## Friday, 10 November 2023

MS PRICE: Good morning sir, can you see and hear us.

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, thank you very much.
MS PRICE: May we please call Ms Bernard.

## NATASHA PRUDENCIA BERNARD (sworn)

## Questioned by MS PRICE

MS PRICE: Can you confirm your full name, please, Ms Bernard?
A. Natasha Prudencia Bernard.
Q. You should have in front of you a hard copy of a witness statement in your name, dated 16 October of this year. Have you got that there?
A. Yes.
Q. If you can turn, please, to page 23 of that document. Does your copy have a visible signature?
A. Yes, it does.
Q. Is that your signature?
A. It is.
Q. Are the contents of that statement true to the best of your knowledge and belief?
A. Yes.
Q. For the purposes of the transcript, the

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that right?
A. That's correct.
Q. Are we right that an Investigation Manager is sometimes referred to as a Security Advisor --
A. That's correct.
Q. -- but they're essentially the same role?
A. No, they weren't the same role. At one point we were referred to as Investigation Managers. I'm not sure if that was at the start or in the middle or at the end, but we were also known as Security Advisors and at that point was where Security and Investigation became one --
Q. I see.
A. -- as in the role became combined.
Q. You left the Post Office in February 2011; is that right?
A. I did, yes.
Q. How did you come to apply to join the Security team?
A. If I can -- if I recall correctly, I was working at Acton branch office and I was -- I think I was the manager at the time. The -- somebody from the Post Office Investigation Department came. They were going to interview a subpostmaster who was local in Acton and they
reference for that is WITN09390100.
Thank you for coming to the Inquiry to assist it in its work and for providing the witness statement that you have. As you know, I will be asking questions on behalf of the Inquiry.

Today I'm going to be asking you about issues which arise in Phase 4 of the Inquiry, focusing on your involvement as an Investigator within the Security and Investigation Team in the criminal prosecution case study of Mrs Oyeteju Adedayo. Before we turn to that case study, I'm going to be asking you about the Security team and your role and the processes within that.

You joined the Post Office in 1985; is that right?
A. That's correct.
Q. As a counter clerk initially?
A. Yes
Q. In April 1998 you became an Assistant Branch Manager?
A. Yes.
Q. You stayed in this role until June 2000 when you were promoted to an Investigation Manager; is 2
needed to use one of our rooms. When the person approached me, I recognised him, I didn't know where from. He said he'd come and talk to me after he'd done the interview with his colleague, and when he came afterwards we realised that we went to school together, and his name was Tony Utting

So I was asking him how he got into Investigations and he told me at that time that they were going to have -- that vacancies were coming out in January 2000. So I applied.
Q. Was it common for Security and Investigation Team members to be drawn from other non-security areas of the business rather than being recruited externally?
A. That was the first -- l'd seen people in the Security and Investigation Team in the past. I think then it was called Post Office Investigations Department and it seemed to be -there didn't seem to be many of them and I think at that time they had a huge recruitment campaign and I think they were -- they'd actually taken people from within the Post Office and externally.
Q. You say in your statement that when you became
an Investigation Manager you complete the security foundation course; is that right?
A. Yes, that's correct.
Q. How long did that course last?
A. If I remember correctly, I think it was two weeks residential.
Q. Can you recall now what topics were covered on the course? If you need to refer to your statement, feel free to.
A. I can -- I've still got them, actually. I think there were 17 or so modules that had to be complete before we started the course and then, on the first day of the course, there was an exam to sit and if you didn't pass that exam -- I think it was a multiple choice as opposed to just an exam -- if you didn't pass then you would have to take it a few days later and then, if you still didn't pass, then you would have -- I think you'd be sent home.

And then there was -- at the end of the two weeks there was another exam which you had to pass.
Q. You say in your statement that you were made aware on the course of Post Office policies, around the duty on an investigator to 5
working in Twickenham at the time so he was based in Twickenham as well so I think, just because we were both in the same office, he -I could go to him about anything. I would shadow him. He would -- if I remember correctly I think he was reading my reports, as well. I can't remember.
Q. Who was your line manager when you started in the role?
A. So my line manager was Paul Fielding, who used to deal with the physical security, and because I was assigned to Investigations I had -- I was kind of supervised, if you like, by Tony Utting because he was more Investigations.
Q. In the 11 years that followed the initial security foundation course, did you receive any other formal training?
A. Not that I can recall.
Q. Looking, then, to other forms of guidance which were available to you, relating to the conduct of investigations, you say at paragraph 21 of your statement that two of the policy documents sent to you by the Inquiry -- please do turn that up if you'd like to -- two of the documents sent to you by the Inquiry for the purposes of
investigate a case fully and what this meant in practice. From that training, what did you understand the duty to investigate a case fully to mean?
A. By looking at all lines of inquiry that -that's about all I can remember.
Q. Were any examples given of how an investigator might seek to comply with that duty in practice?
A. I can't remember.
Q. You don't mention in your statement receiving training on disclosure in the context of that security foundation course. Is it right, as you say in your statement, that you cannot recall whether you had any specific training on disclosure while you worked at the Post Office?
A. I don't remember having training on disclosure during that foundation course. There may well have been but I don't remember it.
Q. After you were appointed, you were assigned a mentor, weren't you?
A. Yes.
Q. This was David Posnett?
A. That's correct.
Q. What was his role as a mentor to you?
A. I could go -- I was working -- | think I was 6
preparing your statement were ones which, having reviewed, you think guided you on what needed to be contained in the legal report; is that right?
A. That's correct, yeah.
Q. Those two documents were the casework management policies, version 1, dated March 2000, and version 4, dated October 2002. Before we go to those documents can you explain, please, what the legal report was?
A. The legal report was a report that we would write after we'd completed an investigation, after we'd done the interview and that would be for the Legal team.
Q. That was prepared by Investigators, was it --
A. Yes.
Q. -- who'd been involved? You say the Legal team: who was that?
A. The Criminal Law Team for Post Office. So Post Office Legal Services I think they were called at the time.
Q. Was that the process for seeking legal advice on a case for the whole time you were an Investigation Manager?
A. Yes.
Q. Could we have on screen, please, the first of
the casework management policies. The reference 1
is POL00104747. Looking first, please, at
page 5 of this document. We can see, scrolling
down, please, at section 5 , this includes
details of the document including an "Effective
from" date of March 2000. The "Assurance
Details" in the next section appear not to have
been completed and, over the page, please, the
final review section also appears not to have been completed.

So it is possible that this document is not the final approved version. However, the material parts of the wording we're going to look at is materially the same as the later version, which we'll come on to.

Going back, please, to page 1 of this
document. The "Purpose" of this policy at section 1 is said to be:
"The aim of this policy is to ensure that adequate controls are in place to maintain standards throughout investigation processes."

Section 2 covers the "Link to
Accountabilities", and identifies "Security
Managers".
Then section 3.1, "Reporting Standards". 9

Just going on to the fifth bullet point:
"For cases in England and Wales, sensitive
information should be detailed in a separate
report clearly marked with the level of
sensitivity (In Confidence/In Strictest
Confidence etc) and placed in a sealed envelope
enclosed in the case papers sent to Legal
Services, Criminal Law Division and must be
listed on form CS006D and if necessary CS006E as sensitive information."

Just pausing there, the asterisk there, and we see where it links up further down, says:
"See Post Office Code of Practice under the
Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996."
Do you know what that document was? Is that
document as described there among those provided to you by the Inquiry?
A. The Post Office Code of Practice?
Q. Mm .
A. I can't remember.
Q. Going further down the page please, there is, at the bottom of the page, a list of things which would count as sensitive information.
A. $\mathrm{Mm}-\mathrm{hm}$.
Q. Going over the page, please, the first bullet

This bullet point, the first one here, gives some background to what follows and it reads in this way:
"Industrial Tribunals have criticised the practice of refusing to disclose investigation reports to interviewees on the grounds of privilege. As a consequence, it is now business policy to release investigation reports to the subjects of those investigations during the disciplinary process. It is therefore essential that consistent standards are applied by all ... in the Security Community when compiling investigation reports to comply with business requirements whilst avoiding unauthorised disclosure of sensitive material."

