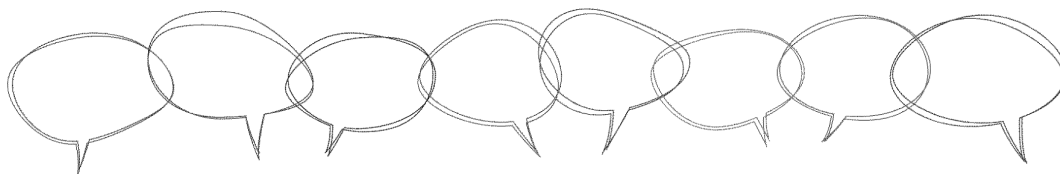




HORIZON PROJECT

Rebuilding Trust: The First Step Toward a Restorative Future

First Report - Insights of those harmed - October 2025



Prepared for: Post Office Ltd; Fujitsu Services Ltd; Department for Business & Trade

Prepared by: Jim Simon, Chief Executive Officer, Restorative Justice Council

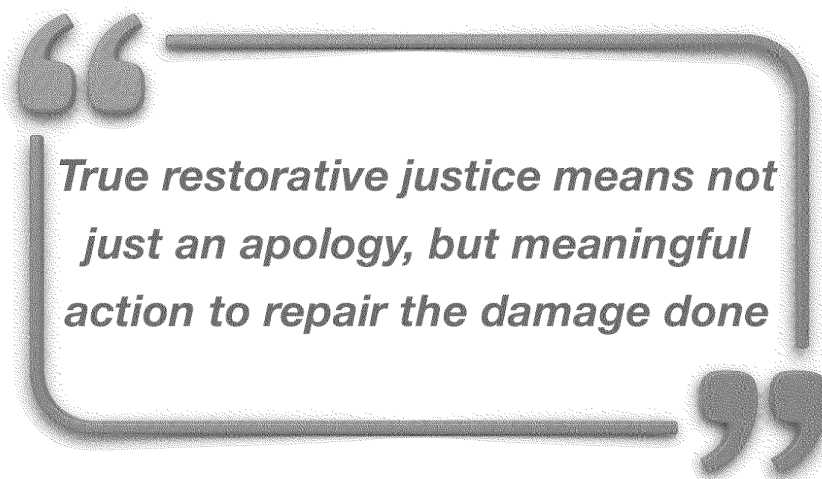
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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Restorative Justice Council is proud to present this report, marking a significant milestone in the journey towards meaningful restoration for those harmed by the Post Office Horizon IT scandal. Launched on September 1, 2025, this first phase of the Horizon Project centred on Listening Sessions—safe and structured environments where affected individuals could share their experiences and articulate their aspirations for a future restorative justice programme.

Over a two-week period, the RJC engaged with 145 participants across the United Kingdom, utilising in-person and online sessions as well as written submissions. From the onset, the importance of collaboration with those harmed was abundantly clear. This engagement provided profound insights into the experiences of affected individuals and allowed for the identification of potential restorative processes that could effectively address their needs. The success of restorative justice is intrinsically linked to inclusive dialogue—where the voices of individuals directly impacted are genuinely heard and respected. Initiatives undertaken without this essential input risk being ineffective or could even exacerbate feelings of harm.



During the Listening Sessions, participants expressed a pressing need for truth, acknowledgment, accountability, and repair. They emphasised that justice must transcend mere financial compensation, calling for personal and public acts of recognition aimed at restoring dignity, rebuilding trust, and enabling healing for individuals, families, and communities. A recurring message resonated throughout these discussions: words alone are insufficient. Participants urged Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu Services Ltd, and the Department for Business and Trade to demonstrate genuine remorse through visible actions and long-lasting cultural change. This includes timely compensation, public apologies, leadership accountability, and mechanisms to ensure such injustices can never recur.

The sessions uncovered powerful insights into what an effective restorative justice programme must entail. Participants advocated for a comprehensive, inclusive, and trauma-informed approach that offers multiple pathways for engagement, respects individual readiness, and supports long-term recovery. Key themes emerged from their feedback, including:

Truth and Acknowledgement: Calls for public and written apologies that fully recognise the extent of harm and affirm the integrity of those wrongfully accused.

Restoration and Support: Holistic measures, including family counselling and financial security, to facilitate lasting recovery.

Inclusion and Voice: Ensuring that those harmed continue to participate in shaping and reviewing the restorative justice programme.

Institutional Reform: Embedding restorative principles within organisational culture to prevent future harm.

To prepare for these listening sessions, the RJC undertook foundational activities, including the recruitment and training of eight Advanced Restorative Practitioners tasked with facilitating the discussions. In collaboration with key stakeholders, including Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu Services Ltd, and the Department for Business and Trade, joint training sessions were conducted, equipping practitioners with a comprehensive understanding of the Horizon IT scandal. This collaborative approach fostered a shared commitment to the restorative process among all involved.

Recognising the sensitive nature of these discussions, we implemented a preparation programme to empower participants, ensuring they could engage meaningfully. Throughout the Listening Sessions, thoughtful questions were posed to elicit participants' insights on what outcomes would help them feel acknowledged and valued. This framework allowed for rich dialogue and supported the participants in expressing their perspectives.

Importantly, this phase has reaffirmed that restorative justice is not a single event but a continuous process of rebuilding trust and relationships. Many participants described the Listening Sessions as "*healing circles*," which provided a comforting, supportive atmosphere for sharing personal stories. For many, these gatherings represented the first opportunity to truly feel "*heard*."

This first report outlines the central components that are being considered for the future restorative justice programme set to launch in April 2026. As we look ahead, the Restorative Justice Council will utilise these insights to inform further recommendations on the design of a national restorative justice programme. Additional listening sessions—including those involving children from affected families—will ensure comprehensive representation. Furthermore, we plan to introduce pilot initiatives, such as a Restorative Listening and Well-Being Service and Group Restorative Circles, alongside preparatory sessions for organisational representatives.

As we progress, our aim remains clear: to enable a restorative justice programme that not only addresses the harm caused by the scandal but also lays the groundwork for a more equitable and compassionate future. Section Two of this report details the activities the Restorative Justice Council will undertake between November 2025 and March 2026, allowing us to refine our approach and ensure a well-prepared launch in April 2026. Section Three provides detailed insights into the feedback gathered, while Section Four elaborates on how these insights have shaped our thinking regarding our initial recommendations as to key elements of the restorative justice programme.

As Chief Executive Officer of the Restorative Justice Council, I am fully committed to ensuring that we fulfil our duty to create a restorative justice programme that delivers meaningful opportunities for healing and empowerment. The voices of those affected by the Post Office Horizon IT scandal will remain at the heart of our work, guiding us as we design a programme that truly reflects their needs and aspirations. Together, we can foster a transformative process that not only repairs the past but also paves the way for a more just and compassionate future for all involved.

Jim Simon

Chief Executive Officer, Restorative Justice Council

SECTION TWO: NEXT STEPS IN THE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROGRAMME DESIGN

In the coming months, we will continue conducting the Listening Sessions that have been vital in collecting insights from those affected by the scandal. While the feedback we have received thus far has proven invaluable, we recognise the necessity of engaging more individuals who have been harmed, either directly or indirectly. To facilitate this, we have already scheduled a series of online listening sessions specifically aimed at amplifying the voices of the children of those impacted. Furthermore, we are considering additional in-person sessions for those unable to attend the previous gatherings. These additional Listening Sessions will enhance our collaborative approach and help us capture a broader range of voices and perspectives, ultimately enriching this critical process as we progress.

In our consultations, we have also identified that specific groups, such as members of the South Asian postmaster community, may encounter unique barriers to participation. Factors such as status and standing within close-knit communities—particularly noted in areas like Northern Ireland and rural Scotland—can significantly impede engagement. Additionally, some individuals may lack confidence in their English language skills, potentially discouraging them from attending in-person sessions. To address these challenges, we are exploring alternative engagement methods, such as providing translation services and user-friendly tools on our website that enable individuals to request translation services or submit information in their first language via a secure Dropbox.

To maximise engagement in these additional listening sessions, we recognise the value of maintaining the strong working relationships established during our initial work with trusted representatives, including legal representatives. We have requested that the Department for Business and Trade, Post Office Ltd, and Fujitsu Services Ltd continue to support this activity and extend previous arrangements made with legal representatives where needed.

Alongside efforts to gather further insights, we will also pilot a number of restorative processes based on suggestions made by participants during the first series of listening sessions. A prominent proposal was the establishment of a dedicated phone line staffed by trained restorative practitioners, where those harmed could have an independent space to talk through the harm caused to them without the pressure of having to participate in a direct or indirect restorative justice process. Formally launching in November 2025, we will pilot a **Restorative Listening and Well-Being service**, fully funded by Fujitsu Services Ltd. This service will be staffed by trained and experienced restorative listeners who possess a deep understanding of the context of the scandal and its impact on victims and their families. Further details about this service will be made public in the coming weeks.

In addition to the Restorative Listening and Well-Being service, we will be piloting a range of restorative processes outlined in Section Six of this report. This includes **Group-Based Circles**, where multiple affected individuals will communicate with organisational representatives either directly or indirectly to facilitate shared narratives and collective healing. By acknowledging the commonality of their experiences, participants will support one another while articulating their needs and expectations for accountability and reparative measures. This group dynamic fosters solidarity, reinforcing the notion that affected individuals are part of a supportive community, ultimately enhancing emotional resilience and connection.

We will offer **Individual Restorative Meetings** and **Indirect Restorative Communications** to create a more intimate space for dialogue. These sessions will allow affected individuals to engage privately with the organisational representatives they wish to communicate with, either directly or indirectly through a restorative

practitioner. This approach enables participants to discuss their experiences and expectations without the complexities often present in larger group settings. Individual meetings and dialogues will ensure that participants can address specific concerns and needs, guaranteeing that their unique circumstances receive the focused attention they deserve.

Furthermore, we will pilot **Postmaster Community Building and Well-Being Initiatives**, including support networks. This will involve creating a peer-led support group, providing essential opportunities for affected individuals to connect, share experiences, and discuss coping strategies in a safe environment. Northern Ireland has been identified as our pilot area, given the strong support for this initiative and the existing small informal network of harmed postmasters from which we can build.

