

## Post Office Horizon system investigation reveals concerns

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# Post Office Horizon system investigation reveals concerns

by Karl Flinders, [computerweekly.com](http://computerweekly.com)

The investigation into the allegedly faulty accounting system used by sub-postmasters has revealed serious concerns about a system which many claim has led to prosecutions, fines and even jail for some sub-postmasters.

Although Horizon itself appears to have worked properly, from the investigation so far, an interim report has raised concerns over unreliable hardware, exceptionally complex systems and a lack of proper training.

The Horizon system, which is used by thousands of sub-postmasters, has been ~~blamed by many for sub-postmasters being wrongly~~ charged and even jailed for accounting shortfalls. Others have had to make up cash discrepancies following prosecutions.

Despite years of allegations that the Horizon system – which was developed by ICL/Fujitsu Services – is at fault for many accounting shortfalls, the Post Office has unrelentingly defended it.

But after pressure from groups such as the ~~Justice for Sub-postmasters Alliance (JFSA)~~ and MPs, the Post Office agreed to run an independent investigation. The independent investigation funded by the Post Office is being conducted by forensic experts, Second Sight.

James Arbuthnot, the Conservative MP for North East Hampshire who chairs a group of MPs that have campaigned for the Post Office to get to the bottom of the problem, welcomed the interim report.

He told Computer Weekly that so far the investigation has shown that the Horizon system has worked as it should: "It seems at the moment that Horizon itself has worked as it is meant to."

But Arbuthnot listed areas where there are concerns.

These are: unreliable hardware; the absence of "proper" system training and support; the complexity of linking with a large number of other systems; a business model that puts responsibility for dealing with small system problems with sub-postmasters; and the way the Post Office has in the past investigated concerns about transactions.

He said that "while the problems are devastating for those affected, in proportion to the number of sub-postmasters and transactions it deals with, it is a small number."

Arbuthnot praised the Post Office for the way it "has dealt with difficult issues".

"The Post Office has gone out of its way to fund this independent investigation and there has been no attempt to cover up what has been going on," he said.

Read Computer Weekly case studies from 2009 of those that believe they have suffered as a result of problems related to Horizon.

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