Moving to the fourth bullet point here, we have this:
"In the majority of investigation cases, the investigation report alone will adequate limit. The requirements of both the prosecution and conduct processes. In some cases, however, it is necessary to protect sensitive information which, if disclosed, could damage either ongoing enquiries, the anonymity of informants or the reputation of Consignia."
point we have here:
"Heads of Security should ensure that all face reports are vetted for content before copies are supplied for disciplinary purposes."

The next bullet goes on:
"In England and Wales, Legal Services will decide what information will be disclosed to the Defence in compliance with the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996."

The next bullet point deals with failures in security or operational procedures which are identified in the course of an inquiry. The bullet point down from that, so the fourth on this page, deals with information concerning procedural failures. It says this:
"The issue of dealing with information concerning procedural failures is a difficult one. Some major procedural weaknesses if they become public knowledge have the potential to assist others to commit offences against the Post Office, or to undermine the Prosecution case, or to bring Consignia into disrepute, or to harm relations with major customers such as the DSS or Girobank. Unless the Offender states that he is aware that accounting weaknesses
exist and that he took advantage of them, it is important not to volunteer that option to the Offender during interview. The usual duties of disclosure under the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 still apply."

You said in your statement that you remembered using this document to guide you with what needed to be contained in the legal report when you reviewed it for the purposes of preparing your statement. Do you now remember the guidance given in this bullet point that we've just read through? Is that familiar to you?
A. No, it's not familiar to me.
Q. What do you understand this paragraph to be instructing someone to do, where a major procedural weakness has been identified in the course of an investigation and it had the potential to undermine the prosecution case or bring the business into disrepute?
A. It seems like it's saying that you shouldn't bring it up to the suspect offender during an interview, like volunteering that information, because it will give them a way to explain their behaviour. That's what I'm

29 November 2001
Having looked at both of these documents and having recognised them as the documents that guided you, as you say, on the content of the legal reports, can you help with the way the dates are on this document?
A. No, not at all. I wouldn't have been involved in -- I wouldn't have been involved in drafting any of this.
Q. Going back, please, to page 1 of this document and scrolling down a little to the second bullet point, please. We can see that this second bullet point has changed from the last version we looked at and it says this -- the first bullet point remains materially unchanged. The second bullet point says:
"As a consequence of this criticism there is now a necessity for Security Managers to prepare two reports, both of which are to be included within the case file. One report is to be clearly marked 'CONFIDENTIAL': (insert name of business) and addressed to our Legal Services. The second report is to be marked 'CONFIDENTIAL': (insert name of business) and addressed 'For the attention of the Discipline

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understanding this to mean.
Q. The terminology that was being used in this paragraph to describe someone being investigated for a potential offence is that of an offender, isn't it, on the terms of that paragraph? Was that the terminology that was used at the time to describe a suspect.
A. Suspect offender.
Q. Do you understand that paragraph to include an instruction that accounting weaknesses, which might be relevant to the case against the person being interviewed, should not be disclosed to the suspect at least in interview?
A. Yes.
Q. Could we have on screen, please, version 4 of this "Casework Management" document, which is dated October 2002. The reference is POL00104777. Going, please, to page 6 of this document. We see at the bottom of the page, a little further down, please, the date of October 2002. In section 5 a bit further up, we have the "Effective date" as being from February 2002 and a last update date of November 2001. Then below that, at section 6, the "Assurance Details" give the last "Assurance Date" as 14

Manager'. This is known as the Conduct report." Does that description of those two reports sound right to you in terms of the --
A. Yes.
Q. -- reports that you made at the time?

Going over the page to page 2 , please. The second bullet point down on this page is also different from the last version, and it says:
"The Prosecution Support Office will ensure that all investigation reports are vetted for content before copies our supplied for disciplinary purposes."

Do you recall there being a Prosecution Support Office which the Post Office Security Team liaised with?
A. There was one. There was something called the Prosecution Support Office but I can't remember where it was. I can't remember who was in it.
Q. One bullet point which remains unchanged in all material respects is the fifth bullet point on this page. The wording is the same, isn't it, as the paragraph dealing with "information concerning procedural failures" in the last version we looked at, save that "Consignia" has been replaced with "our Business".

Turning, then, to the remainder of the policies you reviewed from those sent to you by the Inquiry to assist with the preparation of your statement, these are the ones listed at paragraph 20 of your statement, if you want to have that in front of you.

In respect of the Post Office policies, you say in your paragraph 21 of your statement that you do not specifically remember them, but you appreciate that you would have been aware of them at the time of your employment, but the Royal Mail Group ones you do not recall any of or you do not think you would have been aware of them at the time of your employment; is that right?
A. That's correct, yes.
Q. Where were the Post Office policies kept so that Post Office employees could access them?
A. So I only really accessed the policies at the start. I remember during -- either during training, either before training, during training or after training, I can't remember when, it was when we had to look at these a lot. But I don't remember where they were, where they were kept. I don't remember.
a little blue book that used to be part of my tackle kit.
Q. I'm sorry, can I ask you to explain that expression as well?
A. So just all the equipment and stuff that we would take with us, I would have like the Police and Criminal Evidence Act in a pouch, along with the CPIA, small booklet.
Q. So we can see from the title that this document covers the disclosure of unused material.
A. $\mathrm{Mm}-\mathrm{hm}$.
Q. It refers in the title to the Criminal Procedure Investigation Act 1996 Codes of Practice. We can see from the bottom of the page that it's dated May 2001. Going to the last page, please, page 4. We can see the last "Assurance Date" is 4 May 2001, although again the "Final Review" box appears empty.

Going back to page 1, please, the "Introduction" here explains that:
"The rules relating to the disclosure of unused material to the Defence are laid down in the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996.
"In light of the Human Rights Act 1998 the
Q. One of the documents you list at paragraph 20 of your statement as one that you reviewed when we sent it to you is the "Disclosure of Unused Material -- Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 Codes of Practice" policy, dated May 2001. Could we have that on screen, please. The reference is POL00104762. Did you recognise this document when it was provided to you by the Inquiry for the purposes of preparing your statement?
A. I think I recognised the wording as opposed to the actual policy. Like it was -- the wording was familiar to me.
Q. Is it a document you referred to in the same way you referred to the casework management documents, in terms of guiding you?
A. Not particularly this document, but perhaps the little blue book that is what I would have in my tackle kit. So I think that's where I recognised the wording from, as opposed to recognising the actual policy itself.
Q. Sorry, can you just say that again? The which book?
A. The CPIA, it was like a light blue, tiny little A5, I don't know, half the size of an A4 -18

Attorney General has issued new guidelines on the disclosure of unused material. The
Guidelines clarify the responsibilities of Investigators, Disclosure Officers, Prosecutors and Defence Practitioners."

Then further down the page, please, the "General Principles" section. There's a section here for "Investigators and Disclosure Officers" and an Investigator is defined at that first bullet point as:
"An Investigator [being] a person involved in the conduct of a criminal investigation involving Consignia. All Investigators have a responsibility for carrying out the duties imposed on them under this Code, including in particular recording information, and retaining records of information and other material."

At the second bullet point we have this:
"Investigators and Disclosure Officers must be fair and objective and must work together with prosecutors to ensure that disclosure obligations are met. A failure to take action leading to proper disclosure may result in a wrongful conviction. It may alternatively lead to a successful abuse of process argument 20
or an acquittal against the weight of the evidence."

