

Note

	PANORAMA MEETING – TUESDAY 9 JUNE
Mark Davies	My role is Communications and Corporate Affairs Director of Post Office and have been here for nearly three years.
Angela Van Den Bogerd	I'm the head of Support Services, I have been in the business for 30 years. I started working in branch and I have been very close to the branches and postmasters for the whole of my career
Patrick Bourke	I am effectively the Head of Case Management, dealing with the throughput of cases through the Scheme - operation and policy level is really where I come in but working alongside colleagues throughout the business because this is a whole business effort
Matt Bardo	And how doAngela how does your role are you sort of heading up the mediation scheme and I saw you at the Select Committee so you're sort of the responsible figure for those things is that right?
Angela Van Den Bogerd	So I have been leading the investigations; for the applications that come into the Scheme, 150 of them, I mobilised a team of 20 people in Post Office and it was my team that investigated every one of those cases and then we work closely with Second Sight to share information and the findings of those cases as well. So in terms of my business as usual role I've been close to that and then I have led on the investigation because that was the natural thing for me to do
Mark Davies	It is probably worth reprisingit is probably worth just going through a quick history of the issue. If you go back to 2012, Post Office started a process of separating from Royal Mail as a business and it was around that time that we were approached by James Arbuthnot and others around these cases and this sense that some postmasters have felt that their treatment hasn't been appropriate and that was also, as you know, what JFSA would say primarily. We decided at that point - July summer 2012 to investigate, to bring in independent forensic accountants to examine those cases. Second Sight came in and spent about a year, I think it was, preparing their initial report and that came out summer 2013, as you know, and broadly speaking said that- and this is very broadly speaking - but said that there were no systemic issues with Horizon and, as you know, the initial complaint was that Horizon must be somehow responsible for some of the issues that people felt that they'd had. That report came out - no systemic issues, raised some questions about some training and support issues which Angela then set about leading the Branch Support Programme that we put in place to look at some of the specifics. And that is going on and continues doesn't it Angelahow we can improve some of those issues that were raised. But we also at that point -summer 2013 - felt that it would be appropriate to, I suppose, provide a kind of forum for all of those people who had complaints to be able to take them forward in some kind of formal way. And so we that's why we set up the mediation scheme and we invited, through the channels that we have as a business so obviously we have, as you know, 11,500 branches and so we reach out to those branches through internal communication channels which is a

	fairly kind of the business is complex and is the biggest retail network in the country so it is inevitably kind of challenging sometimes to get to everybody but we have a very complex and sophisticated communications framework that can do that. So we, along with JFSA, advertised and asked people to come forward and bring forward cases where they felt that they have been treated unfairly or where they had questions, I suppose, around their running of their branches and cases in the past. And we offered to pay for those people to have independent advice as well. And as you know around 150 cases initially came forward and one of the really important things that is important to draw out is that of those 150 they're not all cases which were criminal cases - the vast majority didn't in factas broadly speaking that [Matt Bardo interrupts to ask number of criminal cases – Mark says broadly speaking thinks about 4/5 did not have but need to get figures]
Matt Bardo	So about 1/5 th of those people did have
Patrick Bourke	We can get you the actual figures
Matt Bardo	It will be helpful
Patrick Bourke	We need to give you the precise figures
Matt Bardo	As Mark said, after Second Sight had done their first interim report - it looked at 47 cases as part of that - and so some of these cases were channelled through JFSAand, as Mark said, there are two broad conclusions - there is no systemic flaw within the Horizon system but we came in for some criticism because they felt that some support was not being provided Post Offices wasn't up to parso really out of concern to achieve two things we set up a scheme and decided to carry on with the investigations and those two things were to do the right thing by those people who had got a complaint and to provide them with an avenue for crafting their complaint and articulating it in an effective way so we could really get to the bottom of what they were complaining about because it is quite hard to really engage with something that is kind of: 'I don't think I did this and I think someone else was at play' we need to refine that to bring a degree of granularity so that we can actually start addressing and investigate. So that was the first concern - to make sure the applicants were well served and supported. And, as Mark says, we provided quite substantial funds to access professional advisers, generally lawyers, some people went for accountants, there was a mix and some people decided to just do it on their own. The second reason we did it is because when faced with a series of complaints of this nature you understand as a business that Horizon which okay I want to demystify it a bit it is simply a tooled system which is connected up to a central repository of information; it's a shop till, it is just a little bit more modern than the one you get at a newsagent, but this is the thing on which the entire retail network runsand faced with complaints about, question marks about integrity, the natural reaction was any responsible business would know that something which had that significance, that bit of architecture, had such significance to the performance of this business was actually work
Matt Bardo	I think there is a couple of things that we can quickly pick up onthe numbers I know we don't have numbers specifically at the moment but roughly about a fifth say were convicted

Patrick Bourke	I think it was slightly higher than that but we can get the precise numbers out I don't know, a couple of dozen or whatever it is
Matt Bardo	Have any of those people been admitted to the mediation scheme now or I should say to mediation?
Patrick Bourke	Okay I think we are just jumping ahead a little bit if you don't mind. Can I just go through my little potted history. I'm sorry to be a bore but I know that you have wanted to come here really wanting to hear our side of the story as well as answer your questions so if you could just literally give me five minutes just to do my bit and then we can get into that and I will have an answer for you
Matt Bardo	Go ahead
Patrick Bourke	So we set the scheme up and we did that in close conjunction with James Arbuthnot and Second Sight and kind of decided what the rules ought to be between us. And we all signed up to those rules and the process, broadly speaking, was to advertise the scheme for a 12 week period through the internal channels we've got and also through JFSA's channels, both on their website but also through their contacts. That produced 150 applications for whatever reason 14 of them didn't progress beyond that because we were able to resolve them early and people pulled out and so on, so we really had 136 cases. Now we then appointed Sir Anthony Hooper to chair a working group which was going to manage the throughput of cases effectively, he is an ex Court of Appeal Judge and so the process was, effectively, subpostmaster articulates their case with the support of their professional advisers which we pay for, they then submit them to the Post Office. That immediately triggers an investigation by the Post Office and the investigations were led by Angela's team and, as she has said allready, she had a 20 strong team, who were all dedicated investigators, throughout this process. Now bearing in mind that a lot of these cases date back to quite a long time ago that process was difficult, we encountered some difficulties in tracking down information and we, in common with all other businesses around the country, have data retention policiesbut even where we came across something that should have been missing but we actually found we produced all of thatso that was all part of the process. Those investigations were incredibly thorough - I would say wouldn't I - but I think, in fact I know, they were judged to be - in fact they were judged to be - incredibly thorough and comprehensive by Second Sight, the people we appointed to do the independent reviewwhich we committed we would provide applicants to assure them that somebody else was taking a good look at this, who didn't have a vested interest in supporting the Po
Angela Van Den Bogerd	Transcripts of interviews
Patrick Bourke	Transcript of interviews so on and so forth. So I mean really you know, a big job of work and for them to then analyse. They do a first analysis and the product of that is what we call a draft case review report and now that draft is both communicated to the Post Office and to the applicant, we have an opportunity and they have an opportunity to commentto correct inaccuracies as we see it. It then goes back to Second Sight and, taking on board those comments or not, depending on the importance that are attached them, then they produce a final CRR and that CRR went to the working group and the working group's task was to really come up with a recommendation as to whether or not, broadly speaking, the

case could be said to be deemed suitable for mediation. Now this was taking a very long time, as you can imagine. I mean, actually, its guite an effort to want to do the right thing.... we created an architecture that was quite sort of heavy really for what we were dealing with. And it became clear to us that... particularly after we completed our final investigation in February of this year... so we had done all the investigations so we were pretty clear what had happened in every single casein fact chrystal clear what had happened...we thought, based on the experience of some mediations to date, we thought we'd take a position which effectively accelerated the process for people, in fairness to the fact that they had been going through this for 21/2 years. And that decision - and it's a watershed moment I suppose - was that for all cases that haven't previously been the subject of a court ruling so, broadly speaking, another way of saying... where somebody hadn't been convicted of a crime in relation to the losses that occurred at the branch, we would mediate those cases. Those people where that did happen.... so all of these facts resulted in them being prosecuted and convicted, our presumption would be that we would be unlikely to mediate. Now that is only a presumption and we have got in place, even today, a system whereby we look at each of those individual cases on an individual basis - that's the commitment we gave on 10 March of this year and it is a commitment that we are fulfilling day in, day out. We have a weekly meeting in my team where the relevant lawyers and other people... investigators.. get together and really go through and say: 'Is there anything about this case which would displace that presumption?' So we have checks of balances all the way through and we are as keen as anybody, more keen than most people, to make sure that the decisions we arrive at are ones we consider to be appropriate and right, having gone through all circumstances. So, once a case has gone through that process, a decision has to be made by both parties - mediation as you know is a consensual process it doesn't displace any court proceedings at all and doesn't affect people's legal rights at all but it is by its very nature a consensual process and the implication of that is you can't compel either side to actually sit down and do the mediation, so we can't insist that anyone mediations with us and they can't insist we mediate with them. So the decision ultimately rests with the parties but we have decided that for those cases which haven't been a subject of court proceedings leading to a conviction we would mediate and we felt that was a fair and speedy way round the problem. It was also a part answer to the criticism which we had from people like James Arbuthnot that things were taking a long time and we should just be getting on with the process of mediation. So, you know, we felt it was the right thing to do in all circumstances. Those cases which are referred to mediation then go to an organisation called Centre for the Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR) the preeminent provider of mediation type services, ADR services broadly, in the country and internationally as well - and again this provides another guarantee of independence to the process, which we think is really, really important....that we got a third party overseeing the fairness of the mediation proceedings proper. These are people who are accredited, trained, who have to submit to both national and international codes of conduct, including some very harsh applications of confidentiality because they are trying to create an environment where it is possible to try and resolve the disputes without having a 'bun fight' and do it amicably, particularly in cases where we have got serving subpostmasters, the mutual interest is finding an accommodation which we can both live with because we have a business relationship to preserve... and this is not a process that we are undertaking with anything other than a genuine desire to try and resolve the differences that exist between us. So, just to bring you right up to speed, CEDR now have something between 50/60 cases which they have dates from the Post Office side for, multiple dates and/or alternative dates which we are making ourselves available for mediation, and now are in the process of approaching applicants and our professional advisers to see where we can dovetail and meet up and have mediations. The availability of applicants is not always an easy thing, you know, you are trying to get availability of mediator, Post Office, our advisers, the applicant and their advisers but we think we are seeing a pick up rate and we expect to be, frankly, pretty busy between now and the end of the

