Thursday, 7 December, 2023

| (10.00 am) | 2 |
| :---: | :---: |
| MS PRICE: Good morning, sir, can you see and hear us. | 4 |
| SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, thank you. | 5 |
| MS PRICE: Please may we call Mr Wilcox. MICHAEL JOHN WILCOX (sworn) Questioned by MS PRICE | 7 8 |
| MS PRICE: Good morning, Mr Wilcox. My name is Emma Price and I will be asking questions on behalf of the Inquiry. <br> Could you confirm your full name, please. | 10 11 12 |
| A. Michael John Wilcox. | 13 |
| Q. Thank you for coming to the Inquiry to assist it in its work and for providing the witness statement you have in advance of today. You should have a copy of that statement in front of you, it is dated 26 October 2023. <br> If you could turn to page 43 of that, please. Do you have a copy with a visible signature? | 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 |
| A. Yes, I do. | 22 |
| Q. Is that your signature? | 23 |
| A. Yes, it is. | 24 |
| Q. Are there any corrections which you wish to make | 25 |

Q. Are there any corrections which you wish to make
knowledge and belief?
A. Yes, they are.
Q. For the purposes of the transcript, the reference for the statement is WITN05060100. Starting, please, with an overview of your career with the Post Office, you have said in your statement that you worked for the Post Office for a total of 47 and a half years.
A. That's correct.
Q. Is that figure slightly lower, given your correction saying that your last day of service was sooner in time?
A. No, because I think in my original statement I put it was January, so we're talking about two months, but it was the time that I got made redundant from the Post Office and I started another job in a Post Office, but it's how long I was actually in between the two dates.
Q. I see it was the last date before redundancy?
A. I was made redundant on 4 March, yes.
Q. So the timespan from 1973 until January of last year, with a three-year break following redundancy in 2011; is that right?
A. It was only an 18-month break because the other 18 months I was still working for Martin
to your statement?
A. Yes, there are.
Q. Would you like to tell us what those are?
A. Certainly.

Paragraph 3, regarding my background. My last day of service was actually 4 March 2011.

Paragraph 78, regarding training instruction, I have recollection of the IC codes question.

Paragraph 81 and 151, due to late receipt of documentation, it's to do with Barkham Post Office, which I initially said was not my case but this is now given me another thought on that.

And paragraph 84, question regarding duplicated transactions.
Q. What was the correction you wanted to make to paragraph 84 ?
A. I don't know whether it's something that's been produced to me or something that I've happened to pick up while watching the Inquiry. But there is evidence that I did have some knowledge of duplicated transactions in an ARQ.
Q. With those corrections made, are the contents of your statement true to the best of your

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McColl's as a relief postmaster.
Q. During that time, you held a range of roles, including being a counter clerk in a Crown Office branch, an Auditor and an Audit Manager and, of most relevance to your evidence today, an Investigation Manager between September 1997 and January 2011 -- sorry, March 2011; is that right?
A. That is correct.
Q. You say in your statement at paragraph 5 that you were approached and asked to apply for the role of Investigation Manager. This was precipitated, you say, by a business review and reorganisation. Can you explain, please, the changes to the business which led to you being approached?
A. Yes. I believe it was to do with Royal Mail and the Post Office on one of their first separations that they had. And, before that, there used to be a Post Office Investigation Department, and the Post Office Investigation Department actually dealt with enquiries right across the board.

When they were announcing a split and they had to choose between whether they wanted to
work for the Post Office -- Post Office
Counters, as it was -- or Royal Mail, most of them chose Royal Mail. Basically, I think they were paying more money and it was probably better prospects for them. So the POID, as it was, was left with very few, if any, people that wanted to stay for Post Office Counters. So there was a bit of a recruitment drive there, I think, and I was approached because of my accounting experience, mainly.
Q. At that point, did you have any prior experience in criminal investigation or criminal law?
A. No.
Q. You address the training you underwent ahead of taking up the Investigation Manager role at paragraph 6 of your statement. Could we have that paragraph of the statement on screen please, it is page 5 of WITN05060100. You say:
"I recall attending a training course prior to taking up the post as there was a national training event taking place in Croydon. Over the course of my time in the 'Security Team', as an Investigator I attended various training courses including refresher courses and ad hoc meetings/training events when any new 5

I knew the course and I knew the five points to prove for theft and I knew about false accounting, and I was the smarty pants there, really, because every time there was a question asked, I was able to come back on it.

But it was covering all sorts of initial introduction to it. But it did cover everything from interviewing, taking statements, putting together case papers. Yeah.
Q. Can you recall if that initial training covered disclosure?
A. If it covered putting together case papers, then the disclosure forms that we had, which were the CS forms, then yes, it would do, as far as -these dates and times are all taken from certificates that I found at home, so these are firm dates that I know I had training and, as far as I can recall, I think, because it was a complete oversight of everything, I would have thought so.
Q. So you think you would have been trained in the disclosure forms which you were required to produce as part of your case work?
A. That's correct.
Q. You then went on a Suspected Offender Interview
legislation was introduced, which would affect my role courses attended were as follows ..."

The first one you list is Investigation Awareness Workshop, August 1997, two days.

Stopping there, the Investigation Awareness training workshop, was that the same as the event you refer to in Croydon, earlier up that paragraph, or is it a different event?
A. No, that's right, all the earlier workshops were taking place in a place called Impact House, which was a security training centre in Croydon.
Q. So the Investigation Awareness Workshop was the event in Croydon?
A. As were all of the others, basically, yeah.
Q. Well, just referring to the initial training course you did prior to taking up the post, which you say took place in Croydon, the National Training event, is that the Investigation Awareness Workshop?
A. Yes, sorry. Yes, it is, yes.
Q. You say that lasted two days. Can you recall what was covered on your initial training?
A. I think it was the basics of investigation. I know -- I remember going there. I did a lot of research in advance, so that when I turned up 6

Workshop in March 1999, which you say was five days; then a Witness Interview Workshop in April 1999, which was three days; and a Search
Awareness Course in December 1999, lasting two days. Whilst you were on that Search Awareness Course, was the basis for Post Office Investigators conducting searches covered?
A. Yes.
Q. What were you told about the basis for Post Office Investigators carrying out searches?
A. The course was conducted at a police training centre somewhere in London, I believe, although it was led by the Post Office Security trainers. Searches, as far as I understood, were to -they were purely voluntary. We had no powers of search whatsoever, we needed to get authority from the suspected offender to conduct the search and they were purely to look for any evidence that may assist in proving an offence.
Q. You went on a Prosecution Process Course in March 2002, lasting two days. Can you recall what was covered on that course?
A. I think that has to be the submission of the offender file, going right through to court attendance.
Q. Was disclosure covered on that course, as far as you can recall?
A. I would have to say that it was because, putting together the committal bundle, those forms have to be in there, so I would have to say yes.
Q. Can you recall being given any guidance or training on disclosure, over and above how to complete the disclosure forms?
A. I can't specifically say that I do. However, there were many sessions within team meetings over the years, where Legal Services would turn up and either give refresher training or anything that changed. So I honestly can't say whether there was a specific -- any more about disclosure.
Q. Can you recall what you were told, if anything, it about the disclosure duties policing to Disclosure Officers and prosecutors?
A. Well, disclosure, as I understand it, was a case of just basically, at the end -- when I was putting together a file, every single piece of paper or every single bit of evidence l'd lay out in front of me on the desk and it would go on one of three forms, I believe. It would either be evidence, it would be unused or the 9
Q. Were those the reports that you could print at the counter in a branch?
A. That's correct.
Q. Were you told anything on that course about the potential for balancing discrepancies to arise because of bugs, errors or defects in the system?
A. Absolutely not.
Q. In August 1999 you became a member of, if we can scroll down a little, please, the International Institute of Security, following completion of course 137 of the International Professional Security Association. What did you cover on that course?
A. I honestly can't remember what that covered. It was a business initiative at the time that I was put forward for and I know I kept having to go to Birmingham, I think, and then sit an exam at the end of it. I think it was mainly security, so physical security, as opposed to investigation.
Q. You also gained a City \& Guilds NVQ level 4 in Investigation in June 2005. What did you cover when you were studying for that qualification?
A. That was my current job as an Investigator, so
third one was anything that might harm the prosecution and help the defence, and I think the only time I ever put anything on that form was once, when it was informant details.

I always used to annotate that form with "There are no items considered that will help the defence or harm the prosecution".
Q. You then went on an Audit and Investigator Course for Horizon, and you say it was a one-day course delivered by ICL Pathway. There's no date there for when you attended that course; can you remember when it was?
A. The certificate is undated, which is why I can't -- but it was at the introduction of Horizon, so it would have been 19 -- 1999?
Q. What was covered on that course?
A. It was, basically -- it wasn't how to use the system, it wasn't about transactions. It was purely for an Auditor or an Investigator, which would tell you how to pull off reports that would help you identify where losses might be or give you the end of day reports. But it wasn't about transactions at all; it was purely about how to pull off the reports that we needed which would help us.

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basically it would take a case, or two or three cases, that I was doing and it would be a step check to everything I did, to make sure that I was carrying it out correctly.
Q. You say you also took part in or sat in on new subpostmaster and staff Horizon training on at least two occasions. Can you recall that training now?
A. It was, basically -- I'm based in Plymouth and there was a training centre in Plymouth and, if I had any spare time at any time and I knew there was a course going on, I would just see if I could sit in on it, and that did cover new postmaster training, so it would be to do with transactions.
Q. You refer at paragraph 67 of your statement to refresher training provided during national team meetings or whenever there was a change in legislation. Who would provide that refresher training?
A. That would be the Criminal Law Team, Legal Services.
Q. You say in your statement that the Legal Services would offer advice on case presentation as well as any changes in legislation. What 12
kind of advice did they give on case presentation?
A. I think that was all tied in with, like, the compliance, to make sure that you had everything in the file, so that, when they received it, they could make a fair judgement on the evidence that you've provided.
Q. You say at paragraph 7, which is on the screen here now, that you understood your role to involve investigating possible criminal offences against the business or its clients, and you say "to include protecting the integrity of the business". What do you mean by the "Integrity of the business"?
A. Yeah, I think from day one it was always an understanding that the Post Office was a public-owned company and backed by the Government and, basically, it was government money that we were using. And I think it was about being seen that the Post Office was a company that you could trust because, I mean, back in this time when I started, there were 13,500 post offices and they were the hub of every city, town and village, and they wanted people to feel that that was a place that they 13
"From the time I started working in Investigation I was always a 'lone worker', based initially in a room in a Crown Office then later in the Security Suite in the mail centre, both in Plymouth. Initially (prior to Horizon) my manager was based in Bridgwater, some 80 miles away, and my nearest colleagues were based in either Bristol or Bournemouth, some 125 miles away. Latterly the Head Office and my line manager were both based in London some 250 miles away. I did not therefore have the opportunity to work within a group on a day-by-day basis, like some of the teams. I therefore did not, on a daily or weekly basis, 'associate' with any of the National Team. When I needed, or someone else needed a second officer then I would normally be Gary Thomas (Bournemouth) as my first port of call."

Given that you were a "lone worker" as you put it, was it difficult for you to get a sense of the issues which were arising in investigations carry out by other Investigators?
A. I think that that is the aim of that sentence that I put in, yes.
Q. Was your set-up unusual or were there other 15
could go and they could just trust people there.
Q. What was your role in protecting the integrity of the business?
A. My role was to investigate if there was any criminal offences.
Q. You say at paragraph 8 of your statement that you recall your line manager being someone called Geoff Hall, initially --
A. Initially, yes.
Q. -- and that was when you were part of a regional team with headquarters in Bristol; is that right?
A. That's correct.
Q. Then when the team became a national team, you recall your line managers being David Posnett?
A. Correct.
Q. Then Paul Whitaker, Ged Harbinson and, finally, Jason Collins; is that correct?
A. That's correct. I think there might have been Paul Dawkins in between, as well, but it was not for a very long time. I think Dave Posnett was only about three or four months.
Q. Could we have on screen, please, paragraph 9 of Mr Wilcox's statement, it's page 6.

You say here:
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Investigators in this position as lone workers as well?
A. I think the South team, which I was a part of, I think most of those people were -- there were five of us, I believe -- I think we were all lone workers in different parts of the country, whereas the North team, some of them -- no, because London was the South team. So London, I think, might have had one or two but the North team, I think some of them were working in pairs. But we were certainly single.
Q. What processes existed for information sharing between Investigators?
A. Do you mean official documentation?
Q. I mean, any processes or means of sharing information between Investigators?
A. There was a post office intranet site and part of that was there was a Security section in it as well, which only the Security Team would access. That would normally be used for policies, policy updates and, failing that, I suppose, anything that needed to be sent out to all team members would be sent out by email.
Q. You say at paragraph 71 of your statement that you were totally unaware of any proceedings 16
taking place about Horizon failings, either criminal or civil. Given that there were such cases going on during your tenure as an Investigator, how effective do you think the processes for sharing information between Investigators were?
A. It's obviously not worked. From what l've learnt, purely from this Inquiry, from 2004, I think Lee Castleton -- who I had never ever heard of before, until this Inquiry. I cannot believe myself that l've been there for seven years after that, and I didn't even know about that case. At no stage did anybody sit me down or call a team meeting and say, "We may have a problem here, this is what's happening, and this is how we're going to handle it".
Q. You say at paragraph 19 of your statement that:
"The structure and role of the Security Team changed many times, including our job titles."

What impact, if any, do you think this
regular change had on the adequacy of investigations?
A. I don't think it had an impact on that because when you took on parts of physical security, which dealt with robberies, burglaries and
because they weren't being supplied, but we would take that with us as well, and anything else, basically, would be on the policy document.
Q. You identify at paragraph 7 of your statement the official policy relating to investigations. Could we have that document on screen, please. It's reference POL00031008. This is the "Royal Mail Group Limited Criminal Investigation and Prosecution Policy". This version, if we can scroll down, please, to the bottom of the page, is dated November 2010. An earlier version, dated December 2007, was also provided to you for the purposes of preparing your statement to the Inquiry. Would you agree that it is materially very similar?
A. From what I recall, yes. Yeah.
Q. You were an Investigation Manager from 1997. In terms of the official policy governing investigations before 2007, being the earlier version of this document, there was a further document sent to you by the Inquiry for the purposes of preparing your statement, which is dated May 2001. That's a document which purported to set down the procedures and 19

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visiting offices about security weaknesses, it just meant that was another part of your caseload. Obviously, if you weren't doing that, you'd be allocated more investigation cases but I don't think that impacted at all on the quality of investigation standards.
Q. You say in your statement that:
"All investigations would be conducted taking into consideration the rules of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, the Data Protection Act and the Human Rights Act."

Where would you have found copies of those Acts as an Investigation Manager?
A. I've had to refresh my memory and l've taken those from a policy statement to say what we worked to, just so that I could remember. I remember the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. We always carried that -- the Codes of Practice, we always carried that book with us because that was produced at any interview, any taped interview.

The CPIA, I remember having to go to every bookshop in Plymouth to try to buy a copy 18
standards applying to investigations.
Could we have that on screen, please. The reference is POL00104754. This document has a heading, in the top left corner "Investigation Policy", and then in bold and centre "Rules and Standards". The date at the bottom of the page, please, is May 2001.

Looking, please, to page 4 of the document, section 5, "Document details", we see a last updated date of October 2000. The "Assurance Details" and "Final Review" sections appear to be blank. Would you agree that a version of this document appears to have been in force from October 2000, on the face of that last updated entry.
A. Yes, yeah.
Q. Going back to the first page, please. Did you recognise this document when it was provided to you by the Inquiry?
A. I can't say I recognised it but I've no reason to doubt that I didn't receive it.
Q. This document sets out "Consignia Investigation Standards" and "Consignia Legal Standards", as well as referring to "Consignia employees" throughout. Was this a document which applied 20
to the work of Post Office Investigators?
A. Yes, because the Post Office changed its name to Consignia, so it would have been Post Office only and not Royal Mail.
Q. Do you think that this was the official policy governing investigations before the December 2007 document?
A. If that's the last one that there was, then I would imagine that's the one, yes.
Q. Under paragraph 3.1, we see investigation standards are addressed. The "high level investigation standards" are defined as follows:
"All Security Managers who are authorised to conduct investigations into crimes or suspected crimes will carry out their duties in accordance with Consignia legal standards for investigation of crime and Consignia rules relating to the treatment of employees and agents in accordance with mandatory instructions detailed in investigation policies.
"Relevant changes in the law or any significant aspect affecting the way in which investigations are conducted will be communicated to all Security Managers by email and where necessary an amendment will be made to 21

Investigators will be bound by the following legislation ..."

For England we have Human Rights Act 1998 (in force from 2/10/2000); Police and Criminal Evidence Act and Codes of Practice; RIP Act, Regulatory Investigatory Powers Act 2000. Then we see the same entries under Wales there.

Then at 3.3, please, we have "Prosecution Casework," and it says this will be dealt with "in compliance with the following instructions", and for England and Wales there's Consignia Prosecution Guidelines, Consignia Code of Practice -- Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996.

Under paragraph 3.4 we have this:
"When undertaking investigations into crimes or suspected crimes involving Consignia employees and agents, all Security Managers must comply with Consignia rules regarding the conduct of interviews. In relation to:
"An interviewee's right to have a friend present at interviews.
"An interviewee's right to have a friend present at searches.
"Special treatment afforded Consignia
the database."
Pausing there, do you recall there being a database with policy and standards documents on it?
A. Yes, definitely.
Q. Were copies of relevant legislation and guidance also contained on that database, can you remember?
A. I can't remember specifically but, if it was something that applied to everybody with regarding the policy, then there's no reason why it shouldn't have been there
Q. Did you ever go to the legislation itself, as opposed to a policy document, when you were an Investigator?
A. I honestly couldn't say whether I did or I didn't.
Q. Under paragraph 3.2, we have "Consignia Legal Standards":
"When undertaking investigations into crimes or suspected crimes, all Security Managers must comply with the relevant legislation so far as this relates to the investigation of crime, the interview, arrest and search of persons and process before the courts. In particular,

## Juveniles."

Does this part on interview rights look familiar to you?
A. Yes.
Q. Was it what governed your approach to interviews as an Investigator, at least before the introduction of the December 2007 Criminal Investigation and Prosecution Policy?
A. Sorry, I don't understand the question.
Q. Were these points, so stressing an interviewee's right to have a friend present at an interview and an interviewee's right to have a friend present at searches, was that what governed your approach to interviews?
A. Those points would have been from day one training, always offer a friend present at interview, whether it's taped interview or not a taped interview, and the same applies to searches.
Q. There's no reference in this section to legal rights in terms of solicitor representation, is there? Simply, this is referring to the right to have a friend present. Does that indicate this is a Post Office policy on having a friend present?
A. Yeah, it's basically saying it's a Consignia rule or a Post Office rule. It's not a legal right.
Q. Could we have on screen another document which was provided to you by the Inquiry, which governs the disclosure of unused material to the defence and is also dated May 2001. The document reference is POL00104762. We can see from the title that this document covers the disclosure of unused material and refers in the title to the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 Codes of Practice.

Did you recognise this document when it was sent to you by the Inquiry?
A. I can't say I recognised it but, again, it seems relevant, yes.
Q. It seemed what, sorry?
A. Sorry, it seems relevant. There's no reason why I wouldn't have had access to it or saw it, yeah.
Q. Do you think it was provided to you when you were an Investigator?
A. It wasn't actually handed to me but it would have been made -- I'd have been made aware that it was on the Security database. 25

Attorney General has issued new Guidelines on the disclosure of unused material. The Guidelines clarify the responsibilities of Investigators, Disclosure Officers, Prosecutors and Defence Practitioners."

Were you aware at the time you were an Investigator of the Attorney General's Guidelines on Disclosure?
A. I can't recall specifically about the Attorney General rules but, if that was covered in the updated training session we had, then it would have been covered, yeah.
Q. It is not referenced in this document but were you aware of, and did you ever refer to, the Code for Crown Prosecutors?
A. No.
Q. Further down the page the "General Principles" section, we see there's a section on "Investigators and Disclosure Officers", then over the page, please, the second paragraph on this page says this:
"The Disclosure Officer is the person responsible for examining material retained during an investigation, revealing material to Legal Services during the investigation and any 27
Q. Under "Purpose", this document sets out the following:
"The aim of this policy is to ensure that Security Managers know and understand the investigation procedures in relation to the Disclosure of Unused Material, as described in the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 Codes of Practice, which must be adhered to by all Consignia staff undertaking investigations."

You refer in your statement to the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act. At the time you were an Investigator, were you aware of the CPIA Code of Practice?
A. Yeah, I specifically -- as I say to you, I had to search around Plymouth to find a copy of it so I actually remember there was a specific training session held by the Criminal Law Team at one of our team meetings regarding that.
Q. This document explains in the introduction that:
"The rules relating to the disclosure of unused material to the Defence are laid down in the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996.
"In light of the Human Rights Act 1998 the 26
criminal proceedings resulting from it, and certifying to Legal Services that he has done this. Normally the Investigator and the Disclosure Officer will be the same person."

Do you recall that being the case, that the
Investigator and the Disclosure Officer in a case were usually the same person?
A. Yes, definitely, yes.
Q. You refer in your statement at paragraph 12 to the forms which would need to be completed by the Investigator, the form CS006C, CS006D and CS006E. You then say at paragraph 13 of the statement that the disclosure documentation bore the name of that Investigator as the Disclosure Officer.

Did you understand at the time that you were acting as the Disclosure Officer in the case when you were an Investigator?
A. Yeah, disclosure of the evidence that we had obtained during our investigation, yes.
Q. At the time, did you understand that this was a distinct role, over and above your role as an Investigator, which imposed upon you additional and distinct duties?
A. I think it was a role as part of the training,

|  | as to the fact of how we conducted the disclosure and filled in the disclosure forms. | 2 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | I think we disclosed what we had to Legal | 3 |
|  | Services. It really depends on what you mean by | 4 |
|  | "further duties". | 5 |
| Q. | Well, did you understand that you were doing | 6 |
|  | more than just filling in the paperwork, that | 7 |
|  | the role of a Disclosure Officer was a distinct | 8 |
|  | one, over and above your role as | 9 |
|  | an Investigator, which had its own duties? | 10 |
| A. | It had a duty to make sure we disclosed | 11 |
|  | everything that we had, yes. | 12 |
| Q. | It is not referenced in this document but were | 13 |
|  | you aware when you were an investigator that | 14 |
|  | there was an obligation on a criminal | 15 |
|  | investigator to pursue lines of inquiry which | 16 |
|  | pointed away from, as well as towards, the guilt | 17 |
|  | of the suspect? | 8 |
| A. | Yes, definitely. I mean, especially if you had | 19 |
|  | a case where somebody wasn't accepting | 20 |
|  | responsibility, part of that investigation into | 21 |
|  | proving that they did is also trying to prove | 22 |
|  | that they didn't. So that -- I would say that | 23 |
|  | went automatically anyway. | 24 |
| Q. | Could we have on screen, please, paragraph 33 of $29$ | 25 |
|  | when you worked for the Post Office. Were you | 1 |
|  | ever aware of a difference in the way Crown | 2 |
|  | Office employees and subpostmasters and their | 3 |
|  | staff were treated by the Post Office? | 4 |
| A. | Definitely not. I took part in a prosecution | 5 |
|  | case of one of our branch managers myself. | 6 |
| Q. | Could we have on screen, please, page 6 of | 7 |
|  | Mr Wilcox's statement. The top paragraph here | 8 |
|  | is a continuation of paragraph 7. About four | 9 |
|  | lines down, you say this: | 10 |
|  | "Away from any criminal investigation I was | 11 |
|  | also required to give assistance to Crown | 12 |
|  | Offices and subpostmasters regarding loss | 13 |
|  | reduction and security issues." | 14 |
|  | What do you mean by "loss reduction" in this | 15 |
|  | context? | 16 |
| A. | On occasions, the Post Office had tasked people | 17 |
|  | with loss reduction. It was basically about how | 18 |
|  | to avoid them. I'm trying to think, in this -- | 19 |
|  | in one of these instances, I actually made up | 20 |
|  | and prepared a presentation in connection with | 21 |
|  | loss reduction and tried it out in a team | 22 |
|  | meeting with members of our -- my own team, and | 23 |
|  | we sort of tweaked it. And, from then, I rolled | 24 |
|  | it out to the whole Security community and | 25 |

Mr Wilcox's statement, it is page 14 of that statement.

