Witness Name: Alison Clark
Statement No.: WITN 03660200
Dated: 1605/2023

THE POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

Second Witness Statement of Alison Clark in the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry

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I, **ALISON CLARK,** of 1 Future Walk, Chesterfield S49 1PF, **SAY AS FOLLOWS:**

1.   My name is Alison Clark. I have been employed by Post Office Limited (**"POL"**) since 2000.

2.   I am the same Alison Clark who provided a witness statement to the Inquiry in draft on 8 February 2022 and then subsequently in signed final form on 21 July 2022, in which I provided to the Inquiry the same or similar information that POL previously provided to the Inquiry at certain "teach-in" sessions between April and June 2021.

3.   Except where I indicate to the contrary, the facts and matters contained in this witness statement are within my own knowledge. Where any information is not within my personal knowledge, I have identified the source of my information or the basis for my belief. The facts in this witness statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

4.   In this statement I use the term "Postmaster" broadly to refer to those people or entities that are responsible for operating post offices (but excluding those individuals employed by POL), rather than with any formal definition in mind. I use the terms "Postmaster" and "Subpostmaster" interchangeably given their

common usage. Nothing in this statement is intended to detract or differ from any definition adopted by POL. I refer in this statement to "Postmasters'" interactions with the Network Business Support Centre (**"NBSC"**), although I note that it was also common for members of staff within a branch to place a call to the NBSC. Calls by staff would be handled in the same way as calls by Postmasters and as such I don't make any distinction in this statement between Postmasters and branch staff and commonly refer, for simplicity, to these interactions being with "Postmasters".

5.   This witness statement has been prepared in response to the request made by the Horizon IT Inquiry (the **"Inquiry"**) pursuant to Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006, dated 3 January 2023 (the **"Rule 9 Request"**). In this witness statement, I address each of the questions set out in the Rule 9 Request, including my career background at POL and my knowledge and involvement in the NBSC.

DEFINED TERMS

6.   In this statement, I have used a number of acronyms and defined terms. I have set out a definition of each, as I have introduced them. However, for convenience, I also set out an explanation of what I mean by each of these acronyms and definitions below:

Knowledge Base	A platform on which the call scripts are hosted for access by NBSC staff
Horizon	The Horizon IT System
Inquiry	The Horizon IT Inquiry
NBSC	Network Business Support Centre (which later became the Branch Support Centre)
POL	Post Office Limited

Rule 9 Request The Inquiry's request pursuant to Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006, dated 3 January 2022

BACKGROUND

1. Please set out your professional background, including summaries of any roles you had at the Post Office or ICL Pathway/Fujitsu.

7. I have been asked to set out my professional background. I graduated from school in 1996, after which I worked in a contact centre before moving to Australia in 1999. In late 1999, I came back to the UK, prior to commencing my employment at POL in 2000.

8. In 2000, I joined POL as a Service Support Advisor within the NBSC. My responsibilities were handling calls from branches as a Tier 2 advisor. At that time, there was a two-tier system within the NBSC. As I recall, Tier 1 advisors were the first port of call for Postmasters who had questions. In relation to Horizon, this included questions about how to use Horizon's functionality to perform tasks in branch, including how to record transactions and do accounting tasks. More technical hardware/software questions were directed to the Horizon System Helpdesk (later called the Horizon Service Desk). This was independent of POL and was run/managed, I recall, by Fujitsu. I describe the different functions of, and the interaction between, the NBSC and the Horizon System Helpdesk further below.

9. The Tier 1 team at the NBSC would listen to the caller's issues, ask questions to understand the exact problem, and then try to find answers to assist from a series of scripts on the Knowledge Base. Tier 2 advisors handled calls from branches that were escalated from Tier 1 advisors where there was no scripted response available or the question could not be answered by a scripted

response (for example, if it was too complex or unusual). My role as a Tier 2 advisor was to speak to the Postmaster to understand this more complex question (including the issue that was really at the nub of the call), record that question on the case management system and seek appropriate ways to find resolutions, including by speaking with the various relevant Team Manager within the NBSC. My responsibilities changed from handling calls to overseeing the performance of the Service Support Advisors who handled calls. I recall that certain complex calls were escalated to me from time to time. All of these calls would have been handled by either a Tier 1 or a Tier 2 Service Support Advisor in the first instance.

