

Royal Mail Group

ROYAL MAIL GROUP - CONFIDENTIAL Record of Taped Interview

Short Descriptive Notes
Record of Taped Interview Summary
Full Taped Interview Transcript
(delete as applicable)

Person interviewed:	ALISON LORRAINE HALL (AH)	Exhibit No:
Place of Interview:	Ineson Solicitors 20 Albion Street Cleckheaton BD19 3JG	Number of pages: 13

Date of Interview: 28.9.10 **Time commenced:** 11.37
Tape reference no.: 065759 **Time concluded:** 12.22
Interviewing Officers: CHRIS KNIGHT (CK) **Duration of Interview:** 45 MINUTES
Other persons present: PAUL NORMANDALE (PN) - SOLICITOR PAUL WHITAKER (PW)

Tape counter times	Person speaking	TEXT
		Voice identification of everyone present and the nature of the enquiry explained. Permission to tape record given.
1.30		CK confirmed that prior to the interview the Post Office Legal rights form and Post Office friend forms were completed. AH cautioned and reminded of legal rights.
2.00		AH confirmed she has been the Postmistress at Hightown Post Office since 16 th February 2005 which is a 2 position office with 3 staff, herself Kimberley Langley and Marjory Higgins. She has extended the Post Office twice which has an off licence, newsagents and grocery store attached.

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Tape counter times	Person speaking	TEXT
		AH continued the opening hours of the Post Office are 9 - 5.30 Monday to Friday, 9 - 12.30 on Saturday. She did not work at a Post office prior to this.
4.55		AH admits that on Wednesday and Fridays when she is on her own she uses Kim's passwords to do parcels and postage. AH admits that both staff also know her password although they do not use it.
6.00		AH admits they all do end of day reports but she completes the branch trading statement on her own. AH said she locks up the branch apart from when she is on holiday when Kimberley opens up, the last holiday being in August this year. AH said she does the cash declarations although the Clerks know how to do it.
7.27	CK	Obviously the reason we're here is on the 3 rd September there was an audit at your branch that highlighted a shortage and the shortage being £14,842.37 ok. I'll just refer to it as £14,000 I won't keep saying all that so so long as you're aware of the amount. Ok can you tell me why there was a cash shortage of £14,000 in the account
	AH	Well I think it's all to do with the scratch cards. I've been having problems with them for a while now and I should have asked for help earlier on and I didn't. I can't see it being anything else. I know sometimes we get discrepancies for

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Tape counter times	Person speaking	TEXT
		missing giros and cheques and stuff but I don't think it's going to add up to that amount.
8.40	CK	AH said it started at the beginning of the year and she has been trying to rectify the matter by telephoning the helpline and lottery line but things have got on top of her. AH said she requested an audit after her holiday having spoken to Glenys at Chesterfield who put her in touch with another lady. AH said she has nothing to hide as she would like the matter sorting out.
10.26	CK	When did it first come to light when did you know that you were having problems?
	AH	It's just the figures the money being down every time I had a transaction correction with the lottery it always put the figures complete, obviously when you get your transaction corrections it changes your figures into your stock and stuff so every time I actually counted what I'd remmed in the figures never showed, never were right and every time I had to put the figures down to what they said I had on hand that's when I was losing all the time and got it all here.
	CK	And you say it would affect your cash?
	AH	Yes affect my cash because I'll give you an example of one thing.
	CK	Yeah I was going to say if you've got something.
	AH	This was the, just probably a couple of days before the audit I'm not sure on the dates. I actually counted my stock what I'd got from what's

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Tape counter times	Person speaking	TEXT
12.05	CK	in the dispensers and the stock said that I had 56 of the £5 ones and the system said I had 59. It said that I'd counted 52 on the £2 ones and the system said I had 133. On the £1 scratch cards I counted 387 and the system told me I had 753 so when I go then to alter the figures of what the systems saying I had that gives me a £528 loss and this is what it keeps telling me to do put the figures right every time you get a transaction correction so to put these.
		Right so how often do you get these then?
		Well to be honest I seem to be getting them after every balance, these are the figures what we've, we've gone through every single remming in slip and activation slip from the 29 th May 09 up to 21 st of the 8 th 10 and that's the.
		Right that's fine.
		Yeah and then this is the, this is every time I've got a transaction correction which is from 5 th June last year, I've got 18 transaction corrections and this is why the figures don't tally up because every time I get one of these, these transaction corrections I've got to alter my stock to what it says.
		So presumably all of these, the sheet that you've given me just for the benefit of the tape you've give me a sheet that's showing....
	PM	Shall we mark it sheet number 1?
	CK	...Well if we call it Alison Hall AH01 alright basically it's an A4 sheet and it's got various date periods on and the first one is the 29th of