To ensure the success of the restorative programme, we will undertake **Enhanced Organisational Preparation** with representatives from Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu Services Ltd, and the Department for Business and Trade. This preparation is critical for equipping them with the necessary skills and understanding of restorative justice principles, fostering a shared commitment to accountability and healing while recognising the diverse experiences of all participants involved.

Finally, we will continue to collaborate with those harmed, as well as with Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu Services Ltd, and the Department for Business and Trade, to take on board learnings from further listening work in developing a recommended restorative justice programme. An updated report will be provided by 30th January 2026, outlining our progress and the insights gathered throughout this next phase of our work.

Restorative Listening and
Well-Being service

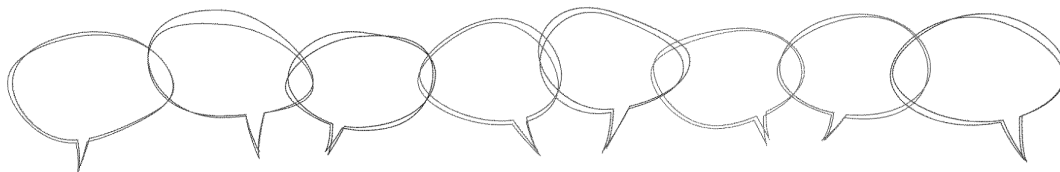
Group-Based Circles

Individual Restorative
Meetings

Indirect Restorative
Communications

Postmaster Community
Building and Well-Being
Initiatives

Enhanced Organisational
Preparation



SECTION THREE: KEY INSIGHTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

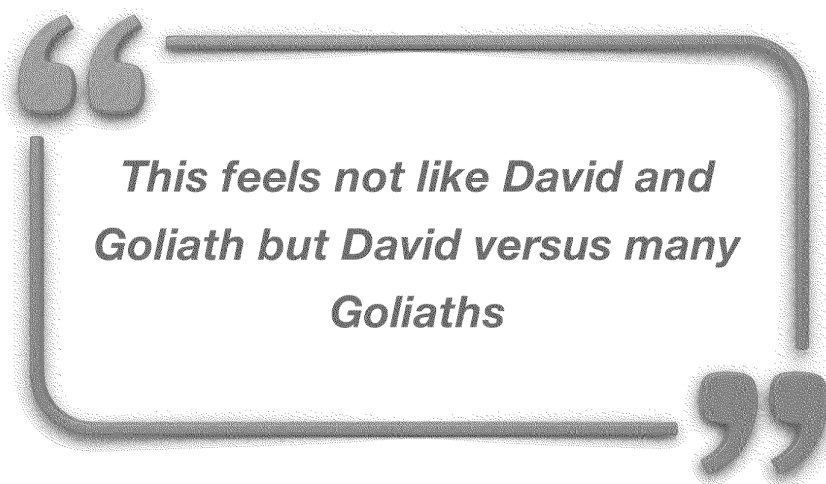
ADDRESSING INJUSTICES AND DESIRED OUTCOMES

In pursuing meaningful restorative justice for individuals affected by the Post Office Horizon IT scandal, participants have articulated a vision anchored in dignity, accountability, and truth. They emphasise that substantive outcomes transcend symbolic gestures, requiring authentic acknowledgment and reparative actions to address the harms endured. The Restorative Justice Council recognises that while no remedy can wholly restore the profound impact this situation has had on the lives of those involved—including their families, who have spent years battling for justice through deeply traumatic experiences—the potential for restorative justice to positively influence individual healing journeys is evident.

Participants articulated a strong demand for public acknowledgment of the injustices suffered, including official recognition from Post Office Ltd and its “collaborators” like Fujitsu Services Ltd. There is a compelling need for personalised, written apologies that embody true accountability and recognise the significant harm inflicted. Central to this process is the insistence that the truth must prevail, particularly from government officials and executives who were aware of the underlying issues yet chose silence.

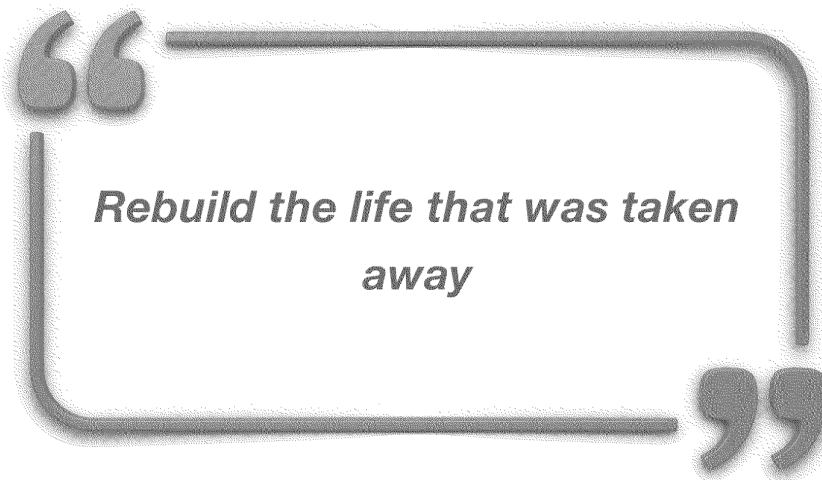
Participants made it clear that the ramifications of this scandal extend beyond individuals, impacting families and communities and leading to a breakdown of public trust with long-lasting consequences. Many participants voiced poignant narratives of postmasters enduring significant personal losses—livelihoods, self-esteem, and relationships—and the emotional toll on families has been profound. Many children have been deprived of parental attention while those affected grappled with restoring their businesses amid systemic neglect. Therefore, we conclude that any restorative justice programme must empower individuals to reclaim their dignity, mend fractured families, and ensure meaningful accountability from organisations responsible for the considerable harm inflicted.

Participants expressed frustration with inadequate apologies and the lack of accountability for those perceived to be responsible for the “lies and cover-ups” that have perpetuated these injustices. Participants expressed that a forward step would involve restoring all affected individuals to their former positions, which should include comprehensive financial redress for lost assets, income, reemployment opportunities, and back pay.



Participants advocated for quashing outstanding wrongful convictions; however, they didn't elaborate on what these convictions were, asserting that true justice necessitates restitution and the restoration of reputations for those wrongfully accused. A transformative shift in leadership and culture within all involved organisations was also deemed critical to prevent further failures in adequately supporting affected individuals. Additionally, participants stated that senior leaders who concealed known deficiencies should return any bonuses or salary increases received during this period, establishing a precedent of honesty and integrity for future generations.

Practical and sustainable solutions, such as government-backed loans, business grants, educational scholarships, and accessible mental health support, were strongly advocated. Initiatives that facilitate rebuilding lives post-scandal and address emotional and psychological repercussions were seen as crucial. Participants underscored the severe mental health impacts—including stress, anxiety, and depression—alongside the stigma now faced by their communities.



Adequate compensation is seen as paramount, not only for alleviating hardships but also for addressing the long-term mental and physical health consequences stemming from prolonged injustice. Ultimately, participants reached a consensus regarding the authentic restoration of their lives and dignity, which entails fair and lasting financial compensation, the clearing of their names, and the full restoration of their reputations. Beyond material reparations, there exists a strong desire to feel genuinely heard, respected, and acknowledged for the pain endured. Participants were clear that a successful restorative justice programme must foster a sense of justice that holds those responsible accountable while preventing the recurrence of such injustices.

Participants called for a significant cultural transformation within Post Office Ltd and Fujitsu Services Ltd to ensure future operations align with ethical and restorative principles. They stated that visible actions should take precedence over written apologies, highlighting the need for meaningful cultural shifts that reflect dedication to restorative principles. There was a strong desire for engaging key leaders directly with those affected to ensure sincerity and accountability, particularly in light of perceived “*silence from Fujitsu—particularly as they continue to secure government contracts—which raises serious concerns about their commitment to addressing historical wrongs.*”

Participants articulated that without genuine cultural transformation, the integrity of the Post Office will be compromised, jeopardising its future viability. When reflecting on the voices of those who have suffered, we can determine there is an urgent call for actionable change prioritising integrity, fairness, and high-quality public

service. The journey towards a more just and equitable system can truly begin only when those responsible actively listen to and act upon the experiences of those affected. The vision for restorative justice articulated by participants embraces accountability, transparency, and holistic restoration aimed at rebuilding the impacted lives and communities. They articulated that true justice requires meaningful action to repair damages, restore opportunities, and ensure the troubling chapter is remembered as a catalyst for learning.

FEELING ACKNOWLEDGED AND VALUED

In discussions about what constitutes meaningful acknowledgment within a restorative process, participants stressed the importance of a personalised, tailored approach over generic corporate solutions. Many expressed frustration with perceived delays in legal processes conducted by Post Office Ltd, interpreting them as attempts to postpone justice. A strong sentiment emerged that such delays must be avoided in any future restorative justice programme.

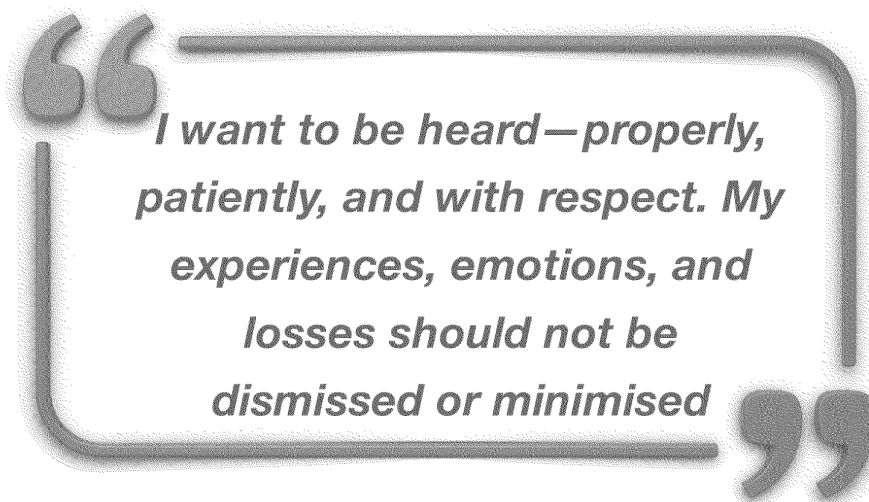
Participants highlighted the necessity of individual acknowledgment and the restoration of community and familial relationships. They recognised that the impacts of these injustices extend beyond postmasters; their spouses and children have also suffered without receiving compensation or apologies. They emphasised that family businesses function as collective units, with all members affected by a flawed computer system and inaction from those aware of the issues.

