| 1 | Friday, 11 March 2022 | 1 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 2 | (10.00 am) | 2 |
| 3 | Focus Group Session 3 | 3 |
| 4 | FACILITATOR: Thank you all, first of all welcome to this | 4 |
| 5 | focus group, which sounds a bit formal but it is not | 5 |
| 6 | going to be a formal session in any sense. We want | 6 |
| 7 | your own views and experiences. You are joined on the | 7 |
| 8 | call by Sir Wyn Williams who I'll ask to introduce | 8 |
| 9 | himself in a moment and then I'll ask yourselves to | 9 |
| 10 | introduce yourself. | 10 |
| 11 | Just a little bit to say we have two hours in | 11 |
| 12 | which to cover an awful lot but we're here to listen | 12 |
| 13 | to what you've got to say. You won't hear an awful | 13 |
| 14 | lot from myself and Sir Wyn. Occasionally, I might | 14 |
| 15 | ask you to give way to another person in the room or | 15 |
| 16 | just to move on a little bit but, purely in the | 16 |
| 17 | interests of time -- that's not very likely to happen | 17 |
| 18 | but just so you know. | 18 |
| 19 | Before we get started, Sir Wyn, do you just want | 19 |
| 20 | to have a couple of quick words about your feelings at | 20 |
| 21 | the moment? | 21 |
| 22 | SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes. First of all, of course, I would | 22 |
| 23 | like to thank the four of you for agreeing to | 23 |
| 24 | participate in this session. We have had two focus | 24 |
| 25 | group sessions so far and each of the sessions have $1$ | 25 |
| 1 | and perhaps if you could just tell us, in a couple of | 1 |
| 2 | sentences, what made you want to come and talk with us | 2 |
| 3 | today, if that's okay. | 3 |
| 4 | SIAN THOMAS: Hi, good morning, bore da. My name is Sian | 4 |
| 5 | Thomas, I'm Noel Thomas's daughter. Unfortunately, | 5 |
| 6 | 16 years ago my father was one of the people that was | 6 |
| 7 | with the Horizon System and got sent to jail. I just | 7 |
| 8 | feel today on behalf of my family and myself that we | 8 |
| 9 | would like to put forward -- it just didn't, | 9 |
| 10 | unfortunately, affect my father, it has affected the | 10 |
| 11 | whole family, so that's why I asked today that I could | 11 |
| 12 | speak to Sir Wyn and yourself to give over what the | 12 |
| 13 | impact was on the family. | 13 |
| 14 | FACILITATOR: Thank you, Sian. You lived then and still | 14 |
| 15 | live on Anglesey, is that right? | 15 |
| 16 | SIAN THOMAS: That's correct, yes. I've never moved away. | 16 |
| 17 | SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Thank you very much. Nice to hear from | 17 |
| 18 | you, thank you. | 18 |
| 19 | Paul, perhaps if I could come to you and hear | 19 |
| 20 | a little bit about yourself and why you're here today. | 20 |
| 21 | PAUL BRANNLUND: Well, I have two careers. I was 25 years | 21 |
| 22 | a classroom teacher and then a senior teacher in | 22 |
| 23 | a large comprehensive school and my wife and I were | 23 |
| 24 | both teaching and we wanted a different challenge. So | 24 |
| 25 | we bought a post office in Cornwall in 1998 and ran it | 25 |

and perhaps if you could just tell us, in a couple of sentences, what made you want to come and talk with us today, if that's okay.
SIAN THOMAS: Hi, good morning, bore da. My name is Sian Thomas, I'm Noel Thomas's daughter. Unfortunately, 16 years ago my father was one of the people that was with the Horizon System and got sent to jail. I just feel today on behalf of my family and myself that we would like to put forward -- it just didn't, unfortunately, affect my father, it has affected the whole family, so that's why I asked today that I could speak to Sir Wyn and yourself to give over what the impact was on the family.
FACILITATOR: Thank you, Sian. You lived then and still

SIAN THOMAS: That's correct, yes. I've never moved away.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Thank you very much. Nice to hear from

PAUL BRANNLUND: Well, I have two careers. I was 25 years a classroom teacher and then a senior teacher in both teaching and we wanted a different challenge. So we bought a post office in Cornwall in 1998 and ran it
lasted the full two hours and probably would have lasted longer if I had had the stamina to keep going. So don't be afraid to say as much as you want, please, because that's what I want to hear. As you know, this is a public session so there may be a number of people watching and listening but try to put that out of your mind and concentrate on what it is you want me to hear.