A little further down the page, please, at paragraph 33 , you say this:
"Throughout my team in the Security Team, and even before when I was an Auditor, I believe the policy and practice regarding the investigation and prosecution of Crown Office staff and the policy and practice regarding the investigation and prosecution of subpostmasters or their staff has basically remained the same."

You go on at paragraph 34 to say that there was no distinction when it came to prosecution decisions between Crown Office employees and subpostmasters or their staff.

As between these two groups, do you recall there being any difference in approach to the question of whether a criminal investigation should be commenced, specifically following the identification of a shortfall in a branch?
A. It would be investigated in exactly the same way and, if evidence was found, the prosecution would take place in exactly the same way.
Q. You had experience of both Crown Office and subpostmaster branches in various roles you held 30

Security Managers or Investigators were going around to Crown Offices giving these presentations.

I also offered them to the NFSP and attended two or three NFSP meetings with postmasters to explain to them about controls at the office and how to reduce losses.
Q. What type of losses are we talking about here?
A. Anything, really. Obviously, branch office losses are reported through the Post Office because branch office staff are employed by the Post Office. Other losses, sometimes we'd get a request from a postmaster to say they're having -- let's just say niggly little losses that they can't really get to the bottom of, and I would arrange or we would arrange to go and meet them somewhere, normally offsite, have a chat about what they think is going wrong, and suggest improvements to ways they can just monitor what's happening in their office.
Q. Did this part of your role involve advising individuals following the identification of unexplained shortfalls?
A. It would be unexplained shortfalls. I mean, the fact that it's unidentified makes it an unknown
shortfall anyway. So, yes, if somebody said, "Look, I'm losing £20 a week, £30 a week, and I can't understand it", it would be really just having a discussion with them about the procedures at the office and what they could do to tighten up on those procedures.
Q. You address possible causes of unexplained shortfalls at paragraphs 160 to 162 of your statement and you give examples of errors on the part of a user of the system and theft by those other than the subpostmaster. Does your knowledge of the possible explanations you list there come from assisting offices as well as investigating them?
A. The reason for that paragraph was really to try to show how difficult it is for an Investigator to look at unexplained losses. The number of things that can possibly happen, and all those instances l've given you are my personal experiences over the years of money that's gone missing.

It's just really -- it's not -- if it's
an unknown loss, especially if somebody isn't declaring it -- if somebody is declaring unknown loss it's hard enough to investigate anyway. If 33
support) a criminal offence at the office (if there is any). If there have been admissions of a suspected criminal offence then it would be prudent to undertake a taped interview with the suspect and get a first account at that time."

What evidence would an Investigator be seeking to obtain and secure at the branch?
A. If there's been a reported shortage by the Auditors, then it would be to try to find either evidence by way of an interview, or evidence of, if you had to, bank accounts or any financial information, if that would assist the investigation.
Q. What evidence would you be seeking to establish a loss to the Post Office?
A. In interview?
Q. No, at the branch when attendance was to obtain and secure evidence?
A. It may be that somebody has already admitted to taking the money, in which case it would be an interview. If they haven't admitted it, but they were a suspect and it was an interview under caution then, obviously, you'd be putting questions to them as for an explanation as to that loss.
A. The evidence of the loss would have been the Auditor's findings.
Q. We're talking here about the difference between what the printable Horizon reports said should be in the branch and what the Auditor actually found in the branch?
A. That's correct.
Q. You say at paragraph 58 of your statement that, if there had been admissions of a criminal offence, then it would be prudent to undertake a taped interview with the suspect to get a first account at the time. Where an admission had been made to an Auditor before an Investigator was on the scene, was it common for the Auditor to ask the person who had made an admission to sign a written record of the admission?
A. They would ask them to sign a written record of the events of that day and just to agree that that's what actually took place, yeah.
Q. In general terms, how would you deal with any such written record in a subsequent interview under caution?
A. I would probably -- after the opening
introductions and the legal rights and friend rights, I would probably just recap what I understood happened in the morning. I would normally read out the signed piece of paper, as a record of what happened that day, and then would ask the suspect to actually give me a reason for the shortage in their own words.
Q. At paragraph 42 of your statement you deal with interviews. You say:
"Interviews could take place normally at the office if enough privacy is attainable and the suspect did not require legal representation or a Post Office Friend to be present."

At paragraph 43:
"I have on occasions, either after visiting
the office or on the day, or when unable to attend an office, pre-arranged an interview with the suspect for a future date. This would be especially true if they required legal representation and, in that case, the interview could normally be undertaken at the solicitor's office."

You deal with the process applying to interviews at paragraph 11 of your statement. Could we have that on screen, please, it's 37
really sure. You would tend not to talk to somebody beforehand without cautioning them anyway. I've never had anybody ask me for disclosure before because, normally, when I invite them for an interview, I tell them what the interview is about and why they're being interviewed. So there's normally -- if it was a postmaster, they would general understand what it's all about, whereas if you had a solicitor, they may not even understand Post Office procedures.
Q. You go on:
"We used a standard cribsheet during
interviews as reminders of procedures and questions. This was so a set format could be followed for standardisation, across the team, of casework papers and reports and also assisted with the correct PACE guidelines. The cribsheet would set out (from memory) reminders such as:
"Explaining what would happen during the interview.
"Opening tapes in front of the interviewee and solicitor if present.
"Introductions of persons present for the benefit of the tape.
A. Not sure I can answer that question. I'm not 38
"Caution and checking the understanding of the caution.
"Explanation of Legal Rights and the rights to a friend being present (friend not applicable at Police Custody Suite).
"Points to cover during interview, ie background, experience, training, staffing and role at the office.
"Conclusion of the interview and signing and sealing of the tapes.
"Anything else which needed to be covered under the interviewing section of PACE 1984."

You then say:
"Dependent on the outcome of the interview, reports for Legal Services and the Discipline Manager would be prepared if necessary."

You deal at paragraph 97 of your statement with the role of the Post Office Friend. Could we have that on screen, please. It's page 29 of this statement. You say:
"Part of Post Office (and Royal Mail Group) policies are that any person being interviewed by an investigator (on tape or informally), is entitled to have a 'Post Office Friend' present with them. The role of this 'Post Office

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Friend' is to sit in on the interview. They are not allowed to take part in the interview at any stage but are allowed to take notes on the proceedings as long as they are kept confidential. The Post Office Friend should be someone who works for the Post Office and someone who is not involved in the enquiry. The reason for not being allowed to say anything in the interview is because they probably wouldn't be qualified to advise and may say something which is not beneficial to the person being interviewed. This would be the role of a solicitor and this right should be exercised if advice is required."

Pausing there -- and we'll come back in due course to what happened in Mrs Rudkin's case -was a union representative classed as a Post Office Friend where they attended an interview with the interviewee?
A. Yes, definitely.
Q. Were individuals who chose to be accompanied by union representatives told that their representative would be classed as a Post Office Friend and, therefore, not allowed to take part in the interview?

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a Post Office Friend, would not be able to take part in the interview?
A. The forms were -- yeah, the forms were signed on tape and that was read out and then they would sign it that they understood they couldn't take part in the interview.
Q. Okay. We'll come on to the form.

Were individuals attending interviews told that, if they wished to be accompanied by someone who could take part in the interview, they would have to have a solicitor?
A. I don't know if it was worded that way but I would have certainly said, "Do you want legal representation or a solicitor, because if you do, I can help you find one?" And, if they said no, then I would explain that they're entitled to a friend but the friend wouldn't be able to take part in the interview and wouldn't be able to give them advice.
Q. Could we have on screen, please, WITN01860100. This is a statement made for the purposes of this Inquiry by a former subpostmaster called Timothy Brentnall, who was prosecuted for theft and false accounting.

Mr Brentnall recalls who attending his
Q. Did you explain to them that that union representative, because they were acting as 42
branch in Roch, Pembrokeshire after an audit in 2009 found an apparent shortfall of some $£ 16,500$. Could we turn to page 2 of this document, please, towards the bottom, paragraph 9. Mr Brentnall says this:
"By the time I was audited in 2009 I had reduced the shortfall to some $£ 16,500$ by putting my own money into the post office when the Auditors came. I was very open and honest with them about what had been happening because I thought they were there to help. I quickly realised that they were not there to help me but to blame me. I recall the Auditor's name being Gaynor Davies, who had another man with her but I cannot remember his name.
"This was promptly followed by a visit from an investigating team. This was a man called Mike Wilcox. Another lady was with him but I do not remember her name. Whilst at first I thought they were there to help me and correct the fault, it soon transpired that they were Auditors to try and collect evidence against me. I remember Mike Wilcox telling me it was an informal chat and I asked if I would need a solicitor and he said no."

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Do you recall Mr Brentnall now?
A. It would be fair to say that I have only seen this document at 9.30 this morning. When you said a statement from Tony Brentnall (sic), my immediate thought was that it was somebody from our Post Office department. So I remember the name, I don't know what for. Roch is completely out of my patch but I'm not saying I didn't do it.
So, to answer your question, I remember the name, I don't remember specifically doing this case. But, at no time whatsoever, do I do an informal chat with a suspect. Informal chats are if I'm out there because somebody is asking me -- they're having problems with losses. No circumstances whatsoever would there be an informal chat and I would not take a second person with me if it was.
Q. Have you ever told a subpostmaster that you were investigating that they did not need a solicitor because the discussion you were having was just an informal chat?
A. Definitely not. Never.
Q. The next paragraph, Mr Brentnall says this:
"I remember being told that I was the only
that I hadn't got it. They asked for bank statements, credit card statements, and they told me if I didn't cooperate, they would come and search my flat."
Do you recall Mr Shingadia now?
A. Again, this was given to me at 9.30 this
morning. I do remember the name. More so I remember the fact of Nippi Singh and, in fact, I believe you've got my notebook and I recall that there's an entry in my notebook about this case. I don't know what it says. I don't know what the outcome was. But l've returned my notebook recently, because l've only just found it, and I believe this case is mentioned in it.
Q. Well, we can certainly try and locate that.
In general terms, did you ever use the threat of searching someone's property to encourage them to cooperate and provide documentation?
A. Searches that we conduct are purely voluntary. There is no way that I would ever have said to anybody "If you don't, we're going to do a search". At the end of the day, they're told that we may need to do a search but it's purely with their permission and, again, they're

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subpostmaster having these kinds of issues."
Did you ever tell a subpostmaster with an unexplained shortfall that he or she was the only one having problems balancing?
A. I don't use that phrase, no.
Q. Could we have on screen, please, WITN01610100.

This is a witness statement made by Hasmukh Shingadia, a former subpostmaster, for the purposes of this Inquiry.

Mr Shingadia explains in his statement that he had problems balancing. Like Mr Brentnall, he was prosecuted for theft and false accounting. He recalls being interviewed by you at paragraph 59 of his statement. Could we go to that, please, it's page 7 . He says:
"On 11 May 2010, I was interviewed at Newbury sorting office by Michael Wilcox. A Federation representative, Nippi Singh, was there supposedly to support me. However in the 7 hours that I was there, he did not say a word. When I challenged him about this, he said, 'Well it's your Post Office' and got in his car and drove away.
"The interview was a real grilling. I was asked repeatedly where money was. I kept saying 46
entitled to a friend present. It's -- I'm afraid I don't work for the Sweeney from the 1970s' TV programme. It's just a completely different way altogether.
Q. Could we have on screen, please, paragraph 68 of Mr Wilcox's statement. It's page 23. You say:
"With specific emphasis on obtaining evidence from third parties, there would be occasions when further investigation was required, or documents required to prove or disprove a criminal offence. With legislation changing over the years obtaining evidence from third parties also changed. Sometimes our 'working partners', ie Department for Work and Pensions and Fujitsu, would have a contract with the business for the release of any documentation. Documentation from banks used to be obtained by the person involved in the enquiry signing a release form for the data to be released. Later with legislation form (DPA, RIPA or CPIA) we would also need to submit a 'Data Protection Disclaimer' form confirming that the information was for a genuine investigation purpose. Any changes in procedure would be notified to us either by meetings,

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personally or notification on a policy change on the intranet."

Just picking up on the third line there, where something was required to disprove a criminal offence, can you think of an example of a time there you investigated further or sought documents to disprove an offence?
A. I think it's just a general term, as I said before. If I'm investigating a case and somebody said they've taken some money and paid it into their bank account, we would ask for those bank accounts, and that may show the money has gone in or it may not show that money has gone in.

It's the same with ARQ data. I don't know if you want to cover that at later stage but, with $A R Q$ data, you can ask for ARQ data but it's not going to prove necessarily -- it depends on what the person tells you that they've done with the money or whether they haven't done anything with the money. But ARQ data is very subjective.

My personal opinion is, depending on the type of loss and what you're told, in some instances, it's no good to you whatsoever.
different skills who could look at such data and make different types of analyses, weren't there? Specifically, Fujitsu employees would be able to tell more from the data than you could, as a non-technical Investigator?
A. The ARQ data that we got was a mirror image of the transactions that were going through the office. There was no further information on there than a subpostmaster could have got himself. The only advantage with ARQ data is it went back further in time, as opposed to it dropping off the system in the office, and it was in the form of an Excel spreadsheet. So it was great to filter and sort figures and specifically look at things.

It would tell me nothing about, if what you mean -- it would tell me nothing about the back office procedures and the technical aspects of the system, no.
Q. That's your opinion on what could or couldn't be gleaned from the data. But do you understand that that would be disclosable, once you'd obtained that data, and what happened to it after it was disclosed is a separate matter from what you thought, as an Investigator?

So -- can I give you an example of what I'm trying to say?
Q. Please do.
A. If there's an audit shortage of $£ 10,000$ and the postmaster says to you "I took that money six months ago and I've paid it into my bank account", you could get bank statements from him showing that $£ 10,000$ has gone into his bank. You could also ask for audit data. Now, if he tells you he's been covering up that $£ 10,000$, so nobody knows about it, you'd look at that audit data and it won't show you anything. It'll show you that he's been balancing all the time.

So you could argue, yeah, that's what he said, he's covering it up, that's why it's not there. But the defence could argue, "Well, there's no loss been shown, so how can you prove there was a loss"?

So that's what I'm trying to say by either trying to prove the offence or not the offence. It depends on what you're told, really.
Q. You're referring there to what you could glean from ARQ data.
A. Yeah.
Q. There were, of course, other people with 50
A. If I ever had ARQ data, then it would always form part of my witness statement and evidence, whether it helped me or whether it didn't, because the paragraph would probably say ARQ data shows that it could back up this person's story. But it also may be not.
Q. Could we have paragraph 82 of Mr Wilcox's statement on screen, please. It's page 26. You say:
"I would obtain ARQ data on any investigation where unexplained losses were involved whether there was a suspected offence, or if I was trying to assist a subpostmaster in investigating losses at their office."

Is that right, that you obtained ARQ data in any investigation where there were unexplained losses or where you were just trying to assist a subpostmaster with unexplained losses?
A. If it was purely unexplained losses, then that is true. If somebody said to me -- an example I used before, if somebody said to me "There's $£ 10,000$ missing, l've taken that money and paid it into my bank account, and l've been inflating the cash every day for six months to cover it up", if I could prove from bank statements that 52
they've paid the money in, ARQ data is not going to help me one little bit because, when I look at that ARQ data, if they're covering up the losses, it's not going to show me the losses anyway.

In that instance, it's of no use for helping me. It's -- and that's what I was saying to you before about it depends what the person tells you. If it is -- somebody says, "l'm having losses every week and it's nothing to do with me, I don't know where it's going", then, yes, it would be useful to look at but, again, I am not convinced it would actually show you anything if somebody is covering those losses up.
Q. When you were in the role of assisting, as you put it, subpostmasters to get to the bottom of things and you obtained ARQ data, would you provide that data to the subpostmaster, as a matter of course?
A. No, I wouldn't say I would provide it to them, because I was there to help them, and they knew what I was doing. I might show it to them, I might, you know, have looked at the dates of when they thought there were losses and it might
data, either a decision that you were making or that another Investigator was making?
A. Well, I can't speak for other Investigators.

I -- as far as I'm concerned, where I thought applicable, I always asked for ARQ data. Depending on the, you know, irrespective of the limits because, if l'm going to do a job, then I need to have that information to hand.

And even if it was a case where I didn't think ARQ data would help me, initially, I would still ask for it, because -- on the off-chance that I may have to do a committal bundle and it would just save time, I'd already have it.
MS PRICE: Sir, I have reached the end of one topic and the next topic is a little lengthier. Would now be a convenient moment for the morning break?
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, certainly. So what time shall we resume?
MS PRICE: Fifteen minutes. I think it's 11.15 , so that would take us to 11.30 .
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: 11.30, then, yes.
MS PRICE: Thank you, sir.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Fine.
(11.15 am)
show that a member of staff to was declaring cash and it was showing a shortage in the balance and then, two minutes later, you see the cash has been altered and there's suddenly a nil discrepancy; that's good evidence that somebody is changing the cash declaration, and that would be shared with the person -- with the postmaster I was helping, yeah.
Q. You say at paragraph 85 of your statement that you did not have direct contact with Fujitsu and that all requests for ARQ data went through the Casework Management Team; is that right?
A. That's correct, yes.
Q. Is it also right that you recall there being a limit on the number of requests which could be made for $A R Q$ data?
A. There was initially because I remember -- you used to just wing off an email and say, "Can you order me ARQ data for this office between these dates", and sometimes it would come back and say, "You'll have to wait for next month's allocation". It wasn't a major problem but it just slowed you down a bit.
Q. Do you recall those limits ever impacting upon a decision as to whether or not to request ARQ 54

## (A short break)

( 11.30 am )
MS PRICE: Hello, sir, can you see and hear us?
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, thank you, yes.
MS PRICE: Could we have on screen, please, paragraph 71 Mr Wilcox's statement, it's page 24 of the statement.

You say here:
"This may be the time to clarify a point made about Horizon bugs, errors and defects. Up until the time I left the Post Office in 2011 and therefore my time in the Security Team, I was never given any indication of any failings within the Horizon system."

Does it remain your evidence that you were never aware that bugs, errors or defects in the Horizon system could cause apparent shortfalls in a branch?
A. I have never heard of the phrase "bugs, errors and defects" until I was following this Inquiry and, as I said before, that paragraph is trying to impress that nobody had specifically called the team together or me together and said about possible problems with the system. As I said to you, I can't believe, I was there for years

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after things were happening and this wasn't communicated.
Q. Could we have on screen, please, document reference POL00172808. This is an email that you have relatively recently been provided with, from Mark Dinsdale, dated 12 March 2010, attaching something, if we can scroll down, please, called a "Security 4 Weekly Report". You are one of a long list of recipients of this email. What role did Mark Dinsdale hold at this time, can you recall?
A. I can only go by Security Programme Manager, as it says at the bottom of the form.
Q. What was the Security 4 Weekly Report?
A. You say l've received this recently, this -I haven't seen this before --
Q. I understand --
A. -- as far as I'm aware.
Q. -- that it's been provided. If you need some time to look at this, we can take it. Perhaps if I show you the report itself, you can tell me whether you recognise that.
A. Yes, certainly, yeah.
Q. The reference is POL00172809. Has this document -- have you seen this recently? 57
read them.
A. That's correct.

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: All right.
MS PRICE: Could we have back on screen, please, document reference POL00172808.

This is the email that we started to look at before the break, Mark Dinsdale, dated March 2010, to a long list of recipients, including you. Just scrolling down, please, this is attaching something called the Security 4 Weekly Report. My question to you before was what was the Security 4 Weekly Report?
A. I'm afraid I haven't got a clue. I mean, I'm assuming it's a report that was sent -- well, this looks like to the whole Security team so it's just a blanket email that's been sent to the whole Security Team. According to this, I mean, it's sent out every four weeks, but I can't recall this document at all, I'm afraid.
Q. So you don't recall receiving four-weekly reports?
A. My name's on it, so I would have received it. If you said to me it was a one-off, I probably would say, well, that's the reason. But, I mean, if this came out every four weeks, I'm 59
A. This rings no bells whatsoever to me. I mean --

MS PRICE: Sir, I'm afraid we may need to take just five minutes so that I can establish what's happened in terms of the provision of this document. Certainly Mr Wilcox should have the opportunity to read it.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, of course. Yes, well, okay, well, we'll let Mr Wilcox have the document now and, in any event, we'll take ten minutes and then we'll see where we go from there, all right?
MS PRICE: Thank you, sir. (11.36 am)
(A short break)
(11.56 am)
MS PRICE: Hello, sir, can you see and hear us?
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, I can, thank you.
MS PRICE: Thank you for the time, sir. The
document that I took Mr Wilcox to is one of four
documents that I plan on going to in my
questions, which were sent to Mr Wilcox
yesterday morning. Unfortunately, he hasn't had
an opportunity to read those, they were on his
emails, but he has now been shown those
documents and I understand has had a chance to
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not saying I didn't get it, what I'm saying is I can't remember getting it.
Q. Could we have on screen, please, the report itself, which is POL00172809, and this is dated 12 March 2010. Again, looking at this and having had a chance to read it, do you recognise this format at all? Going, please --
A. No, sorry, I was thinking --
Q. Apologies.
A. No, I don't recognise the format but I'm not disputing that I received it.
Q. Going, please, to page 3 of this report. There's a heading here "Security programmes for products" and, under the fifth bullet point here, there is a reference to Horizon Online, and it says this:
"Due to live service issues, the decision has been made not to migrate any further branches until these issues are fully understood, necessary actions agreed and success criteria met. In effect, the pilot stabilisation period has been brought forward in order to ensure the quality before proceeding. This will allow Fujitsu some time to resolve issues, including a higher than expected number 60
of screen freezes and resultant recovery transactions."

Do you recall being updated, whether by these kind of reports or otherwise, about issues to do with the Horizon system?
A. I would have liked to have had this earlier so I could change my statement I made about knowing about Horizon. Having said that, to answer your question, no, I don't. But to take it a step further, if I was reading this back in 2008 now, there is nothing in there that says it's a chance it would cause losses. So, if I did read it, it would be a case of, okay, the Horizon -- or Fujitsu have found that there's some sort of glitch, but it's not saying anything about this may well affect losses.
Q. You've anticipated my question of whether this would have caused you any concern if you had read it at the time.
A. No, and I think, when you talk to me a bit further on, I think the same is going to apply but, obviously, I need to clarify to you my reason for this thinking, and, in that, it's the fact that it doesn't mention anything about losses. There are bound to be glitches in the 61
Q. Could we have paragraph 85 of Mr Wilcox's statement on screen, please. That's page 27 of the statement.

The last sentence in paragraph 85 says this:
"I have received witness statements from
staff at Fujitsu regarding the integrity of Horizon and, I think, whether there were any faults with a specific office to be included in that statement."