The third bullet point:
"In discharging their obligations under the statute, code, common law and any operational instructions, investigators should always err on the side of recording and retaining material where they have any doubt as to whether it may be relevant."

Moving, then to the second bullet point on this page:
"The Disclosure Officer is the person responsible for examining material retained during an investigation, revealing material to Legal Services during the investigation and any criminal proceedings resulting from it, and certifying to Legal Services that he has done this. Normally the Investigator and the Disclosure Officer will be the same person."

Do you recall that being the case, that the Investigator and the Disclosure Officer in a case were usually the same person?
. No. I never saw myself as a Disclosure Officer; I just saw myself as an Investigator but, according to this, I was both.

At the time you were an Investigator, did you understand that you had a duty specifically to draw material to the attention of the prosecutor, where you were the Disclosure Officer, where you were in any doubt as to whether something might undermine the prosecution case or assist the defence?
A. Sorry, can you repeat that?
Q. I'm sorry, it was a very long question. At the time, when you were an Investigator, did you understand you to have a duty to draw material to the attention of the prosecutor where you were in any doubt as to whether it might undermine the prosecution case or assist the defence?
A. I think at the time I may not have understood it
fully. After leaving the Post Office, I went and had -- I had another job and then I decided that I wanted to get a qualification, and it was only after -- it was only doing the qualification that I think I got a better understanding of disclosing information to -that would undermine the prosecution or assist the defence.
Q. The bullet point below that reads:
Q. You say similarly in your statement that you cannot recall having any official role in relation to disclosure, other than sourcing and providing documents as and when requested. Should we take that to mean that you do not recall having been the Disclosure Officer in the cases you investigated?
A. Yes.
Q. Having now seen the documents provided to you by the Inquiry, do you accept that, at least on some occasions, you were the Disclosure Officer in cases you were investigating?
A. Yes, I accept that now.
Q. Going down the page, please, to the bullet point about halfway down the page, under the section in bold, this covers Disclosure Officers making sure that descriptions by Disclosure Officers in non-sensitive schedules are clear. Then the bullet point below this says this:
"Disclosure Officers must specifically draw material to the attention of the Prosecutor for consideration where they have any doubt as to whether it might undermine the prosecution case or might reasonably be expected to assist the Defence disclosed by the accused."

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"Disclosure Officers must seek the advice and assistance of prosecutors when in doubt as to their responsibility, and must deal expeditiously with requests by the prosecutor for further information on material which may lead to disclosure."

Who was the prosecutor in cases you investigated on behalf of the Post Office?
A. I'm guessing it would have been the Criminal Law Team, but then the prosecutor was -- I just remember Bell -- I think it was Bell Yard, that's where all the barristers were. I don't know.
Q. In the context of this instruction, in this document, it may be that you never went to the prosecutor to ask but, had you had a disclosure query and you'd been looking for someone to ask who was the prosecutor, who would you have gone to?
A. I would probably have asked, if I didn't -- if I was unsure where to put something when I was preparing a committal, it would be my colleagues or the Criminal Law Team or a manager.
Q. Were you ever in any doubt about your responsibilities as they related to disclosure?
A. I don't think I fully understood, at the time, about disclosure. I can't -- I can't really remember.
Q. It is not referenced in this document but were you aware, when you were an Investigator, that there was an obligation on a criminal investigator to pursue lines of inquiry which pointed away from the guilt of the suspect?
A. Yes.
Q. Turning then to the process which was followed from the start of an investigation to a prosecution being brought, you say at paragraph 18 of your statement that there was another team within the Post Office, you refer to this team as the Casework Function Team, what was that team's role?
A. I think that was the Casework Management Team and all the cases, I think, used to start, not necessarily there, because if something was reported to a line manager, then they may raise the case themselves and then inform the Casework Management Team. But there was a team who kind of dealt with all the admin, so that when the cases will come from there, they would go to your line manager, they would then assign 25
explain, please, what the training covered and what process you followed in your interviews? If you need to refer to paragraph 15 , please do.
A. I can't remember. I know one of the modules covered -- I think it covered interviews. I believe, during the actual training, the residential training -- I can't remember specifically about interviews.
Q. You say in your statement that you would always inform the individual of their right to legal representation and a friend?
A. Yes.
Q. Do you recall that?
A. Yes, I do recall that.
Q. In general terms, do you recall there ever being an occasion when a suspect said something in interview which led to further enquiries being made by you as the Investigator?
A. I don't recall.
Q. You don't recall whether that happened or you don't recall making further enquiries when someone said something or raised something in an interview?
A. I'm just trying to think of something specific and I can't think -- there's nothing that comes
an Investigator and then, during the course of the investigation, the -- you may send the file back to the Casework team who would then put a memo in and then send it to the Criminal Law Team.

I didn't -- I don't know what their
processes were but I think that's what their -that's what they spent their time doing.
Q. Where a case involved a shortfall having been identified in a branch on audit, you say in your statement that the Investigation Team would get a call from the Audit Team. Can you explain, please, what happened after that call, from an investigatory perspective?
A. So the audit -- I'm not sure if the Audit Team contacted the Casework Management Team or their line manager, who then may then escalate things but, once the call came into the Investigation team leader, it would be up to that team leader to assign -- ask an Investigator to go to the office to conduct the investigation.
Q. You say in your statement at paragraph 15 that your role included carrying out interviews under caution of those accused of a criminal offence and you had full training on this. Can you 26
to mind but I'm sure there probably were occasions when that happened but I can't think of any -- I can't think of an example right now.
Q. Coming, then, to the reports which you completed once an investigation was done, it appears from your statement that you recall there being at least two different reports produced by Investigators, and that's in line with the second Casework Management policy we looked at.
A. Yes.
Q. You say at paragraph 11 you would write a report to the Contracts and Services Manager, and that was the conduct report, was it?
A. Yes.
Q. That report was only allowed to contain facts about what happened and not an opinion?
A. That's correct, yes.
Q. But you would also write a report to the Criminal Law Team --
A. Yes.
Q. -- in which you could express an opinion on next steps, including a recommendation on charges; is that right?
A. Yes.
Q. Did you have any training in criminal law to
assist you in making recommendations on charges?
A. Not that I can recall.
Q. Can you recall what test you were applying when making recommendations on charges?
A. If you'd have asked me this question without me having seen any of the documents, then I wouldn't be able to answer but, having read this, I can recall from this information the public interest test.
Q. You say at paragraph 17 of your statement that, ultimately, any charging decision was up to the Criminal Law Team; is that right?
A. Yes, that's correct.
Q. You reference at paragraph 11 that you thought you produced a third type of report but you can't recall now the content or purpose of that third report. Does that remain the case or have you remembered anything further about this since preparing your statement?
A. I was convinced that there were three reports and -- but, having looked at the information, it's probably why I can't remember because there wasn't a third report. It may have been -I always, I just always thought there was three. I don't know -- I think I was probably wrong. 29
the person being interviewed had made any significant statement; any kind of schedules that had been prepared to reflect the evidence.
Q. Were the Criminal Law Team reliant on Investigation Managers to identify potential sources of information and documents that were relevant for disclosure?
A. Yeah, I'd expect so.
Q. Could we have on screen, please, paragraph 19 of Ms Bernard's statement, that's WITN09390100. It's page 5 of that document -- a little further down, just to paragraph 19.

You say here:
"Once we had carried out the investigation, we would submit the case to the Criminal Law Team who would look at the evidence and draft advice on prosecution. If prosecution was going ahead, we would prepare the committal and issue the summons."