Most of the questions, insofar as they are questions, will come from Jerome, but occasionally I might intervene to ask a question of my own because sometimes I like to get a detail straight in my head, as I'm hearing things.

But I hope to be pretty silent and can I just acknowledge that we have, with Ms Burke, our first participant from Northern Ireland, I believe, so that's very good and, in due course, I hope to visit Northern Ireland to hear formal evidence but I'm very glad we've got someone from that part of the United Kingdom joining us today.

So with those few words, over to you, Jerome.
FACILITATOR: Thank you very much. So I will ask you all to introduce yourselves, if that's okay, and I will perhaps start with you, Sian, if that's okay, just to tell us a little bit about yourself and your context 2
until we retired in 2016.
And the reason I'm here is really because I have heard so many of these sessions and I have heard what happened to so many subpostmasters, I'm just one of the lucky 10,000-plus subpostmasters that didn't end up in trouble but paid for the consequences of Horizon for years, and years, and years. So that's why I'm here, to tell my story, which is slightly different.
FACILITATOR: Thank you for that, that's extremely useful to hear. Thank you very much.

So, Wendy, could I come to you just to tell us a little bit about yourself and your context.
WENDY BURKE: Yes, thank you. So Wendy Burke, as you have heard, I'm from Northern Ireland. I live just outside Belfast and I ran Dunmurray Post Office. My father actually took over Dunmurray Post Office in 1976 so I literally grew up with the Post Office in my blood.

I did qualify as a teacher and I taught for five years and then I missed -- because I always worked in the post office whenever I was growing up, in my holidays, my days off, even on the days I wasn't supposed to be off, sometimes, and I went and worked in the bank after I taught. So I worked in the bank for five years and then my father was thinking of retiring, he was in his 70 s , and he asked would I come

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in and run the office, would I be interested in it or would he sell it?

And I jumped at the chance, so I ran his office then for 16 years. I left under NT in 2016 also and I was out of work for four days and stepped into a role in the Henderson Group, here in Northern Ireland, which is Spar NI and they, at the time, had about 50 post offices. I started off a day a week and that worked for a week. I then was full-time and I took on a senior manager post with them.

So I had a good experience with them and currently I'm working with network support in the NFSP, so that's me.
FACILITATOR: Right, thank you. What would you say is the main reason you have come to share your thoughts and feelings today?
WENDY BURKE: So I think, historically, people have gone through harrowing experiences. I have been listening quite a bit, obviously, to the Inquiry and whenever you listen to some of the stories it just really hits home. I also want to see Post Office, government and Fujitsu banged to rights.
FACILITATOR: Right, thank you. Thank you very much, Wendy.

Finally to Carol. Do you want to introduce 5
yourself to the team?
CAROL CHARLTON: Hi, I'm Carol Charlton and I'm the wife of Kim Whiley(?), who was one of the 555.

We both have a background in banking. Kim worked for a bank for 20-odd years before she took on the post office. I -- for the first seven years, I worked for the Bank of England, so we both have quite a financial background, which is why -- one of the reasons we took on a post office.

I did the training with Kim. We decided that she should be the subpostmaster but I worked alongside her for quite a while until in 2010 money disappeared from the computer system.

It has had a huge effect on our lives, healthwise and, you know, members of the family and us and that have both suffered.

The reason I have come here today is because Kim's mum has been battling breast cancer for a long time and died last week and I sort of feel I'm doing this, sort of, because she would have wanted me to as well.
FACILITATOR: Thank you. Well, thank you for being here, to yourself and to all of you.

A couple of you mentioned that you have watched some or part of the Public Inquiries and I know, Sian, 6
you have been at one. What we would like from you today is Sir Wyn really wants to hear your own perspective on things so those you of who are former subpostmasters, we want to hear that point of view and, obviously, those of you who are family members we want to hear how it felt to be a loved one seeing them go through this, so we appreciate there are different perspectives and that's what Sir Wyn wants to hear today. So, please, feel free to share that from that point of view.

