

Letter to Branches

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General Secretary: Billy Hayes (www.billyhayes.co.uk)

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To: All Branches with Postal Members

Dear Colleague

Post Office: Findings of Second Sight report into Horizon computer system

Branches will be aware from publicity over the last few days of the fact that independent investigators Second Sight, have published an interim report, examining "Justice for Subpostmasters Alliance" claims in relation to software defects on the Post Office's Horizon system. The Post Office agreed to engage Second Sight and commissioned them to produce a report, following claims that Postmasters who need to balance their accounts using the Post Office's Horizon computer system had been wrongly accused and some prosecuted or made to repay money after the system apparently declared non-existent shortfalls. The report is attached to this LTB.

The report focuses mainly on the lack of internal IT audit processes of the Horizon system and lack of maintenance of the hardware and architecture over which data flowed. It has also picked up on issues over remote access to individual cash accounts by Fujitsu personnel.

There has been much media attention to this report, with BBC news, reporting on Five Live Radio, as well as on the internet (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-23233573>). Many reports are critical of the Post Office, who defended its position by saying the report states that there were no system wide problems. It has admitted, however, that it raises questions about training and support offered to some sub-postmasters. I attach the Post Office statement.

The Post Office has promised three initiatives on the back of the Second Sight report, which are detailed below. Clearly, the CWU needs to be fully involved in fulfilling points two and three of these initiatives in order to properly represent our members and be included as a key stakeholder in the process.

1. The creation of a working party to work collaboratively to complete the review of cases started by Second Sight last year. This would examine the themes identified by Second Sight and consider all cases brought forward by the JFSA and MPs, together with any new themes which emerge from these cases. The JFSA have been invited to join this working party.

2. A review chaired by an independent figure to determine how an independent safety net might be introduced to adjudicate in disputed cases in the future. Again the JFSA and other stakeholders will be invited to take part in this process.
3. A new Branch User Forum to provide a way for sub-postmasters and others to raise issues and insights around business processes, training and support, directly feeding into the organisation's thinking at the highest level. A key task for this forum will be to review support processes and training to ensure they meet the standards expected of the Post Office.

It follows that the CWU has concerns over the lack of independent representation available to Postmasters. Indeed there has not been any place for Postmasters to go to defend them when they have been wrongly accused of effectively stealing money from the Post Office.

I will be writing to Paula Vennells, Chief Executive of the Post Office, to ensure we are fully involved in points two and three of their recommendations.

Further developments will be provided in due course.

Yours sincerely

Andy Furey
Assistant Secretary



Post Office
Statement on Finding



POL Interim
Report.pdf