Concerns regarding race in the scandal were significant, with participants emphasising that race has not been adequately addressed. Compelling accounts shared revealed experiences marked by overt racism, indicating the treatment of postmasters by Post Office Ltd as entwined with broader racial dynamics. Given that many affected belong to historically marginalised communities, particularly individuals of South Asian descent, the Restorative Justice Council believes there is an urgent need for the restorative justice programme to reflect their cultural heritage. Participants stressed the importance of incorporating these communities' insights into the final programme and urged the Restorative Justice Council to recommend in-depth studies addressing racial disparities.

It's time for those responsible to truly accept the impact of what they have done – not behind closed doors, but publicly

There was a consensus that decision-makers associated with the scandal must demonstrate genuine remorse and accountability beyond financial compensation, although it was reiterated that comprehensive, fair, and timely compensation must reflect total financial losses, including income and expenses incurred due to injustices faced.

Concerns were raised about Fujitsu Services Ltd's perceived lack of accountability during the scandal. Participants urged the company to embrace ethical responsibilities, recommending direct engagement from the CEO with affected individuals. Genuine listening and respect emerged as core values, with participants insisting on the need for personalised communication that recognises individual stories.



Participants expressed a need for transparent dialogue and that their questions should be answered openly, rather than with formulaic responses, and to be treated as human beings rather than mere case numbers. They expressed that meaningful dialogue should include a sincere apology and full accountability—an authentic acknowledgment from those responsible who accept comprehensive liability for both the events and the resulting damages—is crucial for rebuilding trust and dignity.

Establishing a dedicated point of contact for restorative justice was highlighted as vital to streamline communication within what is already a complex process. Participants asserted that the Government holds responsibility for recognising this scandal as “state-sponsored” and should extend restorative support to affected families and children—acknowledging the broader societal impacts of the scandal that demand ongoing financial, emotional, and practical support.

A robust public acknowledgment of the injustices faced and a formal apology from responsible organisations were deemed essential for restoring dignity and recognising the pain suffered. Participants emphasised the importance of imposing financial penalties on Post Office Ltd if they fail to meet agreed outcomes in the restorative process, insisting on transparency to foster trust.

Accountability emerged as a recurring theme, with frustration directed at Post Office Ltd's denial of systemic flaws. Participants referenced Alan Bates's unwavering efforts to secure a hearing—culminating in a Knighthood—as a testament to the need for authorities to actively listen rather than deflect responsibility.

Ultimately, participants called for a restorative justice programme that encompasses genuine acknowledgment, accountability, and transformative cultural change within the organisations involved. The programme must embody principles of transparency, fairness, and ethical responsibility. Meeting these needs will require substantial engagement with affected individuals and communities, extending beyond administrative actions.

HONOURING EXPERIENCES AND TRUTH

Participants articulated expectations for acknowledging their experiences—specifically the truth of what occurred—which underscored the need for substantial recognition rather than mere symbolic gestures. They expressed a strong preference for proactive acknowledgment, indicating dissatisfaction with the idea of public memorials or the burden of advocating for recognition themselves.

They emphasised the importance of meaningful public recognition for the harms endured, paired with tangible actions, a key aspect being a transparent explanation of why Post Office Ltd and Fujitsu Services Ltd deployed the Horizon system despite known issues during the trial phase. Many voiced frustration over decision-makers' lack of courage to address concerns raised by postmasters regarding discrepancies, describing the situation as a “*substantial cover-up.*”

A proposal to place a plaque on post boxes to acknowledge the injustices faced was discussed, although opinions varied. A suggestion to create a dedicated display in the Postal Museum explaining the Horizon scandal met with scepticism; participants felt this would lack a personal connection. Instead, they advocated for establishing a recovery space—a venue where affected individuals could gather, share their experiences, and collectively seek national recognition for the traumas endured.

A particularly resonant proposal was to hold a national ceremony to honour all postmasters and postmistresses who were wrongfully accused and affected by the scandal. Participants envisioned a formal event during which their integrity, resilience, and the injustices they faced would be publicly acknowledged, ideally involving members of the Royal Family, including the Restorative Justice Council's Patron, Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal. This involvement would not only validate their experiences but also serve to restore dignity and respect that were unjustly stripped away, sending a powerful message that these injustices were recognised and that the individuals affected are valued members of society.

Participants stated that true acknowledgment requires actions that go beyond minimal compliance. Participants urged Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu Services Ltd, and the Department for Business and Trade to show accountability by learning from past mistakes and making proactive amends, including holding responsible parties accountable and implementing systemic changes to prevent future occurrences of such misjudgments.

“It feels so wrong that the Horizon software is STILL being used when they know it STILL has problems, however the new PO staff are not being treated the same way we were and are being let off”

While some participants desired face-to-face meetings with those responsible for the injustices, others recognised the need for alternative restorative processes. They expressed that communication should be

personal and avoid legal jargon, fostering genuine connections. Participants emphasised that acknowledgment must also focus on preventing future scandals. To this end, they proposed incorporating a "social responsibility clause" in future public contracts, ensuring that a portion of contract values is reinvested into benefiting local communities, thereby fostering accountability and promoting social good.

Further suggestions included creating a special commemorative stamp recognising the scandal, with proceeds directed towards supporting initiatives like the charity "Lost Chances," and implementing educational initiatives, such as an "Education Day," aimed at integrating the history and lessons of the scandal into school and university curricula. They advocated for local actions, such as community meetings to raise awareness about the scandal's impact, along with a book of awareness featuring apologies from responsible parties and personal stories from postmasters, prominently displayed to educate others and help prevent similar injustices.

Participants shared personal narratives illustrating the deep and lasting impact of the scandal on their lives. One poignant reflection encapsulated the harsh realities faced by those affected: *"Because of my father's suspension, conviction, and sentencing, we lost everything and had to try and start our lives again. I was supposed to go travelling on a gap year after university, but instead, I had to get a full-time job to help my parents find a home. My sister and I gave up our salaries each month to keep a roof over our heads and to prevent my father from taking his own life. Since the age of 21, I have paid the mortgage on my parents' house, and I am still paying it to this day. Now, at 41, with a husband and child of my own, I have never been able to do anything for myself."*

In summary, participants seek a process that genuinely acknowledges their experiences through meaningful, actionable recognition rather than superficial gestures. They aspire to establish a legacy of accountability and prevention, ensuring that the lessons learned from this scandal are preserved for future generations.

IDEAL CHARACTERISTICS OF A RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROGRAMME

In designing an optimal restorative justice programme, participants articulated a clear vision emphasising holistic support tailored to the diverse needs of individuals, families, and communities. The programme must acknowledge past injustices and the psychological and emotional harm inflicted.

They proposed the programme should be comprehensive, addressing both immediate and long-term needs, including essential support for mental health, family counselling, and communal healing through therapeutic activities. Participants stressed that an organisation experienced in delivering restorative justice should lead this initiative to ensure that the needs and recommendations of those harmed are respected and considered by all organisations.

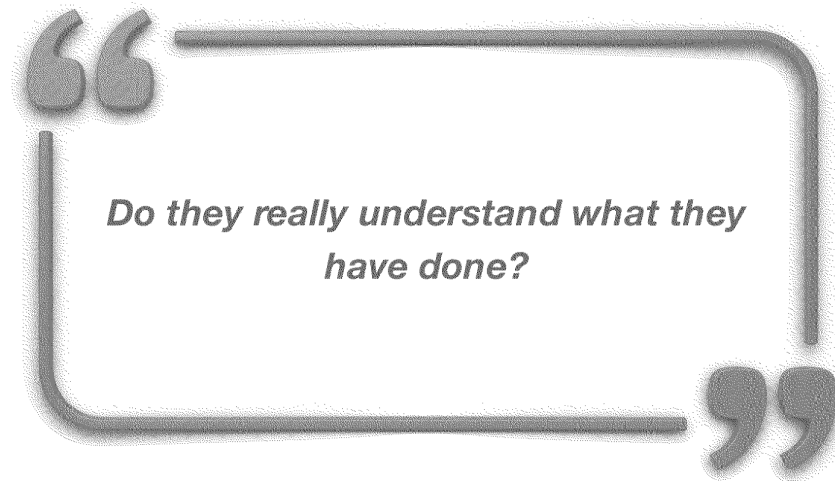
Recognising the broader impact of harm, participants stressed that financial support should be extended to affected families and communities. They emphasised that long-term support with an open-ended approach should allow those harmed either directly or indirectly to access help at any time.

Participants expressed a desire for honesty in the process and accountability for those responsible for injustices, reflecting the critical requirements for transparency, accountability, and iterative development practices resembling human-centred design.

Participants identified the following key components essential to the restorative justice programme:

Truth and Public Acknowledgment: An open and honest account of the scandal's circumstances is crucial. Public figures, including government representatives and executives from Post Office Ltd and Fujitsu Services Ltd, must take responsibility and express their regret for the damage caused. It's important to create a

dedicated space—perhaps in the form of a book or online platform—where these statements can be easily accessed, ensuring they are not hidden or overlooked.



Restoration of Reputation and Dignity: A formal process is essential to clear the names of all those who were wrongfully accused or convicted, along with official apologies directed to the individuals affected and their families. Public recognition events, such as national ceremonies or awards presented by the Royal Family, play a vital role in restoring the dignity that was unjustly taken away. Additionally, holding community meetings in towns where those harmed lived can provide a space for everyone to hear the truth about what transpired, helping to remove the shame attached to their reputations.

Reemployment and Support: Participants called for guaranteed reemployment opportunities within the Post Office for those who wish to return, along with assistance in finding suitable alternative employment. It's also important to provide access to counselling, mental health support, and financial planning services. Additionally, ongoing community support programmes should be established to help individuals rebuild their lives, moving beyond just settling claims. Funded educational support should be available not only for those harmed but also for their families, ensuring that everyone affected has the opportunity to pursue further education and improve their futures.

