

Witness Name: Philippa Wright

Statement No.: 01

WITN05940100

Date: 17<sup>th</sup> October 2024

## **POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY**

### **FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF PHILIPPA JANE WRIGHT**

I, Philippa Jane Wright, will say as follows...

Thank you for making contact with me on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2022 to seek information in relation the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry. For the record, I was employed by Post Office Limited for 25 years between 1985 and 2010. Having left the organisation some 12 years ago, what follows is to the best of my recollection and without access to Post Office Limited records. As a result, I am unable to accurately reflect dates of roles, full titles etc. I have sought to address my answers in the specific order requested.

1. During my career I undertook a range of roles – I initially commenced my employment as a Counter Clerk in a Crown Office

before moving on to Branch Manager roles within the Crown Office network.

Following this, I moved into Area Manager type roles in the Subpostmaster network, the roles had various titles such as Retail Network Manager, Retail Line Manager etc and were primarily aimed at supporting Post Offices on a day-to-day basis.

Prior to leaving Post Office Limited in 2010, I had also undertaken a number of senior roles in Post Office Headquarters in London.

2. In terms of qualifications, I have a range of O and A levels. Whilst employed by Post Office Limited, I completed a HND in Business and Finance and I was sponsored to undertake an MBA and GDL.
3. Whilst employed in the various roles, Post Office Limited provided "on the job" training to assist with one's overall effectiveness. Given the length of time that has elapsed, my specific recollection is unclear. However, the courses were many and varied and included subjects like interviewing skills etc, I assume they are part of my HR record.
4. During my 25-year career, I progressed from being a Counter Clerk in Fleetwood to being a Senior Manager at Head Quarters in London, the relevant roles are detailed in 1. above.
5. The bulk of my involvement with subpostmasters was within the middle ten years of my career when working as a Retail Network / Retail Line Manager.

6. The purpose of these roles was to support individual branches on a day-to-day basis particularly with respect to customer service and sales performance.
7. Where branches encountered difficulties, depending upon the nature of the issue then I would either assist myself or seek further support from the Helpline / relevant business department / line manager.
8. I do not recall whether difficulties specifically involved Horizon
9. There were not any steps that I thought should have been taken in response to concerns raised.
10. I cannot suggest that there was anyone that could have done more to assist or make things better for subpostmasters.
11. Horizon training for new subpostmasters was provided by the training team. On completion of the training, it would fall to the Retail Network / Retail Line Manager and the Helpline to support the branch / subpostmaster through their first few months in branch. For those subpostmasters in post when Horizon was introduced, the approach was broadly similar I vaguely recall.
12. Where subpostmasters did not feel wholly confident using the Horizon, additional training support could be requested, and there was a Helpline but most frequently the Retail Line / Retail Network Manager would assist.

13. At the time, I did not consider that improvements were required to the Horizon training.

14. I was not aware of their being any issues or problems with the Horizon system.

15. As a Retail Line / Retail Network Manager I was involved in cases where on audit branches were found to have financial discrepancies. Although I am unable to remember full details of specific cases the main ones I recall involve subpostmasters admitting falsifying documents to NS&I and DWP in order to steal money or increase income, I seem to recall that there was also a subpostmaster who had used Post office funds to buy his daughter a car. There were other cases where the auditors would have requested line manager involvement, but I can't recall any specific details.

16. Following an audit and the temporary suspension of the subpostmaster, my involvement would be to follow the business approach and invite the subpostmaster to interview accompanied by a friend / NFSP representative. This would be an opportunity for the subpostmaster to discuss / explain the financial / procedural irregularities. As the Retail Line / Retail Network Manager, I would undertake any further fact find that was relevant and eventually reach a decision whether to reinstate the subpostmaster or terminate their contract for service. Where contracts were terminated, subpostmasters had the opportunity to

appeal the decision, such appeals would be heard by a Senior  
Manager.

17. I am not aware of any contact or input from Fujitsu.

18. I have no view on whether there could have been improvement in  
the process outlined at 17 and 18 above.

19. There are no matters that I consider the Chair of the Inquiry  
should be aware of.

**Statement of Truth**

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed: **GRO**

Dated: 17<sup>th</sup> October 2024