Who decided whether a prosecution was going ahead?
A. The Criminal Law Team or -- I don't know if it was down to a particular person. I remember vaguely prosecution authority but that's not from memory, that's only through reading this
Q. You say at paragraph 16 of your statement that, once you had written your legal report, you would submit it to the Criminal Law Team with the relevant documents?
A. $\mathrm{Mm}-\mathrm{hm}$
Q. Was there a checklist of steps to take and what information to obtain or any other guidance to ensure that all relevant information was sent to the Criminal Law Team?
A. I think there was something. Now, I don't know if it was a policy or if it was something that had been made or created by a member of the Security and Investigation Team. So like an aid for us to follow. But I can recall that there was something but I don't know who generated it or created it.
Q. Can you remember what it said?
A. It was similar to the Casework Management policy, so I'm guessing it was probably -- it was based on that.
Q. As a matter of practice, what documents would you provide to the Criminal Law Team?
A. So the report; any exhibits; any witness statements that had been taken; things like notebook entries; if the customer -- sorry, if 30
bundle. So it would come from them whether we were going to prosecute.
Q. Sorry it would come from who?
A. The Criminal Law Team in their advice.
Q. Did that change at all, as far as you can recall, in the 11 years you were an Investigation Manager?
A. I don't recall.
Q. Can you recall any times where the Criminal Law Team recommended that no further action be taken in respect of the case?
A. Are you talking specifically about audit shortages, or any?
Q. Well, any cases across the board, to start with?
A. Yes, I think -- I can't remember specifically but, yes, I'm sure there was.
Q. Can you remember any audit shortages --
A. Where?
Q. -- cases where the Criminal Law Team advised no further action, as opposed to prosecution?
A. I wouldn't be able to name a case, no.
Q. In terms of your involvement in disclosure after the decision had been made to proceed to prosecution, you say in your statement that the Criminal Law Team would list additional
documents and evidence that they required and it was your job to source and provide this. Other than responding to requests from them for documents, did the Investigation Team conduct any further evidential inquiries themselves of their own initiative, after the decision had been made to proceed with the prosecution?
A. I think then an Investigator would -- if there was something that they felt needed to be included that wasn't listed in the advice, that they would do that, yes.
Q. Could we have on screen, please, document reference POL00026980.

This is a "Schedule of Sensitive Material", which appears to have been prepared by you when acting in the role of Disclosure Officer. So we can see your name at the bottom there and the declaration at the top:
"The Disclosure Officer believes that the following material, which does not form part of the prosecution case, IS SENSITIVE."

The copy on screen has the signature redacted out but I understand you've been provided with a copy without the redaction; is that right?
meant that the defence would not be made aware
of it. Did you understand that at the time, in general, about sensitive schedules?
A. Yes, but, looking at this, I thought this had come from the defence.
Q. Was the only sensitivity here that the article was unhelpful to the Post Office?
A. I don't know.
Q. Was this the first time that you became aware of anyone questioning the Horizon system and blaming it for loss or had you been made aware of this before?
A. I don't recall. I don't recall when I learned about the Horizon system. If I hadn't have seen this, I would have probably said that I didn't know about it until after I left.
Q. Setting aside the fact that this document appears to have come from the defendant, do you recognise now that the justification given on this schedule was not a proper justification for the inclusion of material on a sensitive schedule?
A. Yes.

MS PRICE: Sir, if it is convenient to you, may I ask that we take the morning break a little
A. That's correct, yes
Q. Can you confirm, please, that it is your signature underneath the redaction?
A. Yes, I can confirm that.
Q. This document is dated 15 January 2010. There's just one item listed on this schedule and in the "Description" column it is:
"Article relating to integrity of Horizon system, supplied with accompanying letter by defendant."

Can you recall anything about this article now?
A. No.
Q. Would you have read the article, given that you were providing comment on it in this document?
A. If I was supplied with it I would like to think that I read it, yes.
Q. The reason that this was said to be sensitive was that it could be used as mitigation, ie to blame Horizon system for loss. On the face of this, if a document were thought potentially to benefit the defence in this way, was this not a case for disclosure, as opposed to against it?
A. I would say, yes, now.
Q. The placing of an item on a sensitive schedule 34
early. I've just finished one topic and the next topic is a little lengthier.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, by all means. So what's the time by now? Well, we'll call it 10.55 , so 11.10?

MS PRICE: Yes, sir, thank you.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Fine.
(10.53 am)
(A short break)
(11.10 am)

MS PRICE: Hello, sir. Can you see and hear us?
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, thank you.
MS PRICE: Could we have on screen, please, paragraph 38 of Ms Bernard's statement. That is WITN09390100, page 13 of that document. Paragraph 38 reads:
"I can also recall having training on how the Horizon system worked and that it essentially worked as a giant calculator."

This description of Horizon as a giant calculator, where or who did that come from?
A. That was just how we referred to it.
Q. What did you understand by that?
A. That it was just like a calculator. You know, whatever you put into it, it calculated it and 36
threw it out.
Q. What did your training on Horizon consist of?
A. So to start with, when I first joined the Post Office, there wasn't any Horizon or anything. I don't remember when but there was a system called ECCO that came next and I was very familiar with that, and then, when I was working at Acton and I was -- Acton branch office, and I was due to start working as an Investigator in the June, I don't remember if Horizon had come in to Acton at that point.

When I started work as an Investigator, I think it was a case -- it wasn't formal training, I think it was a case of just going -I used to work at Croydon, the offices there and there was a branch office downstairs. And I think it was a case of just arranging with the Branch Manager to go and sit behind someone for a few days. So it was just sitting next to somebody and watching them. There was no -- it wasn't -- as far as I can recall.
wasn't -- as far as I can recall. 21
Q. You say in your statement that, when you were investigating an investigation for a shortfall, you would usually request ARQ data from Fujitsu as part of your investigation and that you did 37
provided to the subpostmaster.
Q. You say that an extract was provided to the Criminal Law Team rather than the full ARQ data.
So can you just explain what that extract might be?
A. So this could be anything, not just necessarily ARQ data. It could be a schedule that was prepared, it could be, let's say, an extract -if we had -- at the time of the audit, we'd asked the auditor to run off the reports from the Horizon system, it may be that you'd look through it and you might just photocopy an extract from that.
Q. From Fujitsu, you recall dealing with Penny Thomas but not Gareth Jenkins; is that right?
A. That's correct.
Q. How often would you speak to Penny Thomas?
A. I don't know. Not on a regular basis.
Q. Was she the person that you regularly spoke to when you asked for ARQ data?
A. Do you know, I don't remember how we had to request the information. I don't think it involved a phone call. There was probably a process in place but I don't remember what that process was. I can't imagine it was
A. No. I can only assume that it was -- that --
phoning her and asking her.
Q. Just trying to understand the context in which you recall dealing with Penny Thomas, can you help with that at all?
A. I remember speaking to her and I know I met her but I can't recall what the conversation was about or ...
Q. In cases involving Horizon data, how was a financial loss or shortfall proved?
A. The auditors would verify the cash and stock that was on hand at the audit, and then that would be compared to what the Horizon system says and the difference would either show an over or a short. That's my understanding.
Q. David Posnett was your mentor.
A. $\mathrm{Mm}-\mathrm{hm}$.
Q. Did he remain your mentor for the whole time you were an Investigator?
A. No, he would be somebody, as well as anybody else in the Investigation Team. I could go to any one of them.
Q. Did he ever discuss with you any problems with the functioning of the Horizon system?
A. I don't recall that.
Q. Did he or anyone else ever discuss with you the
potential for problems with the system to impact upon a subpostmaster's ability to balance in branch?
A. I don't remember any conversations about the Horizon system.
Q. It may follow but were you ever aware, in the time you were an Investigator with the Post Office, that balancing problems could result from bugs, errors or defects in the system?
A. No.
Q. I'd like to turn, please, to your involvement in the investigation of Mrs Adedayo. You say in your statement that you have no direct memory of this case. Does that remain the case now?
A. Yes.
Q. Having seen the documents sent to you by the Inquiry, can you explain, please, how you came to be involved in Mrs Adedayo's case?
A. I think -- looking at the documentation, I was asked to attend the office. I don't know who asked me but I was asked to go and attend the office. I don't remember how I got there. I don't remember if I took a train or if somebody picked me up. I don't remember at all.
Q. You cover your involvement in your statement
signed by Mrs Adedayo and witnessed by the auditor on the day of the audit. Have you now seen a copy of that note?
A. Yes.
Q. Was this provided to you by the auditor on the day of the audit?
A. That's what I would assume, yes.
Q. Can we have that note on screen, please. It is OADE0000001. We see at the bottom left there "Witnessed by JR Valan". That was the Auditor, was it?
A. Well, it says "Deepak". I don't know who JR Valan is. I'm guessing. I think it says Deepak Valani.
Q. We have the audit report from 5 September and that is signed by the Branch Auditor Deepak Valani --
A. $\mathrm{Mm}-\mathrm{hm}$.
Q. -- and we can see that it is signed, although that signature is redacted, by Mrs Adedayo a little further down.

