

Jo Hamilton

Dec 2001 – started at South Warnborough Post Office under Alwyn Stacy

2003 – Alwyn Stacy [GRO]

October 2003 – Jo became Subpostmaster

6 March 2006 – conversation between PO and Jo regarding high levels of cash-on-hand at Sth Warnborough. Jo asked to return at least £27,000 case as it was deemed surplus to running of the branch.

7 March 2006 – Jo reported [GRO]

9 March 2006 – Post Office (PO) audited branch following Audit revealed cash and stock shortage of £36,644.89. Jo suspended. PO security investigation undertaken – in her statement to investigators, Jo said all staff used same login for Horizon, a breach of PO procedure. PO sought to prosecute Jo for theft and false accounting.

19 November 2007 – Jo pleaded guilty to false accounting charges at Winchester Crown Court. Theft charge was removed after she promised to pay PO back.

18 February 2008 – Jo pays PO back in full, plus £1000 costs awarded against her.

Investigation

- No evidence which supports Jo's claim that Horizon caused shortfalls in the branch.
- PO believes that the most likely cause of the shortfall was a series of operational errors by Jo and/or her staff over a period of time (e.g. mishandling of cash, keying transactions into Horizon incorrectly, cheque remittance errors, etc.).
- PO investigation in May 2006 indicates that inflated cash declarations has been going on for some time – possibly 2 years
- PO helpline for staff – Jo knew of its existence and could have asked for support but available records do not show that she did so.
- All this was compounded by Jo submitting false accounts. This means that it wasn't then and isn't now possible to identify all the erroneous transactions which caused the £36k shortfall.

What Jo says

- Minimal training, including no training on how to handle transaction corrections
 - PO does not hold any training records
- Lack of support from PO helpdesk, specifically between Dec 2003 and March 2006 (Jo's employment period following death of her predecessor)
 - No evidence to suggest that Jo couldn't contact helpline; in fact, she did contact it on many occasions
- No ability within procedures / systems to put issues on hold and investigate further

- Unexplained errors – Jo has submitted two specific errors (to do with a TV license transaction) which shows there are flaws in Horizon
 - No data held as far back as this by PO