So the main -- we will cover several different areas. We will look at how it all started, both in the Post Office and the events. We will talk about running a branch and your views of that from within it and as a family member, but mainly we will be talking about your experiences and feelings about working with Post Office Limited and, obviously, the impact of all of this on yourself and your families and things. So that's the kind of broad structure but, as Sir Wyn said before, I'm not going to do a lot of talking, we're here to listen.

I would like to start out just about your sort of feelings and experiences as you started in -obviously, some of you have been a long time. I just wondered if you would trace it back to your own
involvement in this whole story. If you want, one of you just wants to pick up how it all started for you and your feelings at that time.

So perhaps if I start with you, Wendy, about that, because obviously your family history goes back a long way with the Post Office, probably the most out of all of us here.

How do you see this story starting from your point of view?
WENDY BURKE: Well, as you know, my father had it before me. I took over in 1998, just pre-computerisation. So, as you will know, I grew up -- well, I grew up in the Troubles in Northern Ireland. We were very much a community post office at that time. We were sitting on a interface between two different communities. It was difficult but, I mean, as you know, I was helping in the post office at that time. My father wasn't actually running it but we were the heart of that community and we had people chatting in the queue that outside might not have been chatting and that was a very -- I'm very proud that that happened.

I thoroughly enjoyed -- when I took over I thoroughly enjoyed running my branch. I've done the manual balances with pen and paper and I have obviously also worked with the Horizon System.

| 1 | To be honest -- and I think I recollect somebody |
| :--- | :--- |
| 2 | else saying this -- it's not Post Office that's the |
| 3 | trusted brand, it is those people who are customer |
| 4 | facing, the postmasters and their staff. That's who |
| 5 | the community trust and that's who they come to, |
| 6 | whether it is for a little bit of advice, a cup of |
| 7 | tea, a little bit of reassurance. |
| 8 | So, as I say, I used both the manual accounting |
| 9 | and the computerisation. Manually, were there errors |
| 10 | made? Probably. Much easier to find because you were |
| 11 | the one that was inputting that information and you |
| 12 | had it all to hand. |
| 13 | My office was one of the first offices in the UK |
| 14 | to convert to the new computerisation system, which |
| 15 | was quite excited about. I know that because we |
| 16 | were changing from manual benefit books to electronic |
| 17 | systems that we had to have computerisation, otherwise |
| 18 | Post Office, quite literally, would not be here now, |
| 19 | so there had to be a system that supported automation |
| 20 | as such. |
| 21 | As I was the first -- one of the early offices, |
| 22 | the two Post Office trainers that came, they were |
| 23 | lovely, they were totally out of their depth and they |
| 24 | even admitted that numerous times. There was nowhere |
| 25 | to turn to for help so you just really had to plough |

and I were teaching and I think we both got to a point in teaching where we were not sure where our careers were going, so we made the decision to look to buy a business. We didn't know what business. Many of our family thought we were totally bonkers because, obviously, we were giving up good salaries to go into business.

We were very excited about it and we finally found this post office in Cornwall, which we thought had great potential. It was quite a laborious exercise joining the Post Office. I mean, they put you through all sorts of hoops, financial background, criminal records, all sorts of things and it took quite a long while, but it eventually came off, although right at the time when we were going to complete, the house sale fell through and we had all sorts of complications.

Anyway, so we bought this post office in Cornwall and it had quite a good salary, so that was sort of a reason really because it was secure. The shop itself was in its infancy then, so there wasn't a lot of turnover, so the shop was a -- the Post Office gave us a secure income and, as Wendy said, we started off on the manual system with the old paper and the weekly balances on the big blue sheets,
on and learn the system yourself. Ringing the helpline was no good because --
FACILITATOR: We will come onto some of those issues of operation then in a second. Just to come back to that time then when you were about to make that transition from the paper world to the computerised world, what was your prevailing feeling, did you think, at that time, looking back?
WENDY BURKE: Looking back I was really excited about it. I knew it was going to be a challenge but I thought that it was the right thing to do. It was something that, as I say, we had to do, but little did we know that it was going to be such a challenge.
FACILITATOR: Yes.
WENDY BURKE: It was going to take time to learn it and we all knew that. My staff were very nervous about it but I was obviously the postmaster and I had to take it and embrace it because, otherwise, there was no point really us even changing.
FACILITATOR: Right, okay, thank you. That's very clear, thanks.