Inclusion and Voice: Involving those directly affected in shaping the restorative programme is paramount. Their insights should guide the development of solutions, supplemented by a clear and accessible complaints system for individuals still facing challenges and legal support for those continuing to fight for their rights.

Institutional Reform and Accountability: To prevent future injustices, it is essential to implement structural and cultural changes within Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu Services Ltd, and any other involved organisations. Disciplinary or legal actions must be taken against individuals who knowingly caused harm or attempted to conceal it from public scrutiny. Furthermore, establishing a long-term “*independent watchdog*” to oversee the implementation of the restorative justice programme is crucial. There is a concern that once Sir Wyn Williams publishes his second report, attention will shift away from the scandal, allowing Post Office Ltd, the Department for Business and Trade, and Fujitsu Services Ltd to halt the restorative justice programme.

To mitigate this risk, it was proposed that the organisation responsible for delivering the restorative justice programme report to the Business and Trade Committee every six months on its progress, with the duration to be determined by the Committee Chair. This regular reporting would help prevent a sudden halt to the

programme. It was felt that this requirement would encourage a sustained commitment from Post Office Ltd, the Department for Business and Trade, and Fujitsu Services Ltd to uphold accountability.

In summary, the envisioned restorative justice programme must address immediate harms and facilitate long-term recovery through a multifaceted, community-driven approach. Participants advocate for a departure from punitive models, calling for a concentrated focus on healing, accountability, and broader impacts on familial and social well-being.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN THE PROCESS

Participants identified diverse individuals, groups, and organisations that should play pivotal roles in a restorative justice programme, reflecting a collective commitment to accountability and engagement. There is scepticism regarding Post Office Ltd's capacity to contribute meaningfully, with concerns that its involvement may be driven by hidden agendas. Conversely, Fujitsu Services Ltd is perceived as better positioned to provide necessary support, although doubts persist about their understanding of the full extent of the harm caused.

Participants expressed that restorative meetings should not be confined to senior executives of Post Office Ltd and Fujitsu Services Ltd. They advocated for the inclusion of individuals at various levels within these organisations, particularly representatives who are willing to accept responsibility rather than deflect blame. There was particular emphasis on holding the current leadership of Post Office Ltd accountable, ensuring their involvement in making amends, issuing apologies, and implementing reforms.

There was also a strong desire to include members of Post Office Ltd's investigative team, referred to as "*interrogators*" due to their confrontational tactics, as well as area managers who directly facilitated the eviction of postmasters.

The call for accountability extends beyond the primary organisations involved. Participants emphasised the importance of holding legal representatives connected to the scandal accountable, including judges who imposed penalties on postmasters and barristers who advised clients to plead guilty. They also identified the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters, whose perceived inaction is seen as detrimental to victims, and both current and former ministers, along with various government departments, who they felt must confront their past shortcomings and play a crucial role in implementing the much-needed reforms. Participants also proposed that Members of Parliament play a crucial role in the process, particularly in rebuilding community trust and assisting those affected.

Participants suggested the Department for Business and Trade should actively oversee the governance of the restorative justice programme and ensure proper funding and transparency in decision-making. Some participants strongly advocated that funding for the restorative justice programme should come directly from Fujitsu Services Ltd rather than public funds. To preserve the programme's integrity, participants stated that it is essential that organisations such as Post Office Ltd and Fujitsu Services Ltd, while financially accountable, do not oversee the programme's delivery and that this should be entrusted to an independent entity.

Overall, participant input underscores a strong desire for a restorative justice programme encompassing a wide range of stakeholders, each accountable for acknowledging their roles in the injustices faced and contributing to collective healing and reconciliation.

ENSURING SAFE INTERACTIONS

Participants articulated a clear vision for structuring interactions with representatives from the organisations responsible for their harm, emphasising the need for an environment that fosters safety and meaningful

engagement. Central to their expectations is the demand for genuine apologies and sincere admissions of guilt from Post Office Ltd and Fujitsu Services Ltd, alongside transparent responses to all questions.

The Restorative Justice Council acknowledges and respects the perspectives shared by participants. However, it is imperative to convey that experienced restorative practitioners will collaborate closely with all individuals involved in the restorative process, including those who have been harmed and those who have caused harm. This collaboration aims to cultivate a shared understanding that focuses on co-creating clarity around the nature of the restorative process and the outcomes that are achievable. Such an approach ensures that everyone enters the restorative process with a sense of clarity and confidence.

The necessity for accountability and acknowledgment was strongly emphasised, with participants re-asserting that organisations should face tangible consequences if they fail to deliver on agreed-upon outcomes following a restorative process. They also stressed the importance of timing in restorative justice interventions, arguing that these opportunities should be offered when individuals are ready, rather than being rushed or imposed in a one-time offer.

A particular sentiment emerged regarding Fujitsu's Japanese heritage and the cultural significance of honour. Participants expressed a desire for direct dialogue with Fujitsu Ltd's CEO, indicating that such personal meetings would hold substantial meaning for them. Conversely, scepticism was voiced about engagement with government representatives, with participants perceiving these interactions as lacking authenticity and serving more as public relations efforts than as genuine attempts at reconciliation.

To facilitate productive restorative discussions, participants stressed the necessity of conducting meetings in neutral settings, rejecting the idea of hosting these dialogues at Post Office locations. Suggestions included hotels or other neutral venues to create an environment conducive to open and honest communication.

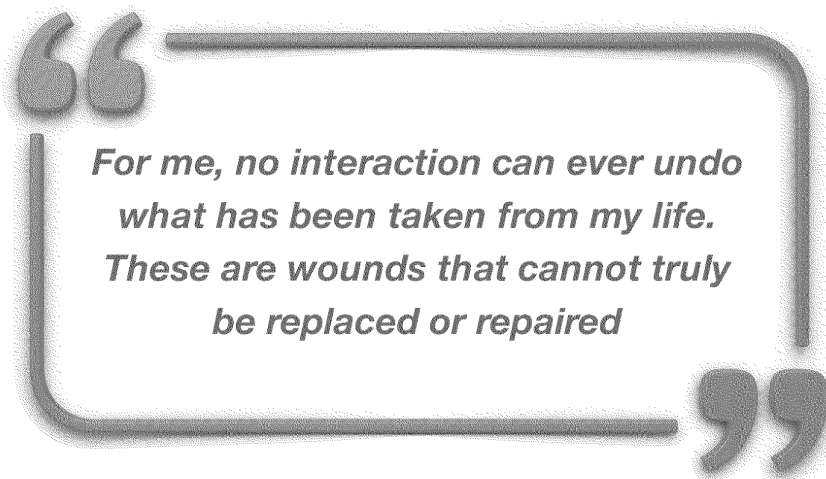
Participants underscored the significance of direct engagement with those responsible for their harm, believing that such interactions would allow them to communicate the full extent of the damage inflicted and to confront the individuals about how they could reconcile their actions with the profound impact on victims' lives. Our practitioners explored this perspective thoroughly, and while the Restorative Justice Council acknowledges the importance of reaching out to specific individuals to explore the potential for restorative engagement, it is crucial to emphasise that participation in this process is entirely voluntary and not mandatory. We are confident that participants understand this distinction and are aware that the likelihood of such meetings occurring remains uncertain.

Many participants reflected on prior restorative justice experiences and expressed disappointment that previous meetings with representatives, including those from Fujitsu Services Ltd and Post Office Ltd, primarily served the interests of the organisations rather than those of the victims. Frustration stemmed from encounters characterised by reluctance to engage with their questions, leading to feelings of dismissal and the perception that meaningful dialogue was not being prioritised.

Above all, participants highlighted the need for organisations to genuinely commit to following through on agreements made during interactions. Restorative efforts should be motivated by a desire to support victims rather than serve organisational interests or enhance public image.

Based on the insights gathered from participants, the Restorative Justice Council believes that restorative interactions must acknowledge participants' suffering and recognise the extensive harm caused. A sincere, direct apology from those responsible is essential, delivered without excuses or legalistic language.

Creating an emotionally safe environment is also paramount, supported by independent restorative practitioners. No pressure or time limits should be imposed on participants to respond, speak, or forgive; the space for dialogue must exist entirely on their terms. Additionally, concrete commitments to action must be established, with clearly defined steps and timelines outlining how those responsible will repair the harm and ensure that such injustices do not recur.



Participants recognised that no interaction could ever undo the profound trauma and loss they had endured—the strain on family relationships, the separation from loved ones, the financial devastation, and the destruction of reputations. The Restorative Justice Council acknowledges the limitations of restorative justice processes, but agrees with participants that restorative meetings must at least honour their pain and afford them the dignity of being heard, without minimising or glossing over the truth of their experiences.

EXPECTATIONS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Participants articulated a comprehensive framework for how organisations can demonstrate genuine accountability within a restorative justice process, emphasising actions, language, and attitudes reflecting clarity, fairness, and sincerity. They stressed that restorative processes should complement, not replace, compensation or criminal convictions.

Participants identified key indicators of authentic accountability, including acknowledgment of past failures, a commitment to improvement, and evidence of meaningful engagement with the restorative process. They stressed that fairness throughout engagement and outcomes is essential, ensuring individuals feel their experiences are acknowledged. They sought recognition that the transformation of postmasters from respected community members to individuals facing unfounded accusations is a systemic issue.

Participants called for timely and equitable compensation, criticising delays and inadequate payments as unacceptable. They expressed that organisations must recognise and rectify the harm caused, suggesting community payback measures to restore tarnished reputations. They reiterated that true accountability must encompass lasting support reflecting the full extent of the harm inflicted.

The tone and style of communication emerged as a pivotal aspect, with numerous participants calling for meaningful dialogue that goes beyond scripted responses, emphasising the importance of thoughtful consideration prior to any messaging. One participant vividly illustrated this by expressing her distress upon receiving her compensation letter in the same style of envelope as her prosecution letter. This example

underscored how seemingly simple considerations, like the choice of stationery, can profoundly affect those who have been harmed.

Participants highlighted the necessity of sincerity in both words and actions, asserting that true accountability demands organisations to honour the commitments made during discussions. The prevailing sentiment was clear: honesty is essential, and conversations should remain free from legal jargon and the restrictions of legalities that can stifle genuine dialogue. As a result, participants suggested that the presence of legal representatives in direct restorative meetings should be discouraged, in order to prevent these discussions from devolving into protracted litigation.