What did you understand to be the purpose of obtaining such statements if, as you say, you understood the position to be, there were no faults with the system?
A. Witness statements from Fujitsu were requested for a committal bundle. They weren't requested just for a normal investigation, and I just -it was something that the business set up with the contract with Fujitsu, probably we were told -- is it a Section 69 statement, is it, or something -- about the integrity of a computer system? Have I got the right one?
Q. Well, I can't help you with that.
A. Sorry, well, whatever it was, there's a special section that you have to have to say that the computer system is working correctly and, as far 63
system and I would expect Fujitsu to tell us every time there is one, so we can actually act on that.
Q. So are you saying, in relation to your statement at paragraph 71, where you say you were never given any indication of any failings within the Horizon system, you want to modify that?
A. I stand by that paragraph, in the fact that nobody called a special meeting or sat me down or called a team meeting and said, "Look, this is getting serious, we're getting all these complaints", or "We know there's a problem and this is what we need to do".

There are things like this and, as I said to you, I spotted one, I think, during somebody else's evidence, that, if I'd have seen it, then it would have allowed me to alter my statement and I would have clarified that I've never been told anything in the fact that, yes, but it doesn't mention anything about losses.
Q. So you want to modify it in the sense that you weren't aware of failings that caused accounting discrepancies or balancing issues; is that right?
A. At the moment, yes.
as I recall -- I mean, that was -- we were just -- from day one, I think that was the request that had to be part of a committal bundle.
Q. Could we have on screen, please, paragraph 149 of Mr Wilcox's statement. That's page 39. You say here:
"At no time from the installation of the Horizon system to the time I left in 2011, was I aware or made aware of any challenges regarding the integrity of the system. I neither heard of nor saw any official documentation or correspondence regarding such claims."

You've already made a correction to an earlier paragraph in your statement relating to challenges. In terms of this paragraph here, has your evidence changed, in terms of your awareness of any challenges regarding the integrity of the system?
A. I think I changed paragraph 151, which basically is linked to 149, which would be to do with Barkham. And, as I said to you previously, I mean, even from Lee Castleton, I hadn't even heard of that one. So no, I was unaware of --
there was -- nobody had officially told me that we'd got a problem going on.
Q. You say at paragraph 150, in the context of your awareness of challenges to integrity, that you tried to recall your caseload over the period and did not consider you had any cases issued to you where the integrity of the system was brought into doubt.

You then say you do recall:
"... being asked to sit in on an informal
interview where a subpostmistress was
experiencing losses after her Post Office had been moved into a Portakabin."

You've had the chance to go through those
Barkham post office branch documents now, do you think that the Barkham case is the one that you're recollecting her because of the reference to Portakabin.
A. Most definitely, yes.
Q. Could we have on screen, please, POL00165852.

This is one of the documents that you've only just had an opportunity to look at but it essentially draws together your comments on a case where you've had emails in the past relating to this case. It is a case closure 65
asking for assistance for some time. There is a possibility (although she will not accept it) that an assistant has been taking the money but that puts the onus back on her to report it to the police. I have sent her the Fujitsu data to reconcile with her daily transaction logs but from a criminal/fraud point of view there is no scope for further investigation into criminal activity."

So this is a case where you were saying, at
the point of case closure, that Mrs Stubbs was convinced that Horizon was at fault for the apparent shortfall; is that right?
A. That's what she was saying, yeah.
Q. Could we have on screen, please, POL00004708, page 2 of this document, please. This is an email chain about the Barkham case. In the middle of the page, we have an email from Mark Dinsdale to Andy Haywood and lain Murphy dated 14 September 2010. This email reads as follows:
"Andy/lain
"This is quickly turning into a bit of a problem.
"This is a potential fraud where losses
occurred when a subpostmaster moved into
report in the Barkham case and it was authored by you and sent on 23 February 2011. The branch is identified three entries down on that first page. The enquiry type is "Cash Loss", just controlling down a bit, please. The main enquiry type is "Disputed Transactions", and going, please, to the bottom of page 2 of this document, "Are there outstanding issues of a significant nature", and you say this:
"This case was raised following an ongoing dispute between Mrs Stubbs and Post Office Ltd regarding an outstanding debt of $£ 28,829.05$. Mrs Stubbs is suggesting that Horizon is at fault when it was moved into a Portakabin during renovations."

## You go on:

"Along with Graham Brander, I met with Mrs Stubbs on 17 January and she was convinced that Horizon was at fault. She has retained daily transaction logs for December to January in which time she lost $£ 9,000$ and is not prepared to release this until she can compare it to Fujitsu data. I have examined the Fujitsu data and cannot see any indications of fraud. She has declared all the losses and has been 66
a Portakabin, but ceased the moment she was suspended and somebody else run the office. She did have a clerk, so it could transpire she has nothing to do with the losses. We are talking about $£ 28 \mathrm{~K}$, a potential flag case, with MPs involved. The subpostmaster is questioning the integrity of Horizon.
"It looks like contracts/Chesterfield dealt with this themselves, although did speak to investigations. Once I received the paperwork from Nigel it looks like there are numerous activities that have taken place, including somebody sending in an auditor who sat with the subpostmaster for half a day which clearly made matters worse.
"I don't know why we were never approached to deal with this as a criminal investigation in the first instance, perhaps it was felt that it wasn't at the time. The auditor supposedly witness all transactions for half a day and witness Horizon being short, thereby corroborating her account and also now a potential witness for her (when in fact clearly he cannot have witnessed everything), and also begs the question as to why it was left
'high and dry' at the time and Credence was not checked etc.
"This now leaves us in a very difficult situation. With the subpostmaster writing letters to Dave Smith, her MP and no doubt countless other people, this is high profile. She has also joined the subpostmasters fight to question the integrity of Horizon. As it stands no investigation has taken place by us, various intervention has probably complicated this, yet because it is a question of Horizon integrity we can't simply ignore it, or drop it, but probably have some difficult questions ahead of us in terms of why it has taken so long for us to consider this criminal if this is the course of action we take."

So this email is referring, isn't it, in terms, to the wider subpostmasters' fight to question the integrity of Horizon. So multiple people raising this issue, a high profile issue with MPs involved.
A. Correct, yes.
Q. The email above this is from Mark Dinsdale to lain Murphy on 17 September, and it says this:
"lain, sorry I run out of time to ring you 69
of the next week or so in line with his own operational workloads. I've asked that he report back his findings in regards to the matter and we can [then] make an informed decision on any potential grounds for an investigation case."

So the email chain below, with the emails we've just looked at, was being sent to you, wasn't it --
A. Yes.
Q. -- including the emails making clear that this was one of a number of challenges to the integrity of the Horizon system?
A. Sorry, just -- no, the chain hasn't been sent to me, by the looks of it. All I've got is the email from Jason Collins that went to Mark Dinsdale and Nigel Allen. The rest of the things are --
Q. Well, we have here a top email with emails underneath, which appear to be part of a chain, don't they?
A. I'm sorry, I didn't read it that way when I received this. I thought they were just emails that you've just put together. If you're telling me it's a full chain, then I can't argue 71
and I'm off on Monday.
"I think in a nutshell, we need to decide if one of the investigators who have the knowledge to sit in and sift through what has been provided along with the ARQ and go and see what the ex-subpostmaster is holding. I think this is going to be a very onerous task, but I can't see how we can let this one go considering she is questioning the integrity of Horizon.
"How do you want me to deal with this one? Jason did offer some advice, but I think it has grown to be a more serious problem now with what has subsequently come to light, ie auditor corroborating the subpostmaster's account."

Could we go to page 1 of this document, please. At the bottom of the page, please, we see lain Murphy to Mark Dinsdale copied to Jason Collins on 21 September 2010. There are further emails above this. Then, at the top of the page, we have an email to Mark Dinsdale and Nigel Allen, copied to you, from Jason Collins, and it is dated 8 October 2010. It says this:
"Mark/Nigel
"I've passed on the details to Mike Wilcox, who will review the information over the course 70
with you but I didn't read this as being the previous information that I had from it.
Q. Well, just scrolling down the document, we have a number of emails, one on top of the other.
A. Right, they all say, "Forward". Sorry, can you go back to the top one again, then. Okay, I accept that. It says, "Forward," yes, correct, yeah.
Q. Okay. So one of the emails being forwarded to you was the one making clear that this was one of a number of challenges to the integrity of the Horizon system and that there was an Auditor who had corroborated the subpostmistress's account.
A. That's correct.
Q. On any few, you were aware when you picked up this case, weren't you, that this was a challenge to the integrity on the Horizon system and that there were others?
A. Yes, yes, that would be true, yeah.
Q. So why did you say in your statement that you were not aware of any challenges regarding the integrity of the Horizon system?
A. I hadn't received this information at the time, which was why I said I'd have to make
an adjustment to it, as far as this email chain is concerned. I mean, I was asked to look at the case at Barkham to see whether there was any evidence of a criminal offence. I've taken Mrs Stubbs' side and said there is no evidence of a -- whether or not there were challenges to the system, which is what you're saying now, this case was about me seeing if there any -this is -- my case closure is a month before I left in February.

I'm not saying that I didn't do my job to the end but what I'm saying -- this was probably the last job that I ever took on. So anything after that -- I mean -- I think I've said to you in my statement, 2017, I worked in a sub office and I personally experienced a $£ 1,000$ loss. I put that money in out of my pocket. I didn't challenge Horizon. I still believed in it. Irrespective of whether people were challenging it, I still believed there was nothing wrong with Horizon.
Q. There is one last document relating to this case, which I'd like to take you to, please, Mr Wilcox. The document reference is POL00106847. Going to page 3 of this document, 73
A. That is a "7", it's the ampersand above the number "7".
Q. $£ 7,000$ :
"I will need to trace the auditor ... and
discuss how this amount was disposed of or accounted for.
"She is more annoyed at the fact that she thinks she did not get the support from Horizon regarding checking her figures against the system. The main point is for the December trading statement when she only opened for about 2 weeks and still lost $£ 9,000$. ."

Over the page, please:
"I have agreed to obtain the full data from Horizon and look at the transactions for that period. I think this may help to convince her that Horizon is okay and it may be that someone has taken the money.
"It doesn't help that someone in her village used to help in designing Horizon and has suggested that Horizon is not perfect.
"She knows she owes for the office removal ( $£ 3,400$ I think) and says she will repay when the office is sold.
"Will update you later ..."
75
please, and starting about halfway down. This is an email from you to Lin Norbury, Nigel Allen and Mandy Talbot, dated 18 January 2011. Do you remember Mandy Talbot?
A. I think she was civil litigation, possibly, in Legal Services. Not sure I ever met her. I didn't get involved in civil litigation.
Q. Do you know why she was involved in correspondence about the Barkham Post Office, which is the subject of this email?
A. I'm only assuming that, if there was no criminal offence, I mean, the Investigation Team drop out and it's dealt with by civil litigation for recovery under the terms of the contract.
Q. You say this in your email:
"I met with Mrs Stubbs yesterday and discussed the outstanding debt with her (this was not a suspect interview under caution).
"The $£ 7,000$ rem shortage on 25 May 2010 she was aware of as this was due to the rem being opened and checked by the auditor on the day. Due to a rushed despatch $£ 7,000$ was left out of the rem was it was resealed. She says this was sorted out by the auditor on the day and she wasn't aware that she still owed the $£ \& 000$."

Was this not a case where somebody whom you interviewed explicitly raised the unreliability of Horizon as a reason for the shortfall?
A. Yes, definitely.
Q. Why were you trying to convince Mrs Stubbs that Horizon is okay?
A. Because I was never told anything different to that.
Q. Was it suggested to you, by anyone from the Post Office, that you should convince Mrs Stubbs that Horizon is okay?
A. Absolutely not. I mean, that's probably my terminology in the fact that I truly believed in Horizon. I mean, I think I've -- initially, in my witness statement l've said to you this wasn't my case. I've gone from being not my case to actually doing quite a bit of work on it and not proving any criminal activity. And I now do recall that she did have a gentleman with her, I believe, he was a professor in computers or something, I don't recall the bit about he helped design Horizon and, to be honest, he completely baffled me because it was technicalities and that's really what I've reported back.
I've said it's not -- no evidence of a criminal offence. I go back to my thing I said this morning: just because Horizon showed no criminal offence, it doesn't mean to say that somebody wasn't taking money and covering it up but ARQ data would not show you that. So I have to stand by the fact that there was no evidence of a criminal offence and I've referred it back and closed the case, as far as the criminal aspect is concerned.
Q. Could we have back on screen, please, the case closure report which is POL00165852. Back to page 3, please. You say here that you examined the Fujitsu data and could not see any indications of fraud, which is what you've just referenced. Is that what you were looking for, indicators that Mrs Stubbs had committed fraud, when you were looking at the data?
A. Not the fact that Mrs Stubbs was committing fraud, no, just anything at all. I was looking for cash that had been redeclared, I was looking for alterations to anything. As I say, it is an exact copy of what Mrs Stubbs would have had at the office. She could have looked at it on 77
a shortage of $£ 200$ from six months ago, where do you start? The whole thing about, if you have a loss of $£ 200$, you report it on the day and ask for help: whether the Post Office gives you help, that's -- I'm afraid I can't comment on that but, if somebody comes to me and says "I've lost $£ 200$ six months ago", I've got absolutely no chance whatsoever of finding out where that $£ 200$ has gone.
Q. Once it has been decided that there will not be any criminal action taken against a subpostmaster, would there be any effort made to get to the bottom of shortfalls by the Post Office?
A. I can't comment. I'm assuming, once my case is closed, it would go back to the Customer Services or the Helpdesk, or whatever, and they should continue to look at it. If they don't, then that's pretty bad.
Q. Were you ever made aware of an issue which was termed the receipts and payments mismatch issue?
A. I don't recall that, no.
Q. Were you aware that there was a bug which could impact upon balancing in a branch?
A. I wasn't, no.
a daily basis but after, I think, six weeks it drops off the system. So I could have gone back as far as I wanted to. But I think, as I said before, the fact that there are losses shown, it doesn't tell you whether it's a genuine loss or whether it's a loss because somebody has taken the money or whether it was a loss because the money has fallen in the wastepaper bin or it's fallen down behind a shelf.

It doesn't tell you any of that but it also doesn't tell you if somebody has covered it up. So, even on a cash declaration, if there was $£ 1,000$ shortage and then two minutes later it's been altered, it may be that they've genuinely found that when they're recounting their cash. It may be that they've covered it up because they've stolen the money. That's why I don't totally rely on the ARQ data, unless it proves what the person is telling you.
Q. Did you look at this data with a view to trying to get to the bottom of the shortfalls or was it simply to establish whether or not there was a criminal case to be pursued?
A. ARQ data would not have helped me get to the bottom of the shortfalls. If I was looking at 78
Q. Were you aware that it was possible for Fujitsu to alter a branch value at the counter of a branch without the branch knowing?
A. I did not, until I watched Richard Roll's evidence two months ago and that was the only true thing that's actually convinced me that there was something wrong. Before that, no idea, nobody told us. I thought it was a secure system and common sense tells you, if somebody is going to going and alter a computer system, it's got to be controlled by a secondary management, or something. But nobody should be able to get in and have access.
Q. You have made a correction this morning to paragraph 84 of your statement relating to the duplication of transactions in ARQ data. Could we have on screen, please, POL00167367. This is one of the documents which you've only very recently had a chance to look at, I'm aware of that.
A. That's correct.
Q. This is an email from Jane Owen to a list of recipients, including you. It is blind copied to Penny Thomas. It is dated 29 July 2010 and the subject line is "Fujitsu -- Duplication of 80

Transaction Records".
Does this email assist you with recalling the duplication of transaction records issue?
A. Right, without seeing it, I'd have said no.

Having seen it, the only thing that rings a bell
with me is saying this Tab 1, Tab 2, and Tab 3, and, if I really have to think back, I have a feeling that, whilst I'm copied in, it didn't affect me. I didn't have any outstanding ARQs, but I read this as affecting the ARQs only.
Q. Just looking at the text of the email, it says:
"All
"As you are aware, due to the recent problems with Fujitsu all ARQ requests have been suspended. I can now advise that the enhancement to delete duplicated records from the returns has been developed and is due to be tested by Fujitsu at the weekend.
"The attached spreadsheet highlights all requests as follows:
"Tab 1 -- duplicate entries. Fujitsu have supplied this list of requests that have been despatched to you but contain the duplicate data."

Then there are two other tabs. It says
honest I don't really know. I don't know in what context they would have been used.
Q. Did this issue cause you any concern at all at the time?
A. No. As I say, I think I put in my statement, as well, that whenever I got ARQ data, I always sorted it anyway into either -- first thing I would do is check to see the users in the office, so that would show me that anybody that has used the computer properly meant to be at the office anyway.

And then, if I'm looking for -- say I'm looking for a $£ 900$ shortage, I would sort it so I've got all the $£ 1,000$ deposits, because that might show that it's been a keying entry, somebody wanted to deposit $£ 100$, the clerk has put an extra nought on, that gives you £900 shortage. It doesn't mean to say it would prove it, I'm back to my same argument, but there's a chance that may have happened.

So I think I would have noticed -- and I say, I don't think I had any involvement in this but I would have noticed if there were duplicate entries because they would have been sorted in order.

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underneath there:
"I realise that you all have deadlines but we now need to be realistic in how we expect Fujitsu to deal with the outstanding requests. Can I ask that you all please look at your cases and advise the actual dates that you require the information by. Court cases and committals will need to take priority especially those on the 1st tab as the incorrect data could already have been submitted."

If entries were being duplicated, that would affect the integrity of the audit data, wouldn't it?
A. Yes, it would, yes.
Q. This was, on the face of things, an issue meaning that unreliable Horizon data had been produced in support of shortfalls which were being prosecuted, wasn't it?
A. I mean, Fujitsu have pointed this out to us, which I would have expected them to do anyway. It does say they have supplied some lists already but, as I said to you, it depends in which context they're being used. But if they're being used in the context that -- that they're being used to support a shortage, to be 82
Q. I would like to turn, please, to your involvement in the criminal investigation and prosecution of Susan Rudkin. You first became involved in the investigation on 20 August 2008; is that right?
A. Yes.
Q. Do feel free to refer to your statement, if you need to.
A. Yes. No, l'll take that. Yes, thank you.
Q. You and your colleague, Gary Thomas, were on another enquiry in the Worcester area and you received a call asking you to attend the lbstock branch?
A. That's correct.
Q. Can you recall who it was who called you to ask you to attend?
A. I can only assume it would have been my line manager because I wouldn't -- nobody else would have any reason to tell me to, really.
Q. Can you recall what they told you about the case?
A. That there was an audit shortage and we needed to -- I think -- yeah, I think there was an audit shortage and we needed to attend to make some enquiries.
Q. The person who called you, you say in your statement, told you about a conversation which had already taken place between Colin Price and Mr Rudkin, the subpostmaster of Ibstock branch; is that right?
A. That's correct, yeah.
Q. What were you told about this conversation?
A. I was told that they'd had a conversation, and -- can I --
Q. Please do.
A. Yeah, sorry.
Q. You start dealing with the case at paragraph 91, and at 93 you refer to Colin Price. If we can have that on screen, please, it's WITN05060100, it's paragraph 93 on page 29. You say here:
"I was informed [and this is in the context of you being telephoned to go out to the branch] that Michael Rudkin the subpostmaster, had spoken to my colleague Colin Price, who knew Mr Rudkin."

Then you say this at 94:
"I contacted Colin Price and was told that
Mr Rudkin had said he would allow an interview to take place on his premises and said that his wife would cooperate fully with any

So part of that conversation in the back of my mind would have been about do I do a risk assessment on whether we go or not? And the fact that Colin knew Mr Rudkin, it was a case of deciding I didn't need a third person. It wasn't like we were possibly going to -- you know, it's not like you're looking for stolen pension books or stolen mail sacks or stolen -at the end of the day, it was going to be a normal investigation.

So I was quite happy, without -- other times we phone the police and we ask if there's any markers on the premises that we're going in and I decided not to do, you know, a risk assessment on that. So that's really why those questions -- or that's the conversation we had about it.
Q. So that was because Colin Price knew Mr Rudkin?
A. I'm assuming, yeah. I mean, Leicester area is way out of my patch. I mean, I don't think I've -- well, I've been to Manchester before but I've never been to Leicester.
Q. But, in terms of the relevance of this to you not doing a risk assessment, are you saying you didn't do a risk assessment because you didn't 87
investigation and would not require a solicitor."

Who was Colin Price?
A. Colin Price was an Investigation Manager in our team.
Q. What were you told about the conversation that Colin Price had had with Mr Rudkin? Was it just this, what he'd said about allowing an interview to take place on his premises and that his wife would cooperate fully and would not require a solicitor?
A. Yeah, I think the reasoning behind that is the system changed over the years with regard to the number of people that were required to do an audit -- sorry, an investigation. Just after I joined the Investigation Team, one of our colleagues in Royal Mail, during a search of a premises, got stabbed and fatally wounded, and the business changed its risk assessment policy, and said that if you were going to go to a premises and you were going to do a search, there had to be three people with you, so that one could always stay with the suspect and you'd have warning signs if you needed to leave the premises quickly.

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86
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think Mr Rudkin was a threat, because he knew Colin Price?
A. I think so. Colin must have been -- it must have been his area that he covered and Mr Rudkin must have known Colin, yes.
Q. So looking at paragraph 94, you'd been told that Mr Rudkin would allow an interview to take place on his premises, his wife would cooperate fully, and any investigation would not require a solicitor. So when you went to the branch, was that your expectation, that Mrs Rudkin would be interviewed there, without a solicitor?
A. That's what l'd been told but, obviously, I would have checked that when I arrived.
Q. Could we have on screen, please, your report for Legal Services, completed in this case. The reference is POL00046485. We can see Susan Rudkin's name at the top. Going to page 3, please, of this document, we can see towards the bottom your name and date of the report, a little further down, please, 2 September 2008.

Going back a page, please, and towards the top of the page, in the second paragraph, you deal with what happened when you attended the branch. You say:

| "When we arrived at the office we introduced | 1 |
| :--- | :--- |
| ourselves to Mr Rudkin and then went into the | 2 |
| Post Office secure area where Paul Field was | 3 |
| compiling the audit. He handed me a signed | 4 |
| admission statement by Mrs Rudkin and informed | 5 |
| me that at the time the discrepancy in the | 6 |
| account was $£ 43,856.89$, which was mainly due to | 7 |
| a shortage in the cash of $£ 43,761.17 . "$ | 8 |
| $\quad$ You describe here a signed admission | 9 |
| statement made by Mrs Rudkin. Can we have on | 10 |
| screen, please, the document to which you're | 11 |
| referring. The reference is POL00045243. Is it | 12 |
| possible to zoom out a little? Just looking at | 13 |
| this document, the first thing to note here is | 14 |
| that it is not, in fact, a statement made by | 15 |
| Mrs Rudkin, is it? It's authored by and from | 16 |
| the perspective of the auditor. | 17 |
| Aeah, I think I said it's a signed statement, | 18 |
| I didn't say it was a signed admission | 19 |
| statement, so signed statement of facts of what | 20 |
| happened on the day. | 21 |
| We've just looked at it but we can look at it | 22 |
| again. Going back, please, POLo0046485, second | 23 |
| page, please, second paragraph: | 24 |
| "He handed me a signed admission statement | 25 | 89

would be a little short of money. When asked how much she stated approximately $£ 40,000$. She also stated that the subpostmaster Mr Michael Rudkin did not know anything about the shortage."

