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**Acceptance Incident 369 - OBCS failures testing approach and rectification
plan**

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Author: Karen Rogers
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Authority: John Meagher

Distribution

Tim Bentley	Benefits Distribution Team, POCL
Min Burdett	Acceptance Manager, POCL
John Coakes	Customer Requirements, ICL Pathway
John Dicks	Customer Requirements Director, ICL Pathway
Ruth Holleran	POCL
Kevin Corrigan	POCL Commercial
David McLaughlin	Business Service Management, POCL
John Meagher	Acceptance Manager, Horizon
Stephen Muchow	Customer Service Director, ICL Pathway
Paul Wootton	COBAP

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Approval

Stephen Muchow	Customer Service Director, ICL Pathway	
John Meagher	Acceptance Manager, Horizon	
Paul Wootton	COBAP	

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Version	Date	Reason for change
0.1	3/9/99	Draft for review
0.2	15/9/99	Revised following review of v0.1, tests, analyses and observations in w/c 6/9/99. Also includes proposed rectification plan.

0.2 Abbreviations

AI	Acceptance incident
ALPS	Automation of London post offices
BA	Benefits Agency
BSM	Business Service Management
CPP	Common Payment Package
DSS	Department of Social Security
FAD	Finance Accounting Division
HSHD	Horizon System Helpdesk
LT	Live Trial
NBSC	Network Business Support Centre
NR2	New Release 2
OBCS	Order Book Control Service
PIRA	Printing Industry Research Association
POCL	Post Office Counters Ltd
PPD	Process and Procedures Description
PRCS	Payment Repository Computer System
R1c	Release 1c

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1. Introduction

This paper outlines the issues surrounding Acceptance Incident 369, which was originally raised by Business Service Management on 20 July 1999. The AI text is as follows:

“The scanner reliability is questionable in relation to OBCS transactions where there has been a high number of rejections of pension and allowance books.”

The aim of this paper is to:

- identify each potential or perceived cause for the manual input of barcode information into OBCS;
- develop and implement appropriate tests and/or analyses, which complement the tests and analyses performed to date, and which will either confirm or disprove that each potential or perceived cause has affected the level of manual inputs into OBCS;
- provide a summary of the findings of the tests and analyses, thus confirming the cause(s) of the problem;
- propose a rectification plan, which, when implemented, will deliver a reduction in the number of manually input barcoded details into OBCS.

It is hoped that the agreement of the rectification plan will enable the Acceptance Incident to be closed.

2. Background

NB It has not been possible to address the comments on this paragraph provided by BA and POCL during the review of v0.1. This will be addressed at v0.3.

Below is a summary of the main events and issues leading up to the Acceptance Incident being raised, and the work subsequently completed by ICL Pathway prior to the Acceptance Disputes Workshop on 25 August.

An issue regarding the number of ‘unreadable barcodes’ was initially identified in July 1998. The issue related to the introduction of barcodes on war pension books, and specifically that the background colour of the order book appeared to be refracting the colour of the barcode, thus causing ‘unreadable barcode’ messages to be shown. When this message appears, the clerk is instructed to impound the book, unless the clerk selects the ‘system failure’ option (i.e. the barcode reader has failed).

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In August 1998 the printing process for order book covers changed from impact printing to laser printing. By the end of August/early September 1998 an increase in the number of 'unreadable barcode' messages was apparent. Calls to the Horizon System Helpdesk continued and in November 1998 the problem was attributed to the new method of printing adopted by BA.

An 'Authorised Temporary Procedure' was introduced by POCL in December 1998, which has continued to date. The procedure involves treating any book that fails on scanning as a 'non barcoded book'.

In January 1999 the Printing Industry Research Association (PIRA) examined the paper and concluded that the necessary ink-hardening agent was absent.

In March 1999 BA received new supplies of paper. In mid April it was confirmed that these provided little improvement in paper quality. Further improved paper was available in mid May.

In early June, BA indicated that the ALPS scanner had greater tolerance than the Horizon scanner. BA also provided evidence that some barcodes could be read with the ALPS scanner but not with the Horizon scanner.

In early July, BA advised POCL that a new paper stock would be introduced in the autumn, which would conform to the revised paper specification recommended by PIRA.

Acceptance Incident 369 was raised by BSM on 20 July.

ICL Pathway performed tests in August on 90 book covers printed using the current specification and 100 covers printed on new specification paper. All covers scanned successfully.

3. Tests, analyses and observations performed to date

A summary of the tests, analyses and observations performed to date appears below:

3.1 Tests conducted in a controlled environment

3.1.1 Tests using current paper stock

ICL Pathway have conducted tests at their site in Bracknell of 90 sample book covers. The covers are produced on the paper stock which is currently being used in the live environment. Each book cover was scanned a minimum of 5 times. All 450+ scans were successful. A summary of the results appears at Appendix A.

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3.1.2 Tests using paper stock available from mid October 1999

ICL Pathway have also conducted tests at Bracknell on 100 sample book covers which will be introduced into the live environment from mid October 1999. These new covers conform to the revised paper specification recommended by the Printing Industry Research Association. All scans were successful. A summary of the results appears at Appendix B.

3.2 Tests conducted at live offices

3.2.1 Tests of sample book covers

To complement the tests performed at Bracknell, 190 of the 190 sample book covers were tested in a 'live' environment i.e. at Borough High Street (OBCS) and Elephant and Castle (ALPS) post offices. Prior to the tests, the 'customer details' of each of the covers were entered by PRCS onto their system; thus enabling the books to be recognised as 'live' books.

On Tuesday 7 September each of the 190 covers were scanned at both Borough High Street and Elephant and Castle. All of the covers contained customer details that were not known to the offices, i.e. the OBCS and ALPS systems had to contact the host system to enable validation against the central stoplist. None of the covers required manual input; either because they failed to scan, because they required validation via the central stoplist, or because of 'system busy' messages (which appeared on two occasions in the OBCS office).

A summary of the tests appears at Appendix C.

3.2.2 Tests at live Horizon offices

The third element of tests related to books which belong to real customers, and which were either being introduced into the live environment, or which were already in the live environment.

