

HORIZON LINES FOR DPMQs

Top line:

- My honourable friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment Relations and Consumer Affairs, will be making a statement to the House shortly on these matters.

[If pushed]:

- Government welcomes the publication of the interim Report by forensic accountants Second Sight into alleged problems with the Post Office Horizon computer system and the company's positive response.
- Important to be clear that, contrary to misleading media reports, the review explicitly confirms that no systemic problems with the Horizon software have been found.
- Must also make absolutely clear that the report makes no comment about the safety or otherwise of any past conviction of a subpostmaster for fraud, theft or false accounting.
- A very small number of subpostmasters have experienced issues with the Horizon system - a minute proportion of the tens of thousands (68,000) of people successfully using the system on a daily basis across the network of over 11,500 branches.
- Important to be clear the issues and concerns covered by the Report do not relate to any Government action or policy decision. They are wholly operational matters for Post Office Ltd in which the Government has no role
- The Post Office has proposed a number of measures to address points made in the Second Sight report about support and training for subpostmasters.
- Government cannot intervene in the legal process to review or appeal past convictions. These are matters which can only properly be dealt with by the relevant judicial authorities.

Background

The Second Sight review was commissioned by Post Office Ltd (POL) last year in the context of allegations by a very small number of subpostmasters of accounting irregularities affecting their branches which they have attributed to faults with the Horizon system. POL has always expressed full confidence in the integrity of Horizon. Concerns raised by 47 subpostmaster were channelled to Second Sight either through local MPs (and co-ordinated by James Arbuthnot MP) or through a group called the Justice for Subpostmasters Alliance (JFSA).