10. As noted in paragraph 8 above, when I first joined POL in 2000, the NBSC had a two-tier system. The Tier 1 operation was run by the Royal Mail Group ("**RMG**") and the Tier 2 operation was run by POL. However, in 2005, the whole operation of the NBSC was outsourced to RMG. Therefore, my job title changed to Team Manager of Royal Mail Customer Services. Despite this change in job title, my role, responsibilities and day-to-day function did not change.

11. In 2005, shortly after the structure change, I left the NBSC and joined the POL customer contact centre as a team leader for advisors. In contrast to the NBSC, the customer contact centre was responsible for fielding calls received from customers coming into branches (rather than from the Postmasters or branch staff). In 2008, I accepted a secondment to a team that was responsible for ensuring the readiness of branches for the rollout of Horizon Next Generation (also known as **"Horizon Online"**). This is covered in more detail in paragraph 22 below. In 2010 I returned to the Team Manager role in the NBSC.

12. Following the split out of POL into a separate legal entity from RMG in 2012, the operation of the NBSC moved back to POL and I continued as a Team Manager of the NBSC with the same responsibilities until 2017.

13. In 2017, I moved out of the NBSC and started working as a Fraud Analyst Manager in the Security Unit. I was responsible for managing a team of analysts who looked at transactional data to identify anomalies and underlying root causes of such anomalies. Once identified, I would raise the issue and work to fix the underlying root cause by contacting branches to rectify these anomalies. This would be the case where the anomaly was caused by something that we had been able to identify that the branch had done wrong, for example a keying error or they had not followed the right process for a particular transaction. In this way, we gave the branch the opportunity to correct what they had done wrong and hopefully learn how to do it correctly in the future. If this was not possible, we would to initiate the decision-making process as to whether to call the branch or to send an auditor out to the relevant branch.

14. Between 2019 and 2021, I held the role of Branch Analysis & Control Manager which entailed similar, but broader, responsibilities. I had second line responsibilities for the predecessor of the Branch Analysis & Control team and I was also responsible for the field-based audit team. My primary role was to bring these two teams together.

15. In 2021, I was promoted to my current role as Head of Network Monitoring & Reconciliation. In this role, I also started to manage the Branch Reconciliation team. The Branch Reconciliation team was responsible for correcting and resolving various aspects of Postmasters' accounts. I also have third line management responsibilities for the Network Monitoring & Reconciliation team.

2. *Please describe any training and/or instruction you received in relation to the Horizon IT project and/or working in the NBSC.*

16. When I joined as a Service Support Advisor in 2000, I recall receiving six weeks of formal training. During the first four weeks I had counter training, where I learned to use Horizon for day-to-day transactions and conduct daily accounting and monthly balancing procedures. Then, I had one week of training on how to carry out accounting processes on Horizon, and the sorts of issues that Postmasters and branch staff may face while using Horizon. The final week of training was on customer service issues and logistical matters, such as how to record details of calls received from branches on the case management system.

17. After completing the formal training, I sat with more experienced call handlers for four weeks to shadow them and receive feedback on how I handled calls. This was standard practice at the time for new joiners within the NBSC and was referred to as the "nursery". There was a culture of learning from those with more experience, asking questions and, if you were the one with more experience, helping others with their queries. After four weeks, I started handling calls on my own without close supervision on every call. Although it was a steep learning curve, I believed at the time that the level of training, support as a new joiner, and supervision were all good.