The tests consisted of the following:

- scanning of the barcode into OBCS using the equipment already installed in live Horizon offices, and;
- assessing the quality of the barcode using specialist software i.e. the 'mobile laboratory'.

The process used for the tests, and a summary of the results obtained, is described below. It should be noted that although the tests provide an indication of the quality of the barcodes that are on books presently being delivered into post offices, they do not provide an assessment of the barcodes

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which have hitherto been in the live environment. They also do not provide an indication of the quality of the printing or paper used.

ICL Pathway's and POCL's preferred option is to remove the covers of books which have failed to scan in the live environment, enabling tests and analyses to be performed. This is consistent with the objectives of this paper, which is to either confirm or disprove each potential or perceived cause of the problem.

It has not been possible to secure agreement on the above approach to date. BA have expressed a reluctance to agree to a process where there is currently a reasonably high level of order book fraud involving the swapping of book covers. There is also a concern regarding the potential delay in replacing an order book for a customer, as a consequence of removing the original book from circulation. In addition, the Authorised Temporary Procedure, introduced in February, prevents books that fail to scan from being impounded. This ATP would need to be temporarily suspended if tests were to proceed on books that fail to scan in the near future.

A potential way forward is to perform tests on exhausted books i.e. books where the ATP has been applied and which have been replaced when the last foil has been encashed. However, most books are valid for an average of 20 weeks, and the tests would therefore only provide feedback on books introduced into the live environment some time ago. The tests would not provide an analysis of the books recently introduced into the live environment, and which have failed to scan. In addition, books that are subject to the ATP have had their barcode 'invalidated' by a datestamp, therefore preventing any testing of the quality of the barcode.

This issue will be discussed at a meeting with BA on Thursday 16 September, where it is hoped a way forward can be achieved, which satisfies the needs of all parties concerned.

3.2.2.1 Identification of live 'test' offices

According to data provided by ICL Pathway, a high proportion of manual inputs of barcodes have recently occurred in the Gateshead area (see 'Data provided by ICL Pathway'). A series of tests were therefore planned in 26 offices in this area on Friday 10 September. The offices involved in the trial were a mixture of those where the data showed that manual inputs had occurred in the previous week, and those where no manual inputs had occurred during the same period.

POCL BSM contacted 26 offices on 9 September, requesting the offices to hold any books delivered on Friday 10 September until a representative from Horizon and ICL Pathway called i.e. not to enter the details of books onto

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Horizon, unless a book was required by a customer. In total, 24 offices agreed to take part in the survey.

Although the majority of the 24 offices received a delivery of books that day, it was only possible to visit eight of the offices. This was primarily due to the time taken to travel between offices and the availability of the subpostmaster to demonstrate the procedures followed (see 'Observations at live offices'). All offices which received books but which were not visited were advised to continue with the receipt transaction if they did not receive a visit by late afternoon.

3.2.2.2. Tests using the Horizon equipment

There was a total of 142 barcoded and eight non barcoded books delivered to the eight offices on the day of the visits.

All barcoded books scanned successfully via the 'Receive In' screen i.e. none of the books required manual input of book details.

An additional test had also been planned, which would be implemented if any of the books failed to scan. This would involve substituting the existing barcode scanner with a second scanner, and performing the tests again to establish whether the original scanner was faulty. However, it was not necessary to perform this test, as all books scanned successfully on the first attempt.

3.2.2.3 Tests using specialist software

The 'PSC Quick Check' specialist software was supplied and installed on a laptop by ICL Pathway. This software uses the ANSI/CEN (American National Standards Institute/Commission for European Normalisation) standard as the measure of barcode symbol quality. The software assesses the quality and produces diagnostic files for each barcode scanned.

An ICL Pathway tester performed the analyses.

Two barcoded books were selected at random from each of the eight offices. Out of the 16 barcodes analysed, six (37.5%) did not reach the ANSI/CEN standard, although they had already scanned successfully on the Horizon system.

A visual inspection was also made to see whether there were any visible problems with the barcode, such as a fold in the book cover/barcode. However, no visible problems were identified.

The report produced by ICL Pathway appears at Appendix D, with the corresponding report from POCL at Appendix E. (NB Details of the

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observations made during the 'Receive In' procedure, highlighted in 'Observations at live Horizon offices' are also included in the report produced by POCL).

DN Clarification is required on the content of the reports produced by ICL Pathway and POCL, as there appears to be a difference in the total number of barcodes analysed.

3.3 Analysis of data provided by BA

The historical data provided by BA in August is attached at Appendix F (available in hard copy only). The calculation of the failure rates is based on a mixture of actual and assumed numbers of order books received in ALPS and OBCS offices for the period March to June 1999, and the number of books manually input for that period.

The data included in Appendix G (also available in hard copy only) was supplied by BA on 7 September. This includes the actual number of receipts, issues, encashments and redirections for both OBCS and ALPS offices for the period March to June. However, the data returned to PRCS does not differentiate between those transactions that have been manually input due to a failure during scanning, and those that have been manually input due to the barcode reader being faulty. (The latter is indicated by the clerk selecting an option on the screen during the transaction).

The data indicates that the number of manual inputs in OBCS offices is almost twenty five times higher than the number of manual inputs in ALPS offices. However, this figure cannot be validated without knowing the level of 'scanner failures', either those reported to the HSHD, or those where the clerk has indicated 'System failure - yes' during the transaction.

Even with the above information, the number of occasions where the scanner has been reported as faulty, or when the clerk indicates that system failure has occurred, should be treated as an indication only of the level of failure, and not as an accurate reflection. ICL Pathway have suggested that in the majority of instances, no problems are found with scanners that have been replaced in live offices. In addition, feedback from the visits to Gateshead indicates that users are using the 'system failure' option to prevent an impound message appearing.

DN ICL Pathway to provide details on the levels of scanner failures reported to the HSHD, and on the number, type and date of transactions where the 'system failure - yes' option has been selected by the user.