vear because the preparation times are significant, the mediation time is significant. Another thing to say on the mediation is that we provide a further tranche of money to applicants so they can be supported by professional advisors. and of course all travel costs for both professional advisers and family members who they want to bring for moral and general support. So that brings you right up to date. Now I don't want to pre-empt where we are going to get to in the discussion that will follow this but just some observations about the process we have undergone: I think we have made really huge efforts to provide everyone with a grievance every opportunity, including as I said direct funding, to bring their complaints to us in the most effective way and be treated with a highest standards of fairness in all our dealings. We have been thinking about this internally and I think, just looking at comparators in other companies, we really have come up short in terms of finding another organisation that perhaps would have placed such a premium on doing the right thing, even if doing the right thing doesn't necessarily engender favour in some media coverage and so forth, but you can't please all of the people all of the time. But I think we are very comfortable that we have done the right thing throughout. Everything that we do is guided by the evidence that our investigations have produced, and this is a point I just want to stress, every case is looked at on the basis of the evidence it produces and those investigations, as I have said have been acknowledged by third parties as being of top drawer standard and where the evidence has gone against us ie we have been found to have come up short - and there have been some of those cases- we have owned up and acted accordingly. Our only expectation is that other people do the same thing because, actually, ultimately only the evidence of what happened in an individual cases can determine its rightful outcome. As I mentioned before, CEDR place a great premium on confidentiality, but even before that we agreed as the working group that we would do this work in circumstances of real confidentiality. Everybody signed up to that as there is a very good reason for that. We are talking about sensitive personal data, very sensitive personal data in some cases and it seems to us to be completely unfair for this data to emerge in the public domain when essentially what we are talking about is, dare I say it, what if they haven't been grouped together are actually routine contractual disputes between franchisees, businesses and Post Office, But I mean, you know, without going into the detail of cases, for instance there will be cases of family breakdown, there have been cases of people with substance abuse problems and so on and so forth and in those circumstances of course we are never going to talk about those things and, frankly, we have been really insistent that we would not divulge confidential information of that nature, even in the face of people who decided that in their case they wanted at least want some of it out there - questionmark whether they really want the whole thing out there....

There is a point that we will come on to and I just want to say this in crystal clear terms, and we will come back to it, but we do not and I say do not, and I'll say again do not, prosecute people for making mistakes. We just don't. Never have, never will. People do make mistakes and we accept that and we have processes in place to enable them to address that in conjunction with us. Okay, so just for the avoidance of doubt we do not prosecute people for making mistakes, but I am sure it will be recorded and written down. Thank you. Where we do prosecute people is where there is good evidence that a crime has been committed and it's in the public interest to do so, so before we even engage in a thought process of prosecution we have to have good evidence that something has gone wrong of a non-mistake type nature that has involved a criminal intent and those prosecutions are taken forward in accordance with the code of crown prosecutors. A great play has been made about whether or not our powers are right or wrong. We are not any different to any other private organisation in the country..... so I think the BBC may conduct its own prosecutions for TV licencing... you know we are not in a million miles territory apart on that..... so that nothing is peculiar about that and we do, as I say, apply exactly the same standard as the CPS does. So we do take those prosecutions - they are very few and far between - and where it results in a

conviction we think that is the right thing to do because of the incidents in question but also because frankly, if you could do it with impunity it would be a very leaky business indeed and we have got to remember this is public money we are handling. It's not Post Office money, most of the time, it's my money, its Mark's money, it's your money and your elderly neighbour's money that's going missing... or its government money... so I think on the convictions front the final point I would make is that, again without going into detail of individual cases, it is really important to understand that in none of the cases that involved a conviction was an appeal made contemporaneously. So not one of the applicants who was convicted by court either following a guilty plea or following a full jury trial ever, ever appealed that conviction. Now you will be aware that some referrals have been made to the CCRC - that is not to be confused with an appeal, that's a request for an investigation by the CCRC - so I will just leave you with the thought nobody appealed their conviction at the time they were prosecuted or convicted. So there we go. One or two things to stress: one is that in no case that we have come across have we found any evidence whatever that the Horizon system is responsible for the losses that occurred in branch, you know we just haven't come across that. So whatever hypotheticals can be introduced to this debate we are very keen to focus on 136 cases we got into the scheme and what happened as a matter of fact rather than what might have happened as a matter of conjecture in these cases - that's an important distinction. The final thing is to sayas we had been asked the other day has this been a difficult time for the Post Office, well, self evidently this has been a difficult time for the Post Office and I think the reason it's been so difficult is twofold. One, we don't fee,I for whatever reason, we really don't expose our side of the story, partly that's our own obsession with maintaining the confidentiality that we promised people so we have had things thrown at us but out of a determination to do the right thing at all times, even in the face of considerable pressure, we maintained an honourable position as we see it. But I think the other reason why it's been challenging for us is that because it doesn't, for all of us who work for the Post Office but perhaps particularly for Angela who has been here for 30 years.... these things are just not reflective of the organisation that we work for and this is not the experience – or what has been alleged is not the experience - of the many, many, many thousands of people who work for the Post Office day in day out; the 78,000 thousand people, 11,500 branches, 6.000,000 transactions and the £90b monies that goes through our systems day in day out...

Angela VdB:

I think that is an important point actually because, as I said, I have been here for 30 years and I talk to people who have been here for as long as I have and longer and how we are being portrayed is not how we recognise the Post Office that we've loved and worked for for the best part of our lives actually. So I think that is why we want to try and balance the story and put the facts out there but, as Patrick said, we will not cross the confidentiality line because we have made that promise to people and on that basis people came forward and therefore we accept that we constrain ourselves to a certain extent but what is important to us is that we do what we said we would do and therefore not breach that confidentiality...

Patrick

And I think really with that - and thanks for indulging me on just giving you the potted history but, you know, to be blunt we so rarely get the opportunity to say it but I was keen that we should try and persuade you to listen to a little bit of where we are coming from before we get into the meat and drink of the meeting but it's over to you really...

Matt Bardo

I mean one very broad thing that comes out of that is that you mentioned the it is not the experience of most people at the Post Office... it's not how most people think of the Post Office actually.... so I suppose why do you think... you obviously feel wronged. Why do you think it gathered such momentum then if this is all

	totally misplaced?
Mark Davies	Well I think you say you think we feel wronged. I mean I'd turn that round actually. I think I would say I think what we think is that we have probably gone beyond what any other organisation would do in the face of having some of our people come to us and put issues to us and I think there is a really important point in there about the kind of organisation that we are. As Patrick says, you know, we have 11,500 branches, 78,000 thousand people using Horizon every single day, we are a fundamental part of the framework of the nation and we know that and understand that and care very much about that reputation. So I think,to your point, do we feel wronged well I think what we feel is that we have done the right thing to the nth degree actually. I don't believe another organisation in the country - well there may be - but I struggle to think of an organisation that would have gone to the lengths that we have gone through on this issue on what is, let's face it, a very small number of people. Half a million people have used Horizon in the last decade or so, or slightly more, and we are talking here about 150 cases actually down to 130ish, of which is a proportion are criminal cases. That's a I don't need to tell you that's a tiny proportion of the overall number of users of Horizon. I mean I think, clearly for good reason, MPs and others have brought the issue to us and, for good reason, they have raised it and for honourable reasons they have raised it but I think, equally, we've responded in the right way. I hope that answers your question
Patrick Bourke	I think also partly, you know let's not beat around the bush, I mean for the people concerned or for the majority of the people concerned what's happened is a very difficult proposition you know they have got money missing now in a sense we just have to park for a second how the money went missing but just recognise the situation they are in. And on an individual level of course this is very distressing. Our job is really to make sure that we understand why that might have happened and see what we can do to help- if indeed we can help. For those ones who have committed a crime that's rather more difficult, not just because of the nature of the crime false accounting is quite prevalent in the sort of demographics and is a slice of what we are looking at it makes it very, very difficult because, by definition, you can't rely on any part of them. But I think there is a human element to this which is obviously quite difficult for the individual concerned. I think thatas MPs rightly bring constituents concerns to the tableand I think one of the reasons - to answer your question specifically - why do we think it's got to where it's got, I mean I think there is something about, you know, having sort of established something dedicated to address it, we have got a collection, which in a sense has given it perhaps a more I don't know prominence than the individual complaints themselves would. So most of these complaints - and I am not trying to make them lesseach complaint is incredibly important - but we do deal with his sort of thing on a 'business as usual' basis but because we took the step of bringing it together, giving it a name and so on and so forth, I guess there must be something in the optics of that that are more appealing from a media outlet point of view
Angela Van den Bogerd	I think that is the thing. What we need to remember, what we sometimes lose sight of, is what actually happened in that situation. So, money went missing and in a large majority of those cases they covered up the fact that money went missing. And that is a very serious situation, and that is a criminal offence so I think in terms of the question - did we feel wronged - I think from my perspective it's about did we act disproportionately or not in that situation. So we have a Post Office brand, that's very important to us as an organisation and it's very important to the whole of the country actually – most people have a view on the Post Office whether you use it or not and we have to protect that. Where we see instances where we've got people covering up losses in branches that isn't, obviously, the image we want to portray and we have to respond to that. So that'sI don't feel wronged in that regard, what I do feel is that we are losing sight of that fact and that's what triggered the situation in those cases. I think it's really important to