18. Once I fully started in the role, I attended 30-minutes to one hour training sessions on a weekly basis to learn about any changes that the call handlers should be aware of to answer questions coming from branches. At the meeting, the call handlers also shared common questions and trends of issues being raised by branches.

3. **_Please describe your experiences working in the NBSC, including the_**
following details:

a. Your responsibilities and any projects you were involved in;

19. As set out in paragraph 9 above, my responsibilities as a Tier 2 Service Support
Advisor involved answering calls from Postmasters and staff in branches that
were referred to me in circumstances where the Tier 1 advisor was unable to
help (because the issue was incapable of being resolved through a standard
process set in a script, usually because it was a little unusual, a new problem
or a little bit complex). A key part of this role was asking the right questions to
really get to the nub of the issue that the caller was having.

20. My role was to try to find solutions to the problems and to record the call on the
case management system. This was a standalone system and was not
connected to the PinICL or PEAK systems. As the problem was, by definition,
something outside of the "usual" and couldn't be answered by reference to the
script, it would usually require a degree of investigation work, and potentially
discussing the problem with the relevant internal product team to help
understand the problem and to come up with a solution. This case management
system could produce reports which could be helpful to identify any trends in
the sort of issues being escalated up to Tier 2.

21. As a Team Manager in the NBSC, my day-to-day responsibilities were largely
focussed on supervising, managing and coaching the Tier 2 advisors (being the
job that I had been promoted from). Between 2000 and 2005, there were around
8-10 Team Managers at the NBSC, each supervising the work of around a
dozen Tier 2 advisors. There were similar numbers of Tier 1 advisors. To

understand how the advisors that I supervised were performing and to help identify areas for development and feedback, I would listen to their calls. I mainly did this by listening to calls that had been recorded, but I also occasionally would sit next to an advisor whilst they were on a call to observe the call live. I would then assess the advisor's performance using the marking system in the POL quality assurance framework, before providing feedback to, and discussing it with, the particular individual on a monthly basis. This feedback would cover both the advisor's soft skills in handling the call, but also would seek to identify whether there were any gaps in the advisor's knowledge.

22. In around 2008, I was involved in a project to ensure readiness in branch for the rollout of Horizon Next Generation (also known as **"Horizon Online"**). This included liaising with branches to ensure that all the right equipment had arrived in branch and they had successfully completed all necessary training modules prior to the introduction of Horizon Online. I managed a team of up to 30 people who were required to work through a checklist with each branch of the various equipment and training points to complete. I understand there was also a group of ringfenced people within POL who were specifically dedicated to supporting branches with the introduction of Horizon Online. I did not work directly with this team and it did not form part of the NBSC.

b. How the NBSC worked in practice in dealing with subpostmasters requests for support in relation to Horizon;

23. Prior to the introduction of Horizon, advice and assistance was provided to Postmasters by regional helplines with dedicated regional telephone numbers. Following the rollout of Horizon, support to Postmasters became more centralised in the form of the NBSC. This meant that there was then a

centralised number that Postmasters and branch staff could call when they were experiencing issues with how to use Horizon's functionality to perform tasks in branch.

24. If the Postmaster had more technical questions in relation to the Horizon hardware/software (including, for example, printer questions), these questions should be directed to the Horizon System Helpdesk (later known as the Horizon Service Desk). This was independent from POL and was, I recall, run/managed by Fujitsu at a variety of locations, including Fujitsu's Stevenage building.

25. In 2000, when Horizon was first rolled out, questions as to how to navigate the Horizon system (for example, which key to press to properly record a transaction) were handled by Fujitsu's Horizon System Helpdesk. In the mid-2000s, the NBSC's remit expanded slightly to include those "navigation" questions and the Horizon System Helpdesk continued to focus on technical hardware/software questions. As I recall, there was a Horizon System Helpdesk/ Horizon Service Desk, focussing on the technical questions, until about 2016.

