

## **Post Office Ltd Confidential**

Vicky Harrison  
Contracts & Services Manager

**Interim Report**  
**POLTD/0607/0108 North Bransholme**  
**Branch Code 174 321 – Janet Louise SKINNER**  
**Branch Loss £59,216.43**

This report refers to a cash shortage of £59,216.43 identified at North Bransholme Post Office on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2006.

North Bransholme is a 4 counter position branch within an independently owned convenience store. The branch is operated by Temporary Subpostmistress Janet Skinner who employs 4 staff, Katherine Ayres, Theresa Holmes, Colleen Kates and Wendy Lyell.

Rural Support Manager Diane Hoyles was requested to visit the branch by the cash management team regarding the Overnight Cash Holding (ONCH) figures reported by North Bransholme. The branch had also failed to return excess cash despite being requested to do so on several occasions.

Mrs Hoyles visited the branch on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2006, accompanied by her colleague Julia Stephenson. After explaining the reason for the visit, Mrs Hoyles was informed by Miss Skinner that there was a shortage in the cash of around £40,000. Miss Skinner had no explanation for the loss.

An audit took place the following day and was lead by Branch Auditor Paul Field. The audit confirmed a shortage in the branch of £59,216.43 of which £58,942.41 was in the cash

On Thursday June 1<sup>st</sup> 2006, accompanied by my colleague Stephen Bradshaw, I interviewed Miss Skinner on tape under caution. Miss Skinner admitted to producing false cash accounts for North Bransholme Post Office since November 2004. She stated she did this by inflating the £10 and £20 notes to disguise the shortages. Miss Skinner made no admissions to stealing the money and offered no explanation as why the losses had occurred.

Miss Skinner stated that the losses in the office were poor. To eradicate the problem, staff were put on individual stocks. The results were favourable until counter clerk Katherine Ayres had a £1,400 loss in November 2004. An agreement was made between Miss Skinner and Mrs Ayres whereby Mrs Ayres would repay the money at £10 or £20 a week. Miss Skinner agreed to

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the £1,400 being added to the cash on hand each week by Mrs Ayres until the full amount was repaid. Miss Skinner states that to date only £500 of this amount has been repaid by Mrs Ayres, this was in a lump sum back in February 2006.

Miss Skinner stated that Mrs Ayres was off sick for 6 months, returning in December 2005. During this period the balancing had been good and the branch returned to operating a shared stock unit. It was shortly after December that the large losses started to appear.

Despite Miss Skinner concerns over Mrs Ayres, she gave her a set of door and safe keys to the branch in order to open up in the mornings. Miss Skinner stated that customers were complaining that the branch was not opening on time so Mrs Ayres, who lives locally, assumed this responsibility. Miss Skinner stated that as she only worked mornings, Monday to Thursday, another set of keys was rotated between clerks Colleen Kates and Theresa Holmes.

In trading period 10, covering 22nd December 2005 to 19<sup>th</sup> January 2006, Miss Skinner stated there was a shortage of £7,500, this again was covered up by inflating the cash on hand figures to avoid showing the loss on the accounting document. This rose to £9,000 in February and in large amounts until the £59,000 present figure.

Miss Skinner stated that the losses in the branch were declared as cash in dormant stock unit CC. On trading statement 02 for 26<sup>th</sup> April to 25<sup>th</sup> May 2006 an amount of £40,253.85 was declared as cash when in fact there was no cash present. Miss Skinner believes this was the current loss figure and could not explain how a further £19,000 had disappeared in 3 working days.

Throughout the interview, Miss Skinner denied stealing any money but admits to operating the branch with poor procedures and did not try to stop the losses occurring. She also added that she did not speak to her staff about the losses or try to find the perpetrator. She admits to falsifying her accounting documents since November 2004.

To summarise the present position.

➤ Miss Skinner made full admissions to falsifying her accounting documents on each and every occasion since November 2004. This was to conceal the losses encountered at the branch.

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- Miss Skinner made no admissions to stealing the funds and did not offer any explanation of how these losses occurred.
- Miss Skinner did not comply with requests to return excess cash on hand due to the branch being low on notes. This was due to holdings being inaccurately recorded to conceal shortages within the branch.
- Although Miss Skinner has referred to an employee as a possible perpetrator, she offered no evidence to substantiate these claims. Miss Skinner gave this person added responsibility as a key holder and greater access to the cash held within the branch.

I now intend to speak to the staff at the branch regarding their involvement at North Bransholme.

This report is forwarded to update on the current position and assist in any contractual issues raised as a result of this investigation. A full discipline report will follow once further enquiries have been completed.

Diane Matthews  
Investigation Manager  
22nd June 2006



**GRO**