Substantial research supports minimising the involvement of legal representatives in direct restorative justice processes. Restorative justice is a relational approach focused on dialogue, empathy, and mutual understanding between those harmed and those responsible. However, the adversarial training of legal professionals can shift attention to legalistic arguments, undermining these emotional aims. Pemberton (2023) highlights that treating restorative justice as quasi-legal creates tensions, as legal representatives may dominate discussions and cause power imbalances, especially affecting vulnerable participants. Their reframing of experiences can feel invalidating, hindering emotional closure. Suzuki (2023) stresses that emotional validation and narrative control are vital for recovery—both of which legal framing can disrupt. Genuine accountability is central to restorative justice, yet legal counsel may discourage authentic engagement from those who caused harm. Research shows the process is most effective when accountability is openly acknowledged and those harmed feel truly heard—outcomes less likely when legal representatives are involved.

While some participants expressed reluctance towards personal meetings with representatives from Post Office Ltd and Fujitsu Services Ltd, they conveyed that public acknowledgment of wrongdoing in a formal setting, coupled with genuine charitable contributions made out of remorse, might be more impactful. There is a strong desire for organisations to openly recognise their actions and provide transparent explanations for their decisions rather than delivering hollow apologies.

A public, sincere apology from those responsible is deemed essential—one that is delivered without legal jargon or excuses, reflecting an attitude of humility, remorse, and accountability. Participants also expect continued access to support services, including counselling, legal advice, and healthcare, alongside clear commitments and actions aimed at preventing such injustices from recurring. To rebuild lives with dignity and peace of mind, these measures must convey genuine compassion and accountability.

Despite these expectations, participants noted that a genuine, written apology has yet to be offered to individuals affected by the scandal. Most communications have occurred through third parties, and participants expressed deep gratitude for their efforts, suggesting that significant progress would have been hindered without them. Many feel that a direct apology would constitute an admission of guilt, which has further inhibited those responsible from acknowledging their wrongdoing.

Furthermore, the ongoing process of compensating the postmasters wrongfully impacted by the Horizon IT system remains a critical issue. Participants are calling for greater justice, equitable compensation, and accountability for those culpable in the scandal. Ultimately, they believe that only through these measures can genuine accountability be achieved, enabling those affected to rebuild their lives with dignity and assurance that such injustices will not be repeated.

OBSERVATIONS BEYOND THE SCOPE OF THE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE COUNCIL

The Restorative Justice Council acknowledges that the restorative justice programme we are tasked with developing exists alongside current redress processes established by Post Office Ltd and the Department for Business and Trade. However, participants expressed significant concerns and frustrations regarding these processes during our Listening Sessions, which have been reflected in the insights shared. We have committed to communicating observations beyond the scope of restorative justice to Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu Services Ltd, and the Department for Business and Trade. A summary of these points is outlined below:

Addressing Tokenism and Superficial Measures: Participants voiced considerable frustration with initiatives perceived as symbolic rather than substantive, such as the well-being portal implemented by Post Office Ltd. Many questioned its practical efficacy, asserting that such measures do not adequately address the profound harm experienced.

Public Accountability and Removal of Honours: There was strong consensus among participants that accountability must extend to individuals in senior positions who played a role—whether actively or passively—in perpetuating the injustices associated with the Horizon system. They advocated for the revocation of honours and formal acknowledgment of moral responsibility.

Financial Fairness and Redress Transparency: Participants raised concerns about ongoing financial exploitation in the redress process, particularly where bankruptcy solicitors or intermediaries take a percentage of compensation, even if bankruptcy claims are withdrawn. This practice was widely viewed as unjust and corrosive to trust. They emphasised that financial redress should cover lost income, savings, legal fees, property losses, and pensions. Additionally, participants highlighted the need for extra compensation for emotional trauma, reputational damage, and years of hardship. The compensation process must be efficient and transparent, free from delays, caps, or unnecessary bureaucracy. To expedite resolution, participants suggested a fixed compensation amount ranging from £1 million to £1.5 million per individual, potentially saving the government significant legal fees.

Support for Families and Future Generations: Participants articulated the profound intergenerational impact of the scandal, calling for additional compensation and support targeted at children and dependents. They acknowledged that stigma and financial damage have extended far beyond the original victims.

Independent Oversight and Dispute Resolution: Many participants noted that Post Office decision-making often appears adversarial and obstructive. There was overwhelming support for establishing a neutral, third-party dispute resolution body with the authority to adjudicate disputes fairly and transparently.

Economic Rehabilitation and Enterprise Support: Participants expressed a strong desire to rebuild their livelihoods and identities as business people. Proposals included government- and industry-backed entrepreneurship programmes, business grants, and mentorship networks led by experienced sub-postmasters.

Housing, Employment, and Insurance Barriers: Participants reported ongoing discrimination in mortgage applications, insurance coverage, and employment opportunities due to historical convictions or reputational damage stating these barriers continue to perpetuate hardship long after exoneration.

Financial Security and Long-Term Support: There were calls for establishing a benevolent or hardship fund, similar to those in the Civil Service, to provide ongoing support to individuals unable to regain employment or financial stability.

Transparency and Institutional Accountability: Participants reported challenges with unrecorded communications, poor documentation, and inadequate help-desk responses, which undermined perceptions of effective management. Ongoing concerns about Fujitsu Services Ltd role and transparency in the redress process were prevalent.

Compensation, Pensions, and Lifetime Support: Participants emphasised the need for comprehensive financial compensation and lifetime support for those unable to re-enter the workforce. Many expressed that they continue to face exclusion from pension schemes and employment opportunities. They expressed a desire for a monthly, lifelong payment equivalent to their previous salary, adjusted annually and paid tax-free, ensuring their financial security and dignity. They envisioned that this payment would continue for life and, after their passing, be passed on to their partners or children, acknowledging the lasting effects of this injustice on entire families.

Fiscal Efficiency and Resource Prioritisation: Participants expressed frustration over reports of excessive legal spending—estimated at over £400 million—and the perceived misallocation of funds towards public relations instead of victim compensation.

Timeliness, Fairness, and Emotional Impact: Participants highlighted the psychological toll of delayed compensation and bureaucratic complexity, often describing these delays as re-traumatising and detrimental to their well-being.

Faith, Culture, and Financial Inclusivity: Discussions emphasised the need for faith-sensitive financial arrangements, especially for individuals whose beliefs do not permit acceptance of interest-based compensation. Participants advocated for conducting in-depth studies to examine disparities related to faith and culture, gather additional data, and understand the unique experiences of minority victims impacted by the scandal.

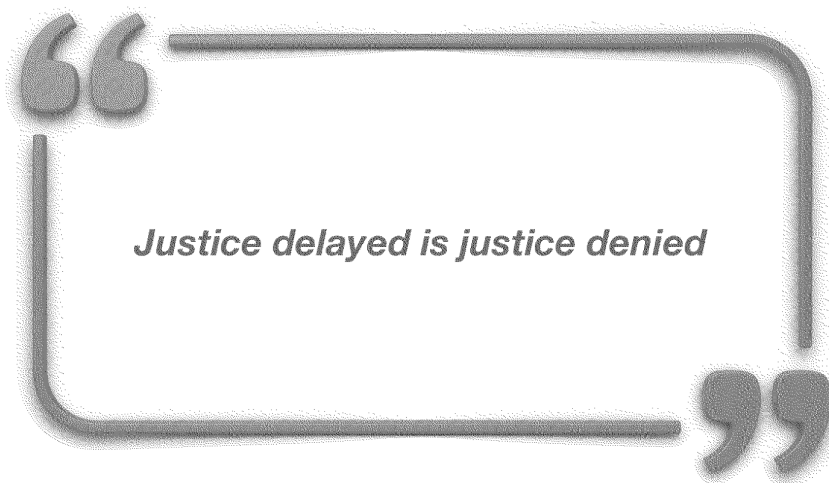
The Restorative Justice Council encourages Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu Services Ltd, and the Department for Business and Trade to consider these insights on their own merits.

KEY MESSAGES FOR THE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE COUNCIL TO TAKE FORWARD IN THE PROGRAMME DESIGN

Participants conveyed a compelling and urgent message to the Restorative Justice Council, underscoring the critical need for accountability, recognition of harm, and meaningful action. While scepticism exists regarding Post Office Ltd's sincerity in its commitment to the restorative justice programme, there was confidence in the Restorative Justice Council's ability to advocate effectively on their behalf in designing a future restorative justice framework.

A primary expectation articulated by participants is for the programme to acknowledge both individual narratives and the collective harm experienced. They emphasised the importance of creating pathways towards normalcy, peace, and closure, ensuring that every affected individual feels heard.

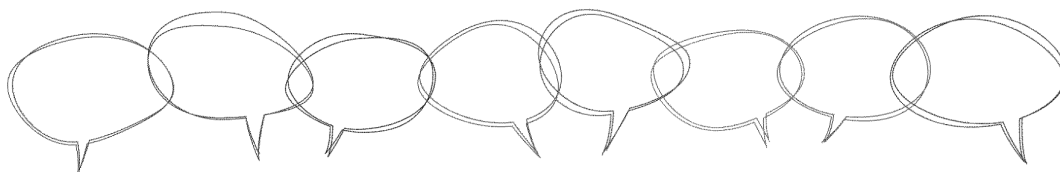
A profound truth emerged from discussions: *"Justice delayed is justice denied."* Time, once lost, cannot be regained. One participant poignantly reflected on their journey, recalling the age of 36 when harm was inflicted and now being 61, underscoring the urgent need for timely resolutions. This individual expressed deep anger and hurt over disruptions to family life, lamenting lost moments with children and strains on marriages. Many voiced the belief that honesty from those responsible could have mitigated their suffering.



There was a collective push for organisations to demonstrate genuine learning from past mistakes in their engagement with those impacted. Acknowledgment of wrongdoing must extend beyond mere apologies; participants are calling for concrete actions that foster real change and healing.