26. The telephone numbers for each of the NBSC and the Horizon System Helpdesk were made available to Postmasters and branch staff in the Horizon support manual (of which they had a copy) and in the training Postmasters received on Horizon. The Postmasters also had guidance as to which of the NBSC and the Horizon System Helpdesk should be called for each type of issue. Despite this guidance, the NBSC would sometimes receive a call from a Postmaster or member of branch staff that should properly have been made to the Horizon System Helpdesk. This was usually resolved at the Tier 1 stage, as one of the outcomes from the scripts would be to transfer the caller to the

Horizon System Helpdesk. Sometimes queries from the Postmasters that should be resolved by the Horizon System Helpdesk were received by the NBSC and passed by the Tier 1 advisors to a Tier 2 advisor. If, once the Tier 2 advisor had conducted further investigations, the Tier 2 advisor concluded that the Postmaster's issue was a technical hardware/software issue, they would transfer the call to the Horizon System Helpdesk,

27. Postmasters and staff could also be directed to the NBSC by Retail Network Managers. Retail Network Managers were responsible for looking after a group of branches geographically and were an alternative catch-all port of call for issues experienced in branch. The NBSC and the Retail Network Managers had different remits and, in addition, the way in which Retail Network Managers delivered support was different to the NBSC. Whilst the NBSC was the first port of call for Postmasters seeking immediate assistance on a particular issue, Retail Network Managers could proactively check in with branches in person in their region. In addition, certain calls to the NBSC (in particular questions around the running of the branch (the NBSC did not have access to any history of the branch that could often prove useful) or that might have benefitted from an in-person visit) could be escalated to the Retail Network Managers to help resolve in branch, if that was deemed appropriate.

28. When a Postmaster placed a call to the NBSC, they would first speak to a Tier 1 advisor, who provided a response, based on a standardised script of commonly raised issues. Often calls were resolved at the Tier 1 level as they frequently involved branch staff simply wanting to check that they were doing a basic function or process correctly. Examples of issues that could be, and commonly were, resolved at Tier 1 included Postmasters wanting to check

whether a specific form of ID could be accepted for the purposes of a passport "Check and Send", or whether there were certain restrictions preventing a particular item from being posted to a specific country. In relation to Horizon-based queries, an example might be where a Postmaster had input a transaction into Horizon but had keyed it in incorrectly. In this case, the solution would be to enter the Session ID number into system, and the system would recognise the transaction that needed to be reversed. The Tier 1 advisors could help with these queries.

29. If the Tier 1 advisor could not resolve a particular issue, the call would be escalated to a Tier 2 advisor. Examples of issues which would typically be escalated to Tier 2 advisors included queries around products and services, the running of the business and how to carry out certain accounting functions on Horizon, where those queries were either not covered by the scripted response or the scripted response did not resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the caller.

30. After each call, the NBSC advisor would complete a report on the case management system, detailing the Postmaster's question, the solution that had been suggested and the outcome of the call. These records would then be used to update the Knowledge Base, and in particular to improve the scripts available to Tier 1 advisors, so that more issues could be quickly resolved at the Tier 1 level and fewer calls needed to be escalated to Tier 2.

c. *Any specific requests for support or events that you consider to be important to the Inquiry's terms of reference;*

31. I have read, and given thought to, the Inquiry's terms of reference, as they appear here: https://www.postofficehorizoninquiry.org.uk/publications/terms-

reference. I cannot recall any examples of specific calls, requests for support or other events, that I think are particularly relevant, beyond what I set out in this statement as a whole.

d. The most common types of calls you received and how they were resolved;

