

Case Questionnaire and Guidance Notes - M014

Received 21st October 2013  
(mail)

Please re-visit the **Ten Key Questions** included in your Initial Case Overview and, with help from your selected Professional Advisor, now provide more detail along with any supporting evidence that you have.

This Questionnaire will set the foundation for our investigation so you should complete it in as much detail as possible. The more information you provide, the deeper and more useful our investigation will be.

In regard to supporting documentation, you will appreciate that written evidence is a powerful tool in our investigation and allows us to explore your case in more detail.

In order to investigate your case, we do need to be able to fully understand your concerns. We may therefore contact you (by phone, email or letter) to discuss your case.

If you are unable to provide sufficient information or information is not provided in a timely manner, your case may not be investigated and may not go to Mediation.

As a reminder, in order to be eligible for investigation, your case must relate to a financial loss or unfair treatment that you believe you have suffered as a result of the Horizon system or an associated issue.

We repeat here the **Ten Key Questions** from the Initial Case Overview:

1. What is the main issue or issues you wish us to consider that relate to Horizon or its associated processes?

Spasmodic faults with Horizon's accounting and recording of transactions

2. When did the incidents relating to the main issue or issues occur?

April 2011 - Sept 2012

3. What prior contact have you had with the Post Office in regard to the incidents/issues that you are now reporting? Phone calls on a monthly basis to

the helpline. Numerous conversations to Anita Bravata the helpline. Numerous conversations to Anita Bravata asking for advice. Meeting with Anita and Lin Norbury asking for advice. Contract Deployment Manager

4. How was the issue or issues resolved at the time they occurred?

I was informed that my office was being monitored but was under the impression that this was just running off reports that I could quite easily do for myself

5. What is the monetary value of the issue or issues you are now reporting?

£8055.68 plus outstanding £1769.93  
£825.61

6. Were you the subject of either civil recovery action or criminal prosecution regarding the main issue or issues you are now reporting?

No

7. How were these actions against you (if any) resolved?

8. What is your explanation for the events forming the main issue or issues you are now reporting?

Horizon is an old system, not updated or replaced for many years. Until all of my equipment was replaced did normal excellent balances reoccur.

9. Did you request assistance from the Post Office regarding the issue or issues you are now reporting? On several occasions, requests for new equipment was submitted

10. What assistance if any was provided?

I was informed that the budget did not allow for replacement equipment

In addition to the above ten questions, we should be grateful if you would provide information about:

- The telephone calls that you made to the Post Office's helpline. Can you recall and recount the advice or help that you received?
- The specific areas, products or operational processes where you assert that you were given inadequate training, support or poor advice. If you now know or suspect that you made errors as a consequence of inadequate training, support or poor advice, please tell us about that.
- Any specific hardware or telecommunication failures that you know or suspect contributed to your shortfall. Did you, for example, ever receive any written report from Fujitsu in regard to the monitoring work carried out by Damien Caster? If so, please send a copy to us at 2nd Sight.
- Any suspicions you had at the time, or now have, as to where the missing funds could have gone. Were any specific products or processes particularly problematical for example?
- Whether, and if so when and how, you requested help from POL in establishing the underlying Root Cause of the shortfall that was building up.

Please retain a copy of your Case Questionnaire, and of all the documents that you submit, and send the originals (or scanned copies of the original documents) to Second Sight, by 25th October 2013. You may send this either by email to

GRO or by Special Delivery to:

Second Sight Support Services Ltd  
Tythe Farm  
Maugersbury  
Cheltenham  
Gloucestershire  
GL54 1HR

M 014

System Problems 2012.

Position 3.	6 <sup>th</sup> July	15.40pm.	Money Order Time Out
Position 3.	7 <sup>th</sup> July	09.30am.	Cash Withdrawal £50.00
Position 3.	9 <sup>th</sup> July	09.30am.	Frozen Screen
Position 3.	9 <sup>th</sup> July	09.35am.	Cash Withdrawal £300.00
Position 1.	9 <sup>th</sup> July	09.50am.	Unable to take Card Payment
Position 1.	9 <sup>th</sup> July	10.03am.	Card Payment came up as a Pin Pad Error
Position 1.	9 <sup>th</sup> July	10.40am.	Frozen Screen
Position 2.	9 <sup>th</sup> July	12.08pm.	Pin Pad Error.
Position 1.	9 <sup>th</sup> July	12.31pm.	Frozen Screen.
Position 1.	9 <sup>th</sup> July	12.31pm.	Frozen Screen.
Position 2.	9 <sup>th</sup> July	12.32pm.	Frozen Screen.
Position 3.	9 <sup>th</sup> July	16.55pm.	No Card Available.
Position 3.	9 <sup>th</sup> July	17.16pm.	Payments Allowed.
Position 1.	12 <sup>th</sup> July	14.45pm.	Refused Card Payment Twice Frozen Screen
Position 2.	13 <sup>th</sup> July	9.09am	Pin Pad Refused
Position 2.	13 <sup>th</sup> July	9.10am	Pin Pad Refused
Position 3.	13 <sup>th</sup> July	15.12pm	Pin Pad Refused
Position 1.	17 <sup>th</sup> July	14.05pm.	Frozen Screen
Position 3.	20 <sup>th</sup> July	14.05pm.	Frozen Screen
Position 2.	25 <sup>th</sup> July		£120.00 Loss.
Position 3.	26 <sup>th</sup> July	8.50am	No action, re-boot
Position 2.	26 <sup>th</sup> July		£90 shortage
Position 3.	26 <sup>th</sup> July		£479 shortage
Position 2.	26 <sup>th</sup> July		Frozen screen
Position 2.	26 <sup>th</sup> July		No connection to data centre
Position 1.	1 <sup>st</sup> August	09.20am	Screen frozen
Position 2.	1 <sup>st</sup> August	09.20am	Screen frozen
Position 3.	1 <sup>st</sup> August	09.28am	Screen frozen
Position 3.	1 <sup>st</sup> August	09.52am	Screen frozen
Position 3.	1 <sup>st</sup> August	09.55am	Screen frozen
Position ?.	6 <sup>th</sup> August	15.08pm	Banking failure for A/L
Position 1.	13 <sup>th</sup> August	11.25am	Screen Frozen
Position 3.	13 <sup>th</sup> August	11.30am	Screen Frozen
Position 3.	13 <sup>th</sup> August	12.31pm	Screen Frozen
Position 1.	20 <sup>th</sup> August	09.00am	Unable to connect to data centre
Position 3.	20 <sup>th</sup> August	10.18am	Screen frozen. Settlement basket error service.
Position 1.	20 <sup>th</sup> August	10.25am	System busy, waiting to print AP receipt
Position 1.	20 <sup>th</sup> August	10.27am	Waiting for authorisation

