
From: Henry Staunton [GRO]
Sent: Sat 27/05/2023 4:14:34 PM (UTC)
To: Nick Read [GRO]; Juliet Lang [GRO]; Richard Taylor [GRO]; Jane Davies [GRO]; Martin Roberts [GRO]; Owen Woodley [GRO]
Subject: Re: Summary of this morning's FOI response press coverage

Nick ,
I agree . Juliet says some of our black staff are feeling “uncomfortabl “ . I would imagine that many are bloody furious and quite bewildered , and rightly so . I am furious too on their behalf and on behalf of ALL of our staff / colleagues .
Like you I would appreciate a thorough explanation .
Many thanks ,
Henry
PS Andrew Darfoor joins us in a couple of weeks as a NED . He is a [GRO] [GRO] business man and he will quite properly press me on this and related matters .
Sent from Outlook for iOS

From: Nick Read [GRO]
Sent: Saturday, May 27, 2023 12:49:15 PM
To: Juliet Lang [GRO]; Karim Aziz [GRO]; Richard Taylor [GRO]; Jane Davies [GRO]; Martin Roberts [GRO]; Ben Foat [GRO]; Owen Woodley [GRO]
Cc: Lucy Kirwin [GRO]; Patrick Bourke [GRO]; information.rights [GRO]; Post Office Ltd [GRO]; Simon Recaldin [GRO]; Diane Wills [GRO]; Melanie Corfield [GRO]; [GRO]; Henry Staunton [GRO]
Subject: RE: Summary of this morning's FOI response press coverage

I don't disagree with any of that Juliet and thank you for your efforts last night. As you say, many colleagues will have been in the organisation when this document was in circulation. It is impossible to comprehend how that could be the case and how those colleagues must now be feeling. We must be front footed and positive, but also fact based.
I would welcome some detail on this at the earliest opportunity.

Nick Read
Group CEO

EA: [GRO]

Finsbury Dials, 20 Finsbury Street
London, EC2Y 9AQ

postoffice.co.uk



From: Juliet Lang [GRO]
Sent: 27 May 2023 12:42
To: Karim Aziz [GRO], Nick Read [GRO], Richard Taylor [GRO], Jane Davies [GRO], Martin Roberts [GRO], Ben Foat [GRO], Owen Woodley [GRO]
Cc: Lucy Kirwin [GRO], Patrick Bourke [GRO], information.rights [GRO], Post Office Ltd [GRO], Simon Recaldir [GRO], Diane Wills [GRO], Melanie Corfield [GRO], Henry Staunton [GRO], [GRO]
Subject: RE: Summary of this morning's FOI response press coverage

Hi Nick

Agreed, we need to be proactive in articulating the progress we have made recently and I can work with Richard on pulling together a summary for this.

What will be pulled into focus with this is the lack of ethnic diversity that remains within our Senior Leadership Teams, having this representation across the decision making population would ensure that these types of mistakes aren't made and I understand the Complexions network will want to know what actions we are taking to address this, for example we still don't have any black colleagues above band 4, so we should also refer to our ongoing commitments to drive change in our diversity.

The point here isn't if it was used internally or externally, for our colleagues it has been met with shock and concern that we allowed this type of language to be present in our own documentation in recent times. Many of our colleagues from diverse ethnic backgrounds, especially our black colleagues, will feel uncomfortable and hurt by the fact that someone within Post Office believed that this language or terminology was acceptable, at a time that many of them have worked for this organisation. We should approach our communications to colleagues with the view of our people's concern that racism exists within this organisation and acknowledge the trauma that this has caused.

Thanks
Juliet



Juliet Lang (She / Her)
Leadership and Culture Director
People Team

Contact: [GRO]
20 Finsbury Dials
London EC2Y 9AQ

postoffice.co.uk

From: Karim Aziz [GRO]
Sent: 27 May 2023 12:30
To: Nick Read [GRO]; Richard Taylor [GRO]
Jane Davies [GRO]; Martin Roberts [GRO]; Ben Foat [GRO]; Owen Woodley [GRO]
Cc: Juliet Lang [GRO]; Lucy Kirwin [GRO]; Patrick Bourke [GRO]; information.rights [GRO]; Post Office Ltd [GRO]; Simon Recaldin [GRO]; Diane Wills [GRO]; Melanie Corfield [GRO]; Henry Staunton [GRO]
Subject: Re: Summary of this morning's FOI response press coverage

Hi nick, thank you for this.