32. As I recall, I received calls on a large range of topics and most of the time there would be a steady inflow of calls to the NBSC on different subjects. Given the period of time that I worked within the NBSC (between 2000 to 2005 and then again from 2010 to 2017), and the amount of time that has passed since then, it is difficult to identify any specific trends in the nature of calls we were receiving. As I explained above, we met on a weekly basis to discuss (amongst other things) any particular trends that were coming out of the calls received. These meetings were between one or more teams of advisors and were chaired by a Team Manager. I can also recall instances of meetings being led by incident analysts from within POL, who shared insights that they had into any themes that were coming out of the queries raised with the NBSC. Any lessons that could be learned (in terms of updating the Tier 1 script or the training and knowledge of the Tier 1 team) were therefore discussed and fed back to the Tier 1 and Tier 2 teams on a regular basis. That meant that, if there was an increase or trend in any particular type of call, we would likely discuss it and seek to implement whatever changes were required fairly quickly to enable the Tier 1 team to be able to assist Postmasters more effectively on that issue in future.

33. That said, following the introduction of a new product, or if there had been a mistake in some recently published guidance, there would often be a temporary

spike in calls asking for assistance with that new product or seeking help in relation to that part of the guidance. With the new product, calls would usually reduce again, once branch staff got more used to it. Any mistakes that appeared to be present in any of the guidance were fed back to the appropriate team to rectify. In both cases therefore, the spike in calls would subsequently reduce again.

34. As set out above, during the rollout of Horizon, the remit of the NBSC was to deal with questions on how to use Horizon's functionality to perform tasks in branch, for example how to account for certain products or transactions on Horizon. More technical questions around the hardware or the Horizon system itself were dealt with by the Horizon System Helpdesk. As explained above, the Horizon System Helpdesk was separate and independent from the NBSC and POL and was, I recall, managed by Fujitsu. This structure was introduced during rollout and remained in place until the mid-2000s when the NBSC was recast as the single point of contact for Postmasters, with an increased remit (as described in paragraph 25 above). Nevertheless, many of the calls that I and my team received at the NBSC did not actually relate to Horizon, but would instead relate to other products and services, such as the transactional and operational calls referred to in paragraph 28. It is worth noting also that the network of Post Office branches was much bigger around the time Horizon was rolled out. There were around 20,000 Post Office branches in the early 2000s, compared to roughly half that number now. This meant that there was naturally a more continuous churn of new Postmasters and branch staff who would more regularly need advice as they settled into their roles.

e. What resources you had available to you to assist resolving calls for
support and whether they were adequate;

35. I have been asked about the resources I had available to assist in resolving calls for support.

36. As a Tier 2 advisor (and then a manager of Tier 2 advisors), I had access to the same resources available to the Tier 1 advisors, including the call scripts. These were stored on the Knowledge Base and key scripts/sections could be located by running keyword searches. Whether or not an advisor was able to identify the correct script depended in part on the way that the Postmaster presented the issue. In relation to the more complex or unusual issues which were passed on to Tier 2 in particular, the Postmaster would often present a set of scenarios and the advisor would need to ask a series of questions to ensure a good understanding of the specific underlying issue that the Postmaster needed help with.

37. As far as I am aware, there used to be a dedicated team responsible for preparing the call scripts. This team was made up of people who had been in the POL business for a long time, mainly with a background of directly managing the counter service. It likely also included those who had been involved in the live trial of Horizon and, in at least two cases that I can think of, included people who had had experience working on a regional helpline. As time went on, some ex-NBSC advisors joined the team that was responsible for maintaining and updating the scripts as they gained knowledge in the process. This team used incoming materials like Branch Focus (a Postmaster-facing weekly publication showing, amongst other things, updates to Horizon). Once

the scripts were in use, the team of advisors would suggest appropriate changes, coming out of product developments and internal feedback.

38. Tier 2 advisors also had access to additional resources such as process maps and decision trees which showed different suggested solutions, depending on the scenario presented by Postmasters. These were typically useful for calls where an issue was presented and there could be a variety of potential solutions, depending on the circumstances. These process maps and decision trees helped the Tier 2 advisors to ask a logical series of questions to help clarify the actual problem and so identify the correct solution. For example, when receiving a call relating to a banking mis-key, the first question might be "has the customer got a receipt?", as the answer to this would inform what solutions were available. Sometimes the resources used by advisors were the same as those available to Postmasters, for example: the Horizon user guide. In this case, we would relay relevant information to the Postmaster and refer them to the correct section of the guide for future assistance.