M014

Postmistress  
Semilong Post Office  
Mrs. Jane Brewer

Personal Details

I have owned, and worked in, Semilong Post Office for 50 years since I purchased it in 1962. My mother was Postmistress before me, and my father Postmaster before that.

Semilong Post Office has been served, by the same family for more than 60 years, and is well respected by the many customers we have watched, from being children to young adults, and later bringing up their own family in the close knit area of Semilong.

Semilong Post Office had been a well run, and untroubled office until the previous 2 years, when losses began to appear.

These losses started to escalate from £80.00 per Trading Period, to many £100s per Trading Period.

Phone calls were made on a monthly basis to the Helpline, asking for help. When it became apparent that the losses were reaching large amounts, I contacted Anita Bravata and asked her for advice. I heeded her advice and I carried on, putting into practice all that she had suggested.

Later, Anita informed me that my office was being monitored and checked, but I knew that the pattern of losses was not due to my staff, but were due to the faults in the system causing my losses.

I was advised to declare my cash on an hourly basis, and compare the results with snapshots.

This was a very time consuming operation and put a great deal of pressure on my staff.

Semilong Post Office is relatively small. There are three counter positions which are close together. Each position is used for most of the day. Our shoulders touch regularly, and each of us knows what the other's left hand, or right hand is going to do next. We can anticipate who is going to move:- left, right, bend or stand back.

The impact on my staff has been horrendous, the pressure on them has been immense, and they have gone home in tears on many occasions. They have felt to be under suspicion of theft, and have lost much sleep, and have laid awake thinking, how can this be happening??

I was advised to contact the police and explain to them the situation. I found it quite traumatic to make a Police Statement. I spent several hours, both making statements and explaining our work principals to them, and although helpful and useful, they advised me that I was probably right, and that an equipment failure was to blame.

I made more calls to Anita, but was told that Horizon was robust and no faults could be found.

I had asked for equipment to be changed on many occasions, only to be told (DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH THIS COSTS? WE DO NOT HAVE THE BUDGET FOR THIS!!!!)

Pattern of losses

There was no pattern to the losses. They could happen any day, or at any time of the day. My staff, being part time workers, never fitted into any pattern of losses.

The losses occurred when no part time staff were present. I am also a full time Postmistress, I open the Post Office every morning. Every day I have my lunch in the Post Office, and spend time loading and stocking the safe when necessary.

My staff are never left alone at my counters. They were fully aware of my losses which always occurred on Position 2, my serving position.

My staff and I have worked for hours after closing time, running off reams of paper, checking stock and transactions, and finding no mistakes.

The effect on me, personally, has also been equally horrendous. I have lost two stone in weight. I wake twice or three times each night, worrying about the losses and, likewise, worrying about my staff.

I have had to break into my savings to pay off the supposed losses and have even had to cash in a Personal Pension which would have helped me in my retirement

THEN EUREKA!!!

On July 9<sup>th</sup>. A Fujitsu Engineer, John Sargeant, came to replace a pin pad, and whilst he was here, there was another loss of connectivity, which he admitted that he had seen happen in other Post Offices.

He immediately contacted Horizon, and whoever he talked to, told him that he could not see any breakdown in the system.

The strange thing was that John Sargeant was checking the system on Position 2, and was watching the faults on the screen as he ran his checks.

Having examined the computer he told me that the machine needed a new ADSL Cable and a Replacement Plate.

He then contacted Damien at CRV. to arrange for the items detailed above to be sent. Damien then arranged for other equipment to be replaced, being a Land Cable and Hub. I was in contact with Damien on virtually a daily basis, who informed me that packets of up to 2500 bytes were OK, but that other packets of less than 2500bytes were not, and there was a packet loss individually.

Damien informed me that there was a noise on the line and it could be caused by a loop. When the new equipment was installed all noise on the line disappeared and all loops had gone.

The new equipment was monitored for 2-3 weeks but this has now been discontinued.

Damien has continued to be very helpful, and has provided me with lots of information. He spent time telling me that a line can occasionally drop out once a day, but it can sometimes drop out 2-4 times a day.

During my discussions with Damien he said that he would confirm all this data on request if required.

His email address is GRO

M 014

Losses at Semilong Post Office

Outstanding	1769.93
Paid	
278.96	
1380.48	
854.18	
857.96	
1140.79	
466.43	
643.61	
163.56	
312.99	
699.59	
411.49	
654.33	
191.31	
	8055.68