	come back to that. We didn't just go and seek people out. We became aware, because we get there and sometimes they have covered this up not just for a day, a week, in some cases it's months/years in some cases and we will eventually get to that situation because we can see that something is not quite right. I think that's the bit for me – that we lose sight of that.
Mark Davies	I think to build on what Patrick said a few minutes ago I think we've kind of made life harder for ourselves because we actually genuinely care about the point about confidentiality; you know, that was part of the agreement that we entered into with people that came forward – we're not going to break it, as Patrick said, and we're absolutely clear about that. Now of course if we're not going to break it that makes it difficult for us in media terms because clearly, although other cases are going to be put to us and we are going to be in a position where we say 'well I'm afraid we're not going to break the confidentiality that we agreed to' and that clearly then places us in a defensive position. So it's not about feeling wronged but it is a sense of it hasn'tbecause of that we haven't made it easy to get our point across and haven't always necessarily felt that it's been, that we've been able to get our point across and it hasn't necessarily felt there has been a receptive audience to hear some of the things
Patrick Bourke	And just on a reputational point, sorry our corporate clients, if we can put them that way, you know we're talking government agencies, we're talking all the big national, indeed international banks in some cases, they have to have confidence in the system and I can assure you that these people don't muck around. So if there were any concerns in terms of the operation of the system the first people to jump up and down on us would be them actually. If they didn't feel this was a robust system on which they could rely to access their customer base to sell products to, to do transactions with, they would walk with their feet and actually we are seeing quite the opposite – I think Santander came on board not two weeks ago. Anyway
Matt Bardo	Well there's a huge range of things to ask about and let's start withI mean the computer system itself seems like a sensible place to start. The summary you just gave about interim report, the Second Sight one - no system wide problems, there were a couple of bugs picked up there. Subsequently the other Second Sight reports appear to have found or had concerns, they appeared to have had concerns that related to the possibility of that this system is, can go wrong and losses can be created. Is this something that you justwhat I'm getting at hereI came in at Second Sight but just on a really simple level there must be software update patches, things that go out because it's a piece of software and that just must happen. It would be really helpful to understand exactly what you mean by it works – it's perfect. It's somewhere between perfectdo you know what I mean?
Patrick Bourt	So you are quite right, in that first investigation a couple of issues were picked up. I question the words 'picked up' because we actually volunteered the information to Second Sight so this was not the product of the investigation. This was something that we just volunteered to them and we've never, ever made the claim that Horizon is a perfect system – it's not, no system is perfect. As you just rightly pointed out anybody who uses a home computer knows that, forgive me (for the tape) but, I mean, shit happens sometimes and it's difficult to explain exactly what is going on but as you say there's got to be security patches, updates and so on and so forth so that's always possible but we have never said that the Horizon system is perfect. What the Horizon system is, as I go back to really the ABC's because it took me a long time to understand what the Horizon system was, because it sounded like some mystical creature that's out there…it's a shop till so it can only be as good as the figures that you put in to it. So take an example, if I sell somebody a book of stamps for £2.20 and inadvertently forget to key in the all vital decimal point the Horizon system is going to say I took in £220 in when in fact I only took in £2.20. Now that actually encapsulates the vast proportion of

what we are seeing in these cases. It's those sorts of errors. So you know, the computer can only be as good as the people operating it and nobody is infallible. As I said before we don't prosecute people for making mistakes so there's that. We're not saying the system is perfect, we are saying it's subject to security updates, it's audited by any number of organisations on an annual basis. It meets or exceeds all industry standards in terms of its performance. Now when discrepancies arise there are a couple of systems whereby those discrepancies are addressed; one is where we pick it up through something called a transaction correction and we basically flag to the branch that it appears to us that the information held centrally and the information held weekly doesn't match up but it is the subpostmaster who then receives that transaction correction and decides whether or not to accept that transaction correction on the basis of comparing it with his or her records or not to accept it. In which case there is a process for saying, for discussing what we do about it - there's a settled centrally facility so we effectively put in the money pending further discussions and investigations as to what happened.

Angela Van den Bogerd

I think the crux here is that the system is designed to cope with things that go wrong. So for instance, one of the very familiar claims will be "I had a power cut and I lost money as a result of that". The system doesn't lose money so if the power goes off when you're midway through a transaction it actually just freezes. It holds that until the power comes back on and then there's what we call a recovery screen that asks the person using the computer "did you give money to the customer/did you take money" so it reassesses where, the point at which it lost power, and then it builds it back up so nothing is lost. The way a mistake could happen in that situation is if the person using the computer tells the computer the wrong thing. So if it says "did you give the customer £100?" and it says "yes I did" and they didn't actually, it generates a discrepancy. So the system is designed to cope with that includes loss of communication, so if the telephone line goes down, if the power goes, if the screen freezes it copes with all that. It is designed to cope with that and it has recovery stages built in to allow us to get back to our position and that in terms of a number of cases with a common theme of "I had a power cut" or "I'm in an area with a very poor telecoms reception and therefore my discrepancies must be related to that". In the investigations we have taken that at face value and said okay, when did these occur and we have actually gone in to the level of detail which says it happened on, you know, February 27th at 2 o'clock on this terminal and we have investigated that fully and then come back out of it and said actually we can see what happened on the system and actually there was no loss of power, sorry you might have lost power but you weren't midway through a transaction and therefore nothing has changed. So we have gone in to that really granular level of detail to be able to explain. Because that was important to me to be able to explain to people what has gone wrong in their branch because part of, I think, of the dilemma for people is that...they might have a loss but they cannot explain why they have had a loss and that's trying to get them....so what we have done in the investigation is investigated every potential contributor to that loss and come back to actually it's not your coms line, it's not the power cut, it's categorically not the Horizon system - what else could it be?

Tim Robinson

When it's the fault...the subpostmaster made an error there so the system shuts down, they pressed the wrong button they erroneously given out £100 and not noticed until later, the Post Office has accepted that the training support could have been better in some circumstances. In any of those circumstances does the Post Office accept that they are partially responsible for the fact the subpostmaster made that error? Errors at the counterseem to be the big thing in most of these cases. To what extent is the Post Office responsible?

Angela Van den Bogerd

So we have delivered our training to the postmasters and they have been deemed competent to be able to operate that branch at the time. The computer screen itself tells the person using it what to do and what I found in the investigations is that people have become complacent and they are not actually reading the

screen. So for instance, if somebody comes in to pay £100 in to their bank account for instance, and as Patrick said they key in the wrong amount, they key in £1.000, that computer will say 'take £1.000 from your customer' but they have only taken £100 because they have ignored the screen so they are on autopilot. They end up with a £900 loss, okay. In those situations, no we do not accept responsibility for that because all the features that are in place to be able to transact that very well so we cannot be held responsible, we can't legislate for somebody not following that because they have become complacent or lazy or whatever the reason could be. So when I have looked at the part we have talked about - the Branch Support Programme - and the part that I have looked at whilst I have been investigating cases I have looked at how could we make things better or easier for people in branches? I've looked at how we could do that and I have this ongoing conversation with some people that I can't make that anymore simple, I can't simplify that anymore and actually it says in there - it's even colour coded; green to give; red to take. All these features are built in. I can't go any further other than when there's a human being involved we have to rely on, that human being has to take some responsibility as that is what they are there to do. So I've reviewed the whole of the raining package and I have beefed it up in some areas. Some people have said that "well when I was trained I didn't quite have enough training on how to look for discrepancies in branch even though a helpline would provide support", and I have looked at that and worked with the training team to make that more user friendly, better for them to understand and to reinforce that with them. Coming back to your point, I can't take responsibility for people in those situations when they have got all the tools at their disposal to do that job properly. Patrick Bourke And, you know, when they have been appropriately trained to do so. I did say at the outset there are some, and Second Sight pointed this out in their interim report, as I mentioned at the outset, this is what gave birth to the scheme. You know we take our responsibilities.....so in those cases, there aren't many but there are a few, where we have kind of erred on the side of quite heavy self-criticism in actually coming to those conclusions and have been quite harsh on ourselves which you could also say gave the postmaster the benefit of the doubt. Those have been the two corroborates of one another. You know, we have said "look okay hands up we could have probably done a little bit more for you here" or "we did see when we went through the records of the calls to the helpline that you requested additional training on XYZ and it appears you only got it on X and not YZ." So those are the sorts of cases in which we put our hands up and said we could have done better and that's what we do and where that has happened we have accepted, as you put it, responsibility.... a partial responsibility, for the loss. Coming back to the point that Angela was making the subpostmaster has to be responsible for what happens under their direct control. The Post Office is not in that branch okay so we can't have a shadow somebody from the Post Office in those branches basically saying....in the same way that MacDonald's HQ can't know for certain that a gherkin has gone to a Big Mac in Colchester in exactly the right way. That's why franchise agreements exist. So you've got the model, you've got the systems, you've got the training but ultimately what's in your branch of MacDonald's or what's in your branch of the Post Office has to be a matter for you and that's an appropriate and very common system of risk apportionment in a franchise agreement. Matt Bardo So the position is that the training has been reviewed and improved because there was some concern because it might not have been quite perfect? No. It's twofold. What I've looked to do in reviewing the training is bring it up to today's standard in as much as make it online; so I've introduced an online training facility. That allows postmasters and their staff to be able to learn at their convenience, at their own pace and in their own environment. So I've done that which is, I think, a major step forward. That doesn't undermine the fact that the training was fully adequate at the time. What I've done is looked at some of the