The overarching message is clear: participants demand accountability, recognition of harm, and decisive action from the Restorative Justice Council in advancing a restorative justice programme that truly meets their needs. While scepticism regarding Post Office Ltd's commitment remains, they firmly believe in the Restorative Justice Council's capacity to ensure the restorative justice programme reflects their concerns. Recognising individual experiences and collective suffering is essential in forging pathways to healing, emphasising the urgency for timely resolutions and a streamlined process. Their insistence on concrete actions to facilitate genuine change stands as a cornerstone of their call for justice.

In the upcoming sections, we will outline how we plan to translate participants' insights into the restorative justice programme design. Sections four and five will explore the key elements of a restorative justice programme, which we will consult on with participants over the coming months. Some of these elements have already been identified for pilot programmes, as detailed in Section Two of this report. We are committed to incorporating the voices of those affected into every stage of development, ensuring that the final programme not only meets their needs but also embodies the principles of justice, accountability, and healing.



SECTION FOUR: TRANSLATING INSIGHTS TO THE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROGRAMME DESIGN

The insights gathered from participants during our Listening Sessions provide a clear blueprint for developing a restorative justice programme that effectively addresses the harm caused by the Post Office Horizon IT scandal. Their perspectives emphasise that true restorative justice must extend beyond simple apologies and financial redress; it must actively work to rebuild trust, embed accountability, and foster lasting recovery within the community.

To accomplish these objectives, the programme's design must reflect core principles of transparency, acknowledgment, participation, and healing, ensuring that the approach not only repairs past damage but also safeguards against future transgressions.

GENUINE RECOGNITION AND INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Participants emphasise the need to go beyond symbolic gestures, seeking authentic acknowledgment and reparative actions from Post Office Ltd and Fujitsu Services Ltd. This includes public and written apologies that convey personal accountability, accompanied by visible cultural changes within these organisations.

Transformative leadership is crucial; leaders must demonstrate empathy, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to rectifying the systemic failures that contributed to these injustices. Substantial cultural reforms are vital, as participants stress that visible actions should take precedence over words, reflecting a true dedication to restorative principles. This encompasses fair, lasting financial compensation, the clearing of their names, and the full restoration of their reputations, along with a profound desire to be genuinely heard and respected.

HONOURING EXPERIENCES AND COLLECTIVE TRUTH

At the heart of restorative justice lies recognition and validation of lived experiences. Participants called for active engagement with affected individuals and communities, ensuring their stories are heard, validated, and integrated into the national narrative.

Community acknowledgment should extend beyond formal hearings to include initiatives such as local recovery spaces, memorial events, and educational programmes that preserve collective memory and promote societal learning.

HOLISTIC AND ACCESSIBLE SUPPORT

Participants consistently conveyed the importance of addressing both immediate and long-term needs—emotional, social, and financial. The programme must therefore deliver integrated support services, encompassing mental health care, education, retraining, and financial recovery, all tailored to individual and family circumstances.

Access to these services should remain ongoing, recognising that healing is a gradual process requiring sustained availability of support.

INCLUSIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Participants expressed the need for a diverse coalition of stakeholders—including representatives from Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu Services Ltd, legal organisations, government, and community groups—to collaborate transparently and equitably.

Engagement efforts must prioritise individuals genuinely prepared to accept accountability for past actions, rather than those attempting to deflect responsibility.

SAFE, RESPECTFUL, AND TRANSPARENT ENGAGEMENT

Psychological safety in all interactions is paramount, as highlighted by participants. Restorative meetings should occur in neutral venues, facilitated by independent practitioners, and adhere to clearly defined ground rules. Apologies and commitments must be accompanied by documented follow-through to ensure accountability.

DEMONSTRATING GENUINE ACCOUNTABILITY

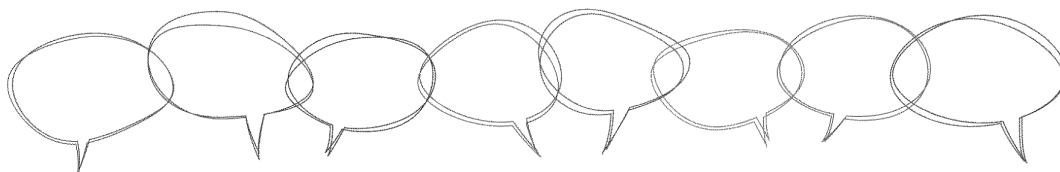
True accountability can only be achieved through public acknowledgment, systemic and cultural reform, and timely reparations. Participants also emphasised the need for cultural sensitivity and equity in all engagements, recognising the diverse backgrounds and experiences of affected individuals.

URGENCY, TIMELINESS, AND RESTORATIVE DELIVERY

A significant frustration among participants was the prolonged compensation and decision-making processes. The urgency for swift and effective resolution is critical, as delays continue to retraumatise those harmed and hinder the recovery process.

The creation of this restorative justice programme represents a pivotal turning point—not only an opportunity to rectify past harms but also to redefine how institutions confront wrongdoing moving forward.

Participants have placed their trust in the Restorative Justice Council to ensure that accountability, transparency, and humanity remain at the forefront of this design process. The organisation delivering the long-term restorative justice work must translate this trust into tangible outcomes that restore dignity, rebuild trust, and lay the groundwork for enduring justice.



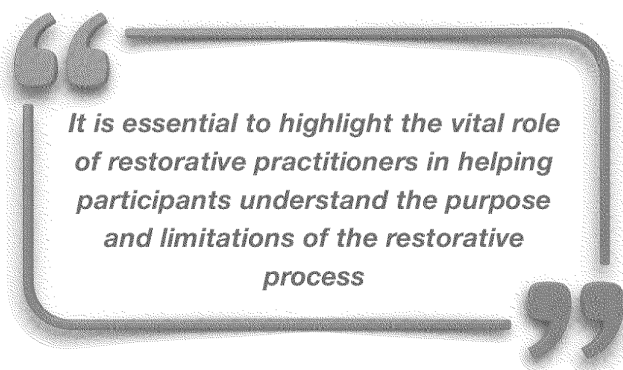
SECTION FIVE: RECOMMENDED ELEMENTS OF THE FINAL RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROGRAMME

Based on the insights gathered from our Listening Sessions, we have identified several key elements that warrant further exploration as we progress towards the next stage of our restorative justice programme design. We believe it is essential for this programme to be comprehensive in nature, addressing the multifaceted impacts of the Post Office Horizon IT scandal. Adequate funding will be critical to support a diverse range of restorative processes, including both direct and indirect interactions with key stakeholders such as Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu Services Ltd, and the Department for Business and Trade.

Additionally, the programme should thoughtfully cater to the needs of the families affected and provide pathways for individuals who may not yet feel ready to engage directly with these organisations. To facilitate the timely achievement of the outcomes from these restorative processes, we recommend the establishment of a restorative justice disbursement fund that allows for prompt actions with minimal bureaucracy.

While we recognise the importance of setting an endpoint for the programme, we recommend exploring the possibility of funding the complete suite of restorative processes for a minimum of five years. This should include critical reviews at two and four years to assess progress and make necessary adjustments.

To enhance the coherence and effectiveness of the programme, we suggest appointing a single organisation to oversee all restorative activities. This entity should have the capability to contract additional support services when deemed safe and appropriate, thereby creating a comprehensive support network for participants. Furthermore, we emphasise the need for individuals accessing restorative services to benefit from a single point of contact—this approach will help eliminate the confusion of navigating multiple pathways.



It is vital to emphasise the crucial role that restorative practitioners will play in ensuring that participants enter the restorative process with a clear understanding of its purpose and the realities of what it can and cannot achieve. Experienced restorative practitioners will work collaboratively with all individuals involved, including those who have been harmed and those who have caused harm. This collaborative effort is fundamentally about co-creating a shared understanding of the restorative process,

focusing on establishing clarity around its nature and the potential outcomes.

By fostering open dialogue and transparency, we aim to ensure that everyone approaches the restorative process with confidence, ready to engage in a meaningful journey. This relational engagement is essential for addressing the distrust some participants may feel, as it sets a foundation for accountability and nurtures the trust necessary for individuals to share their experiences and aspirations authentically.

Recognising the complexities of each individual's experience, our goal is to delineate the boundaries of the restorative process clearly, enabling participants to understand the realistic possibilities for healing and accountability. This approach is geared not only towards nurturing realistic aspirations but also towards creating an environment where all participants can engage fully, knowing what to expect and minimising the risk of further harm. By prioritising clarity and openness, we can ensure that the restorative process serves as a genuine opportunity for meaningful dialogue and healing among all involved.

In summary, the elements we propose for the restorative justice programme are thoughtfully aimed at addressing the diverse needs of individuals and communities impacted by the Post Office Horizon IT scandal. Grounded in the principles of restorative justice—healing, accountability, and community engagement—these elements are designed to facilitate meaningful dialogue between affected parties and the involved organisations. The programme is intentionally non-linear, empowering individuals who have been harmed to choose the pathways that best suit their unique needs and circumstances. By providing this flexibility, we ensure that healing journeys are personal and tailored, prioritising the voices and choices of those affected throughout the restorative process.

The elements we recommend for consultation with all stakeholders in the next stage of programme design are outlined in detail below.

FACILITATED COMMUNICATION CIRCLES

Facilitated Communication Circles are designed to create structured, safe environments for meaningful dialogue among affected individuals and key representatives from Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu Services Ltd, and the Department for Business and Trade. The primary goals of these circles are to foster accountability and promote healing by allowing participants to share their experiences and feelings in a space where they are genuinely heard by those responsible for the distress caused.

These interactions will enable affected individuals to engage directly with organisational representatives, creating an opportunity for open dialogue. Each circle will adhere to established ground rules to ensure respectful and constructive conversation, thus cultivating a safe environment. Participants will feel empowered to express their truths, emotions, and grievances without fear of judgement or retribution. This initiative not only promotes transparency but also enhances understanding among representatives regarding the profound impacts of their actions on individuals and their families.

We propose two forms of circles to cater to various participant preferences:

Group-Based Circles: These sessions will convene multiple affected individuals along with organisational representatives, facilitating shared narratives and collective healing. By recognising the commonality of their experiences, participants will bolster one another while articulating their needs and expectations for accountability and reparative measures. The group dynamic fosters solidarity, reinforcing the notion that affected individuals are part of a supportive community, ultimately enhancing emotional resilience and connection.