Then there's a line underneath "This is
a true and accurate reflection of what was
said", and it seems to have been signed by both,
although we can't see the signatures, Mrs Rudkin and the auditor.
A. Yeah.
Q. On this account, Mrs Rudkin had said the Auditor would find a shortage. Just to be clear, because you have used the word "admission" to describe this document, Mrs Rudkin, on the Auditor's account, was not admitting to any offence, was she? She was informing him that there would be a shortage?
A. She was admitting that there would be a shortage, correct.
Q. Can we have back on screen, please, POL00046485, page 2, please. About a third of the way down the page, in the fourth paragraph here, you say:
"Later that day, after declining
representation, (GS001 copied at Appendix 'B'),
by Mrs Rudkin."
A. Apologies, I'm reading the next one down which says a signed -- it is an admission, it's an admission that there's going to be money missing at that stage.
Q. If you can just hold on there and wait for my questions.
A. Sorry.
Q. If we can go back, please, to the note itself, it's POL00045243. So this is not, in fact, a statement made by Mrs Rudkin; it's authored by and from the perspective of the auditor, isn't It. It starts "Myself and Kevin Watkins arrived at the office".
A. Correct, yes.
Q. The auditor wrote as follows:
"myself and Kevin Watkins arrived at the office at 8.20 am . Following the necessary checks with the Helpline ..."

That word seems difficult to read but:
"... Sue Rudkin (wife of subpostmaster), allowed us access to the secure area.
"Mrs Rudkin asked me if she could have a word in the back office.
"When I entered she told me that the safe 90

I conducted a tape-recorded interview with Susan Rudkin in the private residence at Ibstock Post Office."

Just to get the order of events clear before we look further at that paragraph, can we look two paragraphs down on this page, please. The penultimate paragraph starting with "Following the interview". You say:
"Following the interview, Mr and Mrs Rudkin consented to a search of the premises and produced current bank details and statements, which have been forwarded to Ged Harbinson, Financial Investigator, who has an interest in this case."

Then you say:
"We also recovered paperwork from the Post Office including the record of shortages being maintained by Mrs Rudkin."

Is it right, therefore, that you did not obtain any documentation, other than the signed Auditor statement, before interviewing Mrs Rudkin? Just to get the order of events clear.
A. Yes, correct.
Q. Could we have on screen, please, paragraph 96 of 92

Mr Wilcox's statement. That is page 29 of the statement.

## You say:

"Mrs Rudkin agreed to be interviewed on tape in her private residence and she did not require any legal representation which confirmed Mr Rudkin's conversation with Colin Price." Could we have back on screen, please, Mr Wilcox's report for Legal Services,
POL00046485, page 2 again, please. At the top of this page you refer to Mr Rudkin's conversation with Mr Price. So this is continuing from the previous page:
"... interview to take place on his premises and said that his wife would cooperate fully with any investigation and would not require a solicitor."

At the fourth paragraph on this page, you refer to conducting that interview at the private residence. You do not, in this report, refer to any conversation with Mrs Rudkin about whether she would consent to be interviewed. Did you, in fact, ask her whether she would agree to be interviewed before sitting down to the interview.
acting as friend for his wife, but no one was available. As it was her wish to have a friend present, I took the unusual approach of allowing her son Dale to sit in if she was agreeable. Unusual because Dale did not work for the Post Office so although I 'broke' the Post Office Friend rule it was not a legal entitlement. I could of course have suggested the interview was conducted at the police station where the 'Post Office Friend' rule was not applicable, but I considered that to be unnecessary and over the top as Mrs Rudkin was agreeable and compliant."

So you recall Mrs Rudkin wanting to have someone present interview with her; is that right?
A. I would say, yes, it must have been, but probably her husband had said to her "You need to have somebody with you", as well. I can't guarantee that, but that's from my reckoning. He was sort of trying to look after her the best he could, I think.
Q. So Mr Rudkin tried to find someone from the Post Office to attend but nobody was available. Why didn't you put off interviewing Mrs Rudkin until
A. Yeah, I would have explained that I would need to interview her regarding the alleged shortage in the accounts, yes, and she agreed, yeah.
Q. So you didn't just take her husband's word for it?
A. Well, I couldn't force her to be interviewed,
no. I mean, I'd just say, "I need to interview you, are you willing to do that here? I can do that at your premises, if you're happy with that". I'd have probably said to her at the time, "Are you likely to want a solicitor?" And she said no, which would have been confirmed on the tape with the signing of the GS001.
Q. Could we have on screen, please, page 30 of Mr Wilcox's statement. At the top of this page, which is a continuation of paragraph 97 of your statement, you deal with the question of representation at interview, and you say --

Oh, apologies, I'm ahead of the monitor.
So at the top of the page, this is a continuation of paragraph 97, and you're dealing here with the question of representation at interview, in Mrs Rudkin's case. You say:
"I seem to recall that Mr Rudkin had made some phone calls to 'colleagues' with a view to 94
someone could be found?
A. I think there was a large shortage, there was an admission that the money was missing, she was the suspect, and I had a job to do and it seemed right to continue the interview there. I wasn't stopping her from having anything. If she wanted a solicitor, on the other hand, and we couldn't get one, then I might have had no option but to suspend it.
Q. You took the unusual step of letting

Mrs Rudkin's son sit in the interview with her and you suggested here that the alternative was to suggest that the interview was conducted at a police station. Did you suggest that alternative to Mrs Rudkin?
A. Absolutely not. I'm trying to explain to the Inquiry why I made that decision.
Q. Could we have on screen, please, POL00046546. This is the legal rights document, the GS001 form, that you completed with Mrs Rudkin at the start of her interview, so we see the date there, 20 August 2008. Scrolling down, please, you can see the name printed at the bottom and signed.

Looking at that form, this deals solely with 96
the question of legal representation, doesn't it --
A. Yes, it does.
Q. -- because it is a legal rights form? So it doesn't deal with the Post Office policy on someone being accompanied by a Post Office Friend, does it?
A. Not this form doesn't, no.
Q. Which form does, because you referred earlier to a form that did refer to a Post Office Friend?
A. Yeah, it's the same layout as this. I don't know the -- is it a -- this is a -- GS001, was this?
Q. GS001, yes.
A. 1 -- I think it may be a 003 , it's the same format, it's got the same "Do you understand you're acting as a friend? Yes. Do you understand you're not allowed to take part in the interview? Yes. You may keep notes but they may not be shown to anybody without the permission of the Post Office. Yes, yes, yes", and then they sign that.

So that is also part of the -- that would
have been in the same appendix as this form was in my case file.
find somebody. I think I've put "emotional support" in my statement, which is probably the best -- what I'm saying is it just felt like she had somebody with her.
Q. Did you ask yourself at the outset of the interview whether Mrs Rudkin was in a fit state to be interviewed, emotionally?
A. I had no reason to doubt that she wasn't.
Q. Could we go to page 2 of this document, please.

Scrolling down, please, to 9.18 on the left. At 9.18 , you show Mrs Rudkin the auditor's statement and you ask her why it is short, so why the branch is short.

Over the page, please. Four lines down, you ask where the money has gone, and Mrs Rudkin says this:
"Well, because the business as a whole and the staff, the overheads and the business have not really been doing what it should be doing. I've had, you know, losses behind the Post Office counter and then coupled with trying to sort out the business and difficulties, I've just not know which way to turn."

Then you say this, "MW":
"Clarifies that there have been losses in 99
Q. Could we have on screen, please, the record of tape-recorded interview with Mrs Rudkin, the reference is POL00050026. We can see the date of interview, 20 August 2008. The time is 1.00 pm , the duration 44 minutes and the location, "Private Residence", Ibstock branch.

Scrolling down a little, please. There is a summary of what you covered at the outset of the interview:
"Normal introductions including voice identification, legal rights and caution. No legal representation required. Son Dale allowed to sit in as 'friend'."

You described the step of letting Mrs Rudkin's son sit in on the interview with her as unusual. Did you allow Mrs Rudkin's son to sit in because Mrs Rudkin appeared to need emotional support; was that the reason?
A. No, I think it was more a case of because he was there and he was a family member, she would have felt that she wasn't alone. I was just trying to help out the fact that they were trying to get a friend and I did my bit, the best I could, to get that dealt with, and not let it go on for however long until we could agree that she could 98
the Post Office and under the terms of the contract that should be made good."

You ask:
"Is part if this because you haven't been putting the money in a make the losses up?"

Mrs Rudkin says, "Yes".
You ask:
"Asks if trading statement is short would you just inflate the cash to make that right?
"Yes.
"Also had bills for shop and house, gas and electric."

Mrs Rudkin agrees.
Going over the page, please, to page 4. Towards the bottom 19.27. We see "GT" here, that's not you, is it? That's Gary Thomas --
A. Gary Thomas, correct.
Q. -- asking:
"Trying to understand how the amount got so high."

Mrs Rudkin:
"Says that it started with the shortages and not being able to make them good and when she did pay some back she would be short for bills and then taking money in the hope of paying back 100
from takings."
Then, over the page, please, towards the bottom of the page, if we can have page 7 , please. Again, towards the bottom of the page.

Apologies. Back to page 6, towards the bottom, and "MW" at the bottom here:
"Clarifies the other option could have been a balance snapshot to tell you how much it was out."

This is in the context, isn't it, of
Mrs Rudkin having kept a running total, so she knew how much things were out by?
A. Correct.
Q. Going over to the top of the next page, please.

Mrs Rudkin says:
"As time has gone on, l've had to do a balance snapshot and check the figure and then write that figure down so I know what to put in."

You explain that:
"... any difference between the balance snapshot and her piece of paper would be a genuine shortage, which would have been added on to the paper."

She says, "Yes".
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point, she took money out for this reason and
she meant to pay it back. Is that a fair
summary of what she was telling you?
A. Yeah, I think, yes, that's probably a fair summary, yeah.
Q. So Mrs Rudkin may not explicitly have said that the shortages she was experiencing were caused by a fault in Horizon but she was quite clearly telling you that her problems started with unexplained losses, wasn't she?
A. I think, to be fair to Mrs Rudkin, in 2008, like me, she probably had never suspected anything wrong with Horizon. So that would be the reason that she's never mentioned it and that's trying to be fair, really. She did but, on numerous occasions, she said that they were errors, a lot of them had come back, some of them they'd found. But l'll carry on when you -- when we get to the next part.
Q. Could we have back on screen, please, Mr Wilcox's report for Legal Services. POL00046485, page 2, please. The penultimate paragraph on this page towards the bottom, please.

In the second sentence here, which we've 103

Gary Thomas:
"Clarifies that any difference between the snapshot and paper record must be added on the running total as well."

MW: "Asks if she ever made any shortages good."

She says:
"Yes I tried the best way I could."
MW: "What, the smaller amounts?"
Mrs Rudkin: "Yes.
"Confirms larger amounts would be added on to the piece of paper. Discussion whether anyone else could have taken any money and SR says she believes it was just mistakes. Staff were good with the paperwork."

Mrs Rudkin was in this interview telling her that her problems had started because she was experiencing shortages, wasn't she?
A. That's correct.
Q. That she made these good for a time, from her own money, until she was no longer able to do so?
A. Correct, yeah.
Q. Because she had been making good shortages, she was short on money for the bills and, at that 102
already looked at:
"We also recovered paperwork from the Post
Office including the record of shortages being maintained by Mrs Rudkin."

So, after the interview, you found a record of the shortages that Mrs Rudkin had been experiencing; is that right?
A. I asked her in the interview -- because she brought up the record, I asked her in the interview where it was and she told me where it was and she produced it to me afterwards.
Q. You described this further over the page in your report as "a summary of the weekly balance discrepancies compiled by Mrs Rudkin".

Apart from attaching this documentation to your report for Legal Services, what did you do with this document produced to you by Mrs Rudkin?
A. That would have been in Appendix B, with the evidence.
Q. Did you make any attempt to establish the reason for the shortages listed on that document?
A. The -- right. Because of what she was telling me in interview about the way that she was dealing with the losses and this is where we 104
come back to audit data, if somebody says to you
"I've been taking money and I've been inflating the cash each week to covering it up", audit data will not show you that at all. It will not prove anything either way.

We've also got the fact that she was doing a balance snapshot. Now, if I can explain, the normal way of declaring your cash at night is you count the cash you've got, you put it into the Horizon system, and the system will tell you how much you're out by discrepancy, whether you're over or you're short. That will show on audit data, that will show that you've done that.

If, however, you go into the system and you ask the system how much money you should have, which is called a balance snapshot, you can then automatically add that money into the system, whether it's there or not, and that will not show a shortage. And this is what I was saying about it depends what somebody tells you about audit data. Audit data would have not helped me or Mrs Rudkin one bit in proving it.

The evidence I had was an audit shortage, I had an admission telling me that she'd been 105

I discussed whether it was practicable to call Mr Longman tomorrow, given that there had been, as I understand it, disclosure of hundreds of documents, which had a bearing on Mr Longman's evidence, at the end of last week, as I understand it.

Counsel to the Inquiry has only just begun
to understand the significance of some of those
documents and, in truth, he informs me that many
of the documents disclosed are of relevance and need to be made public and the subject of questioning on Mr Longman.

Given where we are in relation to that, I've decided that it would not be fair to Mr Longman to ask him to consider many documents at extremely short notice, that's assuming even that they can be got to him before he begins his evidence and it would certainly be very unsatisfactory for him to be seeing documents as he is giving evidence.

So, as l've said, l've decided that Mr Longman's evidence should be postponed. That is regrettable, in one sense, in the obvious sense that we're going to lose a day tomorrow. However, it does make some sense that
taking money in inflated cash and I had this piece of paper from her supporting those figures. That evidence was far greater than I would have ever got from any Horizon data.
MS PRICE: Sir, it is 1.00 . May we take lunch at that point? Could I ask that we have a slightly shorter lunch, given the time we lost earlier, coming back at 1.50 , please.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yeah, fine. Yes. See you at 1.50.

MS PRICE: Thank you, sir. ( 1.01 pm )

## (The Short Adjournment)

( 1.50 pm )
Announcement re evidence of JON LONGMAN
MS PRICE: Good afternoon, sir.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Good afternoon.
MS PRICE: Can you see and hear us?
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, I can. Just before you begin, can I make an announcement about tomorrow.
MS PRICE: Yes, sir.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: I'm not sure whether it has yet been communicated to anyone but, during the lunch break, one of the counsel team and 106

Mr Longman's evidence be heard at about the same time as the evidence or the further evidence to be given by Mr Jarnail Singh, and so it's my intention that both those witnesses should be called either at the end of Phase 4, or perhaps even in Phase 5, when those parts of their evidence which overlap and/or dovetail can be examined more or less sequentially.

So that's an oral announcement. It may not have been preceded by a written announcement. But the effect of it is that there will be no evidence from Mr Longman tomorrow and it will be postponed to a suitable date in the New Year.
MS PRICE: Thank you, sir.
Shall I proceed with the questioning of Mr Wilcox?
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, please.

## MICHAEL JOHN WILCOX (continued)

Questioned by MS PRICE (continued)
MS PRICE: Mr Wilcox, we left off before lunch on the question of the use to which you put Mrs Rudkin's list of weekly discrepancies and the question of the use you consider ARQ data would have served in this case. Could we have on screen, please, paragraph 115 of Mr Wilcox's 108
statement, that's page 33, please.
At paragraph 115 you say this, in the context of the investigation into Mrs Rudkin:
"As part of the investigation, I requested Horizon ARQ data, and my report to Jarnail Singh dated 29/1/2009 shows that there was nothing untoward regarding these figures."

There is no reference to you obtaining ARQ data in your report to Legal Services. Is the only reason you think you requested any ARQ data the document referenced here, POLO0046505? (No audible answer) Is that document the basis for you understanding that you requested some ARQ data.
A. I was asked to do some further investigations with regard to previous time to my actual investigation I was undertaking. But I think
I would have ordered ARQ data anyway, pending a committal.
Q. Could we have on screen, please, the summons for Mrs Rudkin at POL00046537. This is dated 12 February 2009. In the middle of the page there is the alleged offence, "Theft", and the period to which that charge relates, 1 January 2007 to 20 August 2008.

1 January 2007 to 20 September 2008 but instead for the earlier period in 2006, when the robbery took place; is that right?
A. I was asked to continue investigations into the previous robbery, so $A R Q$ data was requested to look into that. However, because the ARQ data wasn't considered necessary for the initial investigation, I would have asked for that after the papers had been submitted, in case there was a committal. So I would have requested it but it wasn't used to form my decision.
Q. What is the basis for you saying you would have requested it? There's no reference in your legal report to it?
A. Because it wasn't relevant. As I said, the fact that Mrs Rudkin was covering up losses and inflating the cash, it would not have shown in the ARQ data. So I didn't consider it necessary to look at that because it wouldn't have given me any evidence either way, but I would have requested it once the papers were sent in, in case it was required as part of a legal bundle.
Q. So when you're referring, at paragraph 15 , to requesting Horizon data, at that paragraph, are you referring to your request for the period

Could we now have on screen, please, the document you reference at paragraph 115 of your statement, that is POL00046505.

The recipient of this communication is Jarnail Singh. Going over to the second page, please. We can see it's from you and dated 29 January 2009. Going back to page 1, please, you say this:
"Your original advice is noted on pages 14 to 16 of these papers. Thank you.
"Due to the admissions made by Mrs Rudkin to the theft in excess of $£ 43,000$, I was instructed to revisit the case and in particular the reported robbery which took place on 5 January 2006, in which the business has stood a loss of $£ 58,000$ (after appeal against culpability). The confidential Police reports can be found at pages 26 to 31 of these papers."

Then you say this:
"I requested Horizon data for this period (which showed nothing untoward) and also obtained bank disclosure authority for the last 6 years' bank accounts."

You appear to be saying here that you requested Horizon data, not for the period of 110
relating to the robbery alone, or both that and another request?
A. That particular request, where I said I have examined ARQ data and it shows no anomalies, that was to do with the robbery, yeah.
Q. Okay. Is it right that you made no attempt to compare the list of weekly discrepancies made by Mrs Rudkin to any Horizon data to try to establish the cause of the shortages?
A. Absolutely pointless. The --
Q. I'm sorry, if you could answer my question, please.
A. Yeah, sorry. No, because it wouldn't have compared because there were no losses being shown.
Q. You have referred in a number of places to assisting subpostmasters and branches to investigate unexplained losses. What did you do to help Mrs Rudkin to get to the bottom of her unexplained losses?
A. I couldn't do anything because the ARQ data -once you start altering cash figures and covering them up, you don't know whether it's a genuine loss or not. There is absolutely nothing you can do if somebody is covering up 112
losses. You've got nothing to go on at all.
Q. Going back, please, to the communication on screen with Jarnail Singh, three paragraphs up from the bottom. You say:
"I wrote to Mrs Rudkin requesting that she attend a further interview regarding the financial situation prior to the admitted thefts. I have since been in contact with Richard Nelson solicitors (pages 33 to 35) who have notified me that Mrs Rudkin does not wish to attend a further interview as they have concerns over her deteriorating mental health."

You were writing this communication around
two weeks before the summons for Mrs Rudkin was
served. Did you feel any concern about
Mrs Rudkin's mental health, in the context of the criminal proceedings being brought against her by the Post Office?
A. I think I've mentioned in there that she may not be fit to even go to court and that was my opinion. It wasn't my decision whether or not we served a summons.
Q. It appears that after this communication, you contacted the police seeking their assistance to pursue investigation of the robbery in 2006. 113
charges.
"Thanks for your help and any problems
please give me a ring."
This email appears to have led to a response from the police on 25 March 2009. Could we have that on screen, please. It is POL00046522.
This is an email from Detective Sergeant David
Bacon, dated 25 March at 3.06 in the afternoon.
He says:
"Dear Mr Wilcox,
"I write to acknowledge your recent email to
DS Gareth Goddard and to introduce myself as a future point of contact. I have discussed the robberies with Gareth at length and the exhaustive enquiries that were undertaken. There is no evidence at this time to support the fact that Susan Rudkin fabricated this offence in order to steal monies. Without fresh evidence I do not propose to reopen the offence after this amount of time; and decline the invitation to reinterview Mrs Rudkin.
"I propose that you continue as planned with the theft charges."

So the police were declining to reopen the investigation.
A. Yeah.
Q. Could we have back on screen, please, POL00051258. In the middle of the first page, there is an email from Gareth Goddard, also dated 25 March 2009 and timed around three hours before DS Bacon's email, which we've just looked at. This is him to a number of police officers copied to you. It says:
"Sir,
"Please could someone make contact with Mike Wilcox from the Post Office. He is sending these emails to me because he had my contact details from my days at Coalville CID. The post office he refers to was subject to two armed robberies, one of which I charged an offender with and he was convicted but the second one was believed to be an inside job by the subpostmistress. We never had any evidence to support this however and it remains undetected."

This leads to a further email at the top of the page, suggesting that you speak to DS Wheeler and there are some handwritten notes at the top. Are those made by you?
A. Yes, they are, yeah.
Q. They read:
"Will assist on voluntary interview. Will not arrest."
So just to be clear, you were asking the police to arrest Mrs Rudkin for the purposes of interviewing her about the robbery in 2006; is that right?
A. Absolutely not. That's not what I'm asking them for is their assistance and what he said to me, "Yes, I'll come along and do an interview with you", and it would have been under caution, if she attended, but not under arrest. I wasn't asking for her to be arrested. She wasn't a suspect in my opinion for that, unless the police thought so.
It was just a point of saying it's going to be a voluntary interview.
Q. That email at the top suggests there might have been some further discussion about whether or not the police would be involved. Did the police ultimately decline to be further involved?
A. No, the last contact I got, according to this, is they will assist me on a voluntary interview, but, because of the letters I got from the doctor about Mrs Rudkin, I just dropped it.
losses, as Mrs Rudkin did?
A. The situation I was in at the time the evidence I had was an audit shortage. I had an admission from Mrs Rudkin that she'd been disguising the losses and she'd been taking money to pay into her bank account and I'd had the piece of paper from her showing what money was missing. I was -- it was not possible to investigate why there were losses because of what she was doing with the accounts, and I'm very surprised, having seen this, that Mr Rudkin never mentioned it to me at all.
Q. Is it right that, during your investigation into Mrs Rudkin, you didn't make any enquiries of the National Business Support Centre or the Horizon helpline to see whether there were any calls made from the branch, which might shed light on the unexplained losses being experienced by Mrs Rudkin?
A. That is true, and the reason for that is because she told me that she did not ask for any help and she knew she should have done but she didn't.
Q. You appear in your statement to the Inquiry to be casting some doubt on Mrs Rudkin's account,
Q. In terms of the enquiries you made in Mrs Rudkin's case, relating to the theft charge actually brought, you didn't make any enquiries as to the history of the operation of the Horizon system at the lbstock branch, did you, at the time?
A. Any history of the Horizon?
Q. Any history of the operation of Horizon and any concerns or complaints regarding that. You didn't make any enquiries about that at the time, did you?
A. No.
Q. You are now aware, I think, from documents provided to you by the Inquiry, for the purposes of preparing your statement, that, had you done so, you would have discovered that Mr Rudkin had raised concerns about the operation of the Horizon system on a number of occasions, prior to the investigation of Mrs Rudkin, including concerns about shortages, phantom transactions, and balancing issues with the Horizon system in 2004 and 2005; is that right?
A. I've seen that since, yes.
Q. Looking back, do you think you should have made such enquiries where someone had unexplained 118
in her statement to the Inquiry, that she called the helpline when she was experiencing difficulties with the system; is that right?
A. That's correct. That's not what she told me during the interview, yeah.
Q. You have no knowledge yourself, do you, of whether Mrs Rudkin called the helpline or not, because you didn't ask the question?
A. Because she told me she hadn't. That's correct.
Q. Why is it, therefore, that you seek to cast doubt on what Mrs Rudkin says about the fact of calling the helpline?
A. Sorry, can you say that again?
Q. Why is it, then, that in your statement you seek to cast doubt on what Mrs Rudkin says about having called the helpline?
A. I think, when I read that statement, I'm very upset at the fact that I was accused of denying her legal representation because that just didn't happen. When I reread the tapes and the taped summary, she told me that she did not ask for help. So I'm suggest -- I'm not suggesting, I'm giving her the benefit of the doubt that maybe she didn't remember what happened on the day correctly.
Q. Are you now aware that Mrs Rudkin's conviction was quashed by Southwark Crown Court on 7 December 2020?
A. I am.
Q. At that hearing, it was accepted by the Post Office that the reliability of Horizon in her case was essential, and this was said by counsel for the Post Office appearing at that hearing to be because there were a number of calls from her branch to the Helpdesk relating to Horizon and balancing issues.

