

Sparrow Questions for Parliamentary Debate 17th December 2014

Scope and Operation of the Scheme

Q. How has POL defined “the system” – this was supposed to be wider than just Horizon?

Q. If it's not a Horizon issue that is causing the problem, what is, 140 SPM's can't be wrong?

Q. Paula Vennells talks about investigation “horizon and directly associated issues”. “Directly” is not what was agreed when the scheme was established.

Q. Why did POL agree to incorporate convicted cases in to the scheme if it knew it wasn't going to mediate?

Q. Why aren't POL mediating criminal cases?

Q. JA states that the “outcome envisaged” at the start of the scheme was that not mediating would be the exception. Why is this not now the case?

Q. Why is POL excluding professional advisers from the final consideration of whether a scheme should go to mediation?

Q. How can we rely on second sight if paid for by POL?

- When I answered questions on this matter in this house last year the honourable member for Batley and Spennings (Mike Wood MP) sought a specific commitment that the working group would include representation from Second Sight, recognising their independent understanding of the issues.
- I gave the honourable member the assurance he sought and Second Sight continue to play a central role in the design, establishment and operation of the Working Group and the Case Review and Mediation Scheme.
- The honourable member for North East Hampshire acknowledges their independence in his letter to the POL CEO.

Q. Who is Sir Anthony Hooper? Who Chairs the Working Group?

- The Working Group is independently chaired by Sir Anthony Hooper, whose appointment was announced on 29 October 2013.
- He is a former member of the Court of Appeal of England and Wales.

Q. When were subpostmasters able to complain? Hundreds have been frozen out of the process.

- Subpostmasters who wished to have their case considered by the Initial Mediation Scheme had three months between August and November 2013 to submit their applications.
- The Post Office advertised the Scheme, as did the Justice for Subpostmasters Alliance, and I'm sure interested honourable members would have done so also.

Progress / Results of the Scheme

Q. What were the main accusations of the interim report?

Q. What were the main accusations of the leaked thematic report?

Q. Can the minister summarise the finding of the scheme to date, in her view?

Q. Why has POL rejected 90% of cases going to mediation?

- It is not clear how the 90% figure has been determined
- [Insert real facts]
- It is for the Working Group to decide whether it considers a case suitable for mediation. The parties can decide whether they are prepared to mediate.
- Each case put forward benefits from re-investigation and an independent review but the scheme does not oblige either Post Office or applicants to mediate.

Q. Why are POL ignoring second sights advice if they are independent and are recommending mediation?

- It would be wrong for there to be a presumption that all cases should be mediated where Second Sight recommend mediation [WHY?].

Q. How much has POL spent on this to date:

On their own internal costs

On Second Sight

On their legal and other advice

On legal and other advice for SPMs

On mediation

Q. Given POL has spent so much, why is POL not going the final mile to mediation?

Q. JA admits that some SPM's might be trying it on – have there been any cases where the working group / JFSA / SS agree?

Q. Post Office has taken six months to investigate some cases, SS have only taken 2-3 months?

Q. Why is the scheme taking so long to complete?

JA "asks" of POL

Q. Will the delay in investigating the scheme mean that POL can rely on the statute of limitations so that applicants cannot bring action against them?

Q. Will POL agree to waive the time bar to statute of limitations in this matter?

Q. Will POL agree to not destroy data

Q. Why is POL being so secretive?

Q. [JA refers to “the response of 22 September 2014” – what was this and what’s the line of his attack, presumably it’s about scope of the scheme?]

Treatment of SPMs

Q. Did POL pressure people in to pleading guilty to lesser offences?

Q. SPM’s contracts are 100 pages long – what else do/did POL do to ensure SPMs understand their responsibilities?

Q. What has POL done to settle out of the scheme?

Q. What has POL done to resolve issues at mediation?

Other – possible questions to fire back at JA?

Q. JA quotes the January minutes of the working group. Should he have had access to these?

Q. Is JA clear about Second Sight – he either trusts them or he doesn’t