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Angela

	areas where people perhaps felt less comfortable. I'm talking about (again to put this in to context this is about 150 people out of a very large population of people who come through that training process) and what I've tried to do is take on board that feedback to say okay so in your situationso you two might have come on the same training and you might be perfectly confident in the training and you might be slightlysorry to pick that way round
Tim Robinson	I actually was late because I cocked up the tube so you should probably[laughing]
Angela Van den Bogerd	So I'm giving you the benefit of the doubt and I'm playing your down your skillset so apologies for that. So you could receive exactly the same training and it could work for you and it might not quite work for you for whatever reason. What I have tried to do is take the feedback and say okay, so in that situation how can I make this absolutely simple to give you not an idiots guide because that would be the wrong word, but an aide memoir that says in this situation this is what you do and literally you follow these steps. So when youwalk away from training - it's a combined training you do a classroom/class on site -and when you walk away you've got your handouts because I accept - and I have been to the training myself, it's the same training I went through 30 years ago - you've got a lot in your head and you've gone to run your business and so "yes I remember they told me at that point "and "yes I've got something" so that is what I have tried to do and to make sure I have covered, as far as I can, every eventuality in that situation. What we mustn't forget is that we have always got the helpline to fall back on so that support has always been there. It was there before Horizon was introduced when we worked manual systems – it was there before Horizon was introduced when we worked manual systems – it was there before Horizon was introduced when we worked manual systems – it was there ont in a central function but in regions. When we went with the Horizon system in 1999 we set up a central helpline and that has always been there and that operates outside their normal opening hours as well so it's quite extensive. So that support has always been there. What we have always said is the training you get that at the front; we come and train you on site; we do a few follow-up visits just to make sure it's embedded and you're comfortable but if all else fails you've got the helpline to fall back on.
Patrick Bourke	So actually the tube worked fine today so you can't blame the tube for being late. So an anologous situation.
Tim Robinson	True. True. [Laughing] Sorry there was a closure and a guide dog got stuck in a door – and they could have handled it better actually [Laughing]
Matt Bardo	I do want to get in to sort of the nitty gritty of some of this as well but I suppose one of the things that is quite striking listening to what you're saying is that there is almost nothing there in that summary; training, helplines, the system itself, those are all things which to some extent seem to be contested in the Second Sight report who you employed to investigate on your behalf. How am I to make sense of that? Why has that occurred, what is that about?
	The Second Sight present evidence that these things are problems in those reports but you just don't think that's a problem at all. It might be only a meaningful conversation to have if we go down in to the detail of it but I suppose I thought it was worth just asking that question first.
Angela Van den Bogerd	I think the difference between what Second Sight have done and what we've done is that we have evidenced what we said. So if an applicant said the helpline told me to do this, we've looked for evidence of that and we have gone throughso the helpline call logs are one of the information sources that has never been destroyed so we have been able to go back to 1999 which covers the lifespan of the cases we have been dealing with and we've gone through, and I'm talking about thousands of logs, and what they do on the helpline, it's not actually recorded so if you ring in you get a reference number so it identifies you, you are

	asked what the problem is and then there is a record of what the problem was and what we actually did to resolve it and what the answer was, so that is all recorded and what we have been able to do is go back and piece the picture together built on the facts. So in terms of, if an applicant has claimed something then I look for the evidence to support that. I don't go "oh we would never say that" you know - I look for the actual evidence and I think in some of Second Sight's report they have claimed something but not evidenced it and then when I have responded in my responses to them and actually the responses to Part 2 I have made points that say "you said this but could you please give me the evidence to support that?" I think that is the difference between what Second Sight have done and what we have done. I would never say something in the report, I would never claim a finding if I could not evidence it. Everything I have done has been built on facts and evidence so I have taken on jigsaw pieces of these cases, I have evidenced them and then I have put them together to give me a picture of actually what's happened in that situation.
Matt Bardo	So there were reports by saying there were a few cases, many cases etc and give you a broad idea of how many times things are recorded and it would appear that there is evidence but that the evidence is not in the report and I would assume that I mean you've mentioned confidentiality and not being able to talk about things, I assume they couldn't say "Johnny subpostmaster" and this person and this person also said this for the same reasons, so the fact that the evidence isn't in there, I assume there must be some reason they are saying these things and they haven't just kind ofthere must be some evidence there otherwise they wouldn't
Angela Van den Bogard	Second Sight have gone on record and said that Post Office have done a very thorough investigation and we have been very mindful of that and I personally have been involved in the investigation of every single one of these cases and so have been heavily involved in making sure that we have left no stone unturned, and I have had those conversations with Second Sight and said this is what we've found therefore, you know, bring the evidence to us because I would like to see it please if you have got it I would like to see it, in them producing their analysis of that then you would expect them to produce the evidence to support what they've claimed.
Matt Bardo	So it's more about them not producing evidence behind the scenes as opposed to it not being in the report, so you haven't seen the evidence privately
Patrick Bourke	So there are two types of reports. One addresses things as a whole and one is the case reports and we have had the benefit of both those from Second Sight. Obviously in the individual reports we go through you know, it's very much 'Mr X said Y' and, as Angela says, we go through and check whether that in fact happened or not and insofar as we can and we can on the call logs because we have retained them for longer, I don't know quite why but we do, so we have been able to say, for instance, well the applicant says that sometime in July 2013 this happened and we've been able to say well actually the applicant wasn't employed by the Post Office or wasn't in business with the Post Office until at least a year later and, you know, that sort of thing is actually pretty common. Similarly 'I reported a fault on this' well actually the call log showed a complete absence of telephone calls to the helpline or to anybody in the Post Office for that month and one month either side. So I mean you can understand people don't remember precisely the dates but we have to work on the basis of evidence. Now I think where we have been very, very keen is that we need to move beyond assertions and as we all know you know just because somebody says something even if they say it believing it to be 100% true that is not evidence - we need to actually go a little bit further and I suppose the point of difference between us is that I think in some circumstances at least an assertion has been made and taken rather more on face value than we would necessarily do and have done and investigated it so I

	think that accounts for something of a difference.
Angela Van den Bogerd	But to answer your question Tim if Second Sight had the evidence they would have produced it.
Matt	So you would've seen it and it would appear that you've seen it.
Patrick Bourke	I think if we hadn't we would have to ask why the devil not. [All speaking together].
Angela Van den Bogerd	So there have been some cases where Second Sight have claimed something and I have gone back and said 'can I see the evidence?' and they have said 'yes I have got that' and they have given it, so every time they have said something without evidence I have gone back and said 'can I see?' and if they have got it they give it I have challenged them and said 'well if you haven't got evidence then how can you'.
Tim Robinson	So basically the areas where you said in your report in response to their report there is no evidence to support this assertion, it's not that there is no evidence, they don't have the evidence, they haven't put in their report there IS no evidence.
Patrick Bourke	Yes that's correct.
Matt Bardo	Um false accounting this is another quite a specific thing that will be helpful to have a chat about. So you were just describing a lot of responses that I have read that are published online there is no excuse for false accounting. Could you take us through what a subpostmaster sort of sees on their terminal and then does in order to commit false accounting and what they could have done otherwise, that seems to be where the
Angela Van den Bogerd	Okay so if I can start. Every day a branch is required to declare the cash, physically count the cash on hand and declare into the system how much they had, broken down by their denominations and that allows us to manage their cash in and out of the branches properly. The system at that point would generate what is expected so if they do that accurately they might see a discrepancy, say £100 discrepancy, and the better the subpostmaster the more they would look into that on the day to get to that situation. The full balance only actually happens once a month that they are required to do, again the better the subpostmasters balance on a daily and weekly they will do their cash records on a daily basis but they do full weekly balances just to make sure they are on top of how their branch is operating. When we come to the monthly position, which is called the branch of trading statement, they are required by us to physically count all their cash accurately and declare it but also to check their stock on hand. When they put those numbers and they verify those two things into the system the system will tell them whether they've got a discrepancy or not so it will say 'you've told me you've got this much cash and that much stock' and we know what transactions have gone through because you have put those through on a daily basis - this is your discrepancy. At that point, the postmaster then would usually go through the whole cash to check it again and the stock. At that stage they are then required to make good that discrepancy or settle it centrally and let us know if there is a problem. So there are three options, so if it's a £100 short, contractually they are required to make good and so they actually put physically £100 into the till, declare that on the system, so then it balances and they are able to go forward. Say it's a large amount and they don't know what it's for and they are waiting for an error notice, they would settle it centrally which means they settle it to their account so they have an account

	they didn't have the funds to pay that today so therefore they would have conversations with us about sorry I can't pay it now can I pay it over a period of a few months out of their remuneration
Tim Robinson	Can I say at this point - how does that manifest itself on the screen? Is there is button that says settle this centrally and then you have to make a phone call afterwards and say I dispute or I don't?
Angela Van den Bogerd	Yes
Matt Bardo	Put into the computer and a figure is declared and then the computer says you have a discrepancy here because if you've only got that sum in the branch that doesn't make sense based on the transactions reported on the machine great and then you do all the things that you describe which I completely understand and there used to be if I have understood correctly there are three options, so it was a sort of dispute function, settle centrally and settle to cash. But I understood there were some change at some stage between which so that now you just described the two options settle centrally and dispute with a phone call was there previously another option a third option on the terminal that enables?
Angela Van den Bogerd	So there was, before we introduced the settle centrally, there was what we called a suspense account that was on the system but they were always required to get authority to put into that. What we found was that they were not doing that and when we looked at the system as a whole there was a very large amount of money being held in the suspense account so what we did is we took the opportunity to formalise that through the settle centrally so that we've got better line of sight to the discrepancies that are being declared on the network and those ones that are being made good or not. The other choice that isn't one of the valid choices is I tell the system that I have made the money good but I don't put the money in, okay, so I've now just falsely declared my cash, I have made a false declaration on my account, I have now just falsified my account which is a criminal offence.
Matt Bardo	So effectively it's not that you go back to your cash figure and change it it's that you say settle to cash and then don't put the cash in, is that the
Angela Van den Bogerd	The machine says have you physically put the money in the till and they say yes and then
Tim Robinson	Of course Post Office doesn't know because they can't come round and physically count what's in your safe so they have no idea what's going on
Angela Van den Bogerd	So when we do an audit that's when we uncover that very same day.
Matt Bardo	Technically, in that when that happens obviously you press the button on the system to say that you have declared that amount of cash and settled to cash there is also then a printout a branch trading report which is signed so how does that work and at which point do you make the official declaration? Have you made the official declaration when you push the button or when you sign the thing what happens to the bit of paper that you have signed?
Angela Van den Bogerd	So you've made the declaration, when you press the button you then reinforce that when you sign because it says I certify this is a true reflection
Matt Bardo	So at the moment you press that button and if your accounts are incorrect
Patrick Bourke	Then you are required to certify the accuracy as being true