39. In processing a call, I would also speak to other people in the business who had experience in the area being asked about by the Postmaster, such as the various product managers. When this happened, I would sometimes have a discussion with the relevant internal expert and then relay the information or explanation received to the caller. In other situations, where it was appropriate and easier for the Postmaster for me to do so (for example where the issue might be more easily explained by, for example, the product manager), I might hand the Postmaster over to my internal colleague and they would then become the main point of contact for the Postmaster in resolving that issue.

40. I have been asked to comment on whether I think the resources available to me were adequate. Overall, I consider that the available resources to have been adequate, although I note also that they improved over time both in quality and in quantity. Where resources were lacking, insofar as they did not fully resolve the issue being presented, this generally reflected the complexity and uniqueness of the scenarios being raised by Postmasters and the fact that these could not always be resolved through scripted answers. That said, where resources were not available to assist with a particular issue, it formed part of the internal feedback to consider whether additional resources should be developed.

f. How the team was managed;

41. NBSC advisors were supervised by, and reported to, their Team Manager, which is a role that I took on from around 2003 or 2004. Team Managers were each responsible for overseeing the performance of a team of approximately twelve advisors and occasionally assisting with calls where these were escalated accordingly. Advisors could approach a Team Manager if they had questions about how to deal with a particular issue. If the Team Manager was not available, a more senior or experienced advisor might also step in to assist their colleague on an informal basis.

42. The performance of the advisors was reviewed by the Team Manager on a monthly basis. As explained above, as a Team Manager, I would listen to approximately five calls that each advisor had taken over the previous month. These would be either be taken from the bank of recorded calls or I would sit in and listen live to a call. I would make notes on points to discuss coming out of these calls. I would then have a one-on-one discussion with the advisor to

provide feedback (both positive and constructive). I, and the other Team Managers, would provide feedback to the advisor on the way that they handled calls and we would make recommendations and set objectives for advisors where we considered that the advisors could learn more about a particular product or process to improve their performance. Team Managers had access to various tools they could refer the advisors to. For example, if the Team Manager had identified a coaching opportunity (e.g. a gap in knowledge on a certain product / issue), they would look for reference materials such as training guides or specific training sessions from subject matter experts to try to close those knowledge gaps. On a couple of occasions, we received training from external providers, especially during the years where the quality assurance frameworks were relaunched. We also had sessions with external coaches to help develop call-handling skills and soft skills.

43. As a Team Manager, I reported to the Customer Services Manager for the contact centre. The Customer Services Manager was responsible for managing the quality of the contact centre as a whole.

44. The atmosphere within the NBSC was generally collaborative. We had weekly team meetings as well as weekly training update sessions. In addition, there was an electronic notice board which people would use to share solutions to issues in case it was helpful to other advisors receiving similar calls.

g. *The attitude of members of the NBSC to subpostmasters.*

45. In my view, the attitude of members of the NBSC towards Postmasters was generally good. Part of the training we received when joining the NBSC was on the quality assurance framework which set out criteria around customer service.

The framework included being polite, asking questions, showing empathy, confirming that Postmasters understood the advisor's response, ensuring the advisor was answering the right question. These criteria were designed to ensure that the Postmaster's call experience was a positive one.

4.   In your view, did the NBSC provide adequate support to subpostmasters who called for assistance?

46.   I have been asked about my view as to whether the NBSC provided adequate support to Subpostmasters who called for assistance.

47.   My understanding is that Tier 1 advisors had a target for the number of calls that ended in the Postmaster receiving a satisfactory answer to their issue without the need for further escalation. I do not remember what this target figure was, but based on my understanding of the types of calls received by Tier 1 advisors, I would guess that this target was met because most calls were short and straightforward, and therefore easily resolved.

