

Louise Dar

Branch: Lenzie Post Office Branch®, 118 Kirkintilloch Road, Lenzie, Glasgow

Dates of service: 19 November 2014 to 27 March 2017

Loss claimed: Roughly £3,709,000 for repayment of shortfalls, loss of investment, loss of earnings during suspension and post termination impact on business revenue.

Contract model: Network Transformation Contract

Background:

Ms Dar opened the Branch in her existing business premises on 19 November 2014.

On 15 July 2015 an audit was conducted and found shortfalls of £10,423.96 relating to amounts of cash, cheques and foreign currency. Ms Dar was suspended. Post Office informed Ms Dar that during investigation they had found deliberate falsification of the accounts by the user of the Horizon ID of Ms Sohi. Ms Dar dismissed Ms Sohi, her assistant. She later confirmed that the discrepancy with the foreign currency was unexplained and she was responsible for it. She alleged that she must have misplaced the money. Post Office reinstated Ms Dar and the branch reopened on 28 August 2015, on the basis that Ms Dar repaid the shortfalls and adhered to some specified Post Office procedures. Monthly deductions were taken from Ms Dar's remuneration for the shortfall sum of £7,302.52.

On 17 May 2016 another shortfall of £2,252.84 was identified. Post Office's auditor thought the cause was irregular accounting procedures. Ms Dar repaid the shortfall.

On 3 February 2017 a shortfall of £6,870.85 was identified at audit. Ms Dar had not carried out a cash and stock check for around 2 weeks, and was suspended with immediate effect.

Key allegations made:

Ms Dar claims, in addition to the generic complaints made by all Claimants, that:

She relied on Post Office's investigation which suggested the discrepancies found in July 2015 were due to deliberate falsification and inflation of accounts by her assistant, Ms Sohi, for which she was held responsible for.

She had no access to Horizon during her periods of suspension in July 2015 and May 2016 so could not look into what happened and why there was a shortfall.

From her experience with systems similar to Horizon, the programme was basic and based on older technology than she expected.

Reason for termination:

A meeting with Ms Dar took place on 3 March 2017 in which she could not explain (or pay for) the shortfall of £6,870.85. This fact, combined with the fact that there had been two other substantial shortfalls within 18 months, led Post Office to believe that Ms Dar was not operating her branch properly.

Post Office terminated her appointment on 27 March 2017 in view of her repeated failures to properly account for Post Office cash and stock, and her failure to be able to explain or make good the last shortfall.