Angela Van den That trading statement stays in the branch, it's a physical copy that stays in the Bogerd branch and it stavs there. So in some cases then that might happen and somebody might genuinely make a mistake, so they balance and they say... and forget to put the money - in one off that's a mistake but when they come to do the next balance they would realise, because that would then show the shortage again, okay, because they haven't put the money in. At that point they kind of say yes I remember what I've done. So in those situations - we wouldn't typically be aware of that anyway because it would be a one off. What we have seen in the cases we talk about false accounting is that it is systematic false certifying of an account - they do that on a regular basis and in a number of cases the amount creeps up. So they might start off with £100, £200 etc and then it gets to be a significant amount of money over a period of time. Patrick Bourke Just on that point there are one or two cases and again I am not talking about the individual cases but generically I can say that that acceleration, whether or not you've conducted the interview, is explained by the fact of you have kind of broken the seal, so you've done it once and then it becomes just a little bit easier to do the next time, perhaps to cross subsidise your other business or whatever you do it for in the first place and people have said 'I was really really foolish you know I just got into it it was almost too easy' and I think in one case someone in fact wrote to us after they had been prosecuted and convicted and said they wanted to share their experience with other sub postmasters to warn them against the temptation that this presented so Matt Bardo How is your decision informed then when you decide somewhere along that process..... because as you say if they do it once then it's probably a mistake and even though it's technically a criminal offence because the moment they press that button it's a criminal offence, you are not going to prosecute them because you think maybe they forgot to put the money in. Is there is a Post Office policy to say that if you've done this by X amount over X amount of months it's a crime or if it's a crime we will prosecute or is this something that you will discuss on individual cases? So after there has been an audit and you've found out there is a big discrepancy that has been covered up is there a period at which you decide we prosecute people who have done it for X amount of times and who makes the decision? Patrick Bourke Well we don't have a policy that says 'three strikes and you are out' type of policy so, if that is what you mean, then the answer to that is no. We look at every case on its individual merit and because there are a number of factors that can be at play and it's right that every case is addressed in regard to its specific circumstances - we are not going to extrapolate a policy out of for the experience of one person. The point at which we bring a prosecution is where basically, typically, going back to the prosecutors' code to do so satisfies two tests. One there is sufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction and the second is it's in the public interests to do so. Now you might get special circumstances around a case where it wouldn't be in the public interest to so do for a variety of reasons - elderly infirm vulnerable person etc - so it's difficult to say we've got a policy but its right and proper that we should prosecute because, as I have said before, this money is entrusted to us regardless of that money we are holding it on trust and you've also got to think to yourself if we didn't what is that message sending out to the network as a whole with 78,000 people working throughout branches for us day in day out and if you can just do this with impunity we wouldn't have a viable business for very long. Matt Bardo Is it in the training, the implications of making that mistake, sorry of committing that crime.... but I suppose what I am getting out is there a bit of a grey area I suppose if you didn't know and you were operating a system that's where the grey area between mistakes and...

Angela Van den Bogerd	There is no grey area in this regard. When we interview potential postmasters that is part of our interview process, so we actually go through the key areas of the contract and I personally have interviewed postmasters over the years and I would have the contract with certain markers on so I would actually read through - under no circumstances would you make use of Post Office money as this is what could result. So that is made clear through a number of stages throughout that recruitment process to become a postmaster so there isn't any grey area in that respect.
Patrick Bourke	We're bound to say, aren't we, there are no circumstances which excuse the committing of a criminal offence – there just aren't, particularly in a retail environment. That just would not work for us but we do look very, very much at the individual circumstances surrounding
Tim Robinson	This concept of kind of muddling through is not an excuse because I think false accounting there has to be an element of dishonesty there so there has to be dishonest intent but even if you think somebody iseven if they are incompetent then they have made a mistake and do not know where this is and are desperately hoping for a transaction correction to come in and fix all of their problems then blindly put in false accounts until that happens, that is sufficiently dishonest in your view that it's a criminal offence?
Patrick Bourke	It's patently not a sensible thing to do I mean that
Tim Robinson	But that's not a difference as to whether it's a criminal offence it's not sensible.
Patrick Bourke	No its not but in the eyes of the law it's crystal clear when you certify your accounts as being true and accurate
Angela Van den Bogerd	What you are missing here Tim is muddling throughif I am struggling with something I know it's wrong and I am going to ask for some help and ring the helpline and ask for some help. I think that's the difference.
Tim Robinson	So if somebody made lots of calls to the helpline asking for help on that particular issue then that would be evidenced that they were in that particular pickle and that would not necessarily
Patrick Bourke	Combined with the fact that they are not signing off their accounts systematically as being correct. So you have got two choices, you know it's pretty binary stuff - I made a mistake and I made a serious mistake and I put my hand up to ask for help and I would just say 'can I have help because I cannot understand what is going on, clearly it's something that I have done or not done or something has gone wrong' but the other choice that you can make which is to say 'well I am just going to falsify the accounts because it suits me or because I am too embarrassed or whatever it is that I can't do my maths.
Matt Bardo	Which comes to the helpline. This is another contested kind of territory because lots of subpostmasters seem to have an experience that they ring the helpline, feel they don't get the help they need and don't know what to do - that would be their narrative. I mean you have the call logs and is it your position that in every single case for the purposes of a mediation scheme that you have looked at the call logs and for those who are convicted there is no suggestion that those phone calls were anything but helpful, they were exactly what was required under those circumstances to assist the subpostmaster to make the right decision. Because, there seems to be quite genuine confusion for postmasters having made those phone calls about what to do next. What do you think?
Angela Van den Bogerd	There are three stages to support from helpline so there is what we call a tier one so if you rang in as a postmaster to request help you would explain what you were

	requesting help for. Now that is a transactional helpline as well so if they have an issue with the customer they would also ring in for that. In each of the cases that are in the scheme we have looked at the logs and gone through every single call that they have made and there are some cases where they say I have made lots of calls to the helpline and asked for help and with regards to every single one we find that there might be one or two questions that they have asked relating to accounting as opposed to 'can I send this letter to America with this in it' and when we have looked at those particular call logs and looked at the answer then those appropriate answers have been given. If the tier one were unable to help that branch at that time they would escalate it to the tier two which is a bit more specialist, ask more probing questions to try and get to the crux of the matter and at that point if we still feel that the postmaster is not quite understanding or is still not right or we have not resolved that issue we then send out a field person to visit to talk about 'what is the issue, let me have a look, let me help you, let me talk it through' and when they find the problem explain what to do. It's not just 'the helpline, I don't understand, end of the story' there is another two levels of support there. If in some cases that the branch they have come off the call and , yes, they are told what to do and they have done it and they are still not comfortable we have seen in some cases they have then rung back and said that didn't quite work for me, can you talk me through it again. I think the important thing here is the helpline operator is reliant on you to give the right information, so if you ring us and say 'I have lost £1,000, I have reversed this transaction twice' we take that as read as we don't know any different and we tell you how to get back to the starting position. Therefore what we found in some cases is that you have asked a certain question, you are going to get the answer to that but if th
Tim Robinson	Okay so the examples that I have seen I know you can't go into specific cases but where people have made just dozens and dozens of phone calls to the helpline is your sort of explanation that they were giving the helpline the wrong information so it was their fault. They were looking for help but they gave the wrong information and then they received
Angela Van den Bogerd	Depends on when you say dozens of reports. So on the information you have seen have you seen on those dozens of calls have they all been about the same thing?
Tim Robinson	Sometimes yes.
Angela Van den Bogerd	Okay give me an example.
Tim Robinson	Well it's difficult to give examples without
Angela Van den Bogerd	There are only so many examples that can be a call into helpline.
Tim Robinson	Yes say for example somebody phoned up because they had problems with balancing and they made 90 phones calls over a period of however long I suppose that would be the sort of thing you are talking about.
Angela Van den Bogerd	But that hasn't happened. There is no case that has 90 calls about balancing.
Tim Robinson	Beg your pardon I made up a reasonably large number there

Angela Van den Bogerd

It depends on what the issue is on the balancing. They might ring up and say I have got a loss here and the helpline will talk them through - have you checked your cash, can you go back and check your cash and have you checked the stock and can you go back and check the stock. If it's an amount of £1,000... print off your transaction logs which actually lists every transaction you have done over that period and look for amounts that might be £500, £1,000 or £2,000 as it tends to be some kind of.... or look for £100 deposit where you have keyed in £1,000 so we pinpoint them to certain areas. That might resolve it .We wouldn't know if that has been resolved because we would have said 'go away and check those things and if you still have a problem come back to us' so unless they come back to us then in those situations that would have rectified the problem. If it was an ongoing situation where it was the same branch ringing in then that would usually flag to us we have a problem here and we would then proactively intervene and say is it a common theme, can we help you with something.

Matt Bardo

And I suppose what I am asking really is have you also interrogated then the helpline itself? I mean is the advice always top notch, is it always exactly as it should be as far as you know? The sort of.. the way that people describe it is that it's like calling any helpline, which would make sense... that somebody seems to have only a set number of answers and it's difficult to make sense of the situation as a result. That's an experience we have all had, it's rather like computers don't go wrong when we all know they do. Helplines work perfectly and we all know they don't so is the helpline another perfect system or what the position on the helpline.....

Patrick Bourke: I didn't say it was perfect.