I just wanted to flag that as things stand, we believe this to have been a document used by investigators to record the background of Postmasters (and potentially postmaster's staff).

What we need to establish is could that document have ever been used to report suspicions about someone that worked in a DMB or at Post Office HQ.

Because if the answer is no, and was only ever used in conjunction with recording postmaster backgrounds. Then it's important that we yes tell our colleagues all the great progress made on D & I, but that we emphasise this was a unit using unacceptable codes in relation to postmasters. And so we need to think about what we say to today's postmasters.

Karim

From: Nick Read [GRO]
Sent: Saturday, May 27, 2023 12:20:04 PM
To: Richard Taylor [GRO]; Karim Aziz [GRO]; Jane Davies [GRO]; Martin Roberts [GRO]; Ben Foat [GRO]; Owen Woodley [GRO]
Cc: Juliet Lang [GRO]; Lucy Kirwin [GRO]; Patrick Bourke [GRO]; information.rights [GRO]

[GRO]; Post Office Ltd [GRO]; Simon
Recaldin [GRO]; Diane Wills [GRO] Melanie
Corfield [GRO] [GRO]
Henry Staunton [GRO]

Subject: RE: Summary of this morning's FOI response press coverage

Thank you Richard.

Can I suggest that you and Juliet think through and work up into a document how we demonstrate we are/have changed ? Both for internal and external consumption. I can well anticipate I will be called upon – voluntarily or otherwise – to articulate this to all our stakeholders. Theses will be Govt, commercial partners, internal colleagues, the media and others...next week, at the latest. The story is moving fast and we may need too, as well. Let me reiterate, we have a very positive story to tell on our approach to D&I and I don't want this drowned out.

thank you
Nick

Nick Read
Group CEO

EA: [GRO]

Finsbury Dials, 20 Finsbury Street
London, EC2Y 9AQ

postoffice.co.uk



From: Richard Taylor [GRO]
Sent: 27 May 2023 10:31
To: Nick Read [GRO]; Karim Aziz [GRO]; Jane Davies [GRO]; Martin Roberts [GRO]; Ben Foat [GRO]; Owen Woodley [GRO]
Cc: Juliet Lang [GRO]; Lucy Kirwin [GRO]; Patrick Bourke [GRO]; information.rights [GRO]; Simon Recaldin [GRO]; Post Office Ltd [GRO]; Diane Wills [GRO]; Melanie Corfield [GRO]

Subject: RE: Summary of this morning's FOI response press coverage

Nick

As discussed, our statement is included in the articles and available on corporate website (Cardew involved).

With thanks to Juliet, email from you sent to all colleagues yesterday afternoon; and we will update 'the hub'. We can cover more at ten@ten and continue to involve the complexions network.

So far no new media calls to the press office this morning – potentially indicates that story is contained for now – will alert you if the story moves on.
I will work with Ben and Juliet on any other documents which may emerge and handling strategy.
Thanks
Richard

From: Nick Read [GRO]
Sent: 27 May 2023 09:53
To: Karim Aziz [GRO]; Richard Taylor [GRO]; Jane Davies [GRO]; Martin Roberts [GRO]; Ben Foat [GRO]; Owen Woodley [GRO]
Cc: Juliet Lang [GRO]; Lucy Kirwin [GRO]; Patrick Bourke [GRO]; information.rights [GRO]; Post Office Ltd [GRO]; Simon Recaldin [GRO]; Diane Wills [GRO]; Melanie Corfield [GRO]
Subject: RE: Summary of this morning's FOI response press coverage

This is a truly horrific situation. The language used is abhorrent. Indeed unbelievable.

Richard, can I suggest you work over the weekend with Juliet, to ensure we have appropriate statements and information on our website and indeed for media response. Please involve Cardew as well.

We will need to do a complete review of all our documentation – Ben, will you reflect over the weekend and convene a suitable work party on Tuesday to think this through. I assume much will have been identified through the numerous disclosure exercises we have been engaged in.

We have a proud diversity record more recently and we must ensure this shines through...for all stakeholders.