Following information received during telephone calls to Horizon offices, feedback from the visits to Gateshead, and evidence provided by CAPS

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(detailed in 'Information provided by CAPS'), it is apparent that a number of manual inputs can be attributed to non barcoded book details being entered into OBCS as 'barcoded books'. In addition, the Authorised Temporary Procedure introduced in February should prevent books being manually input when they have failed to scan. The data provided by BA therefore indicates those occasions where procedures are not being followed, rather than the number of books which have failed to scan. The Horizon system cannot record those instances where a book fails to scan, only those instances where book details have been input manually.

Although the introduction of the ATP prevents customers from being inconvenienced, and reduces the number of replacement books issued, it does not provide an accurate indication of the current level of books that may fail to scan if the ATP had not been introduced.

At a meeting with BA on 14 September, it was agreed that an alternative approach is required to obtain an accurate view of the level of barcoded books that have failed to scan in recent months. It is possible to calculate the potential increase of books recorded onto OBCS as 'non barcoded' i.e. barcoded books which have failed to scan and which are subject to the ATP. However, the data available at PRCS will require a certain amount of manipulation to achieve the end result. This is primarily due to the way in which data is captured for non barcoded books (i.e. number of foils), against the number of *transactions* recorded for barcoded books. In addition, new Horizon offices, with potentially higher levels of order book transactions, have been introduced during the period that is being analysed.

BA have agreed to circulate the proposed formula, and to produce calculations of barcode read failures, based on this formula. This information should be available for circulation by Thursday 16 September.

DN A similar exercise has been conducted by POCL, and the results are attached at Appendix H. The calculations suggest that an average 60,000 additional 'non barcoded' encashments are being performed, i.e. encashments of barcoded books which are being treated as non barcoded books following the introduction of the ATP.

3.4.3 Information provided by CAPS

As highlighted previously, information provided by CAPS on 8 September indicates that a number of non barcoded books are being recorded as barcoded books i.e. the book details are being input via the 'Manual Input' option. This option should only be used when barcoded books fail to scan, either because the barcode cannot be read, or because the scanner is faulty. Non barcoded books should be input via the 'OBCS Foils' option.

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The information indicates that 23 offices have incorrectly recorded Invalid Care Allowance books as barcoded books. However, information provided from POCL BSM on 15 September indicates that five of the offices highlighted appear to have incorrect FAD codes i.e. there is no such office recorded against the FAD code provided. Confirmation of the correct FAD codes is required, before further analysis can be made.

Suggested source: CAPS

3.4 Analysis of data from recent transactions

3.4.1 Data provided by ICL Pathway

Following the action agreed at the Acceptance Disputes Workshop on 25 August, ICL Pathway is providing a daily report of failures in OBCS offices. The report includes the following information:

- FAD code;
- node ID;
- date of transaction;
- time of transaction;
- User ID;
- product code (identifying the benefit group number)*;
- Customer Reference Number*;
- type of transaction i.e. receipt, issue or encashment;
- whether the transaction required a connection to the central stoplist.

(* derived from manual keying).

The most recent data also shows the results of telephone calls to the outlets by ICL Pathway Customer Services staff, to identify the cause of the problems.

ICL Pathway provided a summary of the manual inputs from 11 August to 11 September on 15 September. This is attached at Appendix I.

The analysis of data and the feedback from the telephone calls from 25 August to present indicates a number of contributing factors:

3.4.1 Software problem at Sedbury SPSO

A total of 40 of manual inputs were recorded at Sedbury SPSO (FAD code 269632) from 25 to 28 August.

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The subpostmistress reported a problem to the HSHD on 24 August. The problem appeared to be a software 'bug' which prevented the scanning of the first book following book receipt. When a book was scanned for encashment, the 'Receive In' screen appeared, which the clerk had to exit. Any attempt to scan the book would result in the 'Receive In' screen appearing again. Therefore, the clerk used the 'Manual Input' option to enter the book details onto OBCS.

Evidence from the PinICL text (28907) suggests that the subpostmistress reported that the problem was occurring at all three counter positions and as a consequence advised the HSHD that all book details would be input manually.

A fix was implemented on 29 August, and, although there has been an overall reduction in the level of manual inputs at Sedbury, a total of 20 have been recorded for the period 31 August to 11 September. However, there is a lack of clarity regarding the actual implementation date of the fix, which, in one case has been reported as being introduced on 1 September. If correct, this could explain the number of manual inputs made on 30 August and 1 September (5 and 3 respectively).

DN ICL Pathway to provide clarification on the date when the software fix was implemented.

3.4.2 Books not scanned at the time of the transaction

The data indicates that there are a number of manual inputs when offices appear to be closed e.g. before 8.30 in the morning. In a number of instances this could be attributed to offices 'Receiving In' books following delivery, and prior to the office opening. However, during a discussion regarding PinICL 28907, the subpostmaster at Sedbury SPSO indicated that on occasions barcodes are not scanned during an encashment, and that the encashment details are entered later. As the barcode details would no longer be available, when the details are entered, an impound message is displayed.

3.4.3 Non barcoded books entered as 'barcoded' books

As highlighted in 'Analysis of data provided by BA' (para 5), a number of non barcoded books appear to have been entered as 'barcoded' books.

3.4.4 A lack of knowledge of the ATP/procedure for 'new' offices

It appears that barcoded books that fail to scan are being entered manually onto the system, rather than being treated as non barcoded books i.e. offices are not following the ATP introduced in February 1999.

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In addition, evidence suggests that the procedure agreed for 'new' Horizon offices, i.e. those which have gone live since 31 August, is not being followed. This procedure instructs users to 'Receive In' books onto the Horizon system, but not to use OBCS for issue, encash or redirect transactions. The data provided by ICL Pathway suggests that some of these offices are using OBCS for all transaction types, and manually entering order book details.

3.4.5 Books scanned more than once

In some instances, the data indicates that a book has been scanned a second or third time, even though an impound message was displayed on the first attempt. This would artificially inflate the number of books which have been manually input due to barcode or barcode reader failure.

3.5 Observations at 'live' Horizon offices

As part of the visits to Gateshead, the procedures which users followed were observed, to ascertain whether they are consistent with those documented in the User Guide. The detail of these observations appears in Appendix E.