At the top of this note, Mrs Adedayo used the word "confessed". It says, "confessed the auditor". Was it usual for a subpostmaster to sign confession documents in front of an Auditor

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starting at paragraph 54 , so please do have that in front of you if it would help. It appears from paragraph 54 and the underlying documents, that you went to the branch on 5 September 2005 to commence an investigation after the audit identified an apparent shortfall of $£ 52,864.08$. It's the figure you give in your statement. Is it right that you attended with your colleague, Adrian Morris?
A. Yes, that's correct.
Q. You say that you introduced yourself to Mrs Adedayo, do you know what you would have said to her about your role?
A. That we're here to talk to her about the audit shortage, probably something like that.
Q. You say she agreed to a voluntary interview. What steps did you take to investigate the case before you interviewed Ms Adedayo?
A. I would probably have spoken to the auditors. I don't recall.
Q. Did you seek to obtain any evidence before the interview?
A. I don't -- I can't remember. I don't know.
Q. It appears from the content of the interview that you were in possession of a note which was 42
on the day of an audit revealing a shortfall?
A. I've known Auditors in the past who, if the subpostmaster says something, they may either write a note at the time or ask the person making the statement to write it out at the time.
Q. There are obvious problems, are there not, with this being done on the spot like this, before a subpostmaster has had the opportunity to consider the position or take legal advice; would you agree with that?
A. I wasn't there when -- I don't know what the circumstances of this was. I wasn't there.
Q. Did you ask what the circumstances were?
A. I don't remember.
Q. Because Auditors are not trained in the conduct of criminal investigations, are they, and none of the safeguards of an interview are present in these circumstances --
A. $\mathrm{Mm}-\mathrm{hm}$.
Q. -- are they?
A. I agree with that, yeah.
Q. Do you recall being told anything by the Auditor about the circumstances in which this note came into being?
A. I don't remember.
Q. Did you give any consideration to the possibility that an Auditor may have said or done something that made both the written note and the subsequent confession in interview unreliable?
A. No.
Q. Coming to the interview, you have said in your statement that your practice was always to inform an individual being interviewed of their right to legal representation and a friend. What did you say to Mrs Adedayo about her legal rights at the start of and during the interview? I think you've had the opportunity to read the transcripts of that interview now.
A. I'm sorry, can you say that again?
Q. Putting it a different way. In this case, did you do that? Did you tell Mrs Adedayo about her legal rights at the start of the interview?
A. Er ...
Q. We can look to that interview, if it helps you.
A. Yes, please. I mean, yes, I would say I did, without looking at it.
Q. So the reference is POL00066742.
A. Yeah.
Q. It's page 25 of the document we just had up POL00066742, page 25, please.
A. Oh, yes.
Q. So you say, three entries down:
"Yeah, I've got that note here in front of
me. Can you read it out for me please?"
Mrs Adedayo does read it out.
A. $M m-h m$.
Q. Just beneath that, you say:
"All right, and you signed that?"
The response is, "Yup".
"You agree you wrote that?
"Yes, oh yes."
Then you note it's been witnessed by the
Auditor. Over the page:
"Okay, he's signed that as well."
A. $\mathrm{Mm}-\mathrm{hm}$.
Q. Looking further down that page, did you ask Mrs Adedayo about the circumstances in which the note came to be written and witnessed by the Auditor?
A. It doesn't appear so, no.
Q. Did you ask her whether what she said in it was correct?
A. I don't think so.
Q. Starting on page 3 of that document, going about halfway down and in bold, by Natasha Bernard at 00.01.43, you appear to be providing the caution.
A. $\mathrm{Mm}-\mathrm{hm}$.
Q. Do you have the hard copy in front of you?
A. Yes, I do.
Q. You do. Do you want to just have a look through and check if you can answer the question based on having a look? Looking, for example, at page 7 , if we can have page 7 on the screen as well, please.

Further down the page, please.
A. Yeah, she was offered a solicitor.
Q. I'm sorry, your answer wasn't quite caught there by -- it won't be caught by the transcriber. Can you say that again?
A. She was offered -- yeah, she was asked if she wanted to speak to a solicitor or if she wanted legal representation.
Q. The note which we've just looked at, you asked Mrs Adedayo to read that note out in her interview, didn't you? If we need to go to that section of interview, we can.
A. Yes, please.

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Q. But you did, on page 26 , if we can go to the top of the page again, please, three entries down, give Mrs Adedayo an opportunity to explain the shortage that we have in the Post Office Accounts.
A. Sorry, can you say that again?
Q. Yes. Yes, that third entry there says:
"Okay, um, well what I want to do now, is to give you an opportunity to explain erm, the shortage that we have in the post office accounts."

So you were giving her an opportunity to explain the shortage.
A. Yes.
Q. Before you asked that question -- or at any point before this -- did you explain to Mrs Adedayo what the basis was for saying there was a shortage?
A. No, it doesn't appear so.
Q. What explanation was given by Mrs Adedayo in this interview to you?
A. The explanation for?
Q. For the shortage?
A. The shortage? That she'd used the money to pay people that she'd borrowed money from.
Q. Did you manage to pinpoint with any precision what amounts Mrs Adedayo was saying were paid to her lenders and when?
A. Only from what's in the tape summary. So it seems like there was $£ 10,000$ initially, followed by two amounts of $£ 20,000$, during the months just before the audit shortage was identified.
Q. Did you seek any further evidence following the interview with Mrs Adedayo as to the payments of those amounts?
A. I'm sorry, I don't know what you mean.
Q. Did you ask Mrs Adedayo for any documentation relating to the payment of those sums?
A. During the interview.
Q. After the interview, did you make any further enquiries?
A. I can't remember.
Q. Was any data sought from Horizon -- sorry, was any data sought from Fujitsu in this case, whether any ARQ data or other type of data?
A. I don't know if there was but if, there was, it would have been -- it would have made up part of the case file. It would have been in the exhibits.
Q. You wrote your report for the Criminal Law Team 49
report and, if we can turn to page 5 of the
document, it's one line at the top:
"Given the admissions made by Mrs ADEDAYO
there is no reason why she should not be charged with false accounting."

What was the basis for this conclusion?
A. I would probably have looked at false accounting and see if it met all the points, if that makes sense.
Q. Mrs Adedayo having said what she did in interview and having read the note, as far as you were concerned, was that the end of the enquiries into the shortfall?
A. I don't remember.
Q. Mrs Adedayo was prosecuted following advice from the Criminal Law Team in this case. What further involvement did you have in the case once this decision was made? If you need to refer to your statement, please do.
A. Is this after -- are you asking after she was prosecuted?
Q. Yes.
A. I don't recall having anything further to do, unless there was any kind of financial investigation afterwards.
Q. You gave a recommendation as to charge in this 50
Q. If you can look, please, to paragraph 67 of your statement.