How about the rest of you? How would you trace the sort of beginnings of these events? Perhaps Paul,
how do you see this sort of --
PAUL BRANNLUND: Well, as I said just now, both my wife 10
and that went on for about two years and that was quite hard to learn.

But balancing was relatively -- as Wendy said,
really straightforward, because you could -- if you had a shortage, you could look back over the week and pretty much find it, or if you had sent it away you knew that Chesterfield would send back a correction at some time in the future. So it ticked over and I guess our shortages under the old system were knock for knock really, one week up and one week down, and so on.

We were so -- I was really quite excited because I was quite keen. I had taught IT in school so I was quite keen on computers, so when Horizon arrived I thought "This will make life easier".
FACILITATOR: Right.
PAUL BRANNLUND: But it didn't. I mean, to me, it was a computer system that nobody who had ever worked a Post Office counter had had any involvement in its design. It was -- it wasn't user-friendly. It -I mean, a lot of computer systems you can pick up just by familiarising yourself with the procedures and the processes. Horizon wasn't like that, so it was a challenge.
FACILITATOR: Right, thank you.
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PAUL BRANNLUND: And it became more and more of a challenge.
FACILITATOR: Right. We will come on to more of those challenges in a second.

Were you based in Cornwall before you took on the post office, by the way?
PAUL BRANNLUND: No, I'm Cornish born, so we were looking for somewhere in the West Country. We were both teaching in the Salisbury area, Andover area and we were looking for somewhere west, and we looked in Somerset and Dorset. It was the right business and it proved to be. We stayed there 18 years and we did very well, but, you know ...
FACILITATOR: Okay, thank you. I just wanted to check that, so there was a degree of moving there.

So, Carol, do you want to -- where do you see all this starting from your perspective?
CAROL CHARLTON: Well, Barclays Bank were doing redundancies and Kim decided to take redundancy and we were looking for a business. I was quite -- I was in teaching as well, so I was quite keen to get out of teaching at that time. I just needed something different.

We looked at tea rooms, and things like this, but my brother and his wife that had a post office and 13
they seemed quite happy doing it, so we looked around for a post office.

We're from the North East of England. We found a post office up at Winlaton, not the best area in the world, no the worst area in the world, you know. But -- and the post office was a lock-up, so, basically, with the redundancy money and Kim sold her house as well, we bought the post office and it was quite a challenge at first, and that.

I kept doing part-time teaching just to keep things ticking over and, again, we think of ourselves as quite lucky because when all this blew up we -- we didn't have to go down the bankruptcy route because I went back to full-time teaching.
FACILITATOR: Right, okay.
CAROL CHARLTON: You know, but it was really tough on Kim, it really was. She embedded herself as part of the community, she loved having the elderly customers, in particular. She just adored them and they adored her. It was very, very hard when this happened.

We both had two days sort of training on the Horizon System because this was 2013 -- no, 2003, sorry, that we actually bought the post office and Horizon had just sort of come in a few years ago, and we had two days training at South Shields branch. 14

Very, very basic training. I mean, both of us have been used to working in banks and had -- double entry bookkeeping, you know, you always have dockets there that represent every single transaction, that you can look back on if you have put something in wrong, so there was always an audit trail and with Horizon there wasn't.

It just seemed to me, at the time, to be a glorified till, you know, a till with little icons on, basically. You didn't have to add the things up or anything like this. But they did no training in how to balance, how to correct errors, anything like that, really.
FACILITATOR: To what -- although you were teaching part-time for some of that period, to what extent were you involved with the running and involvement with the post office business itself?
CAROL CHARLTON: I, sort of like, did a lot of work alongside Kim when I wasn't doing teaching. I also, sort of like, did all the cash and carry runs and things like this for the shop. I quite enjoyed that.
FACILITATOR: So pretty closely involved then, by the sounds of it?
CAROL CHARLTON: Yes, I was closely involved. I mean, I was there when, you know, we had problems a bit 15
later on and that. We did have problems every time there was a thunder storm. You know, we used to have sort of times when we used to have to reboot the computer several times and that, just to get them going again.