In summary, the observations in three of the eight offices confirms the procedural issues identified previously i.e. that the correct procedures are not always followed. Additionally, one user attempted to enter a non barcoded book as a barcoded book, by 'creating' a CPP number to enter into the system (where a CPP number was not available).

Two offices advised that they would select the 'System failure - yes' option to prevent the non barcoded book from being impounded.

In addition to the procedural issues, the Human Computer Interface appears to cause some confusion; one user thought that the 'Manual Input' option is used for the input of both barcoded and non barcoded books. The correct option for non barcoded books is 'OBCS Foils'. However, this does not appear to be an accurate description of this feature.

3.6 Analysis of support materials

3.6.1 Analysis of training workbooks

The LT1 and LT2 versions of the training workbooks were analysed, to identify whether the information is comprehensive and accurate, and whether the instructions are open to interpretation. The detail of the analysis appears in Appendix J.

It should be noted that the analysis has been performed on the *content* of the workbooks, and not on the delivery of the information at a training event.

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A summary of the findings appears below:

- the workbook for LT1 did not appear to include the correct button names for some OBCS functions, as documented in the Horizon OPS Menu Hierarchy document and the PPDs;
- a note was added to the LT2 version, indicating that there was “no requirement to Receive, Redirect or Issue non barcoded order books through the Horizon system”. This is potentially misleading as this could be taken to mean that the details *could* be included if possible (e.g. if the office was not too busy);
- both workbooks document the correct procedure for dealing with impounded books. However, they do not make it explicit that a second scan should not be made.

3.6.2 Analysis of Horizon System User Guide

To complement the analysis of the training workbooks, a similar exercise was performed on the Horizon System User Guides. The detailed analysis appears in Appendix L (available on hard copy).

DN A summary of the analysis will appear in v0.3.

3.7 Feedback on Human Computer Interface

During the visits to Gateshead, a user indicated that some of the button names for OBCS were confusing. Specifically, there appears to be an issue with the ‘Manual Input’ button, as it could be interpreted that the button is for the manual entry of both barcoded and non barcoded books. (NB the ‘Manual Input’ button should only be used for the manual entry of barcoded books. Non barcoded books should be entered via the ‘OBCS Foils’ button.

4 Remedial actions already implemented

A number of remedial actions have been implemented, or are in the process of being implemented. These are:

4.1 Issue of ‘emergency cascades’ to all Horizon offices

POCL have produced ‘emergency cascades’ which were issued on Friday 10 September, for delivery on Saturday 11 September. Two versions of the cascade were produced: one for the original 323 Live Trial offices, and one for the offices which have gone live from 31 August.

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4.1.1 Cascade for 323 LT offices

The version for the 323 LT offices included a reminder regarding the Authorised Temporary Procedure, and emphasised the correct procedure for dealing with non barcoded books.

4.1.2 Cascade for 'new' offices

The version for 'new' offices included a reminder regarding the temporary procedure which has been implemented in new offices only i.e. to use OBCS *only* for the purpose of receiving barcoded books, and not for anything else.

4.1.3 Amendment to training workbook

ICL Pathway are progressing the amendment of the training workbook, to emphasise that non barcoded books should not be entered into OBCS.

4.1.4 Changes to button names

POCL are considering changes to button names, to eliminate the potential confusion when dealing with non barcoded books.

4.1.5 Telephone calls to offices

Following production of the daily report of manual inputs from ICL Pathway, POCL BSM will telephone offices who have manually input book details, to identify the causes of the problem. Where the reason for the manual input can be attributed to a procedural error i.e. those where there is no system failure, a reminder of the correct procedure will be provided.

5 Rectification plan

A matrix of perceived or potential failures appears in Appendix M. This matrix has been used to identify areas of further analyses or tests, to enable the objectives of this paper to be progressed.

The proposed rectification plan has two elements:

- further actions required to enable the completion of comprehensive analysis on each potential or perceived cause of the problem;
- proposed solutions, which when implemented, should deliver a reduction in the level of manual inputs.

NB. These proposed solutions are based on the tests, analyses and observations already completed. They will need to be revised/expanded

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following the completion of any outstanding analyses highlighted in the first part of the rectification plan.

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5.1 Further analyses required

* These could be process papers already produced for other purposes

Topic area	Sub topic	Proposed action	Lead	Outputs	Proposed target date
System issues	Human Computer Interface	Workshop to identify potential areas of confusion/improvement opportunities.	POCL	Paper outlining improvement opportunities on system design.	8 October
Training materials/delivery (ICL Pathway)	Communication of revised procedures (I)	Confirmation of the process for communicating revisions to procedures during the lifetime of a release. To include revision to training material and communication to trainers.	ICL Pathway	Paper outlining the process, focusing on the initial training i.e. the training performed by ICL Pathway (ICL Training Services) personnel*.	24 September
Training materials/delivery	Configuration management	Confirmation of the process for ensuring that changes to system design /procedures are reflected in draft/final versions of the training workbook (i.e. during the development of the workbook for a particular release).	ICL Pathway	Paper outlining the process*.	24 September

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Training materials/delivery (POCL)	Communication of revised procedures (ii)	Confirmation of the process for communicating revisions to procedures during the lifetime of a release. To include revision to training material and communication to trainers.	POCL	Paper outlining the process, focusing on the on-going training i.e. the training performed by POCL personnel*.	24 September
Procedures	Communication of revised procedures	Confirmation of the process for communicating revisions to procedures during the lifetime of a release. To include the communication of urgent information.	POCL	Paper outlining the process for communication both urgent and non-urgent changes to the User Guide *.	24 September
Order books	Analysis of barcodes	Analyse barcodes of books which are currently failing/have recently failed to read in the live environment	ICL Pathway	Report on the quality of barcodes	1 October
Order books	Analysis of printing/paper	Analyse the paper of books which are currently failing/have recently failed to read in the live environment	ICL Pathway (PIRA)	Report on the quality of the printing/paper	1 October