If we can have that up, please, on screen it's WITN09390100, page 21, please.

Just before we come to paragraph 67 you, say at paragraph 66:
"I do not think that I was the Disclosure
Officer in this case and I cannot remember ever holding this official title."

We've been to the other schedule and I think you've revised your evidence on that point.

Do you remember giving any consideration to disclosure in this case?
A. I don't remember.
Q. Paragraph 67, you refer here to a memo from Debbie Helszajn, which states that:
"... Mrs Adedayo appeared at Chatham Magistrates Court on 19 January 2006 and pleaded guilty to the three charges and accepted the further offences set out in the Schedule of TICs. She advises that I should attend the sentencing hearing. This was a normal course of action as all Investigation Managers were asked to attend sentencing hearings and write something up after the sentencing to conclude
the case. I have no direct memory of the sentencing hearing and therefore cannot confirm whether or not I did actually attend. However, it would not have been unusual for me to arrange for someone else from the team to go in my place if I could not attend."

Can we take it that you can't help any further than that as to whether you actually did attend the sentencing?
A. I don't think I did because -- but then I don't know. I've seen in the documentation there was some reference to somebody doing a full report and I think that person was called John Thornewell, following -- so I think maybe -- it wasn't unusual -- because I lived in Croydon and this was Maidstone or somewhere, that Legal Services may have said that we're going to be sending somebody anyway. So I don't remember going.
Q. You have now, I think, read the statement from Mrs Adedayo that she gave for the purposes of this Inquiry and read the transcript of her evidence given in the Human Impact hearings; is that right?
A. Yes.
'Well, there you are, it's peculiar to you'.
"And that was when I thought, 'In the whole of the United Kingdom only me?' I didn't know what to do. That was when I started inventing the story because if I'm the only one in the United Kingdom, who is going to listen to me?" Can you recall a conversation to this effect happening before the interview or at any point?
A. Not at all.
Q. Are you saying that that conversation didn't happen or that you can't recall whether it did?
A. I think if it did happen, I would have remembered it.
MS PRICE: Sir, those are all the questions that I have for Ms Bernard. There are some questions from Core Participants. Shall I proceed to turn to them?
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, please. Yes.
MS PRICE: I think starting with Ms Page.

## Questioned by MS PAGE

MS PAGE: Ms Bernard, I act for a number of subpostmasters, including Ms Adedayo who sits to my right.

Now, l'd like to go back to the interview
transcript, first of all, because what I'd like

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Q. Could we have the transcript of Mrs Adedayo's oral evidence to the Inquiry on screen, please. It is INQ00001039. I'm going, please, to page 21 of that document.

There are some internal page numbers on the bottom of each of the four squares of this page. At internal page 81, Mrs Adedayo was asked about her interview with you and Adrian Morris. At the top of page 82 , she is asked what evidence was produced to her to evidence the shortfall and she says underneath that, three lines down:
"... the cash accounts, the report from the computer [that] was the only thing they showed me ..."

Then she is asked this is line 13:
"Did you ask whether anyone else had experienced discrepancies?"

The answer was this:
"I did. When we went downstairs and the argument was going backwards and forwards I turned around and I said, 'Has anyone else experienced this?' They turned around, they said 'Have you heard of it? Have you heard of it anywhere?' I said 'No', which is true,
'I didn't hear anything about it'. They said, 54
to do is look at what was said to you about the supposed $£ 50,000$ that was mentioned first of all in the written document, and then questions were asked in the interview about it. So if we go to POL00066742, please. If we go down, first of all, to page 28, Mrs Adedayo says:
"So that I can put the money back. It wasn't intentional, doing it at all. So I get them the $£ 20,000$ at that point, again."

You say:
"And when was that?"
She says:
"Oh, it was the right period of time.
"No, but when?"
She says:
"I would say in the last, everything can change in the last couple of months, two months."

Then:
"So when did you give them this $£ 20,000$ ?"
The reply is:
"I gave them roundabout, I would say about June."

So that's the first extract. If we could then, please, hold that thought and go down to 56
page 35 , where you pick up that thought, and if
we go down to -- yes, just -- if we pick up at
27.50. Your question is:
"Okay, so you've, you've paid off the
$£ 20,000$, that accounts for $£ 20,000$."
Mrs Adedayo says:
"No, 30, so far that l've given them the remaining 20 to get them off me."

You say:
"So how much have you given them?"
Mrs Adedayo says:
"I've given them 50."
If we go over to the next page, again
following this same thread, if we go down
a little bit, just stop there. Thank you,
sorry, just tiny bit up. Your question at
28.13:
"So how did you take this money? How, how
did?"
Mrs Adedayo says:
"I, I told Joan."21

You say:22
"No, no how did, what exactly did you do?
What did you come in, did you just come in and take £50,000?"
"And the remaining $£ 50,000$ was in July,
August, I gave it to them", and then she continues with her explanation.

So, in other words, we're getting a very,
very scrambled account, aren't we, of how much
money was paid and when; would you accept that?
A. Absolutely.
Q. When you get that sort of question and answers in an interview, does it cause you any concern?
A. Looking back at this interview, reading this, I was very confused. So I can only imagine that I was probably confused during the interview.
Q. That can come down. Thank you.

We've looked at the document that was apparently signed before the interview and we can read it out again, if you like. In fact, I think it probably makes sense if we do that. So let's just go to OADE0000001, please. If we read it out in full, it says:
"I have today 5th of September 2005 confessed [probably 'to'] the auditor regarding the sum of $£ 50,000$ taking, with my mentioning it to my assistant that I was going to be repossessed and since [probably 'have'] equity no mortgage on the Rainham Road property have 59

She says:
"No, no, no."
You say:
"Okay, so tell me exactly what you did."
She says:
"I did the $£ 10,000$, because I thought if
I can get a mortgage, remortgage, I will put the $£ 10,000$ back in the Post Office."

Just pausing there for a moment, at this point we've had $20,000,30,000$, and now we're back to 10,000 , as the opening gambit, if you like. If we go a bit further down to page 39, and if we go to a little further down to 30.54 , and you say:
"So you paid $£ 10,000$ in June to these people, and when did you pay the rest?"
"I, I gave them £20,000 in July."
Then you say:
"And you gave them $£ 20,000$. So $£ 10,000$ in June, £20,000 in July?"

If we just go over the page. We then get Mrs Adedayo says:
"Yes."
"Natasha Bernard: And?"
Mrs Adedayo says:
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already applied for $£ 50,000$ loan to pay back to the Post Office as this has never been my intention to steal or take somebody else's money which I have never done before in all my 6 years here."

Would you accept that actually that does not confess to theft or, indeed, any other crime?
A. I can't remember what the points to prove for theft are, I don't know.
Q. You can't recall what the points to prove for theft are, is that what you just said?
A. Yes.
Q. Well, do you recall that it's to take money and to not give it back, in layman's terms?
A. I remember it was part of it.
Q. What we have here is somebody saying they were going to give it back, don't we?
A. Yes.
Q. All right. Well, the Auditor who took this "confession" evidently was not trained in what you call the points of theft, was he?
A. I don't know.
Q. Well, would you have expected an Auditor to be trained in the points of theft?
A. No.
Q. Had you been trained in what ought to happen if a suspect makes statements prior to a formal interview?
A. To make a note of it, yeah.
Q. So when confronted with an Auditor who has carried out some form of interview prior to your arrival, what should you have done?
A. I don't know.
Q. Sorry?
A. I don't know.
Q. You don't know now or didn't know then?
A. I don't know now.
Q. Did you know at the time?
A. I don't know.
Q. You don't know whether you were trained in what you should do in that situation?
A. I can't remember.
Q. Do you recall ever, in that situation, making a note to yourself of what has been said?
A. I don't recall.
Q. Do you remember anything about the principles around taking contemporaneous notes or notes as soon as possible thereafter and asking suspects whether they are prepared to read over them, whether they accept them, whether they signed to
and their investments on the line, didn't they, when you interviewed them?
A. Yes.
Q. All of that could disappear pretty much overnight for them, couldn't it?
A. Yes.
Q. Did it ever occur to you that they were vulnerable and that you were wielding quite a lot power over them?
A. No.
Q. Did it ever occur to you that they might be particularly susceptible to inducements or threats?
A. I don't know whether it occurred to me. I'm guessing that in their position they were open to -- they may well have been threatened.
Q. Well, then, just considering what was said in interview, the confusing, as you say, nature of it, and considering a few other points, let's just look at how the actual loss, the figure of the loss, was arrived at.