Kim had complained to the Post Office because all of our printers and terminals ran off one three-pin -- three, sort of like, thing extension lead, it all went through there, like a domestic -she said at the time, and that, she didn't think that was particularly satisfactory. She didn't feel quite secure with that but they insisted that if the engineers had set it up that way, that was fine.
FACILITATOR: Okay, well, we will come to those events in a second, thank you.

So, Sian, do you want to just say a little bit about your perspective on this, the beginnings of this?
SIAN THOMAS: Yes. My father started out -- we lived in a place called Malltraeth. His parents had a shop there. My uncle had a pub and then, out of the blue, my mum had an opportunity. We had a shop at the time -- I think I was about 10 years old. So we always had people around us and then they decided to take the post office on in Malltraeth, because the 16
elderly people there unfortunately went frail and couldn't cope with the work.

And then they decided, mum and dad, there was an opportunity in Gaerwen, where we live now, and when mum went ill they decided that dad was going to take over.

I think, at that time, it was paper that they started with and you could find things and my dad worked his heart out to build that post office up. The salary, I think, was only about 3,000 when we bought it in the early 1980s. It went up to about 30,000 . He was working with the industrial people, selling stamps, and things like that, trying to tell them "Don't buy a vending machine, I will get a bit of discount if you buy stamps off me", and it grew and grew.

And he was so much in with the local community that he went in as a county councillor and I actually was canvassing, and things, with him at the time, but the worst nightmare he did was get the Horizon System in.

It caused him so much stress. He was waking up in the middle of the night and he was saying "Can somebody come here and see the screen", and the screen was just like figures rolling. It was very hard to 17
way.
FACILITATOR: Okay, thank you, Paul. How about the rest of you? How well resourced did you feel by the training or the wider organisation?
CAROL CHARLTON: We did have somebody with us for -- well. it was supposed to be a week when we took over. He wasn't there all the time. He had to keep popping off all the time. He did do a balance with Kim, I remember, that first time, and she just did things his way from then on and then later found out that, you know, one of the things that she was doing wasn't the way that the Post Office liked it done, you know.

So there were little things like that really, but I remember the manuals, yes. They were like great things, and that, that you had to sort of trawl through every time you -- especially when you got something in that you had never had before. Like, the first time I saw the fishing licence, you know, I had to sort of trawl through and find out what it is you were supposed to do so ...
FACILITATOR: Right, okay.
So, Wendy, you mentioned the training. Just tell us a little bit about how prepared you felt to take on Horizon then, you know, taking back to that time?

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describe because I, years ago, did the YTS with the Post Office but I wasn't involved, I went along a different career. And that was the worst, worst thing that he ever did was take that Horizon System in, unfortunately.
FACILITATOR: So a couple of you have mentioned the training, and such. I'm just interested in both of those beginnings, about how prepared you were or what resources you had, whether it was training, support, whatever it might be, to make it work. What was the situation at the start with Horizon for each of you, at your settings?
PAUL BRANNLUND: Well, I think we had about three days training at a local hotel. But it wasn't a live system. It was just the -- it was just working in the room and it was really just the nuts and bolts of the basic selling of the products that we were going to be selling with Horizon.

I certainly don't remember any training ever about balancing and I seem to remember that -- we used to have operational manuals then and there were about eight of them and I think the balancing was explained in one of those, so we literally just took that and worked through balancing, step by step, never really understanding why we were doing it in any particular 18

WENDY BURKE: I really didn't feel prepared at all and, as I said, I worked in the bank, they were computerised. I picked it up fairly quickly, but when the trainers arrived they just hadn't a clue. They were learning as they went along.

They did stay in the branch for two days, so I didn't have to go anywhere and my staff were all in on those two days to learn the system, and they left and it was just "I have no idea what to do next", and we were really left to it.

We did ring the helpline numerous times because a transaction coming up -- it was okay with the card accounts, straightforward, swipe the card, off they go, but the different types of transactions that came in at the time -- and there were many -- you just didn't know where to go. It's not a particularly intuitive system and still really isn't, so then it was just a nightmare.

In fact, because I sort of self-taught myself, because I had to support the staff, I actually, as the roll-out kept going, I sort of became the local helpline for postmasters because they knew if they rang the helpline it wasn't going to be a great experience. So my phone never stopped, just solely because I had had to learn the system myself.

