

Message

From: Shirley Hailstones [GRO]
Sent: 01/09/2016 18:29:48
To: Joe Connor [GRO]; Alisdair Cameron [GRO]; Angela Van-Den-Bogerd [GRO]
CC: Wendy Mahoney [GRO]
Subject: FW: Missing euros/potential system issue
Attachments: Horam 650458 SSRT Report 010916.doc; image003.png; image004.png; image005.png

All

As promised, please find attached report for Horam (Kirsten Fernforth).

It is Wendy's intention to speak with Kirsten tomorrow to discuss findings.

I will update you on the outcome of the call.

Regards
Shirley



Shirley Hailstones

Support Services Resolution Manager

Post Office Limited
Guildhall, 57 Queen St
Glasgow
G1 3AT

Tel: [GRO]
Email: [GRO]

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From: Shirley Hailstones
Sent: 30 August 2016 12:16
To: Joe Connor; Alisdair Cameron
Cc: Wendy Mahoney
Subject: RE: Missing euros/potential system issue

Hi Joe

We have now received & analysed the archive data.

Wendy is currently writing up the full case report which should be concluded by COP Thursday 1st Sept.

Just to give you an idea of findings, however the full report will be shared with you & Al on Thursday.

Key Findings

- Data confirms that 2000 euros received 26th Aug 2015 were never booked into the branch
- There is no evidence in NBSC call logs to show that Kirsten was advised to inflate euros

- When the euros were introduced to the stock unit on 14th Oct 2015, there was a £1492.98 gain declared in the account which was posted to local suspense and then cleared immediately to cash (advising the system that she has withdrawn the cash)
- The branch is not declaring ONCH correctly: they are using the day before to estimate cash usage. This is making it difficult/almost impossible to have a true reflection of when discrepancies have occurred in branch
- There was a surplus of £3731.05 declared 15th Oct 2015, but was then reduced by £3700 within less than a minute to show a surplus of £31.05
- All branch transactions have been analysed from when the euros were first introduced (14th Oct 2015) until ONCH was declared on the 15th Oct (this is the timescale that Kirsten is alleging the surplus disappeared). Analysis of the transactions in comparison with the ONCH reported show that this surplus was not in the branch.

Conclusion

The surplus is showing present in the branch on the 14th, however it is not in the branch by the time the ONCH was declared on the 15th. We can therefore assume that during this time, there must have been a corresponding error carried out in branch or user error (where it be true or deliberate) must have occurred. Point to note: Data shows that Kirsten was only present in the branch for less than an hour early morning on the 15th and therefore is unaware of staff activity.

NB: Andy Winn (Former Dispute Resolution Manager) has investigated this prior to Wendy & has concluded the same.

It's Wendy's intention to speak with Kirsten on Friday before she finishes up for leave.

Regards
Shirley



Shirley Hailstones

Support Services Resolution Manager

Post Office Limited
Guildhall, 57 Queen St
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From: Joe Connor
Sent: 30 August 2016 08:56
To: Alisdair Cameron
Cc: Wendy Mahoney; Shirley Hailstones
Subject: RE: Missing euros/potential system issue

Thanks Al – Wendy/Shirley can you let me have an update on this one please?
Joe

Joe Connor

Head of Shared Services



120 Bark St,
Bolton,
BL1 2AX

Mobile: **GRO**

From: Alisdair Cameron
Sent: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 8:54 AM
To: Joe Connor <**GRO**>
Subject: FW: Missing euros/potential system issue

FYI

From: Angela Van-Den-Bogerd
Sent: 05 August 2016 10:32
To: Alisdair Cameron <**GRO**>
Subject: RE: Missing euros/potential system issue

Al,

The latest is on this is that we have had all the details we need from Kirsten the postmistress but due to the incident happening last year we need archived data. This typically takes a fortnight to receive from Fujitsu so should be with us any time now. Kirsten is happy that this is being investigated properly.

Depending on what we find in the investigation it'll probably be about two weeks from receiving the archive data before we can conclude this case.

Thanks,
Angela



Angela Van Den Bogerd
Director of Support Services

1st Floor, Ty Brwydran,
Atlantic Close, Llansamlet
Swansea SA7 9FJ

M: **GRO**
L: **GRO**

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From: Angela Van-Den-Bogerd
Sent: 04 August 2016 20:02
To: Alisdair Cameron
Subject: RE: Missing euros/potential system issue

Hi Al,

Wendy from my Resolution team had arranged to call the postmistress on 27th July to obtain the detail to investigate the issue. I've requested the latest position and will revert as soon as I have it.

Thanks,
Angela



Angela Van Den Bogerd
Director of Support Services

1st Floor, Ty Brwydran,
Atlantic Close, Llansamlet
Swansea SA7 9FJ

M: GRO
L: GRO

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From: Alisdair Cameron
Sent: 04 August 2016 17:09
To: Angela Van-Den-Bogerd
Subject: FW: Missing euros/potential system issue

Angela, where are we on this? Thanks Al

From: Paula Vennells
Sent: 26 July 2016 15:29
To: [horam.papershop](#); GRO Alisdair Cameron GRO
Cc: Wayne Cowan GRO; Sara M Mitchell GRO; Bob Collins GRO; Angela Van-Den-Bogerd GRO
Subject: Re: Missing euros/potential system issue

Dear Kirsten,
Thank you for flagging this - I hope I can help. This has clearly taken too long to resolve and I would be as frustrated as you are.

