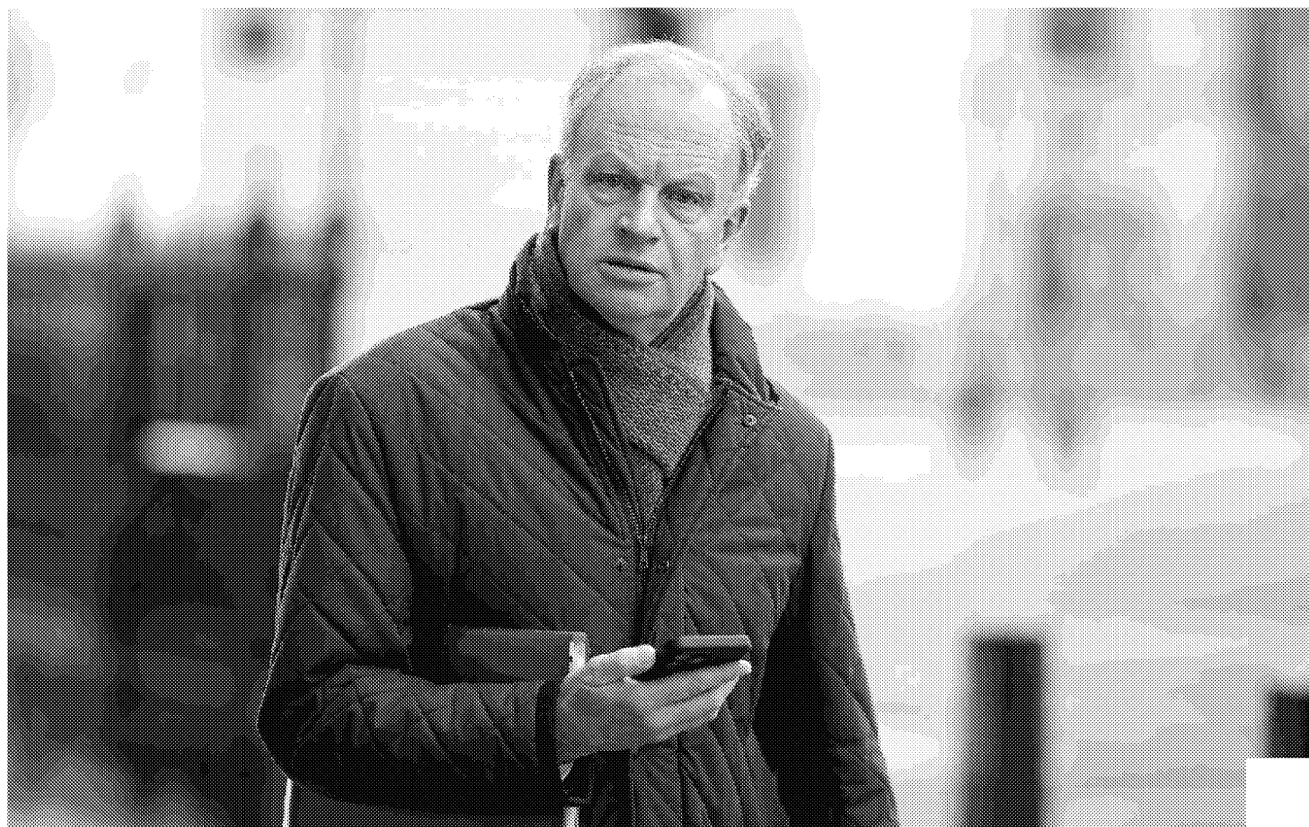


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Post Office hit by string of formal complaints amid toxic culture claims

Nine grievances filed against senior ranks since Nick Read became chief executive

By James Titcomb

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Post Office bosses have been hit with a string of formal complaints over their conduct, The Telegraph can reveal, with nine grievances raised about executives under the leadership of chief executive Nick Read.

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Post Office hit by string of formal complaints amid toxic culture claims

Data released under Freedom of Information laws shows that nine formal grievances have been filed against members of the Post Office's group executive, its most senior leaders, since Mr Read took charge in 2019.

It comes as the Post Office's senior ranks face more turbulence as Mr Read's deputy leaves the taxpayer-owned company.

The Telegraph has learned that Owen Woodley, the Post Office's deputy chief executive, will leave this summer after less than a year in the role.

Mr Read announced the departure to staff last week. He said Mr Woodley, who has been at the Post Office for eight years and was made deputy chief last July, had "personal plans for the future".

There is no suggestion Mr Woodley's departure is related to any complaint.

News of the grievances reported against executives comes as the Post Office grapples with the Horizon IT scandal that saw hundreds of innocent sub-postmasters prosecuted, and claims of a toxic culture including an investigation against Mr Read himself.



Last month it emerged that Jane Davies, the Post Office's former human resources director, complained about Mr Read's behaviour under a separate whistleblowing process, which triggered an external investigation due to report back shortly.

Henry Staunton, who was fired by Business Secretary Kemi Badenoch as the Post Office's chairman in January, claimed earlier this month that Mr Read had overseen a culture of

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misogyny. Mr Read said that he absolutely refutes the allegations that have been made against him.

The Post Office's grievances policy says staff may complain around issues of health and safety or behaviour in cases where raising the issue informally with a manager has been unsuccessful, or if they are complaining about their direct manager.

The nature of the grievances against executives revealed by the Freedom of Information request is not clear, and it is understood that they have all been resolved.

A Post Office spokesman said: "As part of our work to change the culture of Post Office, we encourage any person with a complaint to come forward. All complaints are investigated thoroughly, fairly and appropriately, in order to ensure that the mistakes of the past will not be repeated."

The Post Office website lists five individuals who comprise the group executive, although this has been cut down from nine at the start of the year, and the company's senior ranks have been shuffled since September 2019, when Mr Read was made chief executive.



Mr Staunton was fired by Ms Badenoch as the Post Office's chairman in January | CREDIT: Peter Nicholls/Getty Images Europe

Ms Badenoch addressed Post Office staff on Wednesday, saying its board had provided "strong leadership" over recent months and provided a "unit of purpose".

She said that postmasters had been "badly let down in the past".

Mr Read emailed staff last week to inform them about Mr Woodley’s resignation. He said Mr Woodley had told him late last year that he had decided to resign and that he wanted to “do something different in life”.

“His support for me and the business through this time has been unwavering and he has delivered a great deal for us,” Mr Read wrote.

There is no suggestion Mr Woodley’s departure is related to any complaint.

The Post Office spokesman said: “Owen Woodley leaves us at the end of August. He has made a considerable contribution to the organisation and we are all very grateful for this. He has been planning to step back from his role to pursue personal projects for some time, and our plans to ensure a smooth handover are well underway.”

Ms Badenoch has been in a public row with Mr Staunton since he claimed in February that the Government sought to delay compensation payouts to sub-postmasters, who were wrongfully prosecuted for shortfalls caused by errors in the Post Office Horizon software developed by Fujitsu.

She has said his claims are “full of lies”.

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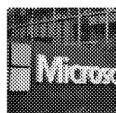
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