Could we have paragraph 146, please, of Mr Wilcox's statement on screen. That is page 38, please. You say here:
"Prior to the original court proceedings of Bates v Post Office I was contacted by Post Office Limited regarding my recollection of this case and it was agreed that it did not fall into the category of Horizon reliability."

Why did you feel the need to include that in your statement?
A. Because I think I was surprised that the case was part of that initial batch of offices, because I didn't consider -- I thought the whole trial and the whole Inquiry was about being 121
were stealing money and they were admitting to it, and obviously then you couldn't blame the computer system.

There were also people that had unexplained losses and, again, you couldn't blame the computer system. In those days, prior to Horizon, you could phone up and say, "I've run out of money, can I have some more, please?" and nobody would know because it was all paper based. You could go two or three years in between audits and you could be using money all the time and nobody would know.

I was just trying to make a point that, at the introduction of Horizon, it's not possible to do that. So if people were taking money prior to Horizon, there's no reason why that shouldn't have stopped and I'm just trying to make a point that, because it was easier to get caught, I would have -- to be honest, I would have expected it to increase.
Q. Setting aside anything you have read or heard since you ceased being an Investigator for the Post Office, did you personally have any knowledge at the time of the numbers of prosecutions being brought by the Post Office 123
reliant on Horizon data. I wasn't reliant on Horizon data when I first wrote the case. It was purely based -- there was nothing to prove through Horizon, so it was based on the other evidence that l'd obtained.
Q. Is it the case that you are still disbelieving of subpostmasters, even after their convictions had been overturned?
A. When the convictions had been overturned, I -if we're talking about this case in particular, I believe that what she told me on the day was correct.
Q. You deal at paragraphs 163 to 167 of your statement with prosecution numbers. What are you referring to when you say:
"There has been a great deal of discussion regarding the increase in prosecutions since the installation of Horizon."
A. Yeah, um, l've been following the Horizon Inquiry for a couple of months now and there just seemed initially to be discussion around the increase since Horizon. I was just trying to point out that, even prior to Horizon, people were stealing money, whether it was postmasters, whether it was staff. There were people that 122
before and after the introduction of Horizon?
A. Not before the Inquiry, no.
Q. You say at paragraph 153 of your statement that you understand, through following the Inquiry, that Fujitsu was withholding information from the Post Office regarding known bugs, errors and defects. Is the basis for that understanding the evidence you have now watched given by Richard Roll, referenced at paragraph 169 of your statement?
A. I initially read the book by Nick Wallis and, you know, put me over the edge, but Richard Roll's evidence has been a complete eye-opener.
Q. You expressed some anger at Fujitsu at paragraph 168 of your statement. You do not seem to express any anger towards the Post Office. Do you feel any?
A. I think -- from what I understand, I don't think the Post Office actually were told by Fujitsu until about 2011, which is the time I left. That may be wrong but l've got nothing to do to defend the Post Office at all. I'm here at the Inquiry to defend the way that I conducted the investigations.
Q. Having had the opportunity to reflect on
matters, do you feel any responsibility for what happened to Mrs Rudkin?
A. I've had a long think about this and would I have done anything different? I think the problem I've got is Mrs Rudkin was inflating cash figures, she was taking money from the Post Office, even though she wasn't making losses good, and all that happened way before I got involved. I cannot take responsibility for that. I only became in -- once I became involved, I purely worked on the evidence that I had.
MS PRICE: Sir, those are all the questions that I have for Mr Wilcox. Do you have any before I turn to Core Participants?
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: No, thank you. No.
MS PRICE: It appears that there are no questions from Core Participants for Mr Wilcox, sir.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Right. Thank you, Mr Wilcox, for coming to give evidence to the Inquiry and for answering a good number of questions. I'm grateful to you.
THE WITNESS: Thank you.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: So that concludes Mr Wilcox's evidence. Do you want a short break before 125
Q. I understand that, before we start, you want to make some corrections to your witness statement; is that right?
A. If possible, yes.
Q. So if you just take us through what corrections you would like to make.
A. Right, okay. First one is paragraph 20, on the second page of paragraph 20, eight lines down, the sentence starts with, "If any admission was made to the Auditor either on arrival or during the audit", and it currently says "they would write this down", I just wanted to insert the word "would usually write this down" in case it wasn't 100 per cent time that they did.

The next two are exactly the same wording for paragraph 45 and 56 , and it's at the end of each of those paragraphs, which makes it a little bit easier, and I wanted to just add:
"... were the now known bugs, errors and defects apparent and identifiable in any of the ARQ data we received."

The fourth one is paragraph 81, and it's a name error there. In my statement l've put, at point (i) "Graham Brander's witness statement in support for an application for a restraint

Mr Thomas starts giving his evidence?
MS PRICE: Maybe five minutes, sir, just so we can bring the next witness in.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: That's fine. I'll remain where I am, so to speak, but l'll just turn myself off for five minutes.
MS PRICE: Thank you, sir.
( 2.18 pm )
( 2.23 pm )
MS MILLAR: Good afternoon, sir, can you see and hear us?
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, thank you, yes.
MS MILLAR: May we please call Mr Thomas?
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes.

## GARY REECE THOMAS (sworn)

 Questioned by MS MILLARMS MILLAR: Can you confirm your full name please, Mr Thomas?
A. Yes, Gary Reece Thomas.
Q. You should have in front of you a witness statement dated 4 October 2023. If you turn to the last page of that, which is page 36 , is that your signature?
A. It is, yes.

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order". That should actually be Graham Ward, not Graham Brander, I believe, as he was a financial -- FIU.
Q. Thank you.
A. The final one is on the final paragraph, I think, at 119, and four lines from the bottom, the sentence starting "Again". "Again, compensation worries appear to be their primary focus", and then l'd like to omit between "yes" and "appropriate".
Q. So you'd like to remove the words --
A. "... yes, whilst I do think this would be appropriate."

I'd like to omit that, yes.
Q. Those are all the corrections you'd like to make?
A. That's right, yes.
Q. Having made those corrections are the contents of your witness statement true to the best of your knock and belief?
A. Yes, they are.
Q. For the purposes of the transcript the URN is WITN09160100.

My name is Megan Millar and, as you know, I'll be asking you questions on behalf of the 128

Inquiry. I'm going to ask you questions about issues which arise from Phase 4 of the Inquiry, focusing on your involvement in the Security team and, in particular, your involvement in the case of Mr Julian Wilson.
A. Yes.
Q. So, first, l'd like to ask you some questions about your professional background. Is it correct that you joined the Post Office in 1985 as a counter clerk?
A. That's correct, yes.
Q. Following that, you were an assistant manager and a branch manager before joining the Security Team in 2000?
A. That's right, yes.
Q. You joined the Security Team as a Security Manager; is that correct?
A. That's correct, yes.
Q. Is it correct that you then left the Security Team in 2012?
A. It was around 2012, yes. Yeah, I think it was around maybe the March 2012, something like that. I did take my personnel papers so I can confirm exactly if you need me to.
Q. After you left the Security Team, you became 129
main post office in Bournemouth in Albert Road.
I had an office that I worked out of from there.
Q. Is it correct that Geoff Hall was your line manager when you first joined?
A. It was, yes.
Q. Later, your line managers included Tony Utting,

Andy Haywood, Dave Posnett and Jason Collins?
A. Not -- Dave Posnett -- sorry, Dave Pardoe, I think you mentioned, and Andy Haywood they weren't my direct line managers, they were more Senior Managers. Jason Collins, yes. Dave Posnett -- we did sometimes go through a change of some people might be in for a few months on temporary promotion or something but, predominantly, it started with Geoff Hall and ended with Jason Collins.
Q. Thank you. Was your line manager located in the same place as you?
A. No, Geoff was located in Taunton and Jason was initially located in Croydon and then moved to a different part within London.
Q. Is it right that, during the time you were in the Security Team, you remembered the Heads of Security being Tony Marsh, then followed by Phil Gerrish, Tony Utting and then John Scott?
a Network Transformation Field Change Advisor; is that correct?
A. That's correct, yes.
Q. Can you just explain briefly what that role entailed?
A. The Network Transformation role?
Q. Yes, please.
A. The Post Office was going through a complete transformation of its network, where I think, again, it was probably another cost cutting exercise, where they were looking to change the sub post office network into what they called mains post offices or local post offices. They were trying to modernise it by taking down the old-fashioned screens and trying to get postmasters to convert to the new model, and that was the type of work I was undertaking at that time.
Q. Is it correct that you then left the Post Office in 2017?
A. I did, yes. I took redundancy.
Q. So moving on, please, then to the structure of the Security Team. When you joined the Security Team, where was your office located?
A. My office was located, when I joined, in the 130
A. That's right, yes.
Q. Who was the Head of Security when you left the Security Team?
A. It was John Scott.
Q. Could we please turn to page 2 of your witness statement, the reference is WITN09160100 and if we start at paragraph 4 of the bottom of the page. So you say:
"During my time in the Security/Fraud Team, I found all of my colleagues and Direct Line Managers (Area Team Leaders) to be both competent, professional and approachable. I did not necessarily feel the same or hold the respect of all of the Security Senior Managers in my final last few years within the team and before I left."

Who are the Security Senior Managers you were referring to there?
A. Predominantly just one, really, which was John Scott. I don't like to mention the other ones, who were probably his understudies, because I think -- how can I put the word -- they were just his whipping men.
Q. You then go on to say:
"The reason I say this is the firsthand 132

experience I witnessed with the treatment of
Security Team colleagues and managers in the
last few years I worked there. They appeared to
not welcome any challenges or questions raised
from team members with regards to any decisions
Did that extend to the way in which criminal
investigations were conducted?
Not necessarily, although I can't be specific.
It's quite a long time ago, and I know everyone
has used that comment pretty much through this
Inquiry, but it was just various things that
would happen, and if you -- no one sort of
wanted to make a challenge because they felt
that they were going to put their head above the
afterwards. So it seemed like everyone was
remaining quiet at times, I think, is probably
it, to study specifically for a degree in investigation-type work. It was something that I wasn't probably academically able to do and something I didn't really want to do and then find I'd failed and, et cetera, et cetera.

So it was something that I wasn't really keen to do. I think it was through the University of Leicester, or somewhere like that.

Now, some of the -- I actually said "No, I don't want to do that". Some of my colleagues, I think, shall we say, didn't want to obviously cause confrontation, so agreed to do it and subsequently ended up dropping out of it so there was probably undue costs that they should have -- you know, wouldn't have incurred had they not have dropped out. So that was one example. I won't witter on too long because I tend to do that.

The second thing was more personal again but also linked to my colleague who was here earlier this morning, Mike Wilcox, also Graham Brander, and other members of the team, probably nationally, as well, where Mr Scott decided that it was going to be the best way of working now where, after eight or nine, ten years, we'd been 134
time, by Dave Pardoe and that's why my first comment was -- I think it was being introduced via Dave Pardoe but at the request of John Scott.

The request was that my colleague, as in Mike, who was in here this morning, would have a 300 -mile round trip from Plymouth to Swindon every day, at his own cost and at his own time and, basically, he couldn't fulfil that and the question was, "Well, that's where the job location will now be".

Myself, Graham and another gentleman called Lester Chine, we decide that we would obviously -- how can I say, not let Mr Scott win and we would go. We had a requirement we had to be in Swindon at least three days a week. Obviously, the other two days we'd probably be out on investigations and enquiries, et cetera. So it was basically an office based in Swindon, which I managed to do for several months, at our own cost or shared costs, we'd try and pick each other up, if we could to try to keep those costs down.

But Mike, unfortunately, had to leave the business because, in my eyes, it was

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a constructive dismissal. He had no option -he had no option.
Q. Okay, so we'll move on then to the training you received when you joined the Security Team.

When you joined the Security Team, did you have any experience of conducting criminal investigations?
A. No.
Q. Did you have any knowledge of criminal law?
A. No.
Q. After you joined the team, it's correct that you went on a residential training course, which lasted around three weeks?
A. As I recall, about three weeks, yes.
Q. Do you remember who delivered this training?
A. I do. It was two gentlemen. The first one I don't remember so much, although I remember his name. It was a guy called Andy Brown and I think he was a Royal Mail based Investigation Manager, and the second one was a guy called Mick Matthews.
Q. Is it right, then, that the topics you remember being covered included the PACE Codes of Practice, interviews, searches and the retention and storing of exhibits?
investigations or just shortly around the same sort of time.
Q. Did you receive any training on Horizon in the residential training course?
A. Not on the residential training course, no.
Q. After your initial training, did you shadow anyone in the Security Team before conducting a criminal investigation on your own?
A. Yeah, I didn't go straight into the -- straight to what we call first officer work. I would have shadowed Geoff Hall, as my line manager, and obviously more experienced people like Mike Wilcox, for example, who would have been in the job at least a year or two before me.
Q. Did you receive any further training or refresher training in the further 12 years you were a member of the Security Team?
A. Very minimal. I think a lot of it would have been either email based, or I remember going on something called a defensive driving course, where it was as if we were going -- well, it seems a bit strange going after someone but, if you're with the case -- there was different forms you could have, tape recorded or video cameras or CCTV, surveillance -- that's what I'm 139
A. Yes.
Q. You explained in your statement that you were tested to ensure that you passed the necessarily levels of competence; is that right?
A. That's right, yeah. We had a set of -- as I remember, a set of books, pre-course books, I think, and that was to sort of -- how can I say -- give us a very basic start before we got on the course and then there was a test at the beginning of the course, I think, and a test at the end of the course and a passmark.
Q. Do you remember this course including disclosure?
A. Specifically, if I'm honest, no, but I'm sure it did. It was a bit of a -- yeah, I think we'll go on to that a little bit later.
Q. We will. Do you remember the Horizon system being rolled out around the same time that you joined the Security Team?
A. Yes, I don't specifically again recall but I was a branch manager in Southampton at the time. We'd previously operated what was called an ECCO computer system and I remember Horizon coming in around that sort of time. I can't recall if it was introduced before I left to join
looking for, surveillance type work.
Q. Moving on, then, to the guidance which was available to you, relating to the conduct of criminal investigations. If we could look at your witness statement again at page 5 . This is a list of policies and guidance documents you were provided with by the Inquiry, and that goes on, if we go down the page, over to page 6 as well.

If we go down to your paragraph 12, you say that:
"In respect of all the numerous documents I have accessed, I can say a few look familiar, a few were more Royal Mail specific and some documents I have never seen or recall as I had already possibly left the Security Team when they were produced and/or circulated."

Where were the policies kept so that Post Office employees could access them?
A. As I vaguely remember there was something called an intranet site and I think there was a Security Team database, and whether they were the same thing I'm not sure, but there were things that you were able to get on to, to obviously access these various policies and 140
things.
Q. That statement can come down. Thank you. Did you have access to the Royal Mail Group policies?
A. I probably did, if I'm honest, especially at the start because, obviously, we were part of the wider team of the Royal Mail Group Security.
Q. You go on to say at paragraph 15 that any legislation, policies or relevant changes would have been communicated to you. Do you remember how they would have been communicated to you?
A. Again, it would have possibly been through a circular or an email attachment or referring you to go to one of these sites to look at it.
Q. So turning then, please, to casework compliance. One of the documents provided to you by the Inquiry was a document titled "Casework Management", and there are two versions of that policy, one from March 2000 and one from October 2002. You say in your statement at paragraph 34 that you would have had no reason to doubt you were provided with those documents; is that correct?
A. Yes.
Q. Do you recall that these documents set out the 141
Q. One of the attachments explains the information which should be included in the offender report. So could we, please, have POL00118101 on screen.
So we can see it's titled "Guide to the
Preparation and Layout of Investigation Red
Label Case Files, Offender Reports and
Discipline Reports". Could we go to page 10, please, the bottom of page 10.

So this section then, you can see, is titled "Post-interview", paragraph 2.15 says:
"Details of failures in security, supervision, procedures and product integrity." It says:
"This must be a comprehensive list of all failures in security, supervision, procedures and product integrity and it must be highlighted bold in the report. Where the investigator concludes that there are no failures a statement to this effect should be made and highlighted in bold."

So what did you understand failures in product integrity to include?
A. Well, certainly now, Horizon itself. But at the time, it would have been, I guess, our clients more than anything, I guess, product integrity, 143
need for two separate reports, one which would go to the discipline manager, which was known as the conduct or discipline report, and a second report, known as the offender report, which would go to the Legal Services team?
A. I do, yes.
Q. What did you understand the purpose of the offender report to be?
A. The offender report would be -- how can I say -the whole picture. Everything including any exhibits or anything that we referred to during the interview, any failings we may have found, and I think, at the end, we put a summary if there was anything we felt would -- it was like a piece in bold that we would write, which was to do with anything that may have undermined the investigation possibly, something like that.
Q. You've pre-empted my question.
A. Sorry.
Q. Not at all. So the Inquiry also provided you with a number of emails, dated 2011, from David Posnett, relating to casework compliance. So is it right that you remember the introduction of compliance checks?
A. I do, yes.

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as to whether there was anything that would impact on those. But I can't really recall at the moment.
Q. So when you say now that you would appreciate it would be Horizon at the time, would you not have thought that would have included Horizon issues?
A. No, because, again, the message came out that there was -- and I don't know where the message came from because, again, everyone said the same, but line managers, colleagues, senior lead team manager, the business, was that we had somebody who would give a witness statement from Fujitsu that all the cases seemed to suggest that there was no product integrity with Horizon. I now know that that's not the case.
Q. Would you have considered it to include allegations of problems with Horizon?
A. Again, it should have done because I should have taken those a bit more seriously than we did, but I can only apologise.
Q. So I'll move on, then. Another one of the attachments to David Posnett's emails is the Identification Codes document which you comment on at paragraphs 42 and 43 of your witness statement. Could we have that on screen, 144
please, and the reference is POL00118104. Can you see that it lists seven identification codes?
A. I do, yes.
Q. Is it still your position that you don't remember ever having seen this document?
A. I don't. It was in an attachment. I can't deny that it came to me. I think I say in my statement that, having been -- when it was circulated, I'd been in the role for probably a number of years then, it seemed to be more that these things were being circulated for more new members of the team, rather than experienced members of the team, and I'm not taking that as disrespect to them or blowing my own trumpet but I'd obviously been using the identification codes for quite a few years.
Q. At paragraph 44 of your statement you say that you were requiring to record identification codes when you notified the police of criminal proceedings on an NPA1 or NPA2 form; is that correct?
A. I do, but I think I've learnt that it's now an NPA3, or 003 or something. I think it's different sides of the forms, et cetera. 145

Identification Codes document.
A. Without a doubt, yes.
Q. So for example, this form refers to "White

European", while the Post Office Identification
Codes document refers to "White skinned
European", and gives a list of countries.
A. Yes.
Q. So if I could take you back then to paragraph 80 of your witness statement, please. Paragraph 80 is on page 25 .

Just down to paragraph 80, please.
So you say there that:
"It was therefore fairly standard practice to complete these Antecedents/NPA forms and was therefore answers of how the person best described their appearance along with all the other questions for its completion."

You go on to then say:
"For example an IC1 was stated in PACE as --White-skinned European: English, Scottish, Welsh, French, German, Swedish, Norwegian, Polish, Russia."

That language there is the same language as the Post Office Identification Codes document; do you agree with that?
Q. Could we have POL00119211 on screen, please. I think this is an example of an NPA1 form.
A. Yes.
Q. You can see in the top right.
A. Yeah.
Q. This form is from the case of Julian Wilson, which is a case we'll come back to in more detail later. But you say at paragraph 80 of your statement that you completed this form after Mr Wilson's interview; do you remember that?
A. That I think would be normal -- the normal process. So I can't remember it exactly but I'm guessing I did. I think that was the -- without being rude, I think that was -- the last occasion I actually saw Mr Wilson was after the interview, so I think the details were taken from him at that time.
Q. So on page 2, then, of that form, we can see there are seven boxes for ethnic appearance to be recorded and the boxes are "White European", "Dark European", "Afro-Caribbean", "Asian, "Oriental", "Arab", and "Unknown".

Can you see that the language used here is different from the language in the 146
A. Quite possibly. I -- it was something I Googled on -- when I was doing my statement, to be truthful. I'd always previously used the identification on the back of the NPA002/3, on the back where you just showed a moment ago, and the -- whilst you're filling the form in, in theory, going across from, you know, right -left to right, sorry, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7 , so I would just have used that form when I was completing -- or asked the person I was asking the questions to, suspect, whatever you want to call it, what they best described themselves as.
Q. So when you refer there to "IC1 was stated in PACE", what are you referring to? You're referring to the NPA1 form?
A. No, I'm referring to the fact that, whilst I was -- obviously, I saw Mr Posnett's email, and hadn't previously seen it, as my recollection was I hadn't open it and, if I had, I think I would have challenged, that I'd seen that and was not -- how can I say -- entirely comfortable with the email that was part of the Inquiry, and basically thought "Well, that's not something -- not a document I opened or used".