We are told that the audit cash shortage was $£ 53,000$, just a little over $£ 53,000$, and that was a $£ 52,864$ cash shortfall, after stock differences were taken out of the equation. So

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say they're true? Do you know anything -- do you recall anything about having done that at all in your time at the Post Office?
A. I can remember contemporaneous notes but not all the things that you've just mentioned, no.
Q. When you were trained in interviewing, were you also trained in other aspects of interviews?
Were you trained, for example, in the provisions around unreliable confessions?
A. No, I don't remember that at all.
Q. So you never were taught anything about the possibility that things that might be said or done that might render confessions unreliable?
A. I don't remember that, no.
Q. No. Leaving aside your training, did it ever occur to you that the people you encountered in these particular types of cases, these audit shortfall cases, were not just managers of post offices but were proprietors? They owned their businesses.
A. $\mathrm{Mm}-\mathrm{hm}$.
Q. They had everything to lose, didn't they?
A. Yes.
Q. They could be suspended, dismissed, prosecuted.

They had their reputations and their livelihoods 62

52,864 cash shortfall. The note signed by Mrs Adedayo mentioned $£ 50,000$--
A. Mm-hm.
Q. -- and that was what was then picked up and picked over in interview. Why did you consider the confession to be reliable, given that it could only explain the removal of $£ 50,000$ and not $£ 52,000$ or even the overall shortfall of £53,000?
A. I'm sorry, I don't understand.
Q. Well, there was a confession note -- quotes
"confession note" -- that mentions $£ 50,000$--
A. Yes.
Q. -- but the shortfall was said to be at least £52,000?
A. $\mathrm{Mm}-\mathrm{hm}$.
Q. How could the confession to $£ 50,000$ be reliable if the cash shortfall was larger than that?
A. It was Ms Adedayo that wrote the $£ 50,000$. The audit shortage was $£ 52,000$. I don't --
Q. Yes, well you had told her about the $£ 52,000$ shortfall and yet, nevertheless, her "confession" never amounted to $£ 52,000$, did it?
A. This what she wrote, though.
Q. Well, that's right.
A. $\mathrm{Mm}-\mathrm{hm}$.
Q. Did it not occur to you that it was unreliable?
A. No. This is -- she wrote this herself.
Q. Yes, as we've just, I hope, established, with the Auditor there and with you yourself recognising a certain susceptibility, in the circumstances, to inducements and threats. Yes?
A. (No audible answer)
Q. We've looked also at your report to the lawyers in which you recommended that Mrs Adedayo could be charged on the basis of this confession. So what that was, effectively, was cherrypicking from her account interview and the confession document, in the sense that you said it could be relied upon to charge her with false accounting but, obviously, all the parts where she put forward her explanations, which would undermine dishonest intent, which would undermine any dishonesty at all, were to be disregarded. Do you take my point?
A. I thought my -- in the report, I just reported what she said and what I said. I wasn't cherrypicking anything.
Q. Did it ever occur to you that the problems in her account and the contradictions in her 65
since had their convictions overturned. I only want to ask you about two documents.
A. Okay.
Q. They relate to a case for a client we represent called Mrs Pauline Stonehouse. You weren't the investigating officer in her case and I just want to give a bit of background before we go to the documents, to perhaps save some time in context.
A. Okay.
Q. The Inquiry is familiar with the findings in

Allen \& others in the Court of Appeal where on 10 December 2021, Ms Stonehouse's conviction in 2008 for false accounting was overturned. In that case, the Post Office accepted that hers was an unexplained shortfall case and evidence from Horizon was essential to the prosecution. She was entitled to a proper investigation of the reliability of Horizon and to receive disclosure in relation to Horizon Issues.

The Post Office accepted that this did not happen and that Mrs Stonehouse's prosecution was therefore unfair and an affront to justice.

To understand the documents we're going to, I'm just going to read two paragraphs from the 67
account came from the fact that none of it was true?
A. I didn't -- I think it's quite clear in my report that I didn't believe what she was telling me.
Q. But you believed it enough to rely on the "confession" elements?
A. It was -- the "confession" isn't my word, it's hers.
Q. Looking back, do you think you were really trained in investigative interviewing or were you just trained to get "confessions" --
A. No.
Q. -- in whatever manner you could?
A. No. I wouldn't describe it like that at all.

MS PAGE: Thank you, sir. Those are my questions.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Thank you, Ms Page. Anyone else?
Questioned by MS PATRICK
MS PATRICK: Sir, it's Ms Patrick. We have number of questions. We should be very short.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, fine.
MS PATRICK: Thank you.
Good morning, Ms Bernard, my name is Angela
Patrick and I act for a number of subpostmasters who were prosecuted and convicted but who have 66

Court of Appeal, so that we can shortcut a lot of other information.

Paragraph 19 of the judgment, it reads:
"On 7 June 2007, Mrs Stonehouse was interviewed. She agreed she'd inflated her cash figure to conceal the shortfall. She denied stealing any of the money. She said that she knew it was wrong to declare a false figure but she did not know what else to do."

Then at paragraph 20:
"In a defence statement dated 15 February 2008, Mrs Stonehouse denied dishonesty and expressly raised the reliability of Horizon. She said that she would require an expert to analyse the POL accounts and the accounting system which was open to abuse. In correspondence of the same date, her solicitors emphasised concerns about Horizon."

It goes on to explain what the solicitors had said.

Now, if we turn to the two documents I'd like to ask you some questions about, the first of those is FUJ00122540. You can see it's a short two-page email thread. Can you see that there, Ms Bernard?
A. I can.
Q. If we start at the very top on the page there you can see there's a reference to an attachment. Can you see that, Ms Bernard?
A. Attached is --
Q. A WS Seaburn, can you see that?
A. Yes.
Q. I only raise that because Seaburn was Mrs Stonehouse's branch.
A. Right, okay.
Q. If we can go to the very end and start at the end, at page 2, it may make more sense. You can see there at the very end, there is an email from Andy Dunks to you, Ms Bernard. Can you see that there?
A. Oh, yes, yeah. I can see me, yeah.
Q. The date, we can see it a little bit below your name there, is 25 March 2008. Can you see?
A. Yes.
Q. So, logically, if Mrs Stonehouse's defence statement had been produced in February 2008, this exchange would have been after the production of the defence statement; is that fair?
A. Mm-hm, yeah.

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A. Mm .
Q. If you were making that request, is it reasonable to assume you'd have been aware that there was a need for the Post Office to have evidence to support the data being produced by Horizon?
A. Yeah, so if -- whenever we asked for the Horizon data, we would normally ask for a witness statement in order that the evidence could be produced.
Q. Okay. If we go back to the email document and we scroll up a little, we can see that you forward this on to Ms Dickinson to consider on 25 March 2008. I think we can see that at the bottom of page 1 and the top of page 2 .
A. Yes.
Q. Can you see that there, Ms Bernard?
A. Yeah.
Q. Can you help us: who is Ms Dickinson?
A. I think she was another Investigator.
Q. You think she was an Investigator in Mrs Stonehouse's case?
A. Yeah.
Q. If we scroll up again we see Ms Dickinson replies to you on 14 April 2008, and I'm going
Q. You see what Mr Dunks says and I'm going to read it out for the transcript:
"Please find the attached WS [witness statement] which I hope covers the request for the working condition of the Horizon system. Please let me know if this is ok, and I will put a copy in the post."