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5.2 Proposed solutions

Topic area	Sub topic	Proposed action	Lead	Outputs	Proposed target date
Training materials/delivery	Training workbook revisions	Reword paragraph(s) relating to non barcoded books. Emphasise that books should only be scanned once, where an impound message is displayed. Emphasise correct procedure for 'system failure' i.e. to use this option <i>only</i> when the barcode reader is faulty and when the failure has been reported to the HSHD.	ICL Pathway	Draft of the changes, for review	24 September
Training materials/delivery	Communication of revised procedures	Confirmation of the communication of the revised procedure for new Horizon offices during	ICL Pathway	Copy of the trainers' 'addendum' documenting the amendment	20 September

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		training events			
Procedures	Communication of revised procedures	Confirmation of the communication of the revised procedure for new Horizon offices	POCL	Copy of the communication issued to new Horizon offices	20 September

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(NB text copied from ICL Pathway's document Testing of 'Current Specification' Book Covers with ALPS and OBCS Scanners v1.0 ref: OTT/TST2/0064)

Testing 'Current Specification' Barcodes with ALPS and OBCS Scanners

Release Note : N/A **PinICL/ChangeProposal :** N/A

Pre Fix Test Completed Date : N/A **Tested By :** N/A

Post Fix Test Completed Date: August 21 1999 **Tested By :** K
Saunders

Result of Testing : Use of ALPS scanners : PASS **Tested By :** K
Saunders

Use of OBCS scanners: PASS

Problem description

Outlets have reported problems with scanning benefit books using the OBCS scanner, but a similar problem has not been seen with the ALPS scanner. POCL believe that the scanners used on the ALPS counters are more tolerant and require comparative testing using both types of scanner against a batch of book covers as part of Acceptance Incident AI369.

100 'current specification' book covers have been supplied by POCL for these tests. All are 'live' cases and have been treated accordingly.

Test**1. Scan the 'current specification' book covers using the ALPS scanner**

All 100 book covers were scanned a maximum of 5 times each using the ALPS scanner.

All scans were completed successfully.

2. Scan the 'current specification' book covers using the OBCS scanner

All 100 book covers were scanned a maximum of 5 times each using the OBCS scanner.

All scans were completed successfully.

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plan**

Conclusions

The tests carried out on the 100 book covers indicate that both the ALPS and OBCS scanners can successfully read the 'current specification' paper and ink combination.

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(NB text copied from ICL Pathway's document Testing of 'New Specification' Book Covers with ALPS and OBCS Scanners v2.0 ref: OTT/TST2/0063)

Testing of 'New Specification' Book Covers with ALPS and OBCS Scanners

Release Note	N/A	PinICL/Change
Proposal:	N/A	
Pre Fix Test Completed Date:	N/A	Tested By:
	N/A	
Post Fix Test Completed Date:	30/7/99	Tested By:
	KSAU	
Result of Testing:	Use of OBCS scanners: PASS	Tested By:
	KSAU	
	Use of ALPS scanners: PASS	

Problem description

Outlets have reported problems with scanning benefit books using the OBCS scanners, but a similar problem has not been seen with the ALPS scanner. POCL believe that the scanners used on the ALPS counters are more tolerant and require comparative testing using both types of scanner against a batch of book covers as part of Acceptance Incident AI369.

90 'new specification' book covers have been supplied by POCL for these tests. All are in the name of Rita Riggins although the serial and National Insurance numbers are different.

Test script**1. Scan the 'new specification' book covers using both OBCS scanners**

Two OBCS scanners were tested:

One off Serial No. M-50, with S/W rev level 5.1.1=*D=1.2

One off Serial No. N-15 with S/W rev. level 5.1.1=*F=1.2.

1.1. Using the first scanner (Serial no M-50, software rev level 5.1.1=*D=1.2)

Each of the book covers was scanned a minimum of five times.

This resulted in 450+ successful scans, with no fails.

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- 1.2. Using the second scanner (Serial no N-15, software rev level 5.1.1=*F=1.2)

Each of the book covers was scanned a minimum of five times.

This resulted in 450+ successful scans with no fails.

2. **Scan the 'new specification' book covers using the ALPS scanner**

Each of the book covers was scanned a minimum of five times.

This resulted in 450+ successful scans with no failures.

3. **Scan mutilated 'new specification' book covers using the OBCS scanner.**

In an attempt to recreate reasonable environmental damage likely to be suffered by a benefit book during usage by a beneficiary, five 'new specification' book covers were damaged in various ways: folded, screwed up, rolled into a tube, soaked in coffee and soft drink (and allowed to dry).

Each of these book covers was rescanned using the OBCS scanner.

Whilst it was necessary to flatten out the worst of the creases in some of the foils, all could be read without significant difficulty.

Conclusion

Based on the tests carried out, there is no evidence to suggest that:

- The OBCS scanners cannot read the 'new specification' book covers.
- The ALPS scanner cannot read the 'new specification' book covers
- The condition of the book cover appears to have no significant effect.

a)

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Appendix C

OBCS Failure Testing at Borough High Street and Elephant and Castle post offices.

Purpose of test

To establish whether there is a problem with the ability of Horizon System to read the barcode on bar-code order books.

Method

Receipt a batch of ninety 'dummy' order books and a batch of one hundred 'dummy' order books, both supplied by the Benefits Agency, into a post office operating the Horizon system and a post office operating the ALPS system.

Five of the order book covers in the batch of ninety covers have been deliberately damaged, three are crumpled, one has a coffee stain over the bar-code and one has been torn across the top of the bar-code.

Offices included in trial

- Borough High Street BO (Horizon)
- Elephant & Castle (ALPS)

Personnel involved

- Steve Austin (Horizon Programme)
- Mark Barber (ICL Pathway)

Test

Borough High Street

The Gateway PC was used to receipt the order books. In order to receipt books the user has to be logged onto the system and the receipt order book function must be selected. For the test, an existing user within the office logged onto the system. The batch of one hundred covers was scanned first followed by the batch of ninety covers. All books in both batches read successfully and there was no need enter any information manually. All of the covers used were not known to the office and therefore the system has to contact the 'host system' in order to validate them against the stop list. There was no significant time delay for the Horizon system to contact the host, the longest pause being approximately 2 seconds, the majority of covers were validate immediately. However, on two occasions a line busy message was

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displayed. Following the acknowledgement of this message the covers were re-scanned and were accepted. There was no need or no system prompt to input the details manually.

