

Witness Name: Rebecca Holder

Statement No.: WITN12010100

Dated: 19 August 2026

POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF REBECCA HOLDER

I, Rebecca Ursula Holder, will say as follows:

INTRODUCTION

1. I am a former employee of the Post Office, where I held a number of roles between 1985 and March 2011.
2. This witness statement is made to assist the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry (the "**Inquiry**") with my involvement in the events surrounding the termination of Ms Julie Kay from her role as sub-postmaster of Cleveleys Post Office ("**Cleveleys**") in 2000/2001. While my legal name is Rebecca Holder, I use my previous name (Rebecca Robinson) professionally and in my day-to-day life. This is how I am referred to in the documents that I have referenced in this witness statement.
3. This statement has been prepared with the assistance of my solicitors and is based on my best recollection. Given that approximately 25 years has elapsed since these events, my recollection is obviously not detailed or in depth and key documents are not now available. The events at Cleveleys were used as a case study in Phase 4 of the Inquiry, but I was not asked to provide a statement or

evidence for the hearings in July or November 2023. I have therefore sought to engage constructively in a relatively short period of time. To assist my recollection and the preparation of this statement, I have reviewed relevant documents which are provided publicly on the Inquiry's website.

BACKGROUND

4. At the time of Ms Kay's termination, I was a personnel adviser for the North-East Region. This was a specialist advisory role. I did not have responsibility for the relationship with sub-postmasters and it was not my role to make decisions on termination. My responsibilities included maintaining a consistent deployment by supporting Retail Line Managers ("**RLMs**"), who were responsible for monitoring the overall performance of sub-postmasters. I would support RLMs in preparing appropriate correspondence which was consistent with the Post Office's contract for services. I would describe the role as similar to an HR adviser nowadays; RLMs would come to me with various scenarios, and I would advise them on how policies and the contract for services would apply to that scenario.
5. In general, my information would come from the RLM who I was supporting; a case would have been fully investigated by the time that it reached me, and it was not usual for me speak to anyone else involved in the matter. It was not my remit to investigate or re-investigate underlying events, and I would not have been expected to check the factual basis for the RLM's views or seek the sub-postmaster's viewpoint. My role was to take the information presented to me, advise on the contract for services, and assist in writing a suitable letter.

THE EVENTS AT CLEVELEYS

6. I have never met Ms Kay. My involvement in the events at Cleveleys was limited to supporting the RLM with advice on how the situation described related to the

contract for services, and what sections needed to be quoted in correspondence.

7. The RLM for Cleveleys was Elaine Cottam. Ms Cottam and I were in different parts of the organisation, and different lines of management. I cannot recall if we were the same grade or if she was one grade higher than me within the Post Office's internal grade structure. My role was advisory, while the RLM was responsible for managing the relationship with the sub-postmaster and therefore had the responsibility for making decisions concerning the sub-postmaster. I would not have had face to face contact with a sub-postmaster and did not hold any management responsibility or accountability over them, while the RLM would have regular face to face contact and was ultimately responsible for the contents of correspondence that went out to them.
8. Ms Cottam mentions in her witness statement that she gave for a 2003 / 2004 court case between the Post Office and Ms Kay that she came to me for "*contractual advice*" about Cleveleys [POL00118219 at p.129]. In this case, this would have been advice on whether this would be summary termination or with three months' notice and ensuring her correspondence was consistent with the Post Office's contract for services. As set out at paragraph [5] above, the matter was investigated fully by the time I became involved in December 2000 / January 2001. I have reviewed the evidence provided to the Inquiry and am aware from reading it that Ms Cottam had been supported by a senior manager (Sharmian Neil) [POL00118219 at p.329] and there had been visits by Horizon Field Support officers [POL00118219 at p.117]. These were experienced colleagues in their areas. Ms Cottam had also discussed the case with her line manager, Tony Biolchi, and Steve Gibbs [POL00118219 at p.333], both of whom were more senior than me.
9. It can be seen from the evidence provided to the Inquiry that Ms Cottam provided me with the first drafts of letters to Ms Kay, and I provided revised suggested wording [see POL00118219 at p.335 and POL00118219 at p.338]. At the time, I described my amendments as "*suggestions*". This reflected the

fact that Ms Cottam held the final sign-off on the contents of letters and was ultimately responsible for the contents of correspondence that went out to sub-postmasters.

Summary for Paul Williams

10. On 12 January 2001, I prepared a summary for Paul Williams (“**the Summary**”) with a narrative about what had happened at the Cleveleys branch. Paul Williams was the Contract Specialist; it can be seen that I was specifically seeking advice as to whether we could proceed by way of summary termination or by termination on three months’ notice, and that Elaine had also sought advice from other colleagues as set out at paragraph [8] above.

11. The Summary included the following paragraph:

“[Ms Kay] complained about the Horizon system saying that she was having real problems, which were resulting in the number of losses at the office. Initially there was a problem with the ISDN line. This was rectified. [Ms Cottam] asked for copies of calls made from Cleveleys office and after a spate of calls there were hardly any. [Ms Cottam] and I both felt that if there was a real and sustained problem with the Horizon system then this would be borne out by the fact that a number of calls had been made.”

12. While preparing this witness statement, I have reviewed the underlying Horizon Helpline logs which were provided as evidence to the Inquiry [see **POL00118219 at p.48 to 131**]. When recently reviewing these logs, I had no recollection of having seen them before. Further, I strongly believe that I was not aware of the number of calls to the Horizon Helpline when preparing the Summary because, if I had been privy to the true number of recorded calls flagging problems or issues with the technology at Cleveleys, I would have reported those to Paul Williams. I would not have characterised them as “a

spate of calls” after which “*there were hardly any*.” Regardless of the level of knowledge held about the nature of problems with Horizon at the time (which was very limited), I cannot see why I would have said there were “*hardly any*” calls if I had known the number of calls to the Horizon Helpline.

13. Due to the passage of time since 2000 / 2001, I do not remember what I did and did not have sight of when creating the Summary. I can see from my cover email dated 12 January 2001 to Paul Williams that I prepared the Summary from “*the information which [Ms Cottam] had provided and from the files of the Post Office*” [POL00118219 at p.324]. The material which I reviewed at the time is now not available to me. While preparing this witness statement, I have also seen a “*brief analysis*” that Ms Cottam had created of the Horizon Helpdesk call logs [see POL00118219 at p.132], which stated there were no calls logged between 4 March 2000 and June 2000.
14. Based on the contents of the Summary, it appears likely that I saw and relied upon Ms Cottam’s “*brief analysis*” of the call logs when preparing that document. It was normal in my advisory role to rely on the findings of decision-makers, such as RLMs, who liaised with relevant frontline operational support and management. I would not have been expected to review all the evidence or check the factual basis for their views.

Statement of Truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed:

GRO

Dated: 19 August 2026