

POSSIBLE QUESTION:

POST OFFICE COMPUTER SYSTEM

***Issue:** Several MPs led by James Arbuthnot have raised concerns over a mediation scheme established by the Post Office to consider complaints about its Horizon IT system. Some of the MPs withdrew their support for the scheme. James Arbuthnot tabled a UQ today on the conduct of the Post Office Mediation Scheme. The UQ was not allowed.*

- I recognise the concerns the Right Hon Gentleman raises, who has consistently campaigned on this issue.
- I also understand the Business Select Committee has also taken an interest in this matter.
- The Post Office set up a mediation scheme to consider concerns by a small number of sub-postmasters about the Post Office IT system.
- Post Offices are committed to helping resolve these disputes through mediation and quite rightly Government should not interfere with its process.
- I understand that the independent investigations that have been carried out have found no systemic issues with the IT system.

Background

- Following allegations by a small number (c.150) of former sub-postmasters about defects in the Horizon IT system which runs in all Post Office branches, Post Office commissioned a report by independent investigators who found there are no systemic issues with the system. This was published in July 2013.
- Post Office then set up a complaint review and mediation scheme so that these sub-postmasters could have their claim investigated, and proceed to mediation if that were appropriate. The scheme has been running for 18 months. It is independent of Government.
- Of those cases, around 56 have already been closed through mediation or other means. The Post Office have now announced they will mediate all the remaining cases not involving a Court ruling, and consider the remainder on a case by case basis.
- Several MPs have shown an interest in this issue, with people saying they have been wrongfully charged of false accounting or made to make up losses they did not create. James Arbuthnot MP has led the group of MPs with an interest in this issue. The BIS Select Committee took evidence from various witnesses including Post Office on 3 February 2015.