Elephant & Castle

The back office processor was used to receipt the order books. In order to receipt books the user has to be logged onto the system and the receipt order book function must be selected. For the test, an existing user within the office logged onto the system. The batch of one hundred covers was scanned first followed by the batch of ninety covers. All books in both batches read successfully and there was no need enter any information manually. All of the covers used were not known to the office and therefore the system has to contact the 'host system' in order to validate them against the stop list. There was no time delay.

Result

Both batches were scanned successfully at both offices, there were no system prompts or no need to enter any of the book information correctly.

Conclusion

There was no apparent problem with the ability of Horizon System to read the barcode on bar-code order books.

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Appendix D

(NB text copied from ICL Pathway's document OBCS Scan Issues v0.1 08/09/1999).

OBCS Scan Issues.

PinICL/Ref: Acceptance Incident 369

Date of Test : 10th September 1999

Locations: Several Post Offices, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear Area

*Testers: Mark Barber (ICL PATHWAY)
Tim Vause (POCL)*

Brief Overview

Tasked by ICL PATHWAY and POCL to accompany Tim Vause (POCL) on a trip to a number of Post Offices in the Newcastle and Gateshead Districts, with the intention of looking into OBCS scan issues. If required I was to use the verification equipment (highlighted below) on any failed OBCS readings.

Equipment

QuickCheck PC Version 1.06

PSC Quickcheck PC Verifier Interface Module (with attached Scanner)

Fujitsu Pentium 32MB Laptop

PO Branches

The following Post Office Branches were visited.

Coldwell Road	Prince Consult Road
Coats Rd	Low Fell
High Street	Saltwell Road
West Street	Westgate

Test Script.

POCL

V0.2 15/09/99

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The following tasks were to be undertaken by POCL staff on site

1. POCL Staff to scan in new OBCS foils
2. Process viewed by POCL representative (Tim Vause)
3. Provide ICL Pathway staff with suspect foil for testing

ICL PATHWAY

The following tasks were to be undertaken by ICL PATHWAY staff on site

1. Take test scans of several OBCS foils at each branch.
2. In the case of failures, OBCS foils were to be scanned 10 times using PSC equipment
3. Analyse results at a later date.

Results

Example Reading

See Attachment 1 for scan reading of an OBCS foil at Coats Rd, Gateshead. The Scan Report included a Scan Grade that is the most important field. This is graded from A-D + F. The example shows a PASS grade of B. See below for a quick ratification of the grade system.

A, B and C	PASS
D and F	FAIL

Actual Results on day

After visiting the Post Office branches and viewing in the region of 300 new OBCS scans. The outcome was ZERO barcode reader failure, with the ICL equipment.

Test Results on day

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As there were no failures of OBCS foils when on site, I decided to take some test readings at various Post Offices, below is a quick highlight of the pass and failure rates of OBCS foils. Please bear in mind that all these barcodes scanned in with no problems on PATHWAY counters.

POST OFFICE	NUMBER OF TEST SCANS	GRADE				
		A	B	C	D	F
Coldwell Road	5	-	-	-	1	4
Coats Road	2	-	1	-	-	1
High Street	2	-	2	-	-	-
West Street	2	-	-	-	1	1
Prince Consult Road	2	-	-	-	2	-
Low Fell	20	-	6	10	2	2
Saltwell Road	6	-	-	5	-	1
Westgate	6	-	-	-	6	-
Total	45	-	9	15	12	9

Conclusion

On the equipment

The PSC Quickcheck equipment is a valid tool to use in the verification of the barcode on Infra Red light.

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However, due to no problems with the PATHWAY equipment on scans, there seems to be a conflict in results when comparing with the results taken using the PSC equipment. Unfortunately not being an expert in this product I can only put this down to:

1. The technique required to pick up a valid scan on the equipment was difficult.
2. The attribute of ambient light in certain Post Offices could have been a factor in failures on the PSC equipment.

On the Acceptance Issue

With regards to the Acceptance Issue, I saw nothing to suggest there was an problem with the PATHWAY equipment with the OBCS scans.

Recommendations.

Possibly undertake this test again in another Region to clarify results taken so far or to gather extra information.

Contact PSC and obtain a Scan Wand, which may prove easier to use.

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Appendix E

OBCS Failure Test 2

Purpose of test

To identify the reasons or possible causes for higher than expected levels of manual input of barcodes on pension and allowance order books

Method

Observe the procedures followed at a selection of post offices in the Newcastle area for the receipt of bar-coded order books onto the Horizon system. Gather data in respect of failed scans during the book receipt process and failed scans following the issue and encashment of bar-coded order books.

Using the software package 'PSC Quick Check', test a random selection of bar-coded order books for bar-code quality at each post office. The 'PSC Quick Check' software uses the ANSI/CEN (American National Standards Institute/Commission for European Normalisation) standard as the measure of bar-code symbol quality. The results of the tests have been saved on floppy disc and include the following methods of verification:

- Scan profile;
- Minimum Reflectance;
- Minimum Edge Contrast;
- Symbol Contrast;
- Modulation;
- Defects;
- Decodability;
- Decode;
- Scan Grade;
- Symbol Grade .

Offices included in trial

- Gateshead MSPO;
- High Street SPO;
- Prince Consort Road SPO;

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- Coatsworth Road SPO;
- Low Fell SPO;
- Saltwell Road SPO;
- Felling SPO;
- Westgate Hill SPO.
-

Personnel involved

- Tim Vause (Horizon Programme);
- Mark Barber (ICL Pathway).

Test

Gateshead MSPO

FAD code: 152 329 5

User ID: **GRO**

The office had 12 order books to receive onto the system. All the barcodes were read and there was no need or no system prompt to input the details manually. The NR2 Order Book Control Service PPD (vers2.0) and the Horizon System User Guide (version 8.0) procedures were correctly followed.