Angela Van Den Bogerd

The helpline is made up of people and there is what we call a knowledge base which is a source of information that they access to be able to give the right answer to the question, so we are not reliant on what people have in their heads. We do have a source of information and what the call log will tell us is that they have actually sourced the knowledge base to draw on that information. The important thing is that there will only be so many responses that that tier one can give to that situation. If they are not able to deal with that call appropriately they will then refer it to tier two and then out to the field team, as I described earlier. There is also a complaints system so if a caller isn't happy with what they get they can log a complaint and say I am not happy with that. They can ask to talk to the floor manager at any time. So there are these steps in place and from my experience of investigating the cases where I have seen they have made a call, the call has been closed because at that point it is deemed that they got the right information to do whatever they had called up to do. If we don't get any subsequent calls then we are happy because otherwise you would call back. If you weren't happy with the result that you got or didn't fix the problem you would ring back. And in a number of those cases where some of the challenges are 'I have made numerous calls' we have gone into the detail and you might have made numerous calls, they might not be about the same thing, it might be about balancing but it doesn't mean it is the same thing about balancing and we have actually closed the call satisfactoraly and we have recorded that and, if we have not, we have escalated it and seen that through..... as I say in some cases or in some of the cases that came into the scheme they have gone through the full escalation process and we have gone to offer further training to help them. We have done that in a couple of cases, in a couple of cases we have done that a couple of times actually. It might not be for the same training need but for a different training need.

Matt Bardo

I am mindful of the time and there is something else I would like to understand that is another complicated area that will involve a bit of discussion so there is, if I just say remote access you will immediately know what I am going to ask about. This is another contested territory as far as I can tell in that in the Second Sight

	report they have various examples of meetings between Post Office and Fujitsu where it would appear that references in minutes to meetings have articulated the ability to promote the access branch terminals. The Post Office have refuted that and Second Sight I forget exactly what all the examples are now but there is a bit of to and fro in the report outlining your responses and their evidence. This is another one of these ones where my sort of common sense understanding of computers, at the BBC for example if I had a problem with my computer I can ring a helpline, they can remotely access my terminals. It's all part of having a fully functioning kind of system. So what exactly is possible and what exactly isn't possible as far as you're concerned when it comes to accessing transactions on a branch terminal?
Tim Robinson	Now and previously.
Matt Bardo	Yeah, throughout.
Angela Van Den Bogerd	Now or previously?
Tim Robinson	Yes, you know, with the time period being long and I appreciate things would have changed and completely different versions of Horizon etc etc.
Angela Van Den Bogerd	Yes there are only two versions though. The second version came in in 2010 so there is quite a ten year span before that. But the scenario you just described cannot happen and it doesn't happen. So in the branches, like when they ring up for the helpline to help them, we can't see their screens and get remote access. I think the important thing about what you described as the same as internal laptops and things is that you give permission for somebody to access your screen and also you click to say yes I am happy for you to look at my screen. The way we amend transactions in a branch is that we send transactions to the branch, to the licenced computer, that sit there until somebody logs onto the system and then they then have to accept that into their system.
Tim Robinson	Transaction correction or transaction acknowledgement?
Angela Van Den Bogerd	Yes. There are two things. Transaction acknowledgement is to say we think you have sold £1,000 worth of lottery scratch card sales do you agree? Yes I agree - it pulls the information in. The transaction correction is that you keyed in £1,000 deposit when you actually only took £100. There is a £900 transaction correction - do you agree? Yes - and it rights the system. The subpostmasters themselves within their trading period can alter their own transactions by what we call a transaction reversal but it can only be done from the terminal and everything that is done in branch is logged against the user ID so there is a complete audit trail. I think that is the important thing. I think the question is really can anybody access the branch data without an audit trail?
Tim Robinson	Yes, without the subpostmaster's knowledge.
Angela Van Den Bogerd	Yes and the answer to that is no.
Matt Bardo	Sorry when you say an audit trail you mean an audit trail that is completely transparent to the subpostmaster?
Angela Van Den Bogerd	Yes.
Patrick Bourke	Right. Okay. And the other thing just to say is these register as an additional transaction. They do not amend, alter or edit existing transactions so the integrity

	of the data that is an the system is maintained as you know you have 25
	of the data that is on the system is maintained so, you know, you have 25 transactions, you get a transaction correction. It does not change any of those transactions it just basically says here's another one and by the way I am flagging myself as being quite distinguishable from everything else that you have done in your normal course of business.
Matt Bardo	So I suppose one of the other things that's true is about, my BBC computer analogy, is you know some of that help is outsourced, so there is another organisation in this case, Fujitsu are there other organisations involved?
	Is it the case then that your understanding of what remote access is possible or isn't possible is based on what Fujitsu are telling you or is it much more thorough than that or? I am surprised this is such an issue. If it's as simple as that why is it such an issue? What is going on? Is there confusion? Are Fujitsu adopting a different form of language? How has this come about?
Angela Van Den Bogerd	I think the confusion comes from that people forget. In some of the cases we have had claims for there has been access at 11 o'clock at night and when we have done the investigation we have found that the wife's husband had actually gone back into the post office to do some work at 11 o'clock at night and it registers on the system. Another confusion is that if they forget to log themselves off over a period of time the system will automatically log you off. It is a built in security feature so that in some cases they have closed up the business at six o'clock at night and they have then seen an entry that says at 7 o'clock at night they logged out when they haven't physically been in there to log out. It is an automatic default system. It's like when your computer hibernates. It shuts down. That's what the system does to, you know, protect the security of that. So I think there is some confusion and again in each of the cases where these claims have been made we have been able to explain what's happened and actually show from the Horizon logs and the information that so in branch they have access to logsthrough the investigation we have pulled the data from Fujitsu archives and we have produced that evidence as part of the investigation and it clearly details everything that has gone on in that branch over that period of time and it covers every key stroke on the system, it covers everything so it is quite clear. I am a bit bemused actually where we get to. We've explained everything and we are able to clearly articulate that but people are then saying 'no it must be, it must be'. I struggle with that because I have explained why it is not the system and I think that is the disconnect sometimes.
Tim Robinson	It seems like the disconnect then might be between it wasn't what happened in the 136 cases but there appears, they seem to have listed some ways in which it was possible or in which it was discussed at various meetings there was the Helen Rose report saying that the transaction reversals that can happen and appear to have been carried out by the subpostmasters that actually weren't and happened without their knowledge.
Matt Bardo	I see what you mean. Isn't the reason for any of the 136 cases but it nonetheless is a thing that can happen?
Angela Van Den Bogerd	So in the Helen Rose report, the key thing there is that the user ID that was detailed, say the subpostmaster to make it easythe subpostmaster did initiate that reversal. What happened was when it was reproduced it was produced against the subpostmaster's ID. So the subpostmaster goes 'I didn't do that'. When I looked at the case, this goes back to remember I said earlier about the power cut and the recovery screen he answered the question on the recovery screen against his user ID and because of the way in which he had answered the question, in this case he didn't complete the transaction, it then pulled through and

Matt Bardo	reversed the transaction. It was all associated with his user ID - he just wasn't aware that that was happening. So that is the Helen Rose report and in that situation a learning for us is that we make that more clearly identifiable in terms of what happened on the print out. So it doesn't change anything and it's not that it's not transparent, it's just that it wasn't as obvious as it could have been around what happened in that situation. There was no loss, there was no discrepancy other than the subpostmaster just couldn't recognise that situation. But we could explain that and
	happens in future it will be more recognisable.
Angela Van Den Bogerd	That is still in process because it takes a while to get changes into the system. What is recognised is that example now so it is more people are more aware that that is the situation and therefore it doesn't ring any alarm bells because people know.
Matt Bardo	There must be people in Fujitsu who work on a sort of coding level I suppose. Do they not have more access? Are there not ways in which I mean this is all networked, all of this stuff so it just strikes me, has Fujitsu provided some kind of full brief for I don't know for legal trials or anything that clearly describes the capability from their perspective? It just all seems strange to me that it is exactly I can see that it would always be best practice for everything to be transparent on the terminal but there is a difference between that and it simply not being possible at all. Do you see what I mean?
	Tim Robinson:
	It does seem that there would be logical reasons why you would want to be able to have remote access in a very controlled way with certain protocols. It seems like quite a handy thing to have.
Patrick Bourke	Well I mean we started out this conversation, saying clearly the system has to be maintained. I mean as it is audited every year and there are security patches that have to be applied We have also talked about the situation that was reported to Second Sight - volunteered rather than picked up. In 2013 when we were doing the pilot and there was a bug, for want of a better expression, in the system, that's what the piloting is supposed to do. It is one step on from a segregated testing environment which isn't linked up to anything and in that case, in conjunction with the subpostmaster we used a balancing transaction, which I suppose is a form of remote access, but through protocols and so on and so forth and as I say with the collaboration of the subpostmaster who, and once it was fixed, he basically signed off and said you have corrected the flaw that we have been able to find as part of this pilot and my branch accounts are fine. So I suppose you can call that remote access.
Tim Robinson	But not without the knowledge of
Patrick Bourke	But not without the knowledge and it has been used once. Once and once only in the entire time Horizon has been effective. It happened as part of the pilot. That is what a pilot is supposed to surface and it was done you know,
Tim Robinson	Is that with receipts and payments mismatched?
Patrick Bourke	Exactly.
Angela Van Den	The important thing is that it was done with the knowledge but actually it leaves a