So, in preparation for my statement, 148

|  | I think, although I'd obviously mentioned -- | 1 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | I probably should have just left it as "I've | 2 |
|  | gone across the top of the NPA form", would be | 3 |
|  | my normal thing of doing that. And, as I say, | 4 |
|  | after a number of years in the role, you tended | 5 |
|  | to have in idea of what the code -- and | 6 |
|  | pre-dominantly, I think I say in my statement, | 7 |
|  | as well, is that the majority of our people | 8 |
|  | would have been -- or was known or considered | 9 |
|  | themselves an IC1. | 10 |
| Q. | So despite using, in paragraph 80, the same | 11 |
|  | language as the Identification Codes document, | 12 |
|  | is your evidence that actually what you were | 13 |
|  | referring to were the boxes on the NPA forms? | 14 |
| A. | Yes, yes, I used the NPA form. | 15 |
| Q. | I'd like to move on then to ask you some | 16 |
|  | questions about the involvement of Post Office | 17 |
|  | Investigators, following the identification of | 18 |
|  | an apparent shortfall at audit. | 19 |
|  | So you explain in your statement that | 20 |
|  | an Investigator would sometimes attend an audit | 21 |
|  | if they had instigated or requested it. Can you | 22 |
|  | explain the circumstances in which you would | 23 |
|  | have requested an audit. | 24 |
| A. | A couple of reasons. One going back to pension $149$ | 25 |
|  | hypothetically they said that they had $£ 50,000$ | 1 |
|  | in the branch, but the Post Office knew that | 2 |
|  | their outgoings for the customers that are on | 3 |
|  | a regular basis coming in was $£ 20,000$, they may | 4 |
|  | request for some cash to be returned to the | 5 |
|  | central cash centre, if you like. | 6 |
|  | They would make a phone call, the cash | 7 |
|  | centre, and say, "Could you return that cash?" | 8 |
|  | And if it came back, great. They may then make | 9 |
|  | another phone call saying, "You didn't send that | 10 |
|  | cash back, can you sent some £20,000/£30,000 | 11 |
|  | back?" et cetera, et cetera. And eventually the | 12 |
|  | money never came, so there would be a suspicion | 13 |
|  | possibly that that money wasn't actually held at | 14 |
|  | the branch so it may, on the enquiry of the | 15 |
|  | investigation, instigate an audit to be | 16 |
|  | requested. | 17 |
| Q. | Then in respect of Crown Offices, if we could | 18 |
|  | have your statement up again at page 8, please, | 19 |
|  | paragraph 19. You say that the same approach | 20 |
|  | was taken in respect of both Crown Offices and | 21 |
|  | subpostmasters who were under investigation. | 22 |
|  | You then go on to say, if we could just go -- | 23 |
|  | thank you: | 24 |
|  | "The only thing that changed in my opinion | 25 |

I think, although I'd obviously mentioned -I probably should have just left it as "I've gone across the top of the NPA form", would be my normal thing of doing that. And, as I say, after a number of years in the role, you tended o have in idea of what the code -- and pre-dominantly, I think I say in my statement, as well, is that the majority of our people would have been -- or was known or considered themselves an IC1. language as the Identification Codes document, is your evidence that actually what you were referring to were the boxes on the NPA forms?15questions about the involvement of Post Office17181920 an Investigator would sometimes attend an audit 21
24
hypothetically they said that they had $£ 50,000$ their outgoings for the customers that are on a regular basis coming in was $£ 20,000$, they may request for some cash to be returned to the They would make a phone call, the cash centre, and say, "Could you return that cash?" another phone call saying, "You didn't send that cash back, can you sent some $£ 20,000 / £ 30,000$ back?" et cetera, et cetera. And eventually the money never came, so there would be a suspicion possibly that that money wasn't actually held at the branch so it may, on the enquiry of the investigation, instigate an audit to be requested. have your statement up again at page 8, please, paragraph 19. You say that the same approach was taken in respect of both Crown Offices and subpostmasters who were under investigation. hank you:
"The only thing that changed in my opinion 151
and allowance frauds that were apparent. If we had one case where we had a complaint that we understood that these pension allowance fraud -the suspect, I shall say, was looking in the obituaries to find out when someone had passed away -- and it was when we were going back to the old pension book scenario -- and they would look in the drawer to find their pension book and subsequently think "Unfortunately, they've passed away, we'll steal that book because they won't be coming in to collect it", and systematically cash the dockets, et cetera. So things like that we would have obviously instigated an audit.

I think I had another occasion where -- and I think that's part of the evidence here -where a holiday relief had contacted the Post Office to say that they believed that there would be a shortage at an office, and the other thing we had was cash -- Overnight Cash Holding.

A lot of times there was -- when Horizon came in, there was occasions where they would do their daily cash declarations or they would show their cash declarations at the end of day, end of week, end of trading period and, let's say, 150
was the actual number of audits carried out at the Crown Offices. It seemed to reduce over the years as the staffing numbers reduced within Audits, as it had also done with the Security Team."

You go on to say that that was because of cutbacks.

The last sentence there where you say:
"The Post Office's focus on Crown Office losses for branch managers was another factor that meant the Security Team had to prioritise their enquiries around the offices with the consistently worst or highest losses to the business, including the worst Crown Offices."

Can you just help us with what you mean by that?
A. Sorry, it's a bit ambiguous, isn't it? Basically, when I joined the Security Team there was about, let's say, 50 of us working to seven team leaders. When I left, there was two team leaders and maybe 15 or 16 of us working. In the same way, the Audit Teams had similar numbers. There would be fairly regular audits of sub offices, Crown Offices, you know, at various periods. With the reduction in staffing 152
numbers, obviously the frequency of audits at any particular branch reduced quite dramatically.

There was also very much a focus, because I was a Crown Office branch manager myself, on ensuring that you maintained losses to a minimum, as much as you possibly could, and that you undertook, as a branch manager, spot checks on tills, on particular stocks, if there was obviously a clerk that was balancing not as well as the others, you obviously tried to assist them with additional training or find out to try to get to the reasons why. So there was more of a focus within the branch office network away from the audits section, if you like.
Q. Moving on, then, to interviews. You explained in your statement that you conducted both voluntary interviews and interviews at police stations. At paragraph 7 of your statement, if we can just go back to page 4, please. At the end of that paragraph, you say that, even if it was at a police station, you would have been involved, as:
"... we were a well-known recognised interviewing authority with the police ..." 153
the suspect at interview. So whether it be Horizon printouts or personnel printouts or anything that we'd done prior to the investigation, anything on the day, audit result, any signed confession or -- "confession" is probably not the right word but, if the auditor had written out a statement if someone had made --
Q. An admission?
A. An admission. Sorry, that's the right word, yeah.
Q. What about in circumstances where the individual you're interviewing was unrepresented? What would you do in terms of giving disclosure?
A. I'll be perfectly honest, I don't remember that we did, if I'm honest.
Q. You don't remember interviewing someone that was unrepresented or you don't remember giving disclosure to someone who was unrepresented?
A. I don't necessarily remember giving disclosure to someone. I think it may just have been part of the interview. I may be wrong.
Q. Was there a reason for the difference in approach?
A. No, l've no idea.
Did you understand that to be a technical
term?
A. It was something I think when I joined that --
I don't know whether it came from Geoff Hall or
came from my team leader, or whatever, at the
time but, as far as I was led to believe, that
we were a similar organisation, a bit like the
DWP, who had their own investigatory people
involved, and that the police were aware of Post
Office and DWP investigation teams, and that,
obviously, we were recognised as that if we
should call and speak to anyone.
Q. So you'd heard someone else refer to the Post
Office Security Team as a well-known recognised
interviewing authority?
A. I had, yes, and that's the only place I got it
from, if you like, but, yes.
Q. Moving down to paragraph 8, please. You explain
then that you would always give disclosure to
any legal representative who was present in
either suspected criminal or voluntary
interviews. What would this disclosure
typically include?
A. I guess everything, as far as I could be aware,
that was available that we were going to put to
Q. After you completed the interview, would you typically carry out further investigation before completing the discipline and offender report?
A. If something was brought up during the interview, then, yes, generally, I would go and try and corroborate what was said.
Q. Is it right that then, following the initial investigation, the case papers, including the offender report, would be forwarded on to the Legal team, who would advise whether prosecution was appropriate?
A. Yes, that would -- it would go generally through the Casework Manager for the compliance checks to be made, and for obviously a score to be given to us on each particular case that went through them. Sometimes it may be that the line manager may look at it, if he was coming down for a one-to-one or anything like that, but the ultimate place it was going was the Legal team for advice, basically.
Q. Who made the decision to prosecute?
A. Well, the Legal team. They would make a recommendation whether they felt the evidence was sufficient or not to realise a -- whatever prospect, be it a good or bad prospect, of 156
conviction. And, subsequently, that would then get the authority or rubber stamp, shall we say, as it's been disclosed, or I think said, from the Senior Authorising Manager within Security Team, I think, or, prior to that, personnel team, I think it was said.
Q. At paragraph 27 of your statement, you say that you have no idea of any tests being applied by those making prosecution or charging decisions. You say:
"I always believed the decision was only
made if there was sufficient evidence to suggest
beyond reasonable doubt that a criminal offence
had been committed by the individual."
Where did that understanding of the test come from?
A. Exactly as I said, prior to you reading that, I understood it was a decision -- or any test that was applied was the test was applied by the criminal lawyer that was looking at the case papers.
Q. Where did you get that understanding of the test, that it was beyond reasonable doubt?
A. I would suggest, possibly again, through mentor, line manager, somewhere like that.
A. Yes.
Q. If we could go to page 6 of that document, please, and if we just scroll down. So we see
there that the title is "Behaviour and
Competency 1 Information", and the name is "Post
Office -- I challenge to make things better".
Was that one of your personal objectives at the time in the Security Team?
A. I would probably have said so, yes.
Q. If we could go over to the next page, then, please, and scroll down towards the bottom. At paragraph 6, then, you -- I understand this to be your entry:
"During November 2009 Mr Jarnail Singh Criminal Law Team suggested 5 theft charges in a case of mine against ... I challenged these charges as I had previously advised Mr Singh that there are no Branch Trading Statements available. Not only did I challenge the suggested charges but I also suggest that an appropriate charge under the Fraud Act 2006 should be considered."

So is it the case, then, that you would have input into some of these decisions as to appropriate charges?

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Q. Did you have any involvement in the decision to prosecute someone?
A. No.
Q. Were you ever involved in recommending appropriate charges?
A. As I recall towards the latter years, l'll say, of my time in Security, I think there may have been a suggestion or an idea that we may put something within the papers but I can't recall whether I ever did, because I'm not sure I was ever that confident of what I would be recommending would be correct.

I think it was tying to give us a bit more -- I don't know, knowledge base, perhaps, of "This is a theft charge" or "This is a false" -- I mean, I probably would know but I wouldn't know what Act it was under or anything like that. So no, it was probably something that may have been suggested me might wish to, but I don't remember actually doing it.
Q. So can I take you to a document with the reference POL00166128, please. So we can see that this is your "2009 to 2010 Full Year Review", and, at the time, your manager was Jason Collins.

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A. Not that I recall, no. Obviously, I have written this. As I said, under what Act or not, the only thing I can say is that I've challenged Mr Singh because he was suggesting possibly a false accounting charge but there was no branch trading statements available. So l've made that challenge. Where I've managed to get the next bit from, of suggesting an appropriate charge, maybe I was digging from friends, colleagues, or management or something, but it's nothing I can definitely say or recall.
Q. So when you refer to digging from friends, colleagues or management, do you mean in respect of what the appropriate charge might be?
A. Probably, yes, yes.
Q. Was it common for you, as an Investigator, to challenge the Post Office lawyers in respect of the appropriate charges?
A. No, not at all. Well, certainly not the majority. Maybe more so towards Mr Singh than any of the others, if I'm honest, but I'm not saying anything specifically there, but I can't answer that.
Q. Why do you say in respect of Mr Singh more than the others?
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Q. Is it correct that, once the decision had been made to proceed with the prosecution, that the decision would then be relayed back to you, along with an Advice on further evidence, which was considered to be necessary?
A. It would, yes.
Q. Was it your responsibility to then obtain this further evidence?
A. Yes, it was.
Q. Were you conscious that there was an obligation on you as an Investigator to pursue all reasonable lines of inquiry, whether these pointed towards or away from a suspect?
A. I was, yes.
Q. Were you aware that this obligation extended to material held in the hands of third parties, such as Fujitsu?
A. Yes.
Q. Can we, please, have your witness statement back on screen at page 12, paragraph 32, please. So starting at "My recollection", which is about a third of the way down that paragraph, it says:
"My recollection of [the point] above [which refers to disclosure in the hands of third parties] as to whether and in what circumstances
"The purpose of the policy is to ensure that
Security Managers know and understand the
Investigation Procedures in relation to the
Disclosure of Unused Material, as described in
the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act
1996 Codes of Practice."
Do you recognise this document?
A. Not specifically but I'm sure I have seen it or would have seen it.
Q. If we look down, then, at section 3. At 3.2, in the first bullet point, it describes an investigator as:
"... a person involved in the conduct of a criminal investigation involving Consignia. All Investigators have a responsibility for carrying out the duties imposed on them under this Code, including in particular recording information, and retaining records of information and other material."

So do you agree that the point of advising whether a prosecution test was met, the Legal Services team would have been reliant on you as the Investigator to provide them with all the relevant material?
A. Yes, Ido.

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evidence should be sought from third parties who might hold relevant evidence and, in particular, Fujitsu, where shortfalls were identified in branch was often through discussions with the Legal Team/Casework Manager and Line Manager (Team Leader), was that any requests for Fujitsu data was only when this became available to us ..."

What do you mean by that, "when it became available to us"?
A. I'm not sure in the very early days that -- and I'm saying probably on the introduction of Horizon 2000 to 2001/2, et cetera, that I have any recollection of us having any kind of contact whatsoever with Fujitsu. I may be wrong but, certainly, from my level or point of view. Then it gradually came to I think fruition that there was two -- as I vaguely recall, and I may be completely wrong, but there was two ways that you could look at the Horizon data, which was either by requesting Fujitsu -- an ARQ data, and I've got something that -- in the back of my mind, whether this was later in the day or before, that we had a thing called Credence that we could go on to as well.

And I think the point I was trying to get across here is that, when I would have spoken with, let's say initially, my line manager or Casework Manager, depending on where the investigation was or what type of investigation it was, et cetera, I would have probably been looking for some guidance as to what we should be doing or shouldn't be doing with regards to that, and there was obviously a restricted number of ARQ requests we could make so should we look at Credence and try to find what we were looking for, for the postmaster or against the postmaster?
Q. So when you say that at some point you became aware that you could request data from Fujitsu, at what point, what year; can you remember?
A. I can't remember. I know we would have to request it and, again, it's in my statement, it's a certain part that we would not have direct contact with Fujitsu, and I think I put in my statement -- again, I couldn't be 100 per cent -- but I think again it was so they didn't get inundated with loads of people contacting them and not knowing who it was.

There was a single point of contact, which 165
you decide to make your requests to Fujitsu for, for example, ARQ data?
A. I think if there was, again, a timespan of an audit or if there was an allegation that there was something wrong, or, you know, that we were trying to, if you like, prove that what had happened at the audit was correct or, if you like, to try to corroborate our evidence, I guess.
Q. Would you ever request data from Fujitsu to try to confirm what a subpostmaster had said in interview?
A. Yes, I had, yes, I'm sure I had.
Q. What types of data were you aware of that could be requested from Fujitsu?
A. Well, I only knew that there was one.
Q. Is that ARQ data?
A. Yeah.
Q. So you then go on to say in your statement at paragraph 32 that:
"Requests were not necessarily made in every case as they were not always deemed necessary if admissions were made ..."

So is it your position that, where a subpostmaster made admissions in interview,

I believe now was the Casework Manager, which later on became in my statement I mentioned a guy called Mark Dinsdale and a lady called Jane Owen and I wasn't sure if there was a form we completed or an email they would sent and then they would complete a form and then subsequently order the ARQ request.
Q. So in what circumstances would you request data from Fujitsu when you were aware this was available?
A. I'm struggling to remember exactly when, because all the ARQ data, and that's -- I've sort of -I think yesterday, it actually came out, shall we say, and I think it was something that I added to my statement today, at the start of today, and although I added it because I sent the email on Monday about adding to my statement, before I learnt yesterday, was that the ARQ data that I had in whatever case, or however many cases -- from obviously analysing it or looking at it, l'd never personally found any of these bugs, errors or defects.
Q. So the question was a little bit different?
A. Sorry.
Q. The question was: in what circumstances would 166
that you wouldn't have requested evidence from Fujitsu?
A. I think I would have taken the advice, again, from the Casework and Legal Team, in my report, to, if you like, take a guidance or a direction, wrongly, I know now, wrongly, because, again, as
I -- the last sentence is: I had no reason to confirm that any of these -- I had no knowledge of any of these things. So if we'd had an admission, we'd had the evidence, the audit was showing shortages, there was -- we'd looked at the Credence possibly and all those things, I'm not sure that I would have, in all cases, no.
Q. Then moving to paragraph 55 of your statement at page 17, please -- paragraph 55 , just further down the page. You say:
"I never recall any of my cases suggesting where a shortfall had been identified and the relevant SPM/SPMs manager(s) or assistant(s)/Crown Office employee(s) attributed the shortfall to problems with Horizon, that ARQ data requested from Fujitsu was requested as a matter of course."

This was the case at Astwood Bank, which was 168
the case of Julian Wilson?
A. Yes.
Q. You go on to say:
"It was my belief and that of my colleagues, I would guess, that shortfalls could not actually be attributed to Horizon ..."

Is that the reason, then, why you didn't request the $A R Q$ data?
A. Yes.
Q. Looking back now, can you see any problem with that approach?
A. Massive, yes.
Q. What problem is it that --
A. Well, whilst I -- I say massive, because of the fact that I now am aware that there were bugs, errors and defects, which at that time, and up until not that long ago, I actually still felt the same -- wrongly, I hasten to add. Although, if I had have requested that data, now, learning yesterday that there was more than one form of ARQ data that could have been requested -- now I don't know whose -- and I'm not trying to ascertain blame here, but who knew that there was more than one, or whether that Fujitsu knew but the Post Office didn't or the Post Office 169
months, month or months, to come.
Q. So is it the position that you could have it but at a later date?
A. Yes, generally, yes.
Q. Do you ever remember a case where someone came back to you and said, "No, we've reached the limit, you can't have it on this case"?
A. Not specifically, no. Whether they would have said, "Do you really need this data?" or raised a question, or, how can I say, a query in my mind whether I needed it or not, I don't know. But I can't specifically say no, it was declined.
Q. You go on to say in your statement that, where ARQ data was available to you, then you would have spent time reviewing it to look for potential issues. Did you receive any training on how to interpret ARQ data?
A. No. It was basically part of the -- I think the statement that we received that we ended up becoming I think fairly -- pretty much, from what I can gather, self-taught.
Q. When you refer to a statement, sorry, what are you referring to?
A. I think if we got ARQ data in the early days or
did but it was more costly or whatever, I don't know.

But I think because Mr Wilson raised that there was -- you know, he had no explanation, et cetera, then, yes, I wish I had have requested it.
Q. So in cases where there was an allegation that there was problems with Horizon, would you take the same approach?
A. I would, but the frustration for me is that, had I done that, I'm still not sure that I would have found any problems within there, which is hard for me to -- I wish I had, on every single case. But I'm frustrated in the fact that, had I done it, which I didn't in Mr Wilson's case, whether I would have found anything different.
Q. So you mentioned that you recall a limit on the number of ARQ requests which could be provided by Fujitsu. Do you ever recall being told that you couldn't have ARQ data because of these limits?
A. I do. I'm not so sure about being told I could never have them but I certainly recall being told that we'd hit the monthly limit and that they may have to fall over into the following 170
later days, I think there was more than one person that would supply the ARQ data. One I remember was Penny Thomas. It would sometimes, within her witness statement, I think, set out the columns, for use of a better word, of -- the first column might be the log-on of the clerk, the next might be the transaction, whether it was a serve customer or a transfer or cash in or cash declaration, and it was specifically in there. And, obviously, it was a bit like an Excel spreadsheet that you were able to sort and filter it into amounts or log-on codes, et cetera.

So it was, as far as I remember, pretty much self-taught.
Q. So what would you be looking for when you're looking for potential issues?
A. Well, if, for example, there was a -- shall we say, a high increase in a cash declaration, from a Tuesday to a Wednesday, so on a Tuesday it was saying $£ 10,000$ and on a Wednesday it was saying $£ 30,000$, there's obviously been an increase in $£ 20,000$, and I would be looking to see if they'd received any cash in or I would be looking to see if there'd been any high levels of business 172
deposits that would obviously, how can I say, equate for why that cash that gone up by £20,000.

Or if all the transactions were, "I've sold a stamp, I've paid out $£ 10$ here or $£ 100$ there", ups and downs, et cetera, it would probably say well I can't -- there is no reason why that's gone up by that amount or the cash declaration has changed by such a large amount.
Q. Do you think that it's adequate that you were left to be self-taught on how to interpret ARQ data?
A. No, not at all.
Q. Did you ever ask for any help on how to interpret ARQ data?
A. I can't recall that I did, no. I think it was just considered that that was it. But I should have asked.
Q. Further on in your statement you say that you understood that, if ARQ data was obtained, you assumed it was unlikely to have been provided to the defence; is that correct?
A. As far as I -- yeah, I'm not -- I'm not sure. I think there was occasions where the -- where the defence requested it, whether we copied the 173
policy we looked at earlier in relation to investigators.

On page 2, then, please, at the first bullet point on this page, it explains that:
"The Disclosure Officer is the person responsible for examining material retained during an investigation, revealing material to Legal Services during the investigation and any criminal proceedings resulting from it, and certifying to Legal Services that this has been done. Normally the Investigator and the Disclosure Officer will be the same person."

Did you understand that to be the case in the majority of cases you were involved in?
A. It wasn't clear. I would say this is probably my least knowledge in the role. I've obviously seen and understand that, as the Investigator, I was also the Disclosure Officer.

The --
Q. Sorry, just to query, when you say "least knowledgeable", do you mean in relation to your role as Disclosure Officer?
A. Disclosure Officer, yes. I was always advised, as part of the training coming out, the training and being mentored, if you like, in that, that 175
disks or there was a way of doing that, I can't be 100 per cent, but -- or if it was just extracts that we took from the ARQ data, if there was something that, if you like, raised a query or -- and it became part of the evidence as, from ARQ data, 1, 2, 3, I have extracted this particular day and it is now as part of my exhibit GRT1, or whatever.
Q. So in circumstances where it hasn't been requested by the defence but you've requested it as the Investigator, is it your understanding that it wouldn't have been provided to the defence in those situations?
A. I don't know because, of course, it would have gone up to the Criminal Law Team and, if it was part of the defence, if you like, I would have expected it that it would have been given to the defence. I'm not saying whether it was or it wasn't, but I would have expected it to be, if it was within evidence.
Q. So I want to move on, then, to ask you some questions about the role of the Disclosure Officer. Could we have the "Disclosure of Unused Material" policy back on screen, please. The reference is POL00104762, and this the 174
you had to retain everything and everything had a place, if that makes sense.

Whether it was in the right place, I often would assist -- ask for some assistance whether it was on the right schedule, was it unused, was it used, was it disclosable, et cetera, but I always was aware that everything was retained. As I recall, it was put on to the schedules of CS or GS, or whatever it was at the time, 006Cs, Ds and Es, and put as part of the casework file, if you like.
Q. Sorry, just to clarify, the $6 C, 6 D$ and $6 E$, is that the Schedule of Unused Material --
A. The --
Q. -- the non-sensitive unused --
A. Yes.
Q. -- then the next one was sensitive unused material and then the last one was Disclosure Officer's report; is that correct?
A. I believe so, yes.
Q. Okay. When you said that you would ask for assistance on where to record things, who would you ask for that assistance from?
A. I think it would have been either the criminal law -- the criminal law person -- lawyer, or my 176
line manager at the time.
Q. But do you now accept that, having seen the documents provided to you by the Inquiry, that you were the Disclosure Officer in a number of cases that you were investigating?
A. I accept that now, yes.
Q. Did you understand that where you were the Disclosure Officer, you had a duty to draw material to the attention of the prosecutor, where you were in any doubt as to whether it might undermine the prosecution case or assist the defence?
A. Again, I believe so, because I was told you had to -- you know, everything had a place, if that makes sense.
Q. When we were talking earlier, then, about having requested the ARQ data, would you understand that that would also have to be retained, if you were the Disclosure Officer?
A. Yes, yes.
Q. Where would you have recorded, then, the things that you'd considered during the course of an investigation?
A. Well, I'm saying would it not have been part of the case papers that were submitted, if there 177

Based on the papers available from the criminal proceedings, there is nothing to suggest any ARQ data was obtained, the Post Office did not investigate any of the criticisms of Horizon made by Mr Wilson historically and during his detailed interview. There is no evidence to corroborate the Horizon evidence, there is no proof of an actual loss as opposed to a Horizon-generated shortage."