Nick

Nick Read
Group CEO

EA: [GRO]

Finsbury Dials, 20 Finsbury Street
London, EC2Y 9AQ

postoffice.co.uk



From: Karim Aziz [GRO]
Sent: 27 May 2023 09:40
To: Nick Read [GRO]; Richard Taylor [GRO]
Jane Davies [GRO]; Martin Roberts [GRO]; Ben
Foat [GRO]; Owen Woodley [GRO]
Cc: Juliet Lang [GRO]; Lucy Kirwin [GRO]; Patrick
Bourke [GRO]; information.rights
[GRO]; Post Office Ltd [GRO]; Simon
Recaldin [GRO]; Diane Wills [GRO]; Melanie
Corfield [GRO]
Subject: Summary of this morning's FOI response press coverage

Morning all, our press clippings supplier has technical issues. Below are links / articles in significant publications regarding the FOI that was released.

The story is on the Press Association News wire this morning which will result in dozens of online local newspaper website pieces coming through over the next couple of days.

The same person who submitted this FOI had already submitted a follow-up FOI regarding this document before yesterday's news broke. We should issue our own media statement (at the very least via our website) at the same time as when we're ready to respond to the FOI with further information we have found out about the document. It's not due for response until 19 June. But if we're able to say more about the document before then, we could release earlier. I will pick up with Information team. Karim

- **BBC News Online** – 'Post Office used racist terms for sub-postmasters in official guidance' - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-65730464> Contains Post Office statement. No one else quoted in the piece. BBC has a warning to its readers - *Warning: This story contains language which readers may find offensive.*
- **Sky News Online** – 'Post Office admits 'abhorrent' racist slur was used to describe suspects in Horizon scandal' - <https://news.sky.com/story/post-office-admits-abhorrent-racist-slur-was-used-to-describe-suspects-in-horizon-scandal-12890411> Contains Post Office statement.
- **ITV News Online** – 'Post Office used 'abhorrent' racial slur to describe Horizon scandals suspects' - https://www.itv.com/news/2023-05-27/post-office-used-abhorrent-racial-slur-to-describe-horizon-scandal-suspects?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1685173950 Contains Post Office statement.
- **Daily Mail Online** – 'Post Office prosecutors investigating sub-postmasters in Horizon scandal used racist slur to classify black workers' - <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12130755/Post-Office-prosecutors-Horizon-scandal-used-racial-slur-classify-black-workers.html> Contains Post Office statement.

- **Daily Telegraph Online** (pasted at end of this email) – ‘Post Office investigators used racist term when collecting data for wrongful fraud prosecutions’ - <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2023/05/26/post-office-investigators-used-racist-slur/> Contains Post Office statement. Also makes reference to recent ARA error towards the end of the piece.

- **Times Online** (pasted at end of this email) – ‘Post Office admits racism after calling suspects ‘negroid types’ ’ - <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/post-office-admits-racism-after-calling-suspects-negroid-types-k79w1xqnt> Contains Post Office statement issued earlier in the day via Twitter. Features the case of Teju Adedayo who was given a one year suspended sentence in 2006. She is quoted referring to the document as absolutely disgusting. The piece also separately refers to an individual who has passed away before receiving compensation.

MP Tweets

- Chris Bryant MP - <https://twitter.com/RhonddaBryant/status/1662166310157942787>
- Kim Johnson MP - <https://twitter.com/KimJohnsonMP>
- Kate Osborne MP - <https://twitter.com/KateOsborneMP/status/1662070407501955072>

Separate story that will be in today’s cuts

- **Sun Online** – Drug Shock: Shoppers stunned after finding crack pipes for sale behind a counter in a Post Office - <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/22495453/crack-cocaine-pipes-found-on-sale-post-office/> This relates to the retail in a branch run by an independent Postmaster in Central London. They sell a variety of vapes and tobacco related products. This includes glass pipes which are available at other shops and online. The inference was that they could be used for drugs. As soon as we were made aware, the Area Manager spoke to the Branch Manager and the items were removed. Post Office statement is included.

Daily Telegraph Online

Post Office investigators used racist term when collecting data for wrongful fraud prosecutions

Use of the slur comes to light as Post Office bosses come under fire for bonus payments

By Gareth Corfield 26 May 2023 • 6:04pm

Post Office prosecutors were using a racial slur to classify black workers the state-owned company pursued in the courts with false allegations of fraud and theft documents show.