Can you recall who Mr Dunks was?
A. No.
Q. We'll return to that. Another document might help your memory but, looking at this, does it seem that a witness statement was being sought by the Post Office and produced by Mr Dunks for that purpose, to cover the working condition of Horizon?
A. Yes.
Q. Can you recall now if it was you that asked for that witness statement?
A. I don't know.
Q. Does it seem from this email correspondence that it was you who had asked for that witness statement?
A. Yes, I guess so. I don't remember the case though.
Q. So this is in 2008.

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to read a little there. Can you see that, Ms Bernard, before we scroll on? Is it on your screen?
A. Yes.
Q. We can see it starts:
"As discussed regarding Seaburn SPSO."
Does that suggest to you that Ms Dickinson would have talked to you about the statement before sending you this email?
A. I don't know what she means by "as discussed". It suggests that maybe we did discuss something but I can't remember.
Q. If we read on, it says:
"Please see attached a slightly amended witness statement required for court on Friday, 18 April.
"All I have done is increase the time period to a starting date of 1 July 2005. This is because the defence have requested Horizon data from the previous year for comparison.
Therefore the amount of ... calls will more likely increase from the 20 mentioned in the draft."

Is it likely, looking at that, that your discussion with Ms Dickinson covered that the
defence was seeking more information about a greater period starting from 1 July, and a greater volume of calls were going to be required to be covered by Mr Dunks?
A. I don't remember any of this. All I can think is, during my later years before I left the Post Office, I was working in the Banking Fraud team and I don't know, and I did say this in -- not in my witness statement but when I was preparing my witness statement, that I may well have been involved with ARQ requests but I couldn't remember.

And I just think, looking at this, it may be that I was just the person who was passing the information to Andy Dunks. I was just kind of, like, the middle person. I wasn't doing investigations, I don't think, at this time.

So that's all I can think of. I don't know
if she would have discussed anything with me at length because I just would have been pass -obtaining information and passing it on.
Q. Okay.
A. If that makes sense.
Q. Just going on to what you said earlier today about when you became aware of challenges to the 73
about without reading -- like having a huge
discussion because I wouldn't have needed to know all of that.
Q. But by 2008, you accept that this does appear to suggest that you and your colleagues would at least have been aware that there were challenges to the integrity of Horizon happening?
A. I really can't remember if I was aware or not about the Horizon challenges, even with this in front of me.
MS PATRICK: No further questions, Ms Bernard. Thank you.
MS PRICE: Sir, I think those are all the questions from Core Participants.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: All right.
On reflection, I just want to ask one or two questions in order to clarify my mind.

## Questioned by SIR WYN WILLIAMS

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: So I think you agreed with both Ms Price and Ms Page in the questions they put to you that -- but l'll try and put it as neutrally as possible -- the answers which were given to you by Ms Adedayo in the interview under caution about the circumstances in which she'd apparently taken $£ 50,000$ in order to repay

Horizon data being produced and its integrity?
A. Yes.
Q. By April 2008, when we're having this exchange, you would have been aware that a defence in this case, prosecution was seeking access to Horizon data for the purposes of comparison?
A. Sorry, was that your question?
Q. Sorry. By this time, 2008, looking at this exchange, do you accept you would have been aware that there were cases where the defence was seeking Horizon data for the purposes of trial?
A. So because I believe, looking at this, I was the person just passing information from one person to another, I may have been the person that they contacted. I wouldn't have been looking into too much about what's actually being said here. I would just have been passing the information on.

So I cannot say, hand on heart, that I knew what they were talking about. Because, when we requested information, I , in the past, have had to ask witness statements from Fujitsu in order to -- for them to produce their discs, and that's maybe what I would have assumed this was 74
it to someone, were somewhat confusing. Yeah?
A. Yes, sir.

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes. So am I right in thing that, notwithstanding that that was the state of affairs, you didn't think it appropriate or necessary to chase up on what she'd done with that $£ 50,000$, for example by getting from her the name or names of the person to whom it had been paid and checking with them whether, in fact, they'd received such sums; is that right? Have I got that right?
A. From the documents that have been presented to me in the Inquiry, I believe we -- and I did -ask for the names of the creditors.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Right.
A. Looking at the taped transcript, Mrs Adedayo says that she needed to talk to her husband first, is what I -- it's not what I remember, this is what is in there.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, yes.
A. And she was going to send them to us afterwards, and then I think in my report I'm just saying "To date, this has not been received". So it was kind of left up to her to present those names to us.

| SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Right. So I can be clear about | 1 |
| :--- | :--- |
| it, your state of mind was that it's for |  |
| Mrs Adedayo (or Ms Adedayo) to provide this | 2 |
| information and, unless she does, there's | 3 |
| nothing much I can do about it; is that fair? | 4 |
| A. I think because it seemed that she was reluctant | 5 |
| to give us the names at interview, when it would | 6 |
| have been quite easy for us to check with these | 7 |
| people, had we had the names -- because she | 8 |
| appeared to be reluctant, I think if I'd have | 9 |
| put more pressure, I would have probably been | 10 |
| accused of being oppressive. | 11 |
| SIR WYN WILLIAMS: All right. | 12 |
| A. So that's probably why I didn't -- | 13 |
| SIR WYN WILLIAMS: I'm asking these questions | 14 |
| because -- and if I've misheard you, this the | 15 |
| chance to put it right -- I think you said to | 16 |
| Ms Page that you didn't actually believe what | 17 |
| Mrs Adedayo was telling you in interview, yes? | 18 |
| A. Yes, that's true, sir. | 19 |
| SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Right, okay. Did you make | 20 |
| a witness statement for the criminal prosecution | 21 |
| of Mrs Adedayo? (Pause) | 22 |
| It hasn't been referred to, sometimes that's | 23 |
| quite deliberate because there's no need for it | 24 |

    IR WYN WILLIAMS: Right. So I can be clear about
    to be referred to in the Inquiry, but I am just wondering whether you did actually make a witness statement?
A. I don't -- I think -- I don't think so, because she pleaded guilty.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: So she pleaded guilty in the Magistrates Court, as I understand it, yeah?
A. Right, yeah.

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: So, from memory -- and I appreciate this is a long time ago but I just want to get your best memory -- your memory is that you didn't actually get to the point of making a witness statement?
A. Honestly, I don't remember. But it's -- I don't think so.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Right.
A. That's about the best I can do.

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Okay, thank you very much.
Well, thank you for coming to give evidence before me, and for making a witness statement in advance of that. I think that concludes the evidence for the day.

I want to recognise the fact that Mrs Adedayo is in the hearing room today to hear evidence about her case, so I'm glad she was 78
able to do that and, as with all other Core Participants, I welcome her to the Inquiry proceedings.

So, with those final remarks, I think we'll bring today's session to a close.

Ms Price, we're due to start again on Tuesday?
MS PRICE: Yes.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: But am I right in thinking that we are still contemplating whether or not that is possible, in the light of disclosure issues which are well known, at least to the lawyers in the room?
MS PRICE: Yes, sir.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Do you have -- and if you haven't, that's fine -- but do you have any current information about the likelihood of us being able to resume on Tuesday?
A. No, sir.

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Fine, all right. Well, then, I'll wait to be kept informed.

Thank you all very much.
( 12.21 pm )
(The hearing adjourned until
Tuesday, 14 November 2023)

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(33) usually - Yup

