

Witness Name: Timothy Newell Bentley

Statement No.: WITN08600100

Dated: 19 May 2023

## POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

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### FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF TIMOTHY NEWELL BENTLEY

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I, Timothy Newell Bentley, will say as follows...

#### **Introduction**

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 14 April 2023 (the “**Request**”).

#### **Background**

1. I am now a Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency Approved Driving Instructor.
2. It is correct that I was a Client Manager at Post Office Counters Limited (“POCL”) in 2001. I can not recall the dates I was employed in this role, however, the position was to deliver the requirements of what was known as “Schedule ‘A’”, which set out the delivery of services for the provision of the benefit payments and allowance system, which predated the introduction of

the benefits payment card which was to have been used with the introduction of automation in post offices. I had no other relevant roles in POCL (later the Post Office Ltd ("POL")).

### **Correspondence with the DSS about Cleveleys Post Office**

3. I have been asked to consider the letters dated 10 January 2001 and 11 January 2001 sent by Angela Smith, of the Financial Services Division of the Department of Social Security ("DSS"), to me (POL00095371 and POL00095372), along with my response dated 16 January 2001 (POL00095370). I can not recall the matter in question due to the passage of time.
4. With regards to the concerns being raised with me by Ms Smith in the documents above, I can not recall the concerns being raised due to the passage of time.
5. With regards to the information I provided to Ms Smith in response to the concerns raised: other than the letters provided, I have no recollection of specific details due to the passage of time.
6. I have been asked what enquiries I made within POCL before I responded to Ms Smith. I have no recollection due to the passage of time.
7. I have been asked what the source was of the information I provided, and in particular, what the source was of the position that "Post Office Counters Ltd is satisfied with the performance of the Horizon platform, including the operation of OBCS within this environment"? I am unable to recall that information requested due to the passage of time.

8. I have been asked whether it my understanding (with reference to my comment that there was “some dissension with staff who have found the transition challenging”) that some staff had reported problems with the functioning of the Horizon IT system. I can not recall what this relates to.
9. I have been asked whether I or others at POCL consider that the problems which staff were having with the Horizon IT system at this time were caused by user error or by a fault with the Horizon IT system and why. I am unable to recall this incident due to the passage of time.
10. I have been asked whether I considered Julie Wolstenholme to be one of the “individuals who, for what ever reason, are resistant to or find it hard to cope with change”? I do not know Julie Wolstenholme.
11. I have reviewed the correspondence from 2001 between myself and Lisa Crabtree from the Financial Services Division of the DSS at POL00095362, POL00095361, POL00095360 and POL00095359.
12. I have been asked to explain what prompted the above correspondence, and in particular what the “errors” being reported were. I can not recall what this relates to due to the passage of time.
13. I do not recall what had caused the “errors” due to the passage of time.
14. I have been asked what the checks of the accounts done by “Chesterfield” (understood to be where the Product, Branch & Accounting team, later the Financial Services Unit, was based) show. I cannot recall this due to the passage of time.
15. I cannot recall whether the “former subpostmistress” referred to by me in my letter dated 17 July 2011 is Ms Wolstenholme.

16. As to the “difficulties” being experienced by Ms Wolstenholme in operating the Horizon system, I cannot recall what this matter was about now due to the passage of time.
17. I have been asked whether the two “under claims” being reported by the DSS were picked up and rectified by error notices when they occurred by the relevant accounting team at POL, and if not why. I do not remember how the under claims were highlighted in the first place due to the passage of time.
18. I have been asked whether, if such errors were not picked up by a subpostmaster or the relevant accounting team within POL at the time, the result might be a balance discrepancy. I do not know the answer to this point.
19. I have been asked whether any other “errors” linked to the Horizon system were reported to me by the DSS when I held the role of Client Manager. I have no such details.

**Other involvement in the Cleveleys case**

20. I have been asked to explain any other involvement in or knowledge I had about the circumstances which led to the suspension of Ms Wolstenholme and / or the case of The Post Office v Mrs J Wolstenholme. I have no knowledge.
21. I have been asked to consider the memo to Tina Davis, Network Trading dated 12 March 2001 (POL00095364) and her response dated 13 March 2001 (POL00095363). I have been asked whether the Tim Bentley involved in this correspondence me, and if so, to explain the request I made for information and what I understood from the information provided in response. I am the Tim Bentley in the memo dated 13th March 2001, however, I can not

recollect, due to the passage of time, the request for information, however, assume it is related to the enquiry from the Benefits Agency.

22. I can not recall what concerns, if any, I had to the press article about the Cleveleys Post Office due to the passage of time.

23. Due to the passage of time I do not recall whether the matter came up at the Service Review Meeting in April however or what was discussed, however it may have come up.

**Knowledge of bugs, errors and defects in the Horizon system**

24. I have been asked whether I had, or whether I was aware of, any concerns regarding the robustness of the Horizon IT system during my time working for the Post Office. I did not work directly on the Horizon system, and have no opinion.

**Other matters**

25. There are no other matters that I could bring to the Inquiry.

**STATEMENT OF TRUTH**

I believe the contents of this statement to be true.

**GRO**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

TIMOTHY NEWELL BENTLEY

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_ 19<sup>th</sup> May 2023 \_\_\_\_\_

**Index to First Witness Statement of Timothy Newell Bentley**

<b>No.</b>	<b>URN</b>	<b>Document Description</b>	<b>Control Number</b>
1.	<b>POL00095371</b>	Letter from Angela Smith to Tim Bentley re: Closure of the Post Office in Runnymede Avenue, Cleveleys, Lancashire (10.01.2001)	POL-0094954
2.	<b>POL00095372</b>	Letter from Angela Smith to Tim Bentley re: Closure of the Post Office in Runnymede Avenue, Cleveleys, Lancashire (11.01.2001)	POL-0094955
3.	<b>POL00095370</b>	Letter from Tim Bentley to Angela Smith re: Closure of Post Office in Runnymede Avenue, Cleveleys, Lancs (16.01.2001)	POL-0094953
4.	<b>POL00095362</b>	Letter from Lisa Crabtree to Tim Bentley re: Cleveleys SPSO (14.03.2001)	POL-0094945
5.	<b>POL00095361</b>	Letter from Lisa Crabtree to Tim Bentley re: Cleveleys SPSO (16.05.2001)	POL-0094944
6.	<b>POL00095360</b>	Letter from Tim Bentley to Lisa Crabtree re: Cleveleys Post Office (11.06.2001)	POL-0094943
7.	<b>POL00095359</b>	Letter from Tim Bentley to Lisa Crabtree re: Cleveleys Post Office (17.07.2001)	POL-0094942
8.	<b>POL00095364</b>	Letter from Tim Bentley to Tina Davis re: Thornton Cleveleys Sub Post Office - West Lancs Gazette Newspaper Feature (12.03.2001)	POL-0094947
9.	<b>POL00095363</b>	Electronic memo from Tina Davis to Tim Bentley re: Cleveleys MSPO- West Lancs Gazette article (13.03.2001)	POL-0094946