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FACILITATOR: So just from your reflections on that, did you -- what sorts -- were they experiencing different things to you or same sorts of issues? What were the nature of the calls you were getting from counterparts?
WENDY BURKE: Very similar issues. The ones that we would have encountered at the very start as well when we just didn't know where to go or how to process a transaction, or if they had a shortage what reports to run, you know, all of those things that it just didn't -- it just didn't make sense on the system. You had to actually go in there and find all these things and --
FACILITATOR: What time would that have been, roughly?
WENDY BURKE: Sorry?
FACILITATOR: What time would that have been, roughly, what year?
WENDY BURKE: Oh, around about 2020, so it was right at the very start of the system roll-out.
FACILITATOR: 20 -- you mean 2000?
WENDY BURKE: Sorry, 2020(sic).
FACILITATOR: Right, I'm with you, so the people were calling you.

I will come on to the helpline in a moment.
Sian, you were obviously there with your father and 21
you mentioned how he started to get problems. Do you want to just tell us how that felt when -- watching that happen. What was your view of it then?
SIAN THOMAS: Your heart broke for him because he would be sitting there for hours at night, you know, whereas the family would be in the back because it was like a post office and a house together, and he would just be thinking "Where's all this money disappearing to?" and he was trying to make good.

And I remember one incident when
Mrs van den Bogerd and his area manager came over and sat with my mum and dad on the settee, he had lost around $£ 6,000$ at the time. And the discussion was over a cup of tea "You pay 3,000 and we will pay the other 3,000 ", but he kept on calling the helpline for help and all he was getting was "Oh, it will come back to you next week or in a few weeks". But, like everybody else, I don't think he had the paper trail like he did when he was doing it manually, and he was just getting so frustrated and I think my dad -- there were three of them that went with him to Llanberis at the time and I think my dad was the only one that stayed on.

The rest of them decided, "No way", and I wish to God now my dad would have been one of them, 22
you know, but he loved his community. It wasn't just a post office, it was a community where everybody came and asked advice and he wasn't just a subpostmaster, he was one of the pillars of the community.
FACILITATOR: So he obviously saw the accounts going wrong. You mentioned the area manager there and the helpline. Let's just focus on the helpline for a moment. Just describe to me what your view was or what he told you about how he was using it and, basically, how it felt, if you like, when those events started to develop.
SIAN THOMAS: He kept the record, he had, like, a diary behind him, if I remember correctly, and he used to write on there how many times he was phoning them a week and they kept on going to him -- that's all we got really off them "It will come, it will come back, don't worry about it". But, of course, as a family as well -- I had two brothers and myself and my mum, and we were all worried because dad was nearly 60 -I know it's young now but, at the time, it was a big thing for him to do (inaudible) --
FACILITATOR: What did he share with you about it at the time?
SIAN THOMAS: He would be frustrated and we would go for long walks and things and talk and say "Dad, what's
going on? Can you find it?" and he says "Nothing's coming back", he says, "and all I get off the helpline is" -- basically, they were a waste of space, sorry. They had no idea how to help him. It was like a script they were reading off the same time, it was like "Question 1, this is what you should do", and he would do it and, if anything, it made matters even worse for him.

And I had a bit of background with the Post Office but I wasn't involved, I had my own job, but I still lived at home with them until I moved to my property in Malltraeth but it was like a nightmare, you wouldn't have any other conversation with him but, you know, "I'm losing money". And he actually told the investigators the day they walked in how much he had lost and they still did what they did to him, bless him.
FACILITATOR: How did it feel at that time to be the daughter of somebody in that situation?
SIAN THOMAS: It was horrible. You would stress yourself. You wouldn't -- we, as a family, weren't sleeping properly. We were second-guessing each other saying, you know, "Where is this going?" you know, "What's happening to the office", and he had had a pride and joy in that office. He loved his work, you know. He

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had been with Royal Mail for years, you know, as a postman and a subpostmaster and me, myself, I just couldn't help him and it was making myself angry.

We were all bickering. All the topics of conversation at the table was the post office. You know, there was nothing on your mind but the post office and it has been the same now for 16 years, unfortunately.
FACILITATOR: Yes. Thank you, yes. I wonder, Carol, if I could ask the sort of same question to you, really, about how it feels to be, you know, seeing your loved one, in your case your wife, going through this at the beginning, you know, when it started to occur.
CAROL CHARLTON: It's been absolutely horrendous. I mean, I will never forget the day that she was suspended.