The Post Office, at paragraph 178, conceded that the prosecution was unfair but the court also concluded that his prosecution was an affront to justice, and his convictions were quashed.

Is it correct, then, that you were the Lead Investigator in this case?
A. I was, yes.
Q. You explain in your statement that you became involved in the case after an audit, which took place on the 11 September 2008, identified an apparent shortfall.
A. Yes, that's right.
Q. Is it right, then, that you spoke to the auditor, Mr David Patrick, while he was at the branch on the day the audit took place? 179
was ARQ data because it would have been an exhibit of Penny Thomas'?
Q. Say that it wasn't an exhibit, it hadn't been exhibited by anyone in Fujitsu: you just considered it?
A. Then yes, I guess it -- if it -- so l've ordered ARQ data, it's not in evidence and it's should be on the schedule?
Q. Yes.
A. Yes, I agree.
Q. So I would like then to turn now, please to your involvement in the investigation of Mr Julian Wilson who was the subpostmaster at Astwood Bank Post Office. Could we please have the judgment in Hamilton and Others on the screen, our reference is POL00113278, and it's page 43.

Thank you. If we just go down the page a little bit.

So his appeal was brought posthumously by his widow, Mrs Karen Wilson, and his convictions were quashed by the Court of Appeal in 2021. At paragraph 177, the court observed that:
"[The Post Office accepted] that this was an unexplained shortfall case and that evidence from Horizon was essential to Mr Wilson's case. 178
A. I can't recall but quite possible. It may -I'm not sure if it was myself or it would have been my team leader at the time and then the case was raised from the report because, generally, if there was an audit -- obviously, if I was aware of an audit I may well have been in attendance or I may have been aware an audit was taking place and they may have contacted me.

On this occasion, again, it was, I think, outside of my normal area, and it may well have been that the auditor had informed the Contracts Manager, who in turned would have informed Jason Collins, if that was my line manager at the time, and subsequently then would have come to me. I can't be 100 per cent whether I would have spoken to David Patrick or not.
Q. Can you remember asking the auditors to obtain a signed statement from Mr Wilson?
A. No.
Q. Could we then just go to the offender report, and it is the reference is POL00044803, and could we go to the third page of that report, at the bottom. So we can see that the offender report was completed by you on 2 December.
A. Yes.
Q. If we go back to the bottom of the first page, please. At the bottom paragraph, you say:
"Upon confirmation of the shortage by the auditor the postmaster was advised that he was precautionary suspended on the authority of Mr Glenn Chester ... I was also contacted at this time and I asked the auditors to obtain a signed statement confirming these facts from the postmaster ..."

So do you accept, then --
A. I accept that then, yes, yeah. I don't know who he would have spoken to first, maybe Glenn Chester and then myself, but I accept that, yes, that that was the case then.
Q. Do you remember asking any questions about the circumstances in which Mr Wilson made this statement to the auditors?
A. Not that I can recall, no.
Q. Did you give any consideration to the possibility that the auditors may have said or done something that may have made both the written note unreliable?
A. I didn't, no.

MS MILLAR: Sir, if that would be a convenient moment to have a short break of ten minutes? 181
A. Yes.
Q. -- is that correct?

So can we have the first part of the interview transcript on screen, please. The reference is POL00050140. Just at the top, then, we can see the interviewing officers were you and Mr Brander, and the other persons present were Mr Wilson's solicitor and Donna Evans, who was the branch secretary of the Federation of SubPostmasters.
A. Yes.
Q. If we go down the page to the bottom of page 1 , then, please. So at 10.40 minutes into the interview, we can see that Mr Wilson was asked for his version of events.
A. Yes.
Q. The second line up from the bottom, he explains:
"When I balanced, I balance every Wednesday as required by Post Office Limited, some weeks it was up, some weeks it was down ..."

Over the page, please:
"... and I kept a record of all those
transactions as to what was up and down during, you know, my period as postmaster. I at one time had a manager who's the line manager in 183

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SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, by all means.
MS MILLAR: Thank you.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: So we'll start again at 3.45?
MS MILLAR: Yes, thank you very much.
(3.34 pm)
(3.45 pm)
MS MILLAR: Good afternoon, sir, can you see and
    hear us?
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, thank you, yes.
MS MILLAR: Mr Thomas, we've been just speaking
    about the audit that had taken place in
    Mr Wilson's case. So, moving on, is it correct
    that you attended Mr Wilson's home address with
    Graham Brander on }15\mathrm{ September 2008?
A. Yes,I did.
Q. Was that to conduct a voluntary search?
A. Yes, so I think, as I recall, I'd spoken to
Mr Wilson on the telephone and had asked him if
he was happy to allow us to do a voluntary
search, and he agreed, and we went to his home address prior to going to his solicitor's office to conduct the interview.
Q. You conducted an interview later that same day -182
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those days, I think they were called Paul Vantoosy, and I raised the question of misbalances with him and I'd been keeping a record."

Can you see that immediately he raised the fact that he had been having problems with Horizon?
A. With misbalancing, yeah.
Q. He said to Mr Vantoosy:
"Could the system be wrong, or are we doing, he said 'no the system cannot be wrong, there's nothing wrong with the system'."

So he was told by that manager that the system couldn't cause his misbalances.
A. Clearly, yes.
Q. He then goes on to say:
"Perhaps 2 years ago we had a letter sent round from the Federation as to whether anybody was experiencing misbalances. I said that I had, and I actually then was asked to submit to the Federation copies of Trading Reports ..."

So he's then explained that he's also reported problems to the Federation of SubPostmasters.
A. Yes.
Q. Then going down to 13.10 in , the middle of the 1 second line, he said:
"I also then had a BDM [a manager] called and his name was Keith Bridges. I also raised the fact that I was having these problems with balancing and I had noticed that when I declared the cash each night, on a Saturday, Friday/Saturday when you declared the cash there was never -- never balanced exactly ... and I noticed on Monday the discrepancy had increased."

So he's then explaining he's reported problems to a third person; is that correct?
A. That's correct, yes.
Q. If we then turn over the page to page 4, please, and just down at 22 minutes in, we see your initials there --
A. Yes.
Q. -- and you then say:
"Well, obviously in respect of the Horizon system obviously it's been in for quite a number of years now, we've had shall we say instances or allegations by postmasters who have claimed that the system's not perhaps working correctly which may have triggered off your letters 185
they'd been up to no good."
Are you referring there to Donna Evans?
A. I'm referring to Donna Evans, in that I think he he'd heard from the Federation, and she was obviously from the Federation, and I say -wrongly now -- the allegations or the ones that the people that were saying there was something wrong with the Horizon system, as far as I was aware, concerned or whatever, was that there hadn't been any evidence to corroborate what a number of people -- I say a number -- some people were now saying about the system. people were now saying about the system.
Q. So do you see there that it seems like you're going one step further and you're saying, actually, people had been up to no good and they were alleging that it was the system at fault?
A. Yes, so I was completely wrong.
Q. And --
A. I was believing, because -- sorry to -- I was believing -- because I believed and I thought the whole business believed, and that Fujitsu were giving evidence to say there was nothing wrong with the Horizon system, that clearly that people had been up to no good. I know that's 187

## had spoken to her or that he said, I think, that

originally out from the Federation."
Can you explain what you meant by that?
A. Well, again, I think it was -- it perhaps became that it was -- I don't know, 2008, something like that, that a few people had now started to cite the Horizon as a reason, possibly, for the losses. I was still of the impression, and I believe the majority of my colleagues were, as well, that there wasn't anything wrong with the Horizon system and I think, in the actual taped summary, as I think at some point I may have mentioned, when he said about saying to the two managers that had visited his office, had he explained to them how much he was out or what was the loss, or was it a general question of "Could there be anything wrong with Horizon?"

And I think -- I may be -- stand corrected but I think he just said he hadn't mentioned the exact amounts but he was just asking if something could be wrong with Horizon.
Q. You go on to say:
"I think possibly speaking to Donna since that some of those things that have been generated by those questions from postmasters weren't founded in the Horizon system in that 186
not the case now and I , you know, apologise for the wording in there as part of that interview.
Q. Do you accept that, even if that had been the case, that that had been an inappropriate thing to say in his interview?
A. Yes, I do, yes.
Q. Can we look then at the second part of the interview transcript and the reference is POLO0050128.

So we can see the interview continued later on in the same day and the same people were present. At 6.57 in , at the bottom of the page, it's you speaking again, and you say:
"At what stage do you think you would have been in a position or you're going to get in a position to repay the Post Office the money that was clearly missing?"

So are you asking Mr Wilson to pay the shortfall at that stage?
A. Not at all, no. What I was in inferencing the fact that -- well, his suggestion was that he'd been changing the accounts for a period of around five years, which he says as part of the interview and, obviously, on the thing that he'd spoken to the auditor about, which I wasn't 188
there, so I don't know how accurate that was or not. But I think my concern was that what -when was he going to be in a position -- because if this audit hadn't taken place, and we'd gone to six years or seven years or whatever, rightly or wrongly, under the terms of his contract, he was going to have a responsibility to repay the money.

So I think what I was saying was at what stage did he think he was going to be in a position to make good, as under the terms of his contract, that money? I wasn't actually asking him "Can you give me the money now?" sort of thing.
Q. But was that your responsibility as an Investigator or was that a contractual matter?
A. It depended. If it was a non-criminal enquiry
it would be a contractual matter. If it was a criminal enquiry, then, if it went to court, then we would always say that, under the terms -- as an Investigator, under the terms of your contract, you have an obligation to repay the money. It wasn't "You have to repay the money" because he may not have been in 189
A. Yes, quite possibly, then.
Q. So can we then go to what happened after this interview, then and can that interview transcript come down, please.

So you say in your statement that you didn't
think any references made by Mr Wilson to Horizon or documents circulated by the Federation of SubPostmasters had any significance, as you had no doubts about Horizon. Was that correct? That was your position?
A. That is correct at the time, yes.
Q. You also referred a moment ago to trying to make some enquiries with people that Mr Wilson may have had contact with.
A. Yes.
Q. What enquiries do you remember making?
A. I can't exactly, but I do -- in refreshing myself with the papers of the taped transcripts, which I think I also said, I'm not even sure that I transcribed them personally, in the way that they're laid out, but l've got no reason to doubt what's in the transcripts at all.

But l'm sure, in the back of my mind, I have recollection of trying to contact -- and I think
a position to do so.
Q. Given the issues that Mr Wilson had explained to you that he was having with the Horizon system, why did you think it was appropriate to ask that question at that point?
A. I think it was just the fact that perhaps, if the audit had taken place at year 2, it would have been a lot less and, if it was at year 7, it would have been a lot more. It was just ask -- I guess I was asking -- he'd raised it with the a couple of Area Managers that had come in to his branch and, rightly or wrongly, I don't know what they did. I'm sure after the interview I tried to contact them, I've got a feeling that one was long gone and -- or -and got it hold of one, and he had no recollection, or something, I don't know. But I was unsure as to -- I think what I was trying to get at was how long was it -- it was not going to get better, by the look of it.
Q. At this point you are at the very start of the criminal investigation, so you aren't even sure whether this is an actual loss or not. Do you think it's appropriate to ask him whether he's in a position to repay at that stage? 190

I may have even said to Mr Wilson my plan was to try to see if -- because I think I asked him were they still -- because, obviously, he said one was an Area Manager and then it was replaced by another one, which was perhaps no different than perhaps in the Security Team then going on to different roles, et cetera. But because I was out of area, all those three gentlemen's names that he brought up, they weren't known to me. So I had to obviously find out who they were and if they still worked in the business and what was --
Q. Can I just ask you to slow down a little bit for the transcriber.
A. Sorry.
Q. Is it the case that you remember making contact or trying to make contact with these --
A. I do have a vague recollection of trying to make contact, yes, and the vague recollection may be that -- because I think could get hold of one of the three.
Q. So we took you, a moment ago, to the offender report. If we could go back to that document, please. It's POL00044803, and it was dated 2 December 2008. So that was around 11 weeks, 192
then, after the interview. You explain in your statement, and a moment ago, that you thought there was maybe a period where you were absent from work and there was a delay?
A. Mm .
Q. So when you were writing this report, would you have refreshed your memory of the case before drafting it?
A. I would have obviously referred to the taped summaries very much and, obviously, the case papers that I had -- the jacketed case papers, as well. What l'm unsure is -- and probably I would probably have been marked down on compliance here, is the delay, which I found unusual.

I'd like to say that I did all the necessary enquiries during that period of time but I do remember speaking to the -- or trying to contact those gentlemen but I don't know why it was such a long time.
Q. Do you remember trying to contact them before you wrote the offender report?
A. I would have said so, yes.
Q. At the bottom of page 2 of the offender report, you summarise the interview that you had with 193
please, you put in bold there:
"There did not appear to be any further
failings in security, procedures or product integrity that directly affect this case."

Do you think that that's a fair reflection, given what Mr Wilson said to you in his interview?
A. No.
Q. Why do you think you positively put that assertion in the report?
A. Because I should have put in there, regarding what was raised with the Federation, and the document that I think that they referred to about postmasters raising issues, and the only reason I can say that I didn't was because of my own personal beliefs that there wasn't anything wrong with Horizon, and that's not an acceptable answer, probably, but that's all I can offer.
Q. Do you also accept that you don't provide any details of conducting further enquiries in that report?
A. Yeah, I accept that.
Q. Why is that the case, if you said that you had contacted his managers?
A. I don't know. That's completely wrong.

Mr Wilson and, just at the bottom of that paragraph, you say:
"Mr Wilson explained how this had been common practice for the past five years or so. He was asked if he had considered theft by his employees, given the fact it appeared the shortages were a regular occurrence with no explanation or corresponding errors ever appearing apparent. He said he had not believed this to be the case."

You don't include there the allegations that he made about the Horizon system; do you accept that?
A. I accept that, yes.
Q. Why did you not include those details in your summary of the interview?
A. I don't know, and I think I also said -- I'm not going to say I didn't write this report, because I believe I probably did. But I don't recall doing the taped summaries but, yeah, I accept that it's not in there.
Q. The end of this report that we looked at has your signature --
A. Then it's my report. Then it's my report.
Q. Then, if we can go down to the bottom of page 3 , 194
Q. Could it because you didn't conduct those enquiries?
A. No, no, I definitely, I'm sure, I did speak to at least one of the three gentlemen but, to recall the actual conversation, I can't recall that. But --
Q. So later in December, the Post Office applied for a restraint order against Mr Wilson. Did you have any involvement in the financial investigation side or the subsequent confiscation proceedings?
A. No, no, we just -- we'd done the report as you've just described, and it obviously went through the Casework Team to the Legal Team and then back and then through the court process and then it was during the court process, I believe, that the Financial Investigation Unit got involved, dependent on whether any payment had been made or seen to be made or not.
Q. Moving on in time, then, you were cc'd into a memo from Jarnail Singh, dated 6 January 2009, and the reference for this document is POLO0044806, if we could have it on screen, please.

So it's to the Fraud Team, and we can see 196
that you're cc'd. If we go to the bottom of that page, please, Jarnail Singh says there:
"If the defendant should elect trial or if the Magistrates refuse jurisdiction or if a Not Guilty plea is entered, the Investigation Manager should obtain and associate all necessary statements and exhibits."

He lists a number of statements which appear to be necessary but also says the Investigation Manager should also consider whether there are any other areas which can usefully be covered.

Was it your responsibility, then, to conduct those further enquiries or consider if anything else was necessary?
A. I guess it was, yes.
Q. Did you consider whether anything was necessary at that point?
A. I'll be honest, no, I didn't.
Q. Did you read this memo from Jarnail Singh?
A. I would have done, yes. I think a copy would have probably been within the case papers as well.
Q. Mr Wilson subsequently appeared at Redditch

Magistrates Court and pleaded not guilty on 4 March 2009. Is it correct that you then 197

You produce those trading statements.
Do you accept, again, that you don't include
the mention of problems with Horizon?
A. Yes, I haven't mentioned it, no.
Q. You don't then go on to explain whether any further enquiries have been made in his case?
A. No.
Q. Is there any reason that you haven't provided any more detail in your witness statement?
A. No.
Q. Can we then move to POL00119090 on screen, please. I think this is you forwarding on the committal bundle to the Casework Manager, Croydon. So you say you provided a list of documents and then, under that list, you say:
"Please note I have not forwarded a GS006D or GS006E as there is no sensitive material and nothing to undermine the case or assist the defence."

So are we referring there to the schedule of sensitive material and the Disclosure Officer's report?
A. Yes.
Q. Did you appreciate that these documents needed to be completed in any event, even if there's 199
prepared the committal bundle in this case?
A. I believe so, yes.
Q. As part of this bundle, I think you provided a witness statement on 12 March 2009. Could we have POL00044778 on screen, please. So we can see that this is dated 12 March 2009. This is some period of time after you've conducted the interview.
A. Yeah.
Q. Would you have referred back to the interview summaries to compile your witness statement?
A. I would have thought so, yes.
Q. So going over the page at page 2, then, please. Going down the page, please. So at the bottom of that page, again, you summarise the interview with Mr Wilson. You say:
"During the interview I showed Mr Wilson a selection of Branch Trading Statements for the Astwood Bank Post Office that Mr Wilson confirmed were all false accounts."

Then going over the page:
"He confirmed that all accounts produced by him over the past 5 years would also have been false accounts as he deliberately inflated cash-on-hand figure."

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nothing to disclose?
A. I didn't, no.
Q. You subsequently went on to then complete a Disclosure Officers report, in which you state there was nothing to disclose. Do you remember that?
A. No.
Q. So I'll take you to that.
A. Sorry, I was saying I didn't forward those two and subsequently --
Q. You did?
A. -- Jarnail Singh must have asked. Okay. All right.
Q. Could we then please have POL00051720 on screen, please. We can see this is dated 28 May 2009 and, again, you're cc'd in. Jarnail Singh says:
"I now enclose a copy of counsel's advice and would be grateful if you could make further enquiries and deal with the matters set out in counsel's advice."

Did you understand that to be your responsibility?
A. I'm not sure because, obviously, this would have gone into the Casework Team, I believe. But if there was any further enquiries to be dealt
with, then I'm sure they would have advised what they were, or it would have been within counsel's advice within the case papers for me to do that.
Q. Do you remember seeing a copy of counsel's advice in this case?
A. Not specifically but, if it was in the case papers then, yes, because I would have obviously had to have looked at doing that.
Q. Could we bring that up, please. It's POL00044751. So this advice is written by Anthony Vines, and it's dated 22 May 2009. On paragraph 4 of page 1, just further down the page, he lists a number of items that should be obtained and served. Over the page, then, at paragraph (c)(iv), he says that:
"A further statement from Mr Patrick [the Auditor] should ...
"State that at all material times the computer was working appropriately and that there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of the information received ..."

Did you consider that at the time?
A. I can't recall but it seems a bit -- I don't know how Mr Patrick would be able to do that, 201
seeks information as to the number and location of other Royal Mail prosecutions."

Were you aware of that letter?
A. Not that I can recall, no.
Q. Halfway down that paragraph he says:
"I personally am not aware that Horizon has
been found to be faulty in any respects but
I would be grateful to have this point clarified."

Do you remember speaking to counsel or Post
Office lawyers about that point?
A. I don't, no.
Q. Do you remember considering this advice at all?
A. I don't, no. I'm sorry, I don't.
Q. If we could turn, then, to an email and the reference is POL00051803, please. This is an email from you to Jarnail Singh, dated 11 June 2009, and you say, the third paragraph down:
"I have noted the further advice requested from Counsel and will await the outcome on 15 June 2009 as to the necessity of this further evidence."

Why did you think that the hearing on 15 June would affect whether it was necessary to 203
really.
Q. Is that because of his role as an Auditor?
A. Yeah, but he wouldn't know that the computer was working appropriately at all times.
Q. Going further down that page, then, at paragraph 5(a), it states that:
"Dependent upon what occurs at the PCMH [which is short for the Plea and Case Management Hearing] it may be necessary to obtain statements from Paul Vantoosy and Keith Bridges ..."

Then, going over on to the next page: and Donna Evans.

So those would be the three people that would be able to speak to what Mr Wilson was raising in his interview; do you accept that?
A. Yes.
Q. Do you accept that, if counsel is asking for it, it's because counsel hasn't seen any evidence that that has been done to date?
A. I agree, yes.
Q. Then at paragraph 7 of his advice, just further down the page, he makes reference to a letter, dated 14 May 2009, and:
"... the Defendant's solicitors apparently 202
obtain this further evidence?
A. I don't know what kind of -- I don't know whether it was a plea and case management hearing --
Q. It was.
A. -- on 15 June, and whether I was waiting -- what date was this? Oh, it was four days before the hearing. I can only assume that I was waiting to see, from the plea and case management, as to whether -- well, necessity for getting the further evidence, I guess. With --
Q. Do you mean --
A. If it had been a longer period of time then I probably was thinking, you know, I would have needed to have got that, but I'm not saying it. It wasn't probably the only case I was dealing with, and I'm not saying rightly or wrongly here, but l've probably several other cases being chased in different manners and, wrongly, I've probably said that I'll wait for the outcome on 15 June. So, yeah, I'm sorry.
Q. Do you mean by that that you were waiting to see if Mr Wilson would plead guilty?
A. I guess so, yes.
Q. Do you think that, looking back, that's in
appropriate way to conduct --
A. No, not at all. Not at all.
Q. So Mr Wilson did plead guilty at that hearing on 15 June 2009 were you present at court during that hearing?
A. No, I wasn't.
Q. Did you have any involvement in agreeing his basis of plea?
A. No.
Q. Do you remember being made aware of his basis of plea later?
A. Later, yes, after the -- I think it was agreed with probably Jarnail Singh, Mr Anthony Vines and, obviously, between the defence as well. So I was made aware, obviously later, because I was the officer in the case but, again, it was unusual for me to be that far away from Bournemouth, and I didn't attend, there was I think a local guy, Mr Dove, who was attending and I was at the end of a telephone, basically.
Q. In his basis he stated that the losses occurred as a result of staff or systemic errors. So what was your view of that basis, when you were made aware of it?
A. Either of those two, I guess. It had to be one 205
interview.
Q. Were you aware that Ms Hogg had represented other subpostmasters who'd raised problems with Horizon?
A. I wasn't at that time but I am now.
Q. So over the page at page 2, at the start of the interview, Mrs Hutchings read a prepared statement and she blamed the losses at her branch on Horizon. She says, at the second line:
"We migrated to Horizon Online in approximately May/June 2010. At the time of migration all accounts balanced. Ever since we have been with HOL [Horizon Online] the balances have been wrong."

If we could then go to page 8, please, and we can see your initials on the left side, and you say:
"Okay, in respect of obviously we have Issy today and you have prepared a statement, etc, is there any reason I could ask you why you have actually got Issy Hogg as your Solicitor and not somebody from (indistinct) do you have not have any solicitors locally."