Indirect Communication Circles: For those who may prefer a less direct approach, indirect communication circles will utilise a shuttle facilitation model. In this format, trained facilitators will transmit messages between affected individuals and organisational representatives, ensuring that concerns are articulated effectively without the need for face-to-face interaction. This method allows participants to share their feelings and experiences while maintaining emotional distance, making engagement more accessible for some. Critically, this model guarantees that affected individuals feel their voices are acknowledged and valued.

By implementing both group-based and indirect communication circles, we aim to establish a comprehensive platform for dialogue that prioritises safety, understanding, and accountability. This multifaceted approach empowers affected individuals to share their truths while encouraging constructive engagement with representatives from the implicated organisations, ultimately driving the healing process and restoring trust within the community.

It must be emphasised that thorough preparation for both affected individuals and organisational representatives is crucial for the success of these meetings. Trained facilitators will lead this preparation, ensuring that sessions occur only when it is deemed appropriate and safe to do so.

INDIVIDUAL RESTORATIVE MEETINGS

In addition to the group-based and indirect communication circles, the programme must offer personalised individual meetings to foster a more intimate space for dialogue. These sessions will enable affected individuals to engage privately with organisational representatives, allowing them to discuss their experiences and expectations without the complexities often present in a group setting. Individual meetings will provide participants with the opportunity to address specific concerns and needs, ensuring that their unique circumstances receive the focused attention they deserve.

Recognising that many organisational representatives may be new to restorative processes, we recommend that the programme includes tailored preparation (as outlined below) that emphasises empathic and active listening. This preparatory work is vital for ensuring that meetings are approached in a manner consistent with the principles of restorative justice, thereby facilitating meaningful engagement and creating an environment conducive to open and honest dialogue.

As with all forms of direct restorative justice, the preparation process will be thorough and guided by trained facilitators, equipping both affected individuals and organisational representatives for these critical interactions. Meetings will take place only when it has been determined that it is safe and appropriate to do so, ensuring a respectful and supportive atmosphere for all participants.

FAMILY-BUILDING RESTORATIVE PROCESSES

Recognising the profound impact of the Post Office Horizon IT scandal on families, it is essential that the restorative programme includes structured processes specifically designed to mend fractured relationships between affected postmasters and their family members. These sessions will focus on strengthening family ties while providing the necessary support for emotional healing.

To achieve this, we recommend the inclusion of two distinct approaches within the programme:

Family Healing Circles: These sessions will bring families together in facilitated circles, creating a safe and supportive environment where they can openly share their experiences and feelings related to the scandal. In these healing circles, participants will have the opportunity to voice their collective sense of injustice and the emotional toll it has taken on their family dynamics. Facilitators will guide the discussion, ensuring that each family member feels heard and valued. The process aims not only to promote individual healing but also to foster empathy and understanding among family members, reinforcing their collective resilience. This shared experience will allow family members to support one another in navigating the complex emotions associated with the scandal, ultimately strengthening their relationships.

Group Workshops on Resilience: These workshops will provide families with essential tools and resources to rebuild and fortify their relationships following the upheaval caused by the scandal. Focusing on practical skills such as effective communication, conflict resolution, and emotional well-being, these workshops will empower families to develop healthier dynamics and coping strategies. Participants will engage in interactive activities, guided by skilled facilitators, to enhance their ability to connect with one another and address challenges collaboratively. By equipping families with these valuable resources, we aim to foster a foundation for lasting resilience that can withstand future adversities.

Importantly, these family-building sessions will not require direct participation from Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu Services Ltd, or the Department for Business and Trade. However, they are considered a vital component of the overall healing process, emphasising the importance of family support in navigating the aftermath of the scandal. By providing these targeted restorative processes, we hope to facilitate profound emotional healing and reinforced connections within families affected by this tragic chapter.

RESTORATIVE STORYTELLING

Restorative storytelling sessions will provide structured opportunities for individuals and families to share their personal narratives within a supportive environment. This process aims not only to validate their experiences but also to foster empathy among participants, thereby reinforcing community ties. By aligning with the legacy work being commissioned through the Postal Museum, these storytelling sessions will serve as a vital mechanism for reflection and healing, allowing individuals to document their truths through restorative questioning. Participants will have the option to share their recorded stories as part of the legacy project, should they choose to do so, thereby contributing to the broader historical narrative of resilience and recovery.

Individual Storytelling Sessions: In these focused sessions, participants will be given the space to share their personal stories in an environment designed for safety and confidentiality. Skilled facilitators will guide the process, ensuring that each individual feels empowered to articulate their experiences, emotions, and reflections. The emphasis will be on promoting understanding and validation, allowing participants to confront their suffering and acknowledge its impacts. This one-on-one setting will provide the necessary support to ensure that individuals can explore their narratives deeply, fostering a sense of recognition and healing as they share their unique journeys. The individual sessions will not only serve as an opportunity for catharsis but also lay the foundation for participants to connect their stories to the broader fabric of collective experiences.

Group Storytelling Workshops: These workshops will facilitate collective sharing among participants, offering a platform where stories can be exchanged in a communal setting. This format encourages participants to recognise commonalities in their experiences, thereby fostering a deeper sense of solidarity and unity. Through guided discussions and interactive activities, participants will explore themes of resilience, hope, and shared struggle, enriching their understanding of both individual and collective narratives. The group dynamic will enable participants to witness the strength found in vulnerability, reinforcing bonds among community members as they collectively navigate their stories. By creating a space for shared storytelling, these workshops aim to cultivate a supportive network that empowers participants to feel less isolated in their journeys and more connected to those around them.

Ultimately, the restorative storytelling sessions—both individual and group—will play a crucial role in the healing process, transforming personal pain into shared narratives that contribute to community resilience. These sessions will not only document the lived experiences of those affected by the scandal but also create a lasting legacy that honours their journeys and fosters ongoing connection within the community.

POSTMASTER COMMUNITY BUILDING AND WELL-BEING INITIATIVES

Building a supportive community for affected postmasters is vital for fostering resilience and facilitating collective healing. Ongoing community-building initiatives will prioritise recovery and well-being, acknowledging the shared experiences of individuals impacted by the scandal and addressing their emotional and social needs. The restorative justice programme must incorporate avenues for collective healing; insights gained from previous listening sessions reveal that many affected individuals derive significant benefit simply from spending time together in a safe and structured environment. Accordingly, we recommend the inclusion of the following activities within the programme:

Support Networks: Establishing peer-led support groups will create essential opportunities for affected individuals to connect with one another, share their experiences, and discuss coping strategies in a safe environment. These networks will serve as vital sources of emotional support and also facilitate the exchange of practical resources and information, fostering a stronger sense of community among those who have faced similar challenges. By connecting individuals within these peer groups, we promote solidarity and understanding, allowing members to offer each other the encouragement and empathy needed for healing.

Well-Being Programmes: Initiatives focused on mental health and overall well-being are integral to the healing journey. Offerings will include mindfulness workshops, counselling sessions, and activities designed to promote mental and physical health. Such programmes will not only support individual recovery but also enhance participants' capacity to engage in communal activities and relationships. By equipping individuals with techniques for stress management, emotional regulation, and self-care, these well-being programmes will empower them to flourish both personally and within the community.

Restorative Retreats: A key component of the community-building initiative will be the introduction of restorative retreats. These thoughtfully crafted retreats will offer affected postmasters and their families opportunities for social connection and healing activities in a tranquil and supportive environment. Grounded in restorative principles, these retreats will include:

Collective Bonding Activities: Dedicated time will be allocated for group activities, team-building exercises, and social gatherings, designed to foster connections among participants. These shared experiences will not only help to strengthen community ties but also allow for the formation of new friendships, thus enhancing the overall sense of belonging.

Facilitated Discussions: Retreats will feature discussions where participants can share their experiences in an open, confidential, and supportive setting. These dialogues will normalise feelings of distress and foster a sense of belonging within the group, encouraging openness and vulnerability.

Informational Sessions: Covering a range of topics such as coping strategies, resilience-building techniques, and available support resources, these workshops will empower participants with essential knowledge and tools. This educational component will equip individuals with practical strategies for navigating their recovery journey effectively.

By anchoring community and well-being initiatives in restorative principles, we create a holistic support system for postmasters and their families. Through the establishment of peer networks, comprehensive well-being programmes, and transformative restorative retreats, we aim to cultivate a strong, resilient community that not only addresses the immediate needs of those affected but also lays the groundwork for sustained healing and revitalisation in the years to come. This multifaceted approach will not only enhance individual recovery but will also strengthen the fabric of the community, fostering a culture of support and solidarity.

COMMUNITY HEALING CIRCLES

Participants in the Listening Sessions articulated their ongoing experiences of stigma within the communities they once served. Despite the quashing of convictions, many still navigate these feelings of social exclusion. They expressed a strong desire for their communities to engage in discussions about the impact of the scandal and to gain a better understanding of the lasting effects it has had on postmasters and their families.

In response, we recommend the establishment of Community Healing Circles designed to facilitate open dialogue among broader community members while acknowledging and addressing the stigma that affected

postmasters have encountered. These circles will create a safe space for collective healing and understanding, reinforcing community ties and supporting the reintegration of postmasters into their local environments.

Public Healing Circles: These facilitated discussions will serve as an essential forum for community members, including affected postmasters and their families should they wish, to express their feelings regarding the scandal and its profound impacts. The primary goal is to foster understanding, empathy, and a sense of shared responsibility within the community. By addressing the feelings of isolation endured by postmasters, these circles seek to dismantle the stigma surrounding their experiences, allowing for a more compassionate community response.

Stigma Removal Initiatives: Within the healing circles, specific activities will be implemented aimed at addressing and mitigating stigma, such as story-sharing and educational sessions about the realities of the scandal. By raising awareness and promoting narratives of resilience and strength, these initiatives can change the community's perception of those affected. Empowering individuals to share their journeys will help reframe their identities, reinforcing their value as integral members of the community rather than symbols of failure.

Collaborative Action Projects: Community members will be encouraged to engage in initiatives that promote healing and rebuild trust. These projects can include collaborative efforts to determine how the legacy of the scandal should be recognised within their community. Such collective actions will not only facilitate the recovery of community spirit but will also emphasise the importance of unity in overcoming past injustices and misunderstandings. By working together on meaningful projects, community members can foster a sense of ownership over the healing process.