She came home and she was as white as a sheet and shaking and I just thought at the time that "How can anybody think that Kim could do anything like this?" I mean, she is one of the most genuine, honest people you could wish to meet.
FACILITATOR: So how did that road to suspension start in Kim's case and how did it feel to be watching it?
CAROL CHARLTON: Well, Kim had had like a shortage in the summer -- like a huge shortage in the summer, 33,000, sort of like, more or less overnight, and she had rung 25
them straight away and told them and got no help whatsoever. I mean, it was ridiculous because we didn't do that much turnover, so, you know, it was a ridiculous amount.
FACILITATOR: When was that, sorry?
CAROL CHARLTON: That was in the summer of 2010, I think it was. And she had settled centrally then and then, later on, I think it was the -- it was either the September or the October, the audit team turned up and they said that they did this audit and said she was another $£ 5,000$ short.
FACILITATOR: So she settled centrally on the 33,000?
CAROL CHARLTON: This is it, and Kim couldn't -- she still, to this day, can't understand where that other 5,000 came from. It's just -- and, you know -- but she was frustrated by it all. It was affecting her sleep, definitely. I mean she -- you know, like Sian's dad, she was having nightmares about things.

Straight after the suspension she was having
chest pains and things like this. She ended up going to the hospital to have scans, and things like this. It was that she just lost all her oomph, you know, she just wasn't Kim.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: When she discovered that 33,000 for the first time, did she seek assistance from the helpline 26

CAROL CHARLTON: No, no, there wasn't an audit and this is the strange thing is that when they -- when Kim was first suspended, she wasn't accused of theft at all. The letter that she got said that they -- how did they put it? That she had lost control of the branch.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: All right.
CAROL CHARLTON: And it wasn't until later on that, actually -- when they found out that we weren't willing to pay back this money that we didn't think we were responsible for, then it changed and there was a charge of theft made. We were never -- she was never given the opportunity to say that -- false accounting or anything like this because she was adamant all the way through and that that she hadn't.
FACILITATOR: And did that 33,000 emerge as a one-off discrepancy or was it cumulative of other discrepancies?
CAROL CHARLTON: I think it was more or less overnight. I don't know if it was a weekend or something, but it basically just disappeared, this 33,000.
FACILITATOR: Right.
CAROL CHARLTON: But Kim still says today she didn't think the money was there in the first place, because she -you know, she balanced regularly, you know, she knew how much she had in the branch. At the time she was 28
having to order more money into the branch anyway because a local branch was shut down for some reason or other, so we were getting all their customers in, so she was having to order more money in, you know, but -- I don't know. We're both still -- to this day, we have no idea what happened with that at all.
FACILITATOR: Okay, thank you.
CAROL CHARLTON: I just know the effect it had on her.
FACILITATOR: So, Wendy, you have described how you became sort of a proxy helpline for your colleagues around in the area. Tell us a little bit about the support that you sought and received yourself.
WENDY BURKE: From the helpline? Goodness ...
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Before you do that, sorry to intervene again, but l'm just curious, was there any kind of different helpline for people in Northern Ireland, or was it centrally for the UK?
WENDY BURKE: It was centrally for the UK.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Thanks. Carry on then, please.
WENDY BURKE: Thank you. Yes, you did continue to ring them because sometimes you're really stuck. I do agree -- somebody did mention that it felt like they were reading off a script.

As time went on, I suppose they got a little bit more of an insight into the system and you would have 29
transaction correction for about 16 weeks if it comes back" and when you get an attitude like that it's -you almost just roll your eyes and think "Goodness, how unhelpful is that?"
FACILITATOR: Yes.
So, Paul, if we come to how you tried to resolve your accounting issues.
PAUL BRANNLUND: When we first started, I said that we were on the old paper system and we had a regional helpline in Bristol and the people who made up the helpline were all people who had worked on the post office counter, so, obviously, if you had an issue with your paper balancing or any transactions you knew you were talking to somebody who had actually worked in a post office and had actually done what you were seeking the support with.

But I share the view of everybody else that when we went over to Horizon and they centralised the helpline, the service progressively got worse and worse.