The postal operator's security division included “negroid” in a list of racial groups

which investigators used to classify suspects, a freedom of information (FOI) request has revealed.

The use of the racially offensive term was found in a document pack issued by Post Office Security to its private prosecutors, thought to have been written in 2009.

More than 700 sub-postmasters were wrongfully accused of stealing money from the Post Office branches they ran and were pursued through the criminal courts by the company until the mid-2010s.

Over 700 sub-postmasters were wrongfully accused of stealing from Post Office branches, many were convicted before having their ruling quashed

In reality, a faulty computer accounting system called Horizon had generated false losses because of flaws in its programme.

Post Office managers were found to have known about errors in the Fujitsu-made software but decided to cover them up.

People of “negroid types” were defined by Post Office Security in the document as those of West Indian, Nigerian, African, and Caribbean origin.

The report was obtained under FOI laws by campaigner Eleanor Shaikh, whose local sub-postmaster was caught up in the Post Office's years-long prosecution campaign.

A spokesman for the Post office said: “The Post Office does not tolerate racism in any shape or form. The language used in this historic document is completely abhorrent and condemned by today’s Post Office.

“We fully support investigations into Post Office’s past wrongdoings and believe the Horizon IT Inquiry will help ensure today’s Post Office has the confidence of its Postmasters and the communities it supports.”

The spokesman confirmed that the Post Office investigations department, which issued the document, no longer exists.

Sources suggested the racially offensive term may have been introduced by ex-police workers hired by Post Office Security.

A list of racial categories in the Post Office document strongly resembles the police Identity Code (IC) system used to classify criminal suspects by ethnicity.

The latest scandal threatens to engulf the postal operator as it struggles with soaring losses and faces accusations that top bosses paid themselves bonuses for supplying evidence to a public inquiry into the Horizon scandal.

Kevin Hollinrake, the business minister, has demanded an “immediate explanation” from the Post Office after parts of chief executive Nick Read’s £450,000 bonus were paid because he provided “all required evidence and information on time”.

Read has since apologised to the Department of Business and Trade and agreed to return an undisclosed amount of the bonus.

More than 700 subpostmasters were wrongly pursued through the criminal courts during the 2000s and early 2010s in what has been labelled the greatest miscarriage of justice in British legal history.

It drove several of the affected postmasters, who were forced to cover Horizon's losses themselves, into bankruptcy. More than 30 people died before the saga was uncovered, while some were driven to suicide.

Survivors face an ongoing fight for compensation as both the Post Office and ministers drag their heels over payouts to those affected.

Times Online

Post Office admits racism after calling suspects 'negroid types'

Investigators in the Horizon IT scandal were given a list of classifications for postmasters who ended up being wrongly prosecuted

Tom Witherow

Friday May 26 2023, 6.45pm, The Times



Teju Adedayo, who was handed a suspended sentence for false accounting and theft, said the Post Office's system was racist

Share

Save

The Post Office told its fraud investigators to racially classify potential suspects, including “negroid types”, during the company’s false prosecution spree.

It later apologised and admitted that the “unacceptable” language, contained in guidance published between 2008 and 2011, was “racist”.

Between 1999 and 2015 more than 700 postmasters, the owner-managers of local post office branches, were wrongly prosecuted for crimes such as theft, fraud and false accounting. In fact the missing money was caused by dozens of bugs in the Post Office’s £1 billion IT system.

Internal guidance has revealed that its investigators were asked to categorise suspects as “negroid types”, “dark skinned European types”, “white skinned European types”, documents showed. The other groups included in the report are “Indian/Pakistani types”, “Chinese/Japanese types” and “Arabian/Egyptian types”, the guidance on how to fill out the covering form for case files revealed. In each case the categories are given sub-groups, for example the list “West Indian, Nigerian, African, Caribbean, etc” appears beside “negroid”.

Teju Adedayo, 59, [REDACTED] **GRO** who was given a one-year suspended sentence for false accounting and theft in 2006, said: “It’s absolutely disgusting. I cried when I saw this document. This shows they were racist. It’s something I’ve suspected for a very long time, but I didn’t have evidence to back it up. They were collecting this data to obviously distinguish how they were going to treat people. It’s unbelievable.”