Through these Community Healing Circles, we aim to cultivate an environment of support and acceptance, ultimately assisting in the reintegration of postmasters and restoring their dignity within the community. By promoting dialogue, understanding, and collaborative action, we can begin to rebuild trust and foster a sense of belonging, essential for healing both individuals and the community as a whole.

ENHANCED ORGANISATIONAL PREPARATION

To ensure the success of the restorative programme, it is essential that representatives from Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu Services Ltd, and the Department for Business and Trade are equipped with the necessary skills and understanding of restorative justice. This preparation is critical for fostering a shared commitment to accountability and healing, recognising the diverse experiences of all participants involved.

We recommend incorporating a series of targeted preparation sessions within the restorative justice programme that focus on imparting foundational knowledge of restorative principles and practices. These sessions will cover key concepts such as empathy, accountability, and the vital importance of dialogue in the restorative process.

Key Components of these enhanced preparation sessions must include:

Understanding Restorative Justice: Representatives will learn the fundamental tenets of restorative justice, including its focus on repairing harm, fostering understanding, and rebuilding relationships. This foundational knowledge will empower them to engage in meaningful dialogue that prioritises healing.

Effective Communication Strategies: Representatives will learn effective communication techniques that emphasise active listening and respectful engagement. By developing their skills in these areas, they will be better equipped to create a supportive environment for dialogue, allowing affected individuals to share their experiences without fear of judgement.

Emotional and Psychological Impact Awareness: Sessions will delve into the emotional and psychological effects of organisational actions on individuals and communities. By fostering awareness of these impacts, representatives will gain a deeper understanding of the significance of the restorative process, enabling them to approach discussions with greater sensitivity and insight.

Practical Exercises and Case Studies: Interactive exercises and relevant case studies will form a cornerstone of these sessions. By analysing real-world scenarios, representatives will gain valuable insights into best practices for engaging in restorative dialogue and addressing community concerns. This experiential learning will refine their skills in empathy, active listening, and constructive dialogue, enhancing their overall effectiveness in restorative settings.

Active participation from representatives of Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu Services Ltd, and the Department of Business and Trade in these preparation sessions is imperative for several reasons. Firstly, it ensures that they enter the restorative process with a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. With a nuanced appreciation of restorative justice principles, representatives will be better prepared to engage authentically and transparently in communication circles, demonstrating genuine remorse and accountability.

Building upon the foundational skills established during these sessions, a commitment to continuous learning will be encouraged among organisational representatives. Regular follow-up sessions and refresher sessions should be implemented to ensure that representatives remain equipped with the latest insights and skills needed to engage effectively in restorative practices. This ongoing education will reinforce their dedication to fostering genuine, long-lasting change within their organisations.

The implementation of this preparatory component is vital for cultivating an environment conducive to healing and accountability. By ensuring that representatives from Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu Services Ltd, and the Department of Business and Trade actively engage in these sessions, we can establish a solid foundation for authentic participation in the restorative process.

EMBEDDING RESTORATIVE APPROACHES INTO ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE CHANGE

We acknowledge that culture change programmes are already underway within Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu Services Ltd, and the Department for Business and Trade. In light of this important work, we recommend that these initiatives be further strengthened by being rooted in restorative principles. By emphasising healing, accountability, and open communication as foundational elements, organisations can foster a truly transformed organisational culture that aligns with restorative values.

Recognising that cultural transformation is an individual journey for each organisation, this initiative should be funded separately from the main restorative justice programme, with each organisation responsible for covering any associated costs. By enabling each participating organisation to address its unique cultural challenges, this initiative will pave the way for lasting change and support efforts to rebuild trust while demonstrating a visible commitment to those harmed.

Through active engagement in this process, organisations will exhibit genuine accountability and a willingness to learn from past mistakes, which will reinforce the core values of the restorative approach. This commitment to cultural change will not only enhance the effectiveness of the restorative justice programme but will also serve as a powerful testament to the integrity and dedication of these organisations in making meaningful amends.

DEDICATED RESTORATIVE JUSTICE DISBURSEMENT FUND

It is recommended that a Horizon Project Restorative Justice Disbursement Fund be established to provide flexible, needs-based financial support for individuals engaging in restorative processes stemming from the Post Office Horizon IT Scandal. This fund would ensure that participants are not financially disadvantaged by joining restorative activities and that agreed restorative outcomes can be meaningfully implemented.

To ensure that those who have been harmed and choose not to engage in the restorative process but may still have additional support needs, as outlined below, are not disadvantaged, we recommend considering the establishment of an additional fund for their access. This fund should be managed externally to maintain clarity and independence from the primary Disbursement Fund.

The creation of a dedicated Disbursement Fund is critical to ensuring that restorative justice within the Horizon context is both practical and reparative, rather than merely symbolic. This fund recognises that financial barriers can inhibit participation and that meaningful restoration often requires access to tailored therapeutic, developmental, or personal support resources. Administered transparently and guided by restorative values, the fund would embody a tangible commitment to healing, dignity, and empowerment for those harmed by the scandal. By providing essential resources, the fund will help facilitate a comprehensive approach to recovery that reflects the needs and aspirations of affected individuals and communities.

The Disbursement Fund should be designed to cover reasonable financial costs associated with agreed restorative outcomes resulting from both direct and indirect restorative processes. These outcomes may include, but are not limited to:

Counselling and Therapeutic Support: Covering services such as trauma-informed therapy, grief support, and well-being interventions aimed at promoting emotional healing.

Training, Education, or Employment-Related Costs: Supporting personal development or community reintegration through relevant training programmes.

Travel and Accessibility Expenses: Financial assistance for expenses incurred while participating in restorative meetings or related activities.

Commemorative or Symbolic Reparative Actions: Funding initiatives agreed upon as part of the restorative process that contribute to meaningful acknowledgment and healing.

Practical Costs: Addressing costs linked to rebuilding relationships, family support, or community-based restorative initiatives.

Access to the fund would operate on a recommendation-based model. Restorative practitioners, upon completing a restorative process, may submit recommendations outlining the agreed outcome(s) and associated costs for consideration.

The organisation responsible for delivering the restorative justice programme should manage and administer the Disbursement Fund, ensuring compliance with established restorative principles, as well as financial transparency and accountability. An independent committee should be established to provide oversight of fund spending decisions, approval of higher-value disbursements, and assurances that the fund remains aligned with the spirit and objectives outlined in Recommendation 19 of the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry Report. This committee would include:

- Those directly affected by the Horizon IT Scandal
- Restorative justice practitioners

- Mental health and trauma specialists
- Representatives from Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu Services Ltd, and relevant government departments

It is important to note that the committee will not be responsible for contract governance but will be expected to report annually on the fund's outcomes.

The fund should be resourced through contributions from Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu Services Ltd, and the government, with funds specifically earmarked for restorative purposes. Clear eligibility and verification procedures should be established to ensure fairness and safeguard against misuse of the fund. Annual reports should be published by the organisation delivering the restorative justice programme, outlining fund usage, including anonymised case studies and impact assessments to inform ongoing improvements and adjustments. A multi-year funding commitment should be secured to ensure continuity throughout the duration of the Horizon project restorative justice programme.

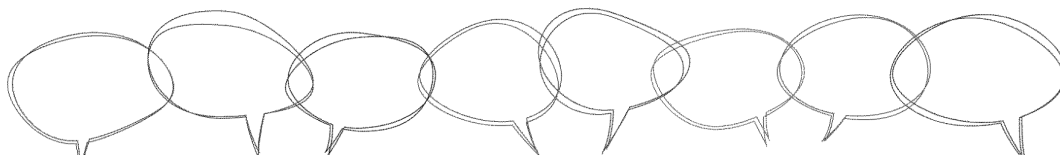
FLEXIBLE AND RESPONSIVE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

The elements we recommend for further consultation and development in the final restorative justice programme reflect a commitment to honouring the experiences of individuals affected by the Post Office Horizon IT scandal while promoting accountability and fostering community cohesion. Grounded in restorative justice principles—such as mutual respect, empathy, and shared understanding—these elements outline a comprehensive approach that encompasses facilitated communication, family healing processes, storytelling, community building, and training initiatives. By integrating these interconnected elements, we can create meaningful pathways for healing, ensuring that the lessons learned from this scandal are woven into future practices and contributing to the restoration of dignity and trust within the affected communities.

Recognising the importance of flexibility and responsiveness, we recommend the establishment of a continuous series of Listening Sessions, echoing those already conducted. These sessions will empower those harmed to have an ongoing voice in the development and refinement of the restorative justice programme over time. We also acknowledge the specific need to include the perspectives of children whose parents were affected by the scandal. To address this, we are planning additional listening sessions through to December 2025 to gather their views.

It is crucial that the final restorative justice programme is commissioned to commence in full by April 2026 to prevent any gaps in support between the conclusion of this pilot project and the full rollout of the programme. Continuity in support is essential to maintain confidence in the restorative justice programme and avoid perceptions of unmet promises and lack of follow-through.

In summary, by prioritising flexibility, inclusivity, and continuity, the restorative justice programme creates a robust framework for healing that acknowledges the diverse experiences of those affected by the Post Office Horizon IT scandal. Through ongoing dialogue, the integration of children's perspectives, and a commitment to seamless implementation, we move towards meaningful restoration and a renewed sense of trust within impacted communities.



About us

Serving as the national, independent membership body for the restorative sector, our mission is to promote and advance the use of restorative practice, in all its forms, for the betterment of the public. We believe that restorative practice has the power to enable communities to cultivate a culture that prioritises reconciliation and empowers individuals to build strong, effective and resilient relationships. By embracing a restorative and relational mindset in every aspect of society and our own lives, we create safe environments where those in conflict can engage in meaningful dialogue and begin the journey of repairing the harm caused. It is our goal to see restorative principles deeply integrated in all aspects of our society.

Restorative Justice Council

Rouen House, Rouen Road Norwich, NR1 1RB

E: enquiries@restorativejustice.org.uk

www.restorativejustice.org.uk

Patron: HRH the Princess Royal

Company no 4199237

Charity no 1097969