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Tape counter times	Person speaking	TEXT
13.55		the 5 th '09 to the 23 rd of the 6 th '09. It says 'activated £4,000 paid in £4,330' so just so that I can understand this when I get away from this. Obviously the period I understand what the period is?.....
	AHIt's like a balance period.....
	CK	When it said activated that's what you've?.....
	AHI've activated I've got every single slip what I've activated on the system and I've got every remming in slip.
	CK	Right, so and.... then the paid in, what does that mean?
	PM	Just show the Officer like you showed me and then he 'cos he.
	AH	This proves that I've actually put them back into the Post Office well these are the, we've got every single day every single day you've got to do this so that shows that I'm putting them back into the system.
	CK	Right.
	AH	That's a slip to say that I've activated all the scratch cards and that's the proof that I'm remming them into the system. Now this, I've only learnt in the last, it was, don't even know what date I'm on, after we came back off the holidays I spoke to somebody called Rebecca I think it's Post Office Limited but she works on the lottery side and I spoke to Rebecca and she said that I've been doing it wrong all this time 'cos I've never had any proper training on the lottery on the Post

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Tape counter times	Person speaking	TEXT
15.45		Office side apart from one guy who came when we started the lottery. Now what I've been doing I've been getting 10 packs of the safe and putting them in my drawer and remming them in into the system so that means I've got so many scratch cards on so I might have 500 at £1 400 at £2 you know and that so all them have been remmed in and then when we need a pack we take it to the shop side and we activate it which are all these and. PM Explain how you activate them. AH Yeah well you've got to activate a pack and then that makes sure you can sell the pack then you know.
	PM	That's activated with the lottery?
	AH	That's activate with the lottery so them's my remming in slips which I've got for every, every one, them's my activation slips to prove that I've activated the pack into the lottery and that's the proof that I've paid the money back into the Post Office so I've been doing that for I don't, well up until this year to August this year when I got told by Rebecca that I shouldn't be doing it that way I should just keep the packs in the drawer not into the system and when I want to activate one I take a pack I activate it and then we rem it into the system so it's on. So this is what.
16.50		AH said the lottery terminal was installed in August 2007 but she did not have a loss for the first 2 years.

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Tape counter times	Person speaking	TEXT
18.30		AH said she once put £640 of her own money in to balance the accounts and said she has also been out before when she has taken money out then put it back in.
20.46		AH said she could not balance in January but could not remember how much it was out after which the figure got higher and higher. She admits she panicked and should not have let it go on but was scared to ask for help until she eventually asked for the audit.
23.34		AH said she has never ever taken a penny out of the Post Office.
23.43	CK	Right that's fine. The other side of it is obviously that every month you have to create a branch trading statement which as you, as it completes a true record of what transactions you've done and obviously what cash and stock is on hand. Now you're saying that in January it didn't balance, you falsified the account and then since January it's kept going on?
	AH	It's just kept going up and up and up and this is when I've just got to the point where right I need help with this because this is just going.
24.51	CK	What sort of concerns me is you're saying that you put £640 in of your savings but you can't remember when that was?
	AH	I don't know I'd have to have a look for my own bank book.

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Tape counter times	Person speaking	TEXT
	CK	Again I'll be up front with you if I had to put £640 in somewhere I would certainly... it would be a date that stuck in my head?
	AH	I just, I'll have to look at my bank book 'cos I took some money out of my savings book and I think I actually took the rest out of the business if I can think rightly.
26.20		AH said she does not think the money has been taken out by any of her staff who are aware of the matter. She has not confronted her staff who are sometimes on their own.
27.50		AH explained at the end of the night or the first thing in a morning the staff run off the report for the lottery then she checks the scratch cards and the money which needs paying to the Post Office.
28.47	PW	The cards that have been remmed in that have not been activated are they kept secure and things like that?
	AH	They're usually kept in the post office. I have got 3 at the moment which is in my cigarette kiosk which is locked which is in the bottom which nobody knows are there apart from me and the lady who's working today. They're just ready to activate onto the because we're running low on a few and I didn't want to come out without you know 'cos you they don't like you to have empty containers sort of thing.

