

Witness Statement

(CJ Act 1967, s9; MC Act 1980, ss 5A(3)(a) and 5B; MC Rules 1981, r 70)



Statement of Rebecca Louise Portch

Age if under 18 Over 18 (If over 18 insert 'over 18')

This statement (consisting of three pages each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything, which I know to be false or do not believe true.

Dated the 09 day of January 2007

Signature

GRO

I have been employed by Post Office Ltd for approximately 4 years and currently work as Inventory Support, within the Retail Cash Management Team based in Bristol. Part of my duties involves monitoring the cash being sent to and from Post Office Branches.

Post Office Branches are supplied with cash weekly via the Flexible Planning system, which is an automated cash replenishment system. Every branch is required daily, to declare a closing cash on hand figure, on the Post Office automated computer system (Horizon), which is then loaded into the Flexible Planning system.

The system calculates the cash requirements of a branch by looking at how much money is currently reported as being held in the office and also takes account of money paid out by the Branch (e.g. Post Office Card Account Payments) and money received (e.g. banking deposits).

Using this data, Flexible Planning forecasts the weekly cash flow and creates a cash order if the office is cash deficit or sends a message to the branch, via Horizon, telling them to remit excess funds back to the local Cash Centre if the office is cash surplus.

Part of the management of the Flexible Planning system is monitoring, whereby we look at

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Continuation of statement of **Rebecca Louise Portch**

different criteria in order to identify any branches that are persistently ignoring planned orders. There are many reasons for this, the usual is declaring cash incorrectly, which gives a false picture of how much is held in the branch. By contacting the branches we are often able to rectify this, thus enabling the Flexible Planning system to work correctly.

On the 6th March 2006 I was carrying out a cash monitoring exercise whereby branches that had a high reported over night cash holding figure (amount of cash reported as held in the branch each night) in relation to their daily payments, were highlighted, with a view to being contacted. The list of branches with a high ratio of cash holdings to payment levels included South Warnborough Sub Post Office Branch (SPOB), Branch Code 092 904.

On that day, I telephoned South Warnborough SPOB as they made total weekly payments of around £2,500, yet were declaring around £28,000, excluding coin, in the office every night and had been declaring in excess of £20,000 since the beginning of the year.

On telephoning the branch, I identified myself and was told by the person I spoke to that the Subpostmistress was not available. After establishing that the person I was speaking to was currently in charge of the branch, I explained the reason for my call. I advised that there was far too much cash in the branch and that our Cash in Transit service would call in, on the next scheduled delivery day to collect the excess funds. I advised that we expected a return of £25,000. There was no explanation given as to why the funds had not been returned on an earlier date.

I contacted the local Cash in Transit depot manager to advise them to expect a cash return from this branch on the next scheduled service day. The Cash In Transit service is part of Post Office Ltd and is used to convey cash and stock to and from Post Office Branches and our Cash and Stock Centres. Each Post Office branch has a weekly scheduled service day or days

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Continuation of statement of **Rebecca Louise Portch**

whereby cash and stock is delivered or collected.

Following my telephone call to South Warnborough SPOB, I sent an e-mail to Area Intervention office 18, located in Bournemouth, to advise of the fact that this branch had been declaring high levels of cash holdings in relation to the money they paid out each week and that I had asked them to return £25,000 on their next collection day, Wednesday 08 March 2006.

Signature

GRO

Signature witnessed by

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