Two barcodes were selected at random and tested for quality. They both failed the test.

Observations: The user had previous experience of other automated systems (ECCO+, Capture and Richard Jackson). They had been ICL Pathway trained. (approx. end April'99).

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High Street SPO

FAD code: 261 329 5

User ID:

The office had 14 order books to receive onto the system. All the barcodes were read and there was no need or no system prompt to input the details manually. The NR2 Order Book Control Service PPD (vers2.0) and the Horizon System User Guide (version 8.0) procedures were correctly followed.

Two barcodes were selected at random and tested for quality. They both passed the test.

Observations: The user had previous experience of an automated system (Richard Jackson). They had been ICL Pathway trained. (approx. end April'99).

Prince Consort Road SPO

FAD code:314 329 5

User ID:

The office had 3 order books to receive onto the system. All the barcodes were read and there was no need or no system prompt to input the details manually. The NR2 Order Book Control Service PPD (vers2.0) and the Horizon System User Guide (version 8.0) procedures were correctly followed.

Two barcodes were selected at random and tested for quality. One passed and one failed the test.

Observations: The user had previous experience of an automated system (Richard Jackson). They had been ICL Pathway trained (approx. end April'99). The postmaster stated that he had not encountered any problems with unreadable barcodes for a long time.

Coatsworth Road SPO

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FAD code: 205 329 5

User ID: **GRO**

The office had 19 order books to receive onto the system. All the barcodes were read and there was no need or no system prompt to input the details manually. The NR2 Order Book Control Service PPD (vers2.0) and the Horizon System User Guide (version 8.0) procedures were correctly followed.

Two barcodes were selected at random and tested for quality. One passed and one failed the test.

Observations: The user had previous experience of an automated system (Richard Jackson). They had been ICL Pathway trained but unable to say when or where.

Low Fell SPO

FAD code: 284 329 3

User ID: **GRO**

The office had 17 order books to receive onto the system. All the barcodes were read and there was no need or no system prompt to input the details manually. The office had also received 4 non bar-coded order books. The user attempted to 'receive' these onto the Horizon system but was unable to do so only because there was no CPP number printed on the front of the order book. The user stated that had a CPP number been on the order book then they would have 'received' them onto the system despite them being non bar-coded. They stated that they would have selected the 'system failure - yes' option so that they would not be impounded. The NR2 Order Book Control Service PPD (vers2.0) and the Horizon System User Guide (version 8.0) procedures were correctly followed for bar-coded order books but **not** for non bar-coded order books.

Two barcodes were selected at random and tested for quality. They both passed the test.

Observations: The user had previous experience of an automated system (Richard Jackson). They had been ICL Pathway trained at the end of May'99. The postmaster stated that he had not encountered any problems with unreadable barcodes for a long time. They also stated that they have problems contacting the central system early in the morning (between 815am and 900am) but a way round this is to receive books on to the system later in the day.

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Saltwell Road SPO

FAD code: 327 329 6

User ID:

The office had 33 order books to receive onto the system. All the barcodes were read and there was no need or no system prompt to input the details manually. The office had also received 4 non bar-coded order books. The user 'received' these onto the Horizon system entering the details manually. Where there were books with no CPP number printed on the front he took a number from the foils and entered two zeros in front of it so it would be accepted on the system as a CPP number. He stated that he selected the 'system failure - yes' option so that they would not be impounded however, whilst I was present he did not select this for one of the order books. This resulted in a non bar-coded order book being impounded on the system. At this stage the user looked at the impound message and, not sure if he had selected the 'system failure - yes' option proceeded to receive the book on to the system again, this time, selecting the 'system failure - yes' option. The NR2 Order Book Control Service PPD (vers2.0) and the Horizon System User Guide (version 8.0) procedures were correctly followed for bar-coded order books but **not** for non bar-coded order books.

Two barcodes were selected at random and tested for quality. They both passed the test.

The user had details of 2 bar-coded order books from the previous day (09/9/99) where they had failed to scan on encashment. The book details were as follows:

Group 11 Ref. ZR 782786B 02 151

Group 11 Ref. NW836101D 26 151

Observations: The user had previous experience of an automated system (Richard Jackson). They had been ICL Pathway trained mid May'99. The postmaster stated that he had not encountered any problems with unreadable barcodes for a long time and that child benefit books were particularly good. They also stated that books could not scan one week but then scan the next. The user felt that the button wording was confusing - mistaking 'manual input' for implying books without bar-codes that need to be manually entered on to the system.

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Felling SPO

FAD code: 237 239 7

User ID: **GRO**

The office had 32 order books to receive onto the system. All the barcodes were read and there was no need or no system prompt to input the details manually. The NR2 Order Book Control Service PPD (vers2.0) and the Horizon System User Guide (version 8.0) procedures were correctly followed.

Two barcodes were selected at random and tested for quality. They both failed the test.

Observations: The user had no previous experience of an automated system. They had been ICL Pathway trained mid May'99. The user stated that they did not follow the authorised temporary procedure for foreign encashment. They would scan the book even if the barcode had been cancelled with a datestamp. He stated that he would always put this through as system failure. Also, sometimes a bar-code will read even after its been cancelled with a datestamp. The postmaster also stated that they had come across several occasions when a barcode had become unreadable after the book had been kept in a plastic wallet. The barcode sticks to the plastic and rubs off.

Westgate Hill SPO

FAD code: 313 329 0

User ID: **GRO**

The office had 12 order books to receive onto the system. All the barcodes were read and there was no need or no system prompt to input the details manually. The NR2 Order Book Control Service PPD (vers2.0) and the Horizon System User Guide (version 8.0) procedures were correctly followed for the receipt of bar-coded order books. However, the user stated that had there been non bar-coded order books present then they would have attempted to receive these on to the system if they had a CPP number present. They had no knowledge of the authorised temporary procedure.

Two barcodes were selected at random and tested for quality. They both passed the test.

Observations: The user had no previous experience of automated systems. They had been POCL trained (sub post office agency trainer) in August'99.

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They stated that they thought 'manual input' and 'OBCS manual' referred to non bar-coded order books.