Bogerd	footprint and that is the important thing so, you know, can the system be accessed remotely and without anybody's knowledge in terms of it doesn't leave a footprint then no, it leaves a footprint and that is the important thing that Patrick just described, that he said it has been used once but lots of protocols around it and it is not just one person doing this, there is a team of people doing it so it is not just one that has got access and can remotely access. It is not a case of going into somebody's bank account and removing money because we don't hold bank account information there, this is about transactional information that has been transacted and corrected in that situation.
Matt Bardo	So, it is not now and never has been possible for anybody from the Post Office or Fujitsu to interfere with transactions, transaction data on a branch terminal without the clear knowledge of the subpostmaster and it is just as simple as that.
Patrick Bourke	We can't alter what has been recorded by the system. As I explained to you, any change that is made is by way of an additional transaction which carries with it a unique identifier, clearly identifying it as being non, that is not the subpostmaster's code, and you know when you go to Next they all swipe their cards so it attaches to them their personal accountability and that's what I was saying about the tools you just have to. So it is 100% true to say we can't change, alter, modify existing transaction data so the integrity is 100% preserved. The only thing we can do whether that is through an error notice, a transactional correction or in the one case it has happened the balancing transaction is inject a new - I think that is the term they use sorry those computer buffs - add, as I would say, an additional transaction which basically has bells and whistles around it that says I am out of the ordinary and I should be treated accordingly.
Matt Bardo	And that is true now and has been since the creation of the system? Okay
Patrick Bourke	Yes.
Matt Bardo	Okay. And then I suppose one other thing while we are talking about Fujitsu is that I would like to understand in the, I know you can't talk about specific cases but this is a public trial there was an expert witness and some exchange of the views between the expert witness Gareth Jenkins from Fujitsu and an expert witness for the defence, Charles McLaughlin, and one of the things that came out of that was that they were trying to get information, he was trying to get more information about the system and that system appeared to incur costs for the provision of that data and it wasn't provided in the end. Is it the case that in order to access the kind of information that an independent expert like Charles McLaughlin would need in order to make full sense of everything that was going on and costs the Post Office money under the service level agreement. Is that right?
Angela Van Den Bogerd	We do have a service level agreement yes. We get a number of archive pulls from the system as part of that and if we exceed that then it is a cost. I think the important thing here is for all the cases in the scheme we have actually pulled those archives and I refer to the, we call it ARQ information, and we provide that — which beefs up the supporting evidence and that is about every key stroke, it leaves the footprint of what happened over that period of time and that would have been done in the court case. If we are, and I am talking generically here, if we are bringing a case against someone in terms of prosecution every piece of information, all the evidence that we will draw on to bring that case will be presented and will be presented to the defence team as well. So that information, I don't know the ins and outs of the case anyway, but that information would have been provided by us and if it cost us, it cost us. That is the part of the cost of, you know, there are legal costs involved and there are other costs involved in bringing the case. So that information will not have been not used if that was the case.

Matt Bardo	And so for everybody on the mediation scheme that ARQ data has been pulled which means there is so what kind of a picture do you have then of everything
	going on in the system for all of the cases in the mediation scheme? Complete?
Angela Van Den Bogerd	Complete.
Matt Bardo	Every single key stroke.
Angela Van Den Bogerd	Absolutely. The important bit here is the timespan. So that information is kept for seven years. Now some of these cases go beyond seven years and clearly we can't do that. What we have been able to rely on then is any other information we had available, and I mentioned the call logs, they have been quite extensive and gone back, so we have been able to piece the picture but, from memory, where we have had key issues in cases that, you know, 'this is where it happened', we have been able to pull the information and have a look at it and explain what has actually happened in that and it is down to every key stroke, every log on of the system, every failed log on the system. It goes into that level. Everything that happens is registered, logged and we've got that. That has been provided as part of the supporting evidence with each of those cases.
Matt Bardo	Okay. I am going to move on again. The prosecutions, I am keen to make sense of something to do with that. We have talked about false accounting a bit there. One of the things, I think it was in the response possibly from the Adjournment debate, where it was outlined what the thinking is for prosecutions for theft and it is a description that goes something along the lines of, I think you will recognise the picture anyway.
Tim Robinson	Post Office bringing charges of theft as a tactical advice to drive false accounting
Matt Bardo	Yeah so it is in defence of that point, the point being that where false accounting is taking place the fact of a loss is sufficient to bring a charge of theft. I was curious about that because, on a really simple level, evidence of theft to me is evidence that somebody's taken something.
Angela Van Den Bogerd	Yes. Agreed.
Matt Bardo	So the question is what is sufficient evidence I suppose for that act having taken place?
Angela Van Den Bogerd	Okay. I understand.
Matt Bardo	And that's what this is about yeah.
Angela Van Den Bogerd	In bringing a case, a prosecution case, we would only bring a prosecution case of theft if we had sufficient evidence to prove theft. We wouldn't claim to charge somebody for theft and then hope to get a false accounting which I think this is where this is going. That's not the case.
Matt Bardo	Actually, I was trying to just to keep the two separate, I know there is this allegation knocking around and it would be helpful to talk about that but just independently of that, the grounds on which a theft charge is brought, it is sufficient for false accounting and a loss. Is it as simple as that or are there additional?
Angela Van Den	No.

Bogerd	
Patrick Bourke	They are distinct offences.
Matt Bardo	They are indeed.
Patrick Bourke	Yes I know but
Angela Van Den Bogerd	Just to give an example
Tim Robinson	Can I read you the rest of the quote? There is in response to BIS. This is your second response. And it said it is possible to bring a charge for theft where someone with access to money takes steps to hide a loss and can offer no credible explanation for where the money was gone. This important point was not explained to the committee etc etc.
Patrick Bourke	Okay. So on that point specifically, false accounting (and I have checked this with our lawyers actually) is prima facie good evidence of a theft having taken place - it is a legitimate ground for a prosecution for theft, so the concealment of an absence of money is sufficient grounds to bring a charge of theft.
Matt Bardo	So why do you not always just charge for theft then because sometimes a prosecution is just for false accounting. What would go into that? Is this one for the lawyers is it?
Patrick Bourke	I suspect it is one for the lawyers.
Angela Van Den Bogerd	Yeah and it would depend on the circumstances of the case but in terms of bringing a prosecution we would always make sure that we have the two tests which is evidence and in the public interest, always do that, but if you want more detail then we'd need to give this to the legal team because whilst I have investigated cases I am not investigating what leads to a prosecution. I am looking at the facts of the case.
Patrick Bourke	I suppose there are all sorts of factors that might go into that. Just because it is prima facie good evidence that a theft might have been committed we have to look at all the circumstances surrounding it. So if it is something that clearly demonstrates that that actually didn't take place, there was no point in prosecuting for theft. There are issues around the public interest. You know, there are issues for consideration for us that we are not a malicious organisation so we are not sort of desperately out to get the highest penalty and the highest charge in every small case so I think we will need to check with the lawyers but I think part of the answer to your question has to be that that is one component and one component alone. And so it is not as simple as saying if it is prima facie good evidence of a charge of theft then it would make sense to always bring a charge of theft. One doesn't follow the other.
Tim Robinson	I don't know if you will be able to answer this question but I understand that when Royal Mail and the Post Office went their separate ways there was a slight change in the way that prosecution works because, as regularly the point was made that you prosecute in the same way that I can or the BBC or the RSPCA or NHS Protect but am I right in understanding that before that, historically, the Royal Mail Group when it was a bigger entity had a slightly different set of powers?
Angela Van Den Bogerd	No. The same as what we've got now.

???	So there was no change in 2012 on all that?
Angela Van Den Bogerd	No.
Patrick Bourke	Not to the best of my knowledge there wasn't.
Angela Van Den Bogerd	No.
Patrick Bourke	I used to work in Post Office Legal many many years ago and the Post Office and its considerable parts were all serviced by a central legal team. The legal team has been decentralised as the business has separated into its parts but as far as I am aware, and I am going back sometime around 2003but everybody shared the same approach.
Matt Bardo	There is also, forgive me but I think it will be something you have said several times, that somewhere you say that all prosecutions have been reviewed, and this is probably with regard to the mediation scheme, and there is no reason to be concerned about any of them. They are all sound and in any case you know under disclosure rules relating
Angela Van Den Bogerd	Yes.
Matt Bardo	Who would be responsible for doing that sort of a review? Would that be handled by legal, internally presumably? Take me through that.
Patrick Bourke	The review was undertaken by an external firm of solicitors. Now you will say that well it's your lawyers but lawyers have very very serious professional and ethical rules governing what they can and can't do and I would strongly argue that was a more than sufficient measure to review those cases but all of these cases are looked at on a continuous basis. Even now as they are progressing through the scheme I made it very clear at the outset that although the presumption is that we are unlikely to mediate criminal cases we look at them on an individual case by case basis so our continuing obligation of disclosure has operated throughout and will continue to do so after the conclusion of this particular scheme. But in none of the cases, not one of the cases that we have been working on, have we come across during the course of our investigations any information that would call into question the safety of these convictions.
Matt Bardo	I am sorry that was a separate that wasn't part of the mediation schemethat was a separate thing that you engaged on with a firm of solicitors to review the existing prosecutions.
Patrick Bourke	Yesbut
Matt Bardo	Roughly when did that happen?
Patrick Bourke	I think it was 2012, we can check that
Matt Bardo	Thank you very much
Patrick Bourke	2012
Matt Bardo	Just one last questionthat external firm of solicitors is that a solicitors that didn't play a role in the prosecutions in the first place or is that the same firm of solicitors

Patrick Bourke	I honestly couldn't answer thatthey may have a hand in some of the prosecutions but not necessarily all of them but to be honest it's not an answer worth getting intoas I just don't know
Matt Bardo	No that's fine [laughing]
	Fineum, so let me have a quick look actually and see what the best thing is with regardsit's here
	[Break]
Matt Bardo	I've just got about four things to run through is that okay?
	One of the questions, one of the other things that was sort of a prominent thing for anyone watching the Select Committee coverage is you got Ian Henderson from Second Sight in some disagreement about provision of information that emails relating to the Bracknell incident and the prosecution files in particular, could you just run me through that from your point of view really clearly[laughing] because it would appear from the Committee that your independent investigators were requesting information in order to complete their independent investigation and you were refusing to give it to them
Patrick Bourke	Ok well, I'll start with the prosecution files if I mayI mean the working group actually agreed what we would be providing Second Sight and what we agreed to provide Second Sight is all the information that was available at the trial. Now the only thing that we haven't provided is legally privileged information as between Post Office clients and as legal advisers, now that is a well-accepted fact of legal proceedings in all circumstances so not even a court gets to see your legally privileged information, in the same way that we haven't seen the legal advice that applicants were provided with when they chose to plead guilty or not guilty or what have you, and that's right and proper. I have no interest in seeing it as I am not entitled to it so we have given them everything that we said we would give them on the prosecution files, the only thing that is absent from that is the legally privileged information to which neither they nor the court nor anybody else is entitled to see. But - and this is an important but - for those cases which have made their referrals to the CCRC for an investigation, the CCRC will see that privileged information and so, if you like, that provides the gold standard in terms of ,you know, the backstop, third party verification - somebody will have access to everything that we had so, you know, that's the explanation on the prosecution files
Matt Bardo	Okay
Patrick Bourke	On the Bracknell incident, we have provided a huge amount of information to Second Sight about this, and that culminated in us actually giving them a witness statement, effectively an affidavit, from the chap they say that the individual concerned went to meet - a chap by the name of Martin Rolf - and he gave a witness statement which attested to the fact that Bracknell is not connected to the Horizon network, it is a test environment and so therefore the claims that he made of what he saw are just impossible - in the genuine sense of the word - to have taken place because there is no functionality, there's no plugs going into the system. And we then went a step further and provided them for the relevant periods, so sometime before and sometime after the meeting took place, we provided them with the email data that we could recover for that period, which I have to say was dull as ditchwater because I looked at it and, you know, I think we have more than discharged our obligations to Second Sight and certainly to the commitment that we gave to the working group and that we were all agreed on, Second Sight included, on what we provide on the prosecution files