Why did you ask that question?
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A. I believe I'd met her once before, at another 206
A. I think it was because we'd had a prepared statement and, recalling back to the occasion I had met Issy Hogg, I'm not -- can't be 100 per cent but I had a feeling we had a prepared statement and the prepared statement read out that the person, Lynette somebody, that she --
Q. Hutchings.
A. Hutchings, sorry, Lynette Hutchings had struggled to get hold of people to raise the issues, et cetera, et cetera and, as an investigating officer, I was feeling that this was her opportunity to, if you like, tell us exactly what was going wrong or what was -and I know -- I think I said that she -- it's her obligation to do a prepared statement, but I was tying to, if you like, say "Look, are you -- have you got Issy Hogg today, because, you know, she's told you to give a prepared statement", which as a solicitor, that's what her role is to do. But there was no other specific reason than that, really.
Q. Why were you asking if she didn't have any solicitors locally? Why would that have been relevant?
A. I guess that because I'd come across Issy 208
before, that I was just thinking, well, it seemed a bit -- how can I say? Unusual for -to be in another interview. I think I was the first officer with the previous case with Issy Hogg and, on this occasion, I was the second officer and it was Issy Hogg and I think possibly that, as I say, there'd been two instances of a prepared statement and no comment and, from the first interview, I think Issy Hogg, off memory lived around the Guildford area, or somewhere like that, but I might be mistaken.
Q. Do you think it's an appropriate question to ask in interview?
A. No, no.
Q. Is it right that, with the exception of the interview, you didn't have any other involvement in this case?
A. No.
Q. Moving on very briefly to the case of Mrs Susan Rudkin, who was the subpostmaster at lbstock Post Office, is it correct that you were also the second investigating officer in this case?
A. I was, yes.
Q. You were assisting Mike Wilcox?
interview. You say:
"On commencement of the interview PM
produced documentation from Computer Weekly with regards to the enquiry Justice for
Subpostmasters being undertaken by Shoosmiths
stating that 11,500 postmasters were saying the system was at fault."

Do you accept that, by this time, you were
aware that a significant number of
subpostmasters were raising errors with Horizon?
A. I'm not sure 11,500 . That would probably be everybody but --
Q. But that's your summary.
A. Yeah. She's obviously produced a document by the look of it, yes.
Q. I just want to take you now to an email chain dated April 2015, and the reference is POL00176521, please. If we start at the middle of page 2. So it starts with an email from Dave Posnett, April 2015, and he's asking for files in cases where you and others were Criminal Investigator and Financial Investigator because they're being subject to the review by the Criminal Case Review Commission.

If we go up the page, then, please, and up 211
A. Correct, yeah.
Q. Did you have any further involvement in this case, other than the interview?
A. No, probably other than maybe producing a second officer statement, if it was required. I can't remember, but yeah.
Q. So the final topic, then, I want to just turn to is about your knowledge of errors in Horizon. Throughout your statement, and again today, you've emphasised that you were not aware of any bugs, errors or defects in Horizon while you were an Investigator. But do you accept that, during your time as an Investigator, you'd been told by multiple subpostmasters that they were having problems with Horizon?
A. I wouldn't say multiple but, yeah.
Q. More than one?
A. More than one, yes, and now a greater awareness that there's more.
Q. Can I take you, then, to POL00107562, please. This is a suspect offender report in the case of Tracey Merritt. We can see that it's sent by you on 10 November 2011. Then if we look at page 3 of that report, please. You give a brief summary of admissions or denials made at the 210
a bit more, thank you. We see that you reply saying:
"I am pleased to advise you that I still have the electronic documents relating to [two cases including Mr Wilson's]."

If we go up the page again, please, and we then see an email from Graham Ward asking:
"Why are you pleased ..."
If we go up to the top of the page, please. So this is an email sent by you to Mr Ward on the 21 April 2015. You say:
"Because I want to prove that there is FFFFiiinnn no 'Case for the Justice of Thieving Subpostmasters' and that we were the best Investigators they ever had and they were all crooks!!"

Can you explain what you meant by that?
A. Absolutely disgraceful. It's the thing that I received last night at about 6.00 and I'm appalled. I've no explanation other than you'll see the time of the email being sent.
Q. 4.10.
A. I think it -- oh, I thought it was 11.40 pm .
Q. I think it's 4.11 in the afternoon.
A. Okay. Then I have no ...

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Q. Was that your view at the time, that these people were guilty?
A. The only thing I can say about this email and the only -- well, the two things I can say about this email -- other than say it's an absolute disgrace and it's something that I wouldn't have wanted to be part of the Inquiry and I can only apologise to absolutely everybody, because I've labelled absolutely everybody, so I can't defend it -- is that on the 21 April 2015, I still, replying to no one else other than a colleague, a friend within the Post Office Security Team, that I still believed that Horizon was still nothing wrong with it, and I wasn't aware of any bugs, errors or defects.

So my inference here, that everybody was guilty, is wrong and I'm embarrassed, is all I can say.
Q. Can we move on, then, to an email that you sent in 2021 addressed to Nick Read please. The reference is POL00113304, and it's on page 5.

This was your email, addressed to Nick Read. Why did you decide to write to Nick Read in 2021?
A. I think this was a couple of weeks after 213
cent correct ..."
Who were you told that by in the Post
Office?
A. Again, it's -- it was in my opinion -- and,
again, it was a wrong opinion -- was the message, and I don't know where this message comes from or whatever this belief is, that, as far as I was aware, all my colleagues and myself, yes, we'd had challenges, yes, we'd had people saying that we've got this document or that document but, as I say, I've been through I don't know how many ARQ data things, and nothing had come to light to me to say, "That's a bit suspicious".

And I'm not saying I was an expert because I'd already I was self-taught, I didn't accept the training. But what I will say is that I couldn't, myself, corroborate it. He's been used in previous evidence that l've watched, as an expert, whether he was an expert or a lay witness, as far as I was concerned, Mr Jenkins was given a statement to say that everything was okay.

The more l've listened is now maybe that wasn't the case because he wasn't being asked

Mr Wilson was acquitted and, for the first time, I now knew that there was some kind of knowledge, possibly within the Post Office at board level, senior team of investigations or whatever, and it was an email of anger. I'm angry with myself for the one we looked at before this, I hasten to add, and this is my frustration that the business, in my opinion, for all the justices of postmasters, given what I'd said previously, should have been listened to.

I was angry that, after 32 years of being pleased for working for the Post Office and actually felt proud to work for them, I was no longer proud to work for them, that if anybody knew something, they certainly didn't tell me. If they didn't tell all my colleagues or people made out they didn't, I don't know. The level of my email before this one and this one, hopefully will reiterate that that was exactly my feelings, is -- that I had no knowledge, which I do now have.
Q. So your paragraph 3 of that email, you say:
"We were informed by Post Office Limited that the Horizon Computer System was 100 per 214
the correct questions to put in his statement and, likewise, l've now learnt that ARQ data, there was more than one option to request. So all of these things are now bringing to a head, to me, in this email, my anger and frustration.

And I'd like to -- and it's not a question, but what I'd like Sir Wyn to be able to do is to find all the evidence and all the solution -you know, everything here, and this isn't painting a picture wrongly, Sir Wyn, in -- what I don't know about these bugs, errors and defects is the subpostmasters that have been brought before here and have been found innocent, is they're all reference to losses.

Now, under the terms of the contract --
Q. That is something that the Inquiry will be investigating.
A. Yeah, investigating as well. Okay.
Q. If I could just take you back, then, to your email, and two paragraphs below, that's the fifth paragraph down, in the middle of that paragraph, you say:
"In fact my yearly objectives that were bonus worthy at the time were based on numbers of successful prosecutions and recovery amounts 216
of money to the business."
So is it the case, then, that your personal objectives, for which you received bonuses, depended on those two things?
A. I can't be 100 per cent sure, if I'm honest. There was bonus objectives. I don't know if they were individual, team based, but there was some kind of bonus worthy, dependent, as far as I can recall, on percentage amounts recovered for the business, something along those lines.

So please accept this is an anger statement to the Chairman of the Post Office, and I'm not saying that I spent a lot of time researching what I put in there. Maybe I should have. And I'm not --
Q. I'm actually just going to take you to another back to that document we looked at earlier, which was your 2009 to 2010 full year review, and the reference is POL00166128, please. Just the bottom of that first page, where we see "Objective 1 Information". The title of that is "40\% Loss Recovery".

Is that what you're referring to in terms of the loss recovery objective?
A. Yes, and reading it here now, I think the last 217
a postmaster's contract with the Contracts
Manager. It was, rightly or wrongly, within the contact that they were responsible for making good losses. So, yeah.
Q. Just, finally, then, if we could go back to your email addressed to Nick Read, the reference is POL00113304, on page 5, at the bottom of that page. In the penultimate paragraph of your letter, you say:
"Whilst compensation is being correctly awarded now to the subpostmasters, I feel the employees instructed to conduct these prosecutions, arrests and searches have been completely overlooked."

Can you explain what you meant by that part of your letter?
A. Well, I think there is part of the chain, I won't go into it too much, but I think they think I was looking for compensation when all I was really looking for was an apology that they'd never actually brought any of this attention to myself and my colleagues, if there was any knowledge -- and I say if there was any knowledge -- whoever had that knowledge, that it was never -- so I -- they've overlooked, where 219
word on there is "team", so recovery of 40 per cent of monies from investigations conducted to have a positive return rate against investigation element of teams. So I'm guessing that wasn't specifically towards me.
Q. It was a team objective, rather than personal objective?
A. A team objective. But I knew there was some kind of, if you like, in that email chain, some kind of link, because l'd been in the Investigation Team for a number of years and I remember there was some kind of percentage against recovery that they were -- the business was looking for.
Q. Were you aware of any benefit that you personally received, if you achieved that benefit?
A. Only if there was a team-based element to it, I guess.
Q. Did that objective influence the way in which you acted as an Investigator?
A. I'd probably be lying if I said no because I probably -- you know, it was part of the business, the culture of the business of recoveries or even under the terms of 218
we are today.
Q. Did you think that it would be appropriate to compensate staff who were involved in these investigations and prosecutions?
A. No.

MS MILLAR: Thank you very much for your assistance, Mr Thomas, I don't have any questions for you.

Sir, do you have any questions before I check whether the Core Participants have any questions?
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: No, thank you, no.
MS MILLAR: Mr Stein, thank you.

## Questioned by MR STEIN

MR STEIN: Sir, I have five minutes of questions. I have with me Tracey Merritt, who started her day at 4.00 this morning so that she could attend, so that you're aware that she is present with us in the Inquiry room.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Mm-hm.
MR STEIN: Mr Thomas, I've got a few questions for you. As I've just indicated to the Chair, I won't be long.

I appear on behalf of a very large number of subpostmasters and mistresses, who are the victims of this scandal. Can we just quickly go 220
back, please, to the time you've spoken about with the barrister that's just been asking you questions today, Ms Millar.

You were talking about the time at around 2008 where there was a growing awareness of subpostmasters saying there were problems with the Horizon system, okay? You said in your evidence that "a message came out", were your words earlier. That was, I think, at about 2.20/2.25 this afternoon.

The message came out, it seems you were saying, from the Post Office, that there wasn't a problem with the Horizon system. Is that what you were trying to say?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. So we know from other evidence that you probably have seen and heard in this Inquiry, that Computer Weekly, a publication dealing with computers and their issues, had started an investigation in relation to the Horizon system. Were you aware of that, around that time?
A. I can't be sure exactly when. I am aware now, yes.
Q. Yes, well, considering that you and your
Q. Okay. Now, you mention in your statement -- and
if you can go up on the screen, please, with
Mr Thomas' statement, paragraph 45, witness
statement is WITN09160100. Thank you. So that's paragraph 45. The copy I have, I'm afraid, isn't a paginated statement.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: That's okay, I've got paragraph 45 there.
MR STEIN: I'm very grateful.
It's going to be the previous page to that, it looks like.

Thank you.
If you could highlight paragraph 45. Just make it slightly larger on the screen. So here you're talking about you having held relevant roles within the Security Team. You:
"... have no specific examples of analysis being done by Security Team Investigators of Horizon data when an SPM/SPM's manager(s) or assistant(s)/Crown Office employee(s) attributed a shortfall to a problem with Horizon."

You go on:
"But if there were any employees that suggested this was the case, I would have asked them initially what steps they had taken to 223

You speak about that in relation to your statement, where you were involved in Mr Wilson's case -- and it's one of those cases, again, that was around 2008 -- Mr Wilson's was one where Mr Wilson was highlighting the fact of his concerns with the Horizon system, yes?

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report this fact. What examples they had actually discovered on Horizon to claim this and had they reported this at their earliest opportunity to say the Post Office Helpdesk, their Contracts Manager or the possibility of requesting some further training assistance or even an audit for example."

So there you're saying in your statement that, if, in a matter that you were looking at, someone were to say, "Mr Thomas, there seems to be a problem with your system", those are the sorts of steps that you say you would have taken; is that correct?
A. Yes.
Q. To be fair, looking back in time to what we're thinking about, you had that by what, 2008, as we mentioned earlier, you were on notice that there was a growing body of claims by subpostmasters that there were problems in the Horizon system, yes?
A. Yes.
Q. Presumably, what you're saying here, at paragraph 45, was that, well, with the knowledge that there is this growing body of problems that are being made public about the Horizon system, 224
you'd want to operate with care, you'd want to make sure that someone has had the opportunity to raise this within the system; is that right?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. You go on to say that, the same paragraph:
"If I had any ARQ Horizon data available to me either before any interview or requested this subsequently after I would have spent time viewing and assessing any such claim they made by looking for any potential issue."

So, again, what you seem to be saying there is, if a subpostmaster or subpostmistress had made such a claim, what you would want to do is to speak to them about what they had tried to do, how they'd raised it, how it had come about; is that right?
A. Yes.
Q. Also, you'd want to then do the other side of it, from an Investigator's point of view, which is to try to find, within the system, ARQ data, yes?
A. Yes.
Q. Trying to analyse what you were doing,
therefore, rather than just ignoring 225

So we can see there that you're one of the interviewing officers of Tracey Merritt, and another person present is Mike Robinson, a solicitor. You're with also Lisa Allen a colleague of yours; is that right?
A. That's correct, yes.
Q. Now, Tracey Merritt, her background was that she was someone that used to work for Social Services, before becoming a subpostmaster or mistress, she was a childcare officer. She had, with her family, gone into the Post Office business, if you like, in order to find a stable income and also to support her family.

She had two post office branches in Dorset, the one at Yetminster and the one at Chetnole. I'm probably saying both of those names very badly but that's where she operated from and had her businesses. So she'd put a lot of effort a lot of time into these businesses, and her background in childcare, working for Social Services, might be said to be something to her credit; do you agree?
A. Yes.
Q. Yes.

Now, what she then says when she's being 227
a subpostmaster or mistress, you'd want to actually, you know, look at this thing properly, as an Investigator; is that right?
A. Yes, obviously now, at the time I wasn't aware that Horizon data or ARQ data wouldn't have shown me anything but, in writing this statement, that is exactly what I would want to do --
Q. These are steps, you're saying --
A. Yes.
Q. -- it seems, reading it your statement.
A. Yes.
Q. These are the steps you'd want to take?

Okay, if we can then go, please, to
Mrs Tracey Merritt's interview, it's got a slightly odd citation for it, so on the system it's HOCO0000002, and Frankie I think has it available on the screen. I'm very grateful.

Sir, the pagination of this isn't very good, it's the top right-hand corner in hand, and so I'm going to be referring to the top right-hand corner pagination as we have it there. If you could just show the first page further down, so that we can see what's going on. The date of interview is $9 / 11 / 2011$.

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asked questions by you, Mr Thomas, we see at the bottom of the page that's on the screen next to 303 and then GT, your initials
"Can I ask you to explain to me why there was that shortage at the branch?"

Tracey Merritt says:
"Because your computers are naff, basically. Because the computers do their own thing ... You go off at night and they're balanced and you come on in the morning and you've got a deficit ..."

Can we go, please, Frankie to page 15, again using the handwritten pagination, top right-hand corner. Now, here we've got a continuation of this interview. You're saying this:
"On the night of the balance on the 28th but this cheque hadn't been entered on the Horizon system had it?
"No.
"Why did you not enter it onto the Horizon system then?
"Cos I'd just told you I'd already done all my work done my end of week, realised that the office was throwing up losses again which were, it seems to do, cos I -- your computer system 228
does its own thing so I wrote out the cheque.
Once l've already done the end of week you can't
go back in and do it cos that looks stupid. So
first thing in the morning that is the first thing to do but obviously l've never got to that stage because your auditors were there."

So you can see that Tracey Merritt in the interview has said, you know, with pinpoint clarity, that basically the computer system doesn't work properly, it's naff. It is throwing up the wrong numbers. It's fairly clear, isn't it?
A. Yes.
Q. Yes, okay. Let's then consider how you dealt with that at this stage and can we go, please, to page 24 of the interview, again using the same handwritten pagination, top right-hand corner. Thank you.

So here we have, against the tape counter times, 29.00, the person speaking, GT, this is you:
"Do you think that it is only your two computers at Chetnole and Yetminster that there is a problem with the Post Office then given that we have I don't know 17,000 post offices 229
have I don't know 17,000 post offices operating on the same system?"

Basically you're saying to Tracey Merritt
"What's your problem? Nobody else has got it".
You're saying to her that she's an isolated case of a difficulty with two computers that she happens to be running at two branches. That's what you're saying, aren't you, Mr Thomas?
A. I think we've not gone through the whole transcript, sir.
Q. Well --
A. I think when you look at the whole transcript you may get a better picture of it possibly, rather than the highlighted bits you've just brought out.
Q. Well, let's just stay with what we've got here for the moment, Mr Thomas. I went through what you said in your statement about the way you would like to deal with these issues when they were raised. You would enquire as to "Well, what's the problem and have you raised this with anybody?" You would want to make sure that you've got the data from the computer system, the ARQ data, and the like. It's hardly the attitude you're displaying here. This is just
operating on the same computer system?"
Tracey Merritt says:
"No, I don't, I'm sorry no, I don't cos
there's 11,500 of us that are all having problems."

Now, let's work backwards. So the 11,500 mentioned seems to be, if this transcript and this note of what she said is correct, is what she's saying, she's also shown you -- from the other evidence that the Inquiry has seen -- some information that's come from the campaign group, in relation to Justice for Subpostmasters. You're aware of the background in relation to Computer Weekly, all of these things, yes?
A. I'm not sure about Computer Weekly but, yes, the one that she showed me.
Q. Yes, and you're aware of the background in relation to the issues that have been coming to your attention since 2008, yes?
A. A couple, a handful, yes.
Q. And you dismiss her. You dismiss her complaint by saying this:
"Do you think it's only your two computers at Chetnole and Yetminster that there is a problem with the Post Office then given we 230
you saying, "This is rubbish, you're making it up. Why is it only you that's making this complaint?" You knew it was different to that, didn't you, Mr Thomas?
A. No, no, I don't know if it's possible to look at but I only received this information yesterday but I did notice, because, a bit like Ms Merritt, I was up very early this morning, but the evidence I looked at earlier on, I think there's a tab in there, number 30, and it talks about a second interview tape, which I don't think we've got there -- I don't know if it's possible to refer to it at all?
Q. Tell us what you want to say about it, Mr Thomas.
A. I think it was to do with -- I don't know if it was known as a Helen Rose inquiry, or whatever, but it's the first one on the actual document that came in, as well, at the same time, saying about the brief summaries of recent challenges, Yetminster being one, and on the summary it says -- and obviously I haven't got the second tape:
"Six minutes into the second tape Ms Merritt states:

[^0]I can give you.
Q. It's not what we're asking about, Mr Thomas, is it? We're asking about your reaction to -well, it's said by Tracey Merritt, she's saying, "I've got these two problems with these two computers at the two branches I operate", and your response is "You're the only one, Tracey Merritt, you're the only one complaining about this".

Yet you knew, Mr Thomas -- you knew -- that there had been a rise in these issues that had been coming forward. So when you said that you looked at these things with care, or would do if they were ever brought to your attention, in your statement, it wasn't true, was it Mr Thomas?
A. I'll agree with you but, as I say, there was other things within the tapes including a cheque that was written out and there wasn't funds in the account.
Q. Well, why didn't you, Mr Thomas, operate with a bit more care? With a bit more respect to the subpostmaster -- or subpostmistress, I should say -- in this case? Why didn't you operate with a little more circumspection to say: "Look, 234

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Is that it, Mr Stein?
MR STEIN: Yes, sir.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Anybody else?
MS PATRICK: Sir, Ms Patrick here.
We'd like to ask one question about one document, if there is time.

## Questioned by MS PATRICK

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Well, as long as your one question is one question, unlike Mr Stein's five minutes!

MS PATRICK: Sir, I will do my best.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Thank you.
MS PATRICK: Mr Thomas, my name is Ms Patrick. I, like Mr Stein, represent a number of subpostmasters. The majority of our clients were convicted and have now had their convictions overturned.

I know that you've talked about your feelings about the email in 2015. I'd like to go back to that document, just very briefly. It's POL00176521. If we can just look at the first paragraph, please.

Before we look at what that says, Ms Millar took you, I just remind you, to the internal document looking at targets and I think that you 236
agreed the target that was set there on 40 per
cent losses, I think that was about recovery of losses up to 40 per cent across the team; is that fair?
A. I think that's right, yes.
Q. I just want to put these two together. The second part of this email, the first paragraph, we haven't looked at yet. I just want to read it, after saying "and they were all crooks!!":
"Oh and we never hit our [Post Office] Profit targets any more as we stopped getting £XX million in recoveries from bloody good financial recoveries through my good friends, Ward, Harbinson, Posnett and the like!!"

To be fair, I just want to check, the 40 per cent target on recoveries, are those the recoveries that you're referencing here in that email? 18
A. They would be part of it, yes. 19

MS PATRICK: Thank you. I don't have any other 20 questions, Mr Thomas. 21
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Thank you, Ms Patrick. 22
Thank you, Mr Thomas, for coming to give 23 evidence and for answering the questions that 24 you have this afternoon. 2525

Mrs Merritt, I'm pleased to see you in attendance at the Inquiry and I hope that you have found the session which you've attended informative, and I wish you a good journey home, if you're going home, if that's going to take another long time.

So thank you all very much. We're not going to sit tomorrow, as I indicated at the beginning of this session, and I'll see everyone on Tuesday morning.
MS MILLAR: Thank you, sir.

## ( 4.57 pm )

(The hearing adjourned until 10.00 am on Tuesday, 12 December 2023)

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[^0]:    "I'm not trying to blame the Horizon system, I'm saying that my office kept coming up with losses'.
    "Towards the end of the second tape transcript Ms Merritt admitted that losses had been accumulating since the end of July 2011 and that she had not been putting the money in for these losses, simply rolling the losses and inflating the cash.
    "Gary Thomas, the lead officer in this case, commented at the end of the report:
    "'It should be noted that this likely to be further challenged towards the integrity of the Horizon system'."

    So I hadn't seen the second tape. I haven't seen the second tape. I can only go on what's been written in this Horizon integrity report that I saw this morning at the same time I saw this. So l'm not defending any of my actions, because, as I've said all along, I'm not saying that I shouldn't have raised it and I did raise it, by the look of it, that there was a Horizon integrity issue. But it does say in tape 2, which I have no action to, within there. So that's the only reasonable offer and answer 233
    there have been these problems raised.
    I appreciate where you're coming from. I'll check into that"? Why didn't you do that, Mr Thomas?
    A. I don't know, and I apologise.
    Q. Now, Mr Thomas, you've said in your statement that you're livid about the fact that these issues with the Horizon system were kept from you?
    A. Yes.
    Q. You say you're very angry. You say that at two different sections of your statement and you've obviously been referred by Ms Millar to the note that you wrote to Mr Read, yes?
    A. Yes.
    Q. Okay. Have you any idea how Tracey Merritt feels about your operation, your part in what happened to her, about the loss of her business? The damage to her life? The shock to her system? The health deficits that she has felt over the years? Have you the slightest idea how she feels?
    A. I can imagine a bit like Mrs Wilson, as well. And my apologies go to Mrs Wilson, Mrs Merritt, and everybody.

