

## **DRAFT SPEAKING NOTE FOR ANGELA VAN DER BOGERD TO SPEAK TO ALAN BATES / KAY LINNELL – 10 MARCH 2015**

### **Purpose of Call**

- I am calling you to inform you that Post Office is announcing this morning:
  - that, having completed our investigations, Post Office will now put forward to mediation all cases remaining in the Scheme except those that been subject to a previous court ruling;
  - that the Working Group's role has ended with immediate effect; and
  - that we are publishing a report on the Scheme.
- We are writing to you to confirm our decision but in wanted to call in advance.

### **Q&A**

#### **Why have we done this?**

- We believe that this decision will accelerate the conclusion of the Scheme while continuing to provide a focus for individual concerns.
- This will address one of the criticisms levelled consistently at the Scheme (ie that it is too slow).

#### **What does this mean for applicants?**

- We are writing today to every applicant the remains in the Scheme (cc their advisors) to draw their attention to the announcement.
- For those that the Working Group recommended mediation (and Post Office agreed), we have confirmed that Post Office remains committed to mediating their case.
- We will write to the remaining applicants shortly setting out the effect of Post Office's announcement on their case.
- For those applicants who have been the subject of court rulings, we will continue to consider each of these cases carefully, on a case by case basis, even though mediation cannot overturn a Court's ruling.
- Having now completed its reinvestigation of each of the cases, Post Office has found no reason to conclude that any original prosecution was unsafe.
- Applicants remain able to pursue the normal legal avenues open to them to appeal court rulings with any further material disclosed to them, including that produced through the Scheme.

#### **What does this mean for the Working Group?**

- Post Office's decision means that the Working Group is closed with immediate effect as it removes the need to determine a case's suitability for mediation.
- All other members of the Working Group are being informed.
- As the Working Group has closed we are removing access to Huddle.

### **Second Sight**

- We wish to continue to work with Second Sight so that applicants have the benefit of their reviews and their Part Two report ahead, for example, of mediation.

#### **ONLY IF PRESSED**

##### **Parliament**

- We have written to the Minister, the Chair of the Select Committee and all MP's with a case in the Scheme informing them of our decision.
- We have restated our offer to meet with MPs to discuss an applicant's case provided we have their consent.

##### **Commitment to a review of future complaint handling**

- After nearly 3 years of investigation and review by Post Office and Second Sight, no system wide issue with Horizon has been found.
- Nonetheless, Post Office has reflected on whether improvements can be made in addressing any concerns that serving SPMRs may have. As a result we have made a number of changes including:
  - o changing the approach to dealing with breaches in contract by SPMRs so that the SPMR stays in the branch while Post Office investigates issues wherever possible (i.e. without suspension). This has resulted in 123 remaining in post this year who would have been suspended under the previous approach; and
  - o establishing the Branch User Forum to provide a way for SPMRs and others to raise issues and insights around business processes, training and support, feeding directly into the organisation's thinking at the highest level.
- These changes have been discussed with NFSP and implemented following their feedback. We also intend to introduce a process where the NFSP executive may escalate cases within Post Office where they believe a Subpostmaster may have been treated unfairly.