Mark Davies	That's a very important point about the working group, everyone on the working group agreeing to thatwith the oversight of an independent chair
Patrick Bourke	I'm very comfortable that they had all relevant information to substantiate the allegation that was made, had they been able to do so.
Matt Bardo	Just to be really clear, sorry, the Martin Rolf statement you just mentioned that was presumably saying that it was test data only in the boiler room or whatever it was in the basementor was that in the whole
Patrick Bourke	I have never been to the placeI don't know
Mark Davies	this is what we said at the beginning about sense of being wronged that a sense has been created and you refer to the Bracknell incident and boiler rooms and all this sort of stuff, there is a kind of sense that there is somehow some kind of bunker, boiler room, black-ops operation run by the Post Office with Fujitsu in order to do something and, you know, due respect, we are a very serious organisation, Fujitsu is a serious organisation, we don't do that and then you have to ask yourself why [laughing] would we do thatwhat would be the reason for having that, you know, that kind of scenario
Matt Bardo	I don't know I also can't really understand what the reason would be for having Horizon terminals testing data in a boiler room either so
	And that's confirmed [laughing]so I'm a bit confused by the whole incident [laughing]
Patrick Bourke	I don't know whether it is tested in the boiler room or not I mean perhaps[Laughing]
Patrick Bourke	You know in Old Street we had meeting rooms in what used to be toilets. I mean you know [laughing] it's at the more exotic end of the claims that have been made
Matt Bardo	But it is your understanding that the test data only because to be fair initially as I understand it I mean the Post Office appear to have slightly walked into the conspiracy narrative on this one because initially as I understand it it was denied - the boiler room incident - and subsequently it was Martin Rolf confirmed that there were these Horizon terminals
Patrick Bourke	I think there are some confusion because we couldn't track down the fact of this chap visiting, that was the initial thing and then when the applicant concerned went through his archives and found an email from I think from Martin Rolf saying "looking forward to seeing you at X" you know but I mean this was an unremarkable visit, it was not a visit by Her Majesty which we would have had in our diaries and which we would have commemorative plates for
Angela Van Den Bogerd	Slightly out of context visits would happen in this areait is not unknown and therefore, you know, it is not unreasonable that we wouldn't remember, especially as it was only raised several years after the incident. So it's not as if it had been on the radar before then - you know this chap only raised this incident several years after it had happened and therefore we would have no recollection of it, we would havehad it been raised closer to the incident we would have been closer to the information and been able to produce the information much more complete

Patrick Bourke somebody else asks did Matt Bardo and Tim Robinson come into the company we would struggle to find any evidence of that so you know Matt Bardo: We signed two visitors books [laughing]sorry[laughing] Matt Bardo The settle centrally and change to that I just wanted to really quickly come back to that there used to be a different type of dispute function then that allowed people to put money into a suspense accountis that right? And there is a protocol associated with that Angela Van Den Bogerd No Matt Bardo Okay so there really isn't a change at all then Angela Van Den Bogerd Is there any change in liability in terms of how the process works and ours vs them is it all the same Angela Van Den Bogerd The liaibility is the same. Nothing has changed other than we have just automated it to have a better line of sight to the numbers in the network Matt Bardo Yes okay. One final thing the issues log, is issues logged the right word, it won't be sort of problems logged that Fujitsu keeps for the entire system, the entire Horizon system, the existence of which does mean that, systems have them it's a standard software thing I gather to have a list of known issues, known problems with a given piece of software and there's a confirmation in the, again it's this Misra trial because it's one of the times that somebody independent is trying to scrutinise the system and there's confirmation that such document exists and it isn't disclosedare you aware of that document and has somebody looked at it from the Post Office Angela Van Den Bogerd I am not aware Patrick Bourke I am afraid I am not and I can imagine that something called an issues log relates to the performance of the systembut certainly again we can		
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Matt Bardo	That's one more thing to the list
	There is something that was mentioned that I think of your response to this committee, clearly you can see this was very confidential and for that reason you can't be saying well we have had this agreement with that person and this agreement with this person but there was kind of this idea that after 15 cases progressed the working group would be fed that informationbut of course the working group disbanded has that still happened is there some kind of high level data about what's gone on there, is that going to happen, because it would just be helpful in informing, you know, what sort of results have come from the cases that have been
Patrick Bourke	Okay what it doesn't say is results because those are confidential but if you look at our 187 page report which we did after we'd done this watershed moment to peed up the process while maintaining its absolute integrity, in that one of the appendices is a letter that we asked CEDR to send to the Post Office which contains basically the same information but because the original document engaged confidentiality of more than just the Post Office, we couldn't just use that document so we asked them to effectively you know cut and paste into a document addressed sent to us and I am very happy to give you a copy of that
Tim Robinson	I have that document
Patrick Bourke	So what it doesn't say is you know XYZ settled for x amount
Tim Robinson	Of course, yeah
Mel Corfield	It is right at the very end so I will send it to you separately because there are a lot of annexes
Patrick Bourke	Yeahand yeah we are obviously continuing to work with CEDR and there will be other points, of which I mean it is really important for us to, as part of the reason for doing it, is really feedback to make sure that were hitting the right buttons in terms of tone, approach, are we being sufficiently helpful, are the statements we are preparing ahead of mediation so that we are giving full transparency as the sort of thing we are going to be bring to the table, you know, is it working and broadly speaking I think the comments they make are quite favourable. I think you know there are some concerns about some people having approached this from the other side as being very much a compensation system which it was never set us as because the question of compensation can only arise where there is evidence of a problem that caused you a loss and in a lot of these cases that hasn't transpired but it is quite there is another illustration we have been having I think people in their minds kind of formed the view that because we are doing this mediation scheme we have somehow admitted that we did stuff wrong or we accept liability and then all they have to do is turn up and get paid out which is very far from where we are
Matt Bardo	I should just check something from right at the beginningis it right that there are currently no convicted postmasters who have gone forward for full mediation to completeis that right? Is that correct?
Patrick Bourke	As of today's date that's correct
Matt Bardo	And are there lots still to process?

Patrick Bourke Well I think I said to you that there are between 50/60 they are trying to schedule I can't give you a definitive figure because as I said we are doing it on a case by case basis so anything I tell you is subject to a variation which I can't predict. It could be plus or minus 15 to broadly speaking, we would anticipate between now and as early as we can do it undertaking something in the order of 75 mediations [Tim Robinson: and that would be done by the end of the year probably?] How long is a piece of string? If we can get the applicants to settle on a date but I mean on our side we have offered multiple dates and CEDR are doing their bestso we have also engaged with one of the firms who have a significant number of cases in the scheme to see what more we could do to support them because I mean I think they have something like 56 cases on their books and we've worked together a bit and they've streamlined their systems so we know that basically there it depends on fewer people being available within the firm so it's concentrated into one or two lawyers taking forward the mediation so that should help us enormously as well because we recognise this is taking a long time and people just want to move on and, you know, if they do we do and the sooner we can see it done the better but I'd struggle to put a timeline on it but it will certainly I think take us up to the end of the year Matt Bardo Matt Bardo Sorry, forgive me, I know I said it before but this is the very, very last thing [laughing], the private prosecution thing, there was a I think it was James Arbuthnot at the adjournment debate. referred aimost in passing to the idea that some at the Post Office don't want to continue to operate in that way, is there any, without knowing that quote, you don't need to know that quote for this question, is it the plan to continue with the prosecution private prosecution as you currently do there's no sort ofnothing pending that you imagine might lead to operating in a d		
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	Mel Corfield	PreciselyI just thought that was some time agohas that shifted?

Matt Bardo	I don't imagine all of those cases will be in a half hour programme they won't all be in a half hour programme but in terms of exactly which ones that's partly informed by this, going back completing it through but we will tell you which cases it will be
Patrick Bourke	I think, just more generally, you know, obviously if there are specific allegations that you bring forward to the Post Office, putting at our doorI think I am right in saying to do that with a bit of time so that we have a chance to digest and respond appropriately.
Matt Bardo	The way I mean we'll be talking about all this but the way it works for an interview, because the interview is not only scripted exercise whereby we give all our questions and you write them and answer them and we sit down, so we give you all the information that you need in order to respond and thencontinue on that basis .it's a standard way of doing it, but yes you're right there's more to come[laughing]
Mark Davies	Absolutely and I think from our perspective this has been very useful but we stand ready to help in any way that we can over the course over the next few weeks to either build on what we have said today or as you have come forward on other things you want to ask about we would absolutely do that
	Patrick Bourke:
	Yes and I think we do stand ready to answer any questions whether it is something that's occurred to you or something that you're passing on from what someone else has said, I mean we believe in answering every question put to us under the terms of the scheme but no doubt there will be more you would like to bringso say we would obviously want to operate in a 'no surprises' environment to any extent that we can but actually it's not just out of that concern it's also to make sure that you are getting what you need.
Matt Bardo	BrilliantCoolthank you very much
Everyone	Thanks everyone