Result

Users who have received their training in May for LT2 are not following the correct procedures.

Out of 16 barcodes analysed, six (37.5%) did not reach the ANSI/CEN standard. A visual inspection of the order books gave no evidence to suggest any problem with the order books.

Out of 142 bar-coded books received at the post offices, 142 (100%) were read by the Horizon system.

Conclusion

There was no apparent problem with the ability of the Horizon System to read the barcode on bar-code order books.

In the main users were not experiencing problems with unreadable barcodes on new order books.

There was no reason to conclude that any of the books analysed were damaged in any way which might have affected the results of the analysis.

User error due to incorrect training or lack of knowledge on the authorised temporary procedure may be causing the figures of manual input of barcodes on pension and allowance order books to be falsely inflated.

Some users have indicated that they find the button names confusing i.e. 'manual input' and 'OBCS manual' could be taken for non bar-coded order books.

Barcodes may become unreadable if the book is kept in a plastic wallet.

Author

Tim Vause, Horizon Product Management Team

15 September, 1999.

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Appendix H - calculation of books subject to the Authorised Temporary Procedure

	Non Barcoded Foins	Non Barcode Encashments	Scanned Encashments	Total encashments	Total barcode	% non
Jun-98	20938	17448	300385	317833	5.49%	
Jul-98	21316	17763	294573	312336	5.69%	
Aug-98	19356	16130	268799	284929	5.66%	
Sep-98	19392	16160	281652	297812	5.43%	
Oct-98	18267	15223	278793	294016	5.18%	
Nov-98	17535	14613	279534	294147	4.97%	
Dec-98	19155	15963	267295	283258	5.64%	
Jan-99	17883	14903	254702	269605	5.53%	
Feb-99	22099	18416	243818	262234	7.02%	
Mar-99	42070	35058	269864	304922	11.50%	
Apr-99	45570	37975	227481	265456	14.31%	
May-99	110651	92209	332860	425069	21.69%	
Jun-99	228342	190285	854001	1044286	18.22%	

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Jul-99	191872	159893	914706	1074599	14.88%
--------	--------	--------	--------	---------	--------

Non barcode
with

5.75%
underlying

non barcode

encashments removed

					REAL TREND
Mar-99	42070	35058	269864	17538	5.75%
Apr-99	45570	37975	227481	15268	8.55%
May-99	110651	92209	332860	24448	15.94%
Jun-99	228342	190285	854001	60063	12.47%
Jul-99	191872	159893	914706	61806	9.13%

April98 - Feb99 ave non barcode encashments 5.75%

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Appendix J - Analysis of training workbooks

<u>Changes</u>								<u>Further areas for concern</u>	
<u>System related</u>						<u>Non system related</u>			
<u>Book Issue</u>		<u>Manual input for bar-coded order book encashment</u>		<u>OBCS serve customer menu hierarchy</u>		<u>Book receipt</u>		<u>Encashment of foils from non bar-coded order books</u>	
LT1	LT2	LT1	LT2	LT1	LT2	LT1	LT2	LT1	LT2
Button name - 'OBCS Book Issu'	Button name - 'OBCS Booklet'	Button name - 'OBCS Book Man'	Button name - 'OBCS Manual'	Button name - 'Benefit + DSS'	Button name - 'P and A'	Text not included	Text added on page 7 - 'Note: There is no requirement to complete the receive in procedure for non bar-coded order books.'	LT1 page 42 & LT2 page 37 'Note: There is no requirement to Receive, Redirect or Issue non bar-coded order books through the Horizon system.'	

Dean Felix supplied training workbooks. Dean advised that workbook dated 15/3/99 relates to LT1 training and workbook dated 25/7/99 relates to LT2 training. It appears that the LT1 workbook did not reflect the current functionality as the button name changes were documented in the 'Horizon OPS Menu Hierarchy for Release 2: Changes Supplement Issue 1' document, dated 13/10/98.

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Appendix M - Matrix of potential or perceived causes of failure

Category	Actions completed to date	Actions required to complete tests/analyses
System issues		
Quality of barcode scanner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tests on sample of 90 order book covers (current stock) conducted by ICL Pathway; • Tests on sample of 100 order book covers (future stock) conducted by ICL Pathway; • Tests on sample of 190 order book covers (current and future stock) scanned through 'live' Horizon and ALPS systems, conducted by ICL Pathway and Horizon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None.
Communications line failure/ Foreign transactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tests on sample of 190 order book covers (current and future stock) scanned through 'live' Horizon and ALPS systems, conducted by ICL Pathway and Horizon. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None.
Human Computer Interface	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation/ information gathered during test on 'live' order book barcodes at selected Horizon post offices, conducted by ICL Pathway and Horizon. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific exercise to identify potential areas of confusion/improvement opportunities.

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Support		
Training materials/delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of training workbooks to confirm accuracy and comprehensiveness; • Observation/ information gathered during test on 'live' order book barcodes at selected Horizon post offices, conducted by ICL Pathway and Horizon. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review description of process for communicating revised procedures, by both ICL Pathway and POCL trainers.
Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of User Guides to confirm accuracy and comprehensiveness; • Observation/ information gathered during test on 'live' order book barcodes at selected Horizon post offices, conducted by ICL Pathway and Horizon. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review description of process for communicating revised procedures; • Obtain confirmation regarding awareness of correct OBCS procedures at the HSHD;
Order books		
Quality of printing/paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tests on paper conducted by PIRA, for the Benefits Agency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tests on the printing/paper of orders books that fail to read in the 'live environment' (on both exhausted books and new books).
Quality of barcodes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tests on sample of 90 order book covers (current stock) conducted by ICL Pathway; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tests on barcodes of orders books that fail to read in the 'live environment' (on both

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tests on sample of 100 order book covers (future stock) conducted by ICL Pathway;• Tests on sample of 190 order book covers (current and future stock), scanned through 'live' Horizon and ALPS systems, conducted by ICL Pathway and Horizon.• Tests on 'live' order book barcodes at selected Horizon automated post offices, conducted by ICL Pathway and Horizon.	exhausted books and new books).
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