The documents, titled “Guide to the Preparation and Layout of Investigation Red Label Case Files”, were published after a freedom of information request by Eleanor Shaikh, a campaigner. “I can only suspect that if they were collecting this data, there must have been a use for it” she told The Times. “I can only imagine

they wanted to create some sort of risk profile for postmasters. We need to know when this guidance became obsolete. I had no idea that was going to be in the document.

“I don’t know where they got the term negroid from, or even then how they felt that was appropriate. Why were those classifications needed? They even put a number on the racial descriptions, they wouldn’t put the label itself in the documents, and that tells you something.”

The documents revealed guidance on how to fill out the covering form for case files, including their name, address, whether they had been suspended and the date they were expected to appear in court.

The Post Office said: “The racist language used in this document was unacceptable. We don’t tolerate racism in any form and we’re clear that it is no excuse that the document is 15 years old. We’re incredibly proud of the diverse backgrounds of our postmasters that make up our branch network.” It added the documents were “obsolete”.

The government website reveals that the 1991 census used the ethnicity categorisations black-Caribbean or black-African, and even in the period from 1971 to the early 1980s the now outdated term “coloured” was used in official surveys.

It came as another victim of the Horizon accounting scandal died without receiving compensation. The family of Sam Harrison, who ran a small post office in Nawton, North Yorkshire, said she died of **GRO** at the age of just 54 on May 11.

She did not live to see justice, despite two decades passing from when **GRO**

GRO who then retrained as a nurse, paid £3,000 cash back to the Post Office to avoid prosecution.

A total of 61 victims have died before seeing the end of the public inquiry to get to the bottom of what happened. Harrison was one of the 557 postmasters who fought the Post Office in a group action in the High Court between 2017 and 2019, winning a judgment that proved Horizon was to blame. Her sons are now picking up her unfinished compensation claim, through the government-run Group Litigation Order scheme.

Will Harrison, 33, GRO, said: “She definitely remained angry at the Post Office until she died. She rang that helpline every week, at least two or three times a week. There was no help, no support whatsoever from the Post Office.”

Press Association copy

Post Office used racist slur to describe suspects in notorious Horizon scandal

By Alana Calvert, PA

06:13 - 27 May 2023

Post Office prosecutors tasked with investigating sub-postmasters in the notorious Horizon scandal used a racial slur to classify black workers, according to documents obtained by campaigners.

Fraud investigators were asked to group suspects based on racial features and used a racist term for staff from the colonial era of the 1800s which refers to people of African descent.

The Post Office Horizon scandal, which has been described as “the most widespread miscarriage of justice in UK history”, saw hundreds of innocent postmasters convicted.

The information came to light through a Freedom of Information (FOI) request obtained by Eleanor Shaikh, a supporter of the more than 700 branch managers

who were prosecuted between 1999 and 2015 on theft, fraud and false accounting charges.

The document, thought to have been published in 2008, asked investigators if the suspects were “Negroid Types”.

Other categories on the document include “Chinese/Japanese types” and “Dark Skinned European Types”.

Responding to the FOI, a Post Office spokesperson described it as a “historic document” but said the organisation did not tolerate racism “in any shape or form” and condemned the “abhorrent” language.

They added: “We fully support investigations into Post Office’s past wrong doings and believe the Horizon IT Inquiry will help ensure today’s Post Office has the confidence of its Postmasters and the communities it supports.”

The Post Office began installing Horizon accounting software in the late 1990s, but faults in the software led to shortfalls in accounts, which sparked demands on sub-postmasters to cover the difference.

Many were wrongfully prosecuted between 1999 and 2015 for false accounting, theft and fraud.

Between 2000 and 2014, more than 700 sub-postmasters were prosecuted based on information from the accounting system, which saw workers wrongly accused of theft, fraud and false accounting.

However, in December 2019, a High Court judge ruled the system contained a number of “bugs, errors and defects” and there was a “material risk” that shortfalls in Post Office branch accounts were in fact caused by it.

Many sub-postmasters have had criminal convictions overturned.

Karim Aziz

Head of Media Relations

Corporate Affairs, Brand & Communications



Finsbury Dials, 20 Finsbury Street
London, EC2Y 9AQ

postoffice.co.uk