We are usually very good at resolving such issues, with 6m transactions a day we have to be!

I have copied Al Cameron CFO and Angela van den Bogerd, Director of Support Services. I know they will do their best to get to the right outcome.

Thank you for your patience,
Best wishes,
Paula

Paula Vennells
Chief Executive
Post Office Ltd

T: GRO

GRO

Sent from my iPad

On 26 Jul 2016, at 15:02, "[horam.papershop](mailto:horam.papershop@nbsc.co.uk)" wrote:

GRO

Dear Paula,

I am writing with an issue I have been having in branch and I wonder if you can help. I seem to have hit a dead end with every other avenue available.

I have been running our Local Plus branch since September 2014. In August 2015, we had a pouch of euros delivered to our branch, which was not input properly onto the system, so didn't show in the stock. It was picked up in a subsequent balance. I called Chesterfield and Bristol to try and locate the pouch number, which would have rectified the problem, but no one was able to give me this information.

By the October balance, I called the NBSC to find out what I should do, as I didn't want to falsely declare the stock holdings. I was told to over declare the euros and wait for a transaction correction to balance this out. In good faith, I did this, but was unable to settle centrally, as we didn't have a suspense account set up (this had already been flagged by our trainer Sara Mitchell when we started the previous year). The only option, therefore, was to settle to cash. Sara has been amazing and such a huge support to us throughout our time here – I can't thank her enough.

In subsequent daily cash declarations, there was no surplus of cash, which there should have been to the tune of £1400. I raised this with Sara, and she visited the branch and took copies of the balance paperwork. As the euros were showing back in stock, we wondered if maybe that had rectified the problem, but Sara raised this with IT and the issue was referred to IT systems. On numerous occasions, we have both chased this, and calls have been closed on us without resolution, or explanation.

By Christmas we were flat out (our nearest main branch had been closed since April, so we had plenty to do). This entire issue was put on the back burner.

In April this year, a year and a half after commencing trading, our suspense account was activated, generating a transaction correction for the missing euros. I have since met with a brick wall of "I'm sorry, we can't look back more than six months". I called NVCS again and was told that I shouldn't have overdeclared the euros, and should have waited for the transaction correction, which was contrary to the advice I had been given by them. I was also told that they, or Chesterfield would have been able to give me the missing pouch number. Again, I had tried this, with no result. I am now being chased by the accounts team for the £1400. In actual fact, they are only asking for £450, as we made a silly error in branch with a Santander transaction that I put cash in to cover, as I thought it would be rectified quickly. Indeed it was, but it's now being held as part payment for the euro error.

NBSC and Sara suggested we forward all the information to Andrew Wynn, but it seems that a balance statement saying "settled to cash" is sufficient for them to take that as read, and further investigation has not been made available to us. The discussion was that our system showed a £3700 gain the following day. This is because I run the cash declaration as it was on the previous day to keep a track of how much cash we have used before amending it to show the true value. We also asked for an intervention audit, and this I guess showed that we were running an office that doesn't have any financial issues, but nothing more. The auditor suggested that the information needed to check what happened sits in our hard drive, but again, no one seems interested in taking that on. I have since been offered an instalment plan to "pay back" the money – I never took it and firmly believe there is some glitch in the system that just made it disappear. It's

fairly much a whole month's salary. We operate the branch in line with our shop hours – that's 76 hours per week over seven days. With an average salary of **GRO** per month at the moment, that equates to just over **GRO** an hour....

I am confused and disappointed that one small error made by us is going to cost a month's salary, yet the set up errors with our suspense account and bad advice given by the helpdesk, and whatever issue there is with the system go by with no one accountable?

My team have worked extremely hard under stressful conditions (whilst the main office nearby has been shut), and we serve an ageing community that relies exclusively on us for Post Office services. I love the work that we do, but I feel totally let down by the lack of back up from the Post office in general. We all make mistakes, but most of them shouldn't cost a considerable chunk of salary.

Apart from the £1400 I am being asked for, I cannot begin to estimate the cost of the hours spent on phone calls, emails and lost sleep that this has taken. I feel like I'm on trial, and guilty until proven innocent, which no one seems able to assist me with. It's a shame – I know I'm a good Postmaster, and we are running a successful office, which would otherwise have closed when the former Sub-Postmaster retired. We have increased sales in many aspects of the business, and Branch Standards have advised that we are in the top 4000 branches in the country for performance, and have no issues in branch. I'm seriously considering selling up, as I could work as a relief for people like me who are struggling with a system that doesn't do much to support them.

In summary:

We made a mistake.

We asked for help.

That help didn't come.

It's going to cost me £1400 that I really don't have spare.

I'm not sure what you can do to resolve a potential system problem. It could take months. What I am asking is that this sum be written off in recognition that we are doing our best, and have been failed by the system in getting a resolution. I am exhausted with dealing with this. My integrity is bashed from it being implied that I took the money. I didn't. That is all.

Many thanks

Kirsten Fernforth
Postmaster, Horam

GRO