

Witness Name: Mrs Tracey Etheridge
Statement No.: WITN0323_01
Exhibits: None
Dated: 14 – 3- 22

IN THE POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF MRS TRACEY ETHERIDGE

I, MRS TRACEY ETHERIDGE will say as follows:

1. I am the wife of Mr Gareth Etheridge, who is also a core participant in this Inquiry.
2. Gareth Etheridge has provided a statement which gives an account of the shared experiences of our family.
3. I confirm that I have read the statement of Mr Gareth Etheridge and that its contents are a true and accurate reflection of our experiences.
4. However, I would like to say something further on the human impact.

HUMAN IMPACT

5. The post office was the community's lifeline and was a much-needed part of the Gurnos Estate and this was one of the reasons why we purchased the post office.
6. The abuse I received as a result of the Post Office was horrendous. People would be talking behind my back, on one occasion I had to attend the doctors so I had to catch a bus and the abuse I received from people behind my was terrible.
7. On one instance, when we were having shortfalls, I had just finished work at the post office and I was speaking to a friend. A young man walked by and said to me "*if you*

close the post office, they will find you hanging from the nearest tree". It was very frightening to be told this and I went straight to my mother's which was not far from the post office. It worried me for a long time as the Gurnos is a rough area but I lived up there and I knew how rough it can be, but a lot of people knew me and my husband. I had concerns because I would be leaving the post office late in the evening when it was dark, it was scary.

8. I once overheard a customer in the queue saying *"god you've taken some money from here haven't you"* I said that *"I haven't done anything"*. I had incidents like these.
9. I felt really bad as I had worked in Four Boy's, a local shop on the Gurnos Estate, for a long time, and the boss who was over there had heard about what was happening with the post office and he came over to me and said *"do not worry not all of us think of you like that"*. It was upsetting to go out for a really long time due to abuse I would receive.
10. After we had another shortfall, I attempted to take my own life by overdosing. It was the stress and pressure and the way that me and Gareth were arguing, I felt that Gareth thought I had done it and taken the money.
11. I could not take it because Gareth and I had been together for so long, I did not know what to do and where to go, it was a no-win situation, it seemed that suicide was the only way out.
12. It was a hard time, my mother still lived up in the Gurnos and I still had to go there and I still had looks from strange people.
13. My mother and daughters all had abuse, my mother had muck thrown at her windows.
14. I was ashamed as I was thinking if Gareth thought I had taken the money, then what was everybody thinking.

15. My attempted overdose affected my youngest daughter, she has not forgotten about how she saw me. I think Post Office Ltd were responsible for my daughter seeing me like that.
16. I no longer have confidence; I would have been working had it not been for the events that happened with the post office. I have always enjoyed working with customers and have always had a good relationship with people.
17. I was a bubbly person, I loved to be out talking to people, Gareth and I would go to town but it is so difficult now I just like to stay in the house.

STATEMENT OF TRUTH

I believe the contents of this statement to be true

Signed... **GRO** Dated... 14 - 3 - 22

Tracey Etheridge