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Tape counter times	Person speaking	TEXT
29.30	PW	<p>So you're saying, you're quite confident 'cos obviously we're looking at potential accountancy issues in relation to the scratch cards and you're quite confident that you're reconciling them correctly within the shop, you're confident that the.</p>
	AH	<p>I am now I wasn't, I wasn't to be honest. I've learned quite a few things this last couple of weeks even like another thing what I didn't know last Wednesday when the people who have took over they was obviously doing the monthly balance and everything on that Wednesday what's been done on the Wednesday obviously I balance at half past 5 on a Wednesday afternoon.</p>
	PW	<p>That's just with the lottery.</p>
	AH	<p>But just with the, but obviously the shop's still open while half past 9.</p>
	PW	<p>Right yeah</p>
	AH	<p>So everything what I sell on that Wednesday has been going through on the Thursday morning but I have been told this week last week they said last week that everything what's done on that Wednesday must go in on that balance.</p>
	PW	<p>On the Wednesday right.</p>
	AH	<p>Well they've been doing it on the Thursday morning.</p>
	PW	<p>Right I see.</p>
	AH	<p>So which I didn't know so to me that makes it out like well that's going to be another, are they going to say that I've got another transaction correction because I'm not putting it in on the</p>

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Tape counter times	Person speaking	TEXT
		right day you know and it's.
31.20		AH was asked if she had started doing things differently since January but she said not. She agreed the transaction corrections can be 4 or 5 months old.
35.22		AH said she always counts and checks everything when she balances.
35.47	CK	Right ok so but again what we have said on the flip side of that that for the last 8, 9 months that the cash hasn't been correct has it?
	AH	No it hasn't and it's been my fault but I never, everything was just getting on top of me and I've tried to, if I've looked through these bloody bags of stuff once I must have looked through them 50 times trying to find the money and it all pins down to me to be honest to these transaction corrections what keeps coming through.
36.30		AH said she is not a member of the Federation but should have asked for help.
38.40		AH agreed the cash was about £13,000 prior to the audit.
39.00		AH was shown a branch trading statement dated 24 th of 3 rd 2010 showing a cash on hand figure of £26,615.38.
39.19	CK	So presumably that figure was not the cash on

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Tape counter times	Person speaking	TEXT
		hand? AH No it wasn't. CK Right it would be something less than that? AH Yes. CK Right I've got these up to the 25 th August which is obviously was just a week before the audit so it would be fair to say rather than going through each one of these and showing you them, that each one of these where it says a cash in hand figure? AH It wasn't right no. CK It wasn't what was there? AH No because I just said it was there because I was struggling with all this what was going on trying to find it and. CK But again presumably from what you've been saying we know at the end point it was £14,000. AH Yeah. CK At start point it must have been zero so it either crept up in amounts over the 8, 9months or it suddenly became £14,000 after the first month? AH No it wasn't no.
40.30		AH said although she was concerned she did not raise the matter with anyone and continued to falsify the accounts.
41.50		AH agreed that by covering up the matter she has remained in employment and did it because she was scared. She continued that she has been trying to sort the matter and should have done so before the audit.

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42.27	CK	<p>Just so I can cover something off as well obviously prior to coming here I understood there was problems with the audit. I contacted the chap in Chesterfield a Neil Thornycroft who looks after the audit stuff in Chesterfield and what he said to me I've just had a look over, he said in the last 2 years we've issued National Lottery gain 3rd of the 4th 08 to date they've issued £1,000 and £1,052 credit, prize payments 24th of the 4th 08 to date £190.20p debit, scratch cards 23, sorry 23rd of the 6th 08 to date they've issued a £2,200 debit that was a stock credit and what he's saying is from the 1st of the 1st 08 to date you've had 115 stock adjustments at £1,760.00 credit ok. Now the figures he's sort of saying there don't come anywhere near £14,000.</p>
	AH	I know.
	CK	<p>Obviously you've brought paperwork which I'm not in a position to verify or dispute or whatever, I'm reading that out to what he's told me so that I'm being open with you, you know I've made some enquiries, I can go back and say well this is what Miss Hall has said, does that tie in with anything.</p>
	AH	Will they go through these then will they go through all these figures?
	CK	<p>I won't say they'll go through them but they can have a look and try and explain what you're saying, if you're saying you've adjusted stock they can have a look and see.</p>

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Tape counter times	Person speaking	TEXT
	AH	I have I've adjusted stock on quite a number of occasions.
	CK	But what I'm saying is, why have you adjusted it, is it through your own?
	AH	No because I've got a transaction correction every time I've got a transaction correction I've had to adjust the stock to what they say I should have.

Master tape seal signed on number 065759
Interview terminated at 12.22