48.   It is difficult to comment on the outcome of Tier 2 calls because they were often handed over to other advisors in different areas of the business, depending on the type of issue. Often the call would be handed to the Retail Network Manager (which was later known as a Retail Line Manager as the remit changed a bit) who acted as a catchall for problems experienced by Postmasters.

49.   In terms of the feedback that we received from Postmasters on their experience with the NBSC, this was, I consider, a pretty normal mixture of both positive and negative feedback. I can't remember any particularly significant pieces of feedback but based on my recollection, the majority of this feedback was received anecdotally, and later through phone-surveys. I also recall that a

complaints team was also introduced at one point to help resolve any issues where Postmasters felt unhappy with the service or where they felt that their issue had not been resolved to their satisfaction. These types of complaints were logged onto the case management system. I am not aware of what happened after that.

5. Were you aware of any bugs, errors or defects within the Horizon IT System at the time you worked in the NBSC?

50. I have been asked whether I was aware of any bugs, errors or defects within the Horizon IT System at the time I was working the NBSC.

51. In my experience, both as an NBSC advisor and Team Manager, I do not think I would have thought to classify an issue raised by a caller in those terms. I was (and others in the NBSC were) aware of Horizon from a front-end user interface side and our job was to help the Postmasters and branch staff from that point of view. NBSC advisors therefore became aware of individual scenarios through the calls from Postmasters. But we focussed on the logic of the information available to us. We did not have the technical skills, tools or knowledge to identify whether there were any potential technical issues in the back-end of the system. Where an issue raised by a Postmaster seemed to be a technical one concerning the Horizon hardware or software, the Tier 1 scripts and/or the Tier 2 decision trees/process maps would likely direct the advisor to transfer the caller to the Horizon System Helpdesk. I was never aware of, or involved in, any formal lines of communication or feedback as between the POL NBSC and the Fujitsu Horizon System Helpdesk. I recall that there used to be service forums where the NBSC and the Horizon System Helpdesk would discuss the performance metrics of the two helpdesks/services centres. I think

that I might attended one of these. But formal communications that might have taken place between POL and Fujitsu on any potential problems with Horizon would take place above the level of a Team Manager. I would have thought that any such conversations would have take place above the level of the Customer Services Manager (who was my line manager and was responsibility for the performance of the NBSC), or perhaps by someone alongside of them.

52.   In any case, I am not aware of any such conversations. For my part, I thought that the Horizon system was working well and that we were therefore able to help anyone who was having issues using it, using the various scripts, process maps, decisions trees and product specialist support that we had access to.

53.   Often, when a Postmaster called the NBSC, it was simply to clarify or confirm something they were doing for the first time (or otherwise weren't familiar with) or it was a case of user error. Those issues were usually quickly and easily dealt with at the Tier 1 level. There were, though, other times when it was not clear whether the likely cause of an issue was user error, or an issue with the system. One difficulty in determining the cause was that Postmasters did not always explain the issue in technical terms and advisors had to learn to ask the right questions to distinguish the likely cause.

54.   Occasionally I would speak to a Postmaster who experienced an issue with Horizon that they did not understand and who would therefore suggest that it was a fault with the Horizon IT system. Any such technical complaints about Horizon would be handed over the Horizon System Helpdesk.

6.   *Is there anything else you think the Chair should be aware of relating to the Horizon IT Project?*

55.   I have been asked whether there is anything else the Inquiry should be aware of relating to the Horizon IT Project. I have reflected on this but cannot recall anything that I would like to add to what I have said in my statement above.

Statement of truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed: **GRO**

Dated: 16/05/2023

Witness Name: Alison Clark
Statement No.: WITN 03660200
Dated: 16/05/2023

THE POST OFFICE

HORIZON IT INQUIRY

SECOND WITNESS STATEMENT OF

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