

From: Communications Team [GRO]
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To: Communications Team [GRO]
Bcc: Melanie Corfield [GRO]; Alan D
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Subject: in the loop - the latest on Panorama



Mark Davies

Communications &
Corporate Affairs
Director

Hello

I wanted to send a short update on the plans by the BBC's Panorama to broadcast a programme about the Post Office and its Horizon system on Monday.

We have spent a great deal of the week dealing with this issue, and making our position clear to the BBC at very senior levels. We do expect, however, that the programme will include a number of unsubstantiated allegations. We have decided against being interviewed as part of the programme and have instead issued a robust statement. This was a very carefully considered decision but the programme wanted us to speak publicly about individual cases and we

are not prepared to break the confidentiality commitments we have given about these. Whilst it is difficult to take this position in the face of untrue claims being made in public, we believe it is the right one.

If you have any queries about the programme, please don't hesitate to contact me at mark.r.davies@postoffice.co.uk **GRO** In addition if any colleagues come across/or are contacted by postmasters with specific questions about Horizon then they should be asked to ring NBSC so that assistance can be offered.

On Monday we will be sending out a note to all Post Office colleagues updating them on the programme. In the meantime, our core points are below. I would welcome your help in ensuring that our key messages are cascaded to colleagues, particularly those who may get questions from customers or postmasters (and potential new operators).

The key points to make are as follows:

- extremely serious, unsubstantiated allegations about the Post Office and the Horizon system have continued to be repeated over the past few years by a small number of mainly former postmasters
- we are sorry if these people feel they have not been treated fairly by the Post Office and we have gone to great lengths to look at their cases
- the clear evidence we have in these cases does not support allegations being made
- we committed to confidentiality to people who put grievances to us, so we cannot share details about individual cases
- what we can say is that we do not prosecute people for making innocent mistakes and never have
- it is right that we may take action as custodians of customers' money where there is evidence of dishonesty
- we have demonstrated that Horizon works as it should. It has been shown to be robust and effective in dealing with six million transactions a day, with some 78,000 people using it, and it is regularly audited
- £70bn goes through Horizon every year: if there were systemic problems with branch accounting, it is reasonable to expect them to have been more widely experienced across the Post Office network than the 136 individual complaints spanning more than 10 years, during which there have been 500,000 Horizon users.

- during the past three years we have done everything and more than we committed to do to investigate the concerns put forward about our computer system. That was the right thing to do.
- we set up an independent inquiry, established the complaint review and mediation scheme and provided financial support for people to obtain independent, professional advice.
- this work has provided overwhelming evidence that demonstrates it was not Horizon that was responsible for missing money in any of the branches investigated

Thank you in advance for your help.

M. Davies

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