrongdoing, because I hadn't done anything wrong.
4. The investigating officers were cruel and very, very aggressive I was a young girl some may even say still a child as such as at the age of 19 we are not really adults. I was completely bewildered by the Post Office investigation, the allegations made against me, my prosecution and trial and my conviction for offences of dishonesty. Everything that was said about me and done to me, was based on a series of POL lies; how and why did this happen I asked myself every

day. I was 19 years old. I am now 39 years old. That is 20 years of my life that the directors of the Post Office helped by Fujitsu and by the lawyers for the Post Office destroyed --my whole adult life. I have been a convicted criminal for a crime I did not commit. They presumably have their salaries, their bonuses, their houses and their pensions.

5. I live in rented accommodation with 3 children a series of mental health issues and a million and one questions still unanswered. They don't get upset by the sound of a door slamming shut, because they have never been in prison. Some people I have read about went on to other high-profile jobs-became bosses of other very large companies. I bet none of them have ever bothered to wonder what harm they caused me since 2001. I have been in the media enough – they could have contacted me and apologised. But they don't really care. Each one of them, and I hope the Inquiry publicly names and shames them all, played a part in destroying my life.
6. On 20 June 2002, I was sentenced to six months' imprisonment in a young offender institution and immediately locked up. I was originally in Holloway; the governor couldn't believe I had been sent there.
7. In my interview under caution by two of POL's investigators at Peckham Police Station, I was asked: "can you demonstrate how you did not steal the money". I was also asked whether I could show the officers that I did not have "any responsibility for the missing eleven thousand". I was asked by Post Office investigators whether my family had forced me to steal. That itself shows the contempt which they had for me and my family. My family raised and paid to the Post Office the £11,500 that it was alleged I had stolen (I hadn't), on the basis that I would avoid a custodial sentence. Having been found guilty, I refused the

invitation from the judge to apologise to those from whom I had (allegedly) stolen. Here is what those people I mentioned above forced me to see while I was in jail—I have said this many times before which is why it is in quotes: “In prison I had a job in there taking hot drinks to the cells, but in this one cell there was a girl, she was hanging, she was dead.” I was 19 years old.

8. I have suffered from repeated stress and panic attacks since my release from custody—20 years ago. I have been in long term therapy—I am in it again now.
9. For many years my family and I suffered harassment and abuse. We had to move home/ towns to escape harassment. My whole adult life has been absolutely ruined by my wrongful prosecution and wrongful conviction for dishonesty. In every job application I made, I had to declare myself a convicted thief, which affected my employment prospects. But of course, I wasn't a thief and never was. The criminals are the directors of POL, of Fujitsu and their lawyers. Immediately before the hearing in the Court of Appeal in November 2020, I was admitted to hospital having suffered a suspected stroke. In fact, I had suffered a complete neurological collapse which left me paralysed down one side, unable to speak, unable to do things I usually did which is still having a massive impact on my life today, brought on by the stress of the court proceedings.
10. As my barrister Paul Marshall made very, very clear I should never have been prosecuted. My prosecution was held by the Court of Appeal to have been unfair, an abuse of process, and constituted an affront to the conscience of the Court. I was one of just three Appellants who was determined to do the right thing, because of everything that had been done to me. That is why I felt so strongly

about Limb 2. I wanted to make sure everyone knew that not only had I done nothing wrong—but that the Post Office was the criminal. Lying and deceitful.

11. Yesterday (27th January 2022) I did something I never believed I could do or would do, I have intense EMDR therapy and need to try and process what has happened to me and why! I made the decision to step back in time and try and confront my fears. I once again walked through the gates of Holloway prison this time of my own accord. As soon as I arrived, I felt scared the huge doors, the sounds, even the smell was the same, I am 39 years old I shouldn't have to worry about being scared or what was about to encounter again but this time I knew like before I was innocent, but I was now in charge. As I walked through the damp cold hallways the flashbacks were instant, I could see things, I could hear things, I could smell things everything was the same nothing had changed! I spent a couple of hours in the prison trying to tell myself this was the past we are now in the present, but this didn't make it any easier for me, the trauma and damage has already been done. I often look at my 17-year-old son and think what would I do now if this was to happen to him? I have no idea to be honest I tell myself; this has had a massive impact on my family, children and myself. All that goes through my mind daily is "How do you send a young girl, (basically a child) to prison for a crime she didn't commit?"

12. I am attaching to my statement, pages from Nick Wallis book – The Great Post Office Scandal. I read those pages before the book was published and confirm the information about me. The pages are 4,5,6, 27, 28,29,30,280. I am also attaching a link to a BBC Radio 4 programme (File on 4) from 16th Feb 2020. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000f5hb> My parts are from the start of the programme to 4.30 mins/ 34.40—35.40/ 35.50 ---36.36.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed 

Print full name: TRACY FELSTEAD

Dated: 15th February 2022