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Press Release

Post Office statement on findings of interim report into Horizon computer system

Monday 8 July 2013

The Post Office today issued the following statement in response to the publication of an interim report into alleged problems with the Horizon computer system, which is used to record transactions in its branch network.

The report is being published by an external firm, Second Sight, who were commissioned by the Post Office last year. It confirms that no system wide problems have been found in relation to the Horizon software, but suggests that the Post Office should examine its support and training processes for sub-postmasters.

Post Office chief executive Paula Vennells said:

"We commissioned this independent review to address concerns that have been raised about the Horizon system and we welcome the broad thrust of the interim findings.

"The Post Office is committed to supporting its people and improving the way we do so. The interim review makes clear that the Horizon computer system and its supporting processes function effectively across our network. As the review notes, it is used by around 68,000 people in more than 11,500 branches, successfully processing more than six million transactions every day. The review underlines our cause for confidence in the overall system.

"It does however raise questions about the training and support we have offered to some sub-postmasters and we are determined to address these issues.

"The people who work in the post office network in communities across the country are the lifeblood of our business and we take our responsibilities to them very seriously.

"We therefore regret very much if any sub-postmaster feels that our standard support or training have not met their needs, and we are grateful to James Arbuthnot of the Justice for Sub-postmasters Alliance (JFSA) for raising these issues with us.

"In many of these cases I am confident that steps have already been taken which have improved support and training but we are always open to feedback and insights from sub-postmasters. So we will make further improvements in this area and take better account of individual requirements and circumstances going forward."

The Post Office is proposing to respond to the Second Sight report with three new initiatives aimed at addressing the issues raised, improving future processes and examining potential structural changes to support sub-postmasters:

1. The creation of a working party to work collaboratively to complete the review of cases started by Second Sight last year. This would examine the themes identified by Second Sight and consider all cases brought forward by the JFSA and MPs, together with any new themes which emerge from these cases. The JFSA have been invited to join this working party.
2. A review chaired by an independent figure to determine how an independent safety net might be introduced to adjudicate in disputed cases in the future. Again the JFSA and other stakeholders will be invited to take part in this process.
3. A new Branch User Forum to provide a way for sub-postmasters and others to raise issues and insights around business processes, training and support, directly feeding into the organisation's thinking at the highest level. A key task for this forum will be to review support processes and training to ensure they meet the standards expected of the Post Office.

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Ms Vennells added: "We have an obligation to protect public money, including investigating suspected wrongdoing. However, we hope the action we are already taking and these additional proposals to work collaboratively with the JFSA and sub-postmasters demonstrate our commitment to improving the way we support all those who work in our unrivalled branch network."

View Horizon Interim report**For more information, please contact:**

Ruth X Barker
Post Office Press Office

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Post Office Press Release: Post Office announces independent mediation scheme for subpostmasters

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Press Release

Post Office announces independent mediation scheme for subpostmasters

27 August 2013

Introduction of scheme part of Post Office's commitments following findings of interim report into Horizon system

Post Office committed to addressing concerns raised by subpostmasters by reviewing their cases

The Post Office has today announced the introduction of an independent mediation scheme to address the concerns raised by some subpostmasters regarding cases which they feel require further resolution.

This follows the publication of the interim report into the Horizon system produced by Second Sight in July. The report stated that so far no evidence of system wide (systemic) problems with the Horizon software had been found. However, it noted that improvements could be made in the training and support processes provided to subpostmasters. In response to the report the Post Office has made a number of commitments, one of which is to create this independent mediation scheme for subpostmasters and the Post Office to investigate and try to resolve a subpostmaster's concerns.

The Post Office, JFSA (Justice for Subpostmasters Alliance), and Second Sight, the independent investigators, have formed a working group to collaboratively develop and monitor this scheme which is available to current and former subpostmasters from 27 August 2013.

Commenting on the launch of the Scheme, Angela van den Bogerd Post Office Head of Partnerships said: "The Post Office is committed to addressing any outstanding concerns among subpostmasters swiftly and transparently.

"As part of this commitment we set up an independent review which recently published an interim report which found that so far there was no evidence of any systemic issues with Horizon but did identify some further improvements we could make to our training and support arrangements, which we are taking forward.

"In addition, the independent mediation scheme we are announcing today will be an effective way to assess and address any outstanding cases where subpostmasters feel they have been unfairly treated.

"Subpostmasters are the lifeblood of our business and we take their concerns extremely seriously. We hope the package of measures we are announcing will demonstrate our commitment to working closely with them to further improve our network."

Commenting on the announcement, James Arbuthnot MP, who is spearheading interest in the matter at Parliament, said: "I am very pleased indeed with the working group's proposed process. To my mind, it represents the very best chance all parties - individual subpostmasters and mistresses, and the Post Office have of ensuring the best outcome for everyone. It is fair, thorough, and independent."

Subpostmasters wishing to submit an application should visit jfsa.org.uk for further information.

Issued by:

Post Office Press Office

GRO**Notes to editors:**

The Post Office is responding to the Second Sight report with three new initiatives aimed at addressing concerns raised, improving future processes, and examining potential structural

www.postoffice.co.uk/post-office-announces-independent-mediation-scheme-for-subpostmasters

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Post Office Press Release: Post Office announces independent mediation scheme for subpostmasters

changes to support sub-postmasters:

In addition to establishing the independent mediation scheme, a working group has been created to build on the work started by Second Sight last year and to develop it into this mediation scheme.

A new Branch User Forum is also being established to provide a way for sub-postmasters and others to raise concerns and insights around business processes, training and support, directly feeding into the organisation's thinking at the highest level. A key task for this forum will be to review support processes and training to ensure they meet the standards expected of the Post Office.

The Horizon system has around 68,000 users and processes more than six million transactions every day. The total number of cases put forward by users to Second Sight as part of its external review was 47, less than 0.1 per cent of the total number of users of the Horizon system.

The mediation process will be open both to subpostmasters who raised concerns through the Second Sight review, and also any who feel they have a dispute with the Horizon system (or an associated issue) which requires resolution. The scheme will involve cases being independently investigated by Second Sight followed, where appropriate, by a face-to-face discussion between the Post Office and the subpostmaster chaired by a neutral mediator.

The scheme is being supervised by a working group comprising representatives from Post Office, JFSA, and Second Sight. Any subpostmaster wishing to take part in the scheme must submit an application through Second Sight which will review each case for eligibility.

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
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Post Office Statement On Findings Of Interim Report Into Horizon Computer System

July 08 2013

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Contact information

Ruth Barker

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