I didn't get the feeling that many of the people who ever answered the phone had ever worked in a post office and I often suspected they were reading from a script, which was exactly the same as the manual I had in front of me. So, really, I suppose,
times when they were helpful. I mean, you have to give credit when credit is due. There were some there who did go out of their way to try and help, but I suppose, if you could do it yourself, you didn't ring them. The call waiting times were long and sometimes if you got somebody at the end of the phone who you really felt didn't give a toss, sorry -didn't care and it was just -- it was almost like a luck of the draw as to who you got speaking to, and I suppose I kind of, at this stage, knew the system more or less inside out and if you didn't really have to ring them, you were very reluctant to go near them.
FACILITATOR: How frequently would you have been calling them, for your own branch point of view, just thinking back?
WENDY BURKE: We would have been calling them on a daily basis, or potentially at least a few times a week. There was always something came up where you were stuck, whether it be just finding some sort of code for an item to order in because you couldn't find it within the Horizon System -- it's very clunky -- right through to, you know, if there was something went wrong, if you scanned a DVLA barcode incorrectly and you knew you had done it.
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30
like a lot of people, I used to devise my own crib sheets for processes that I had to go regularly, like balancing, and my staff would follow that crib sheet. We didn't follow the -- it was a variation, but it was to suit our branch and less and less I contacted the helpline.
FACILITATOR: Right. So do you want to just give Sir Wyn a quick example of something you might have rung the helpline about that didn't get resolved, if you can think back?
PAUL BRANNLUND: Well, it became increasingly difficult to get anything resolved because they brought in a system whereby, unless you had a customer in the actual queue, and that was the problem -- say you were trying to sell, I don't know, South African rand or something, and you didn't know what to do, then you could ring the helpline and they would then ask you "Is a customer waiting?" and you would say "Yes", and then they would help you.

But at other times, if you said no, they would say "Well, we will ring you back", and so that necessarily didn't really help you either, so I think -- we did a lot of -- like Wendy said, two or three local subpostmasters we used to ring each other because, if I hadn't done a transaction, they might
have done.
FACILITATOR: Okay, and to what extent was that different, if you had something like that, as you're saying with the current customer issue versus trying to resolve a discrepancy or a shortfall?
PAUL BRANNLUND: Well, I had to confess that we always had discrepancies. They were impossible to actually audit trail and we paid them because we knew that if we rung the Post Office they would simply say "You will need to put the money in, you will need to put the money in".

I said at the outset we were very lucky. I think our biggest shortage was something like $£ 800$, so we just paid it and, obviously, it never came back to us, but ... over the, what, 14 years of Horizon -no -- yes, 15 years of Horizon, we probably put in thousands but we were lucky, the shop was prosperous and we just used to rob the shop, you know, it was ...
FACILITATOR: So for those of us who weren't or aren't involved in running a branch, when you had those ad hoc, you know, shortages, what did you do to monitor them or, more importantly, to report them, or was it purely --
PAUL BRANNLUND: Well, I certainly didn't -- I mean, we didn't report them to the Post Office after a while,
because there was never any support, and I wanted to say earlier that when we had -- I was so disappointed when Horizon arrived, I mean the hardware and the software, because we already had a very good EPOS system in the shop, electronic point of sale, and we had back up from the company that put it in, so that if we have discrepancies with our shop tills, they would literally come in through the back office and fix it. And we had an audit trail, we could look and see "Oh, that's been missold", something like --

You know, we would have something like $£ 1,000$ worth of telephone top-ups and we would find it because one of the staff had put an extra 0 in, you know, so instead of selling 100 they had sold 1,000 . But we could find that with the shop system but, of course, with the Post Office there was no audit trail at all, there's nothing. You get faced with $£ 160$ shortage on a Wednesday afternoon, you have no means of actually checking it at all, other than checking your stock and checking your cash and if you can't find it there, well -- so we just resigned ourselves to paying it.

I mean, Wednesdays was an awful day and Paul was
usually either in a tantrum or smiling, you know, because it was so frustrating. We tried staff 34
training. We thought there was an issue with the stack because, if a member of staff didn't clear the stack, then a Post Office card account payment could stay in the stack and then get paid again. We thought of all the things that we might be doing, but it never resolved it and -- yes, we just ended up paying.
FACIIITATOR: So we have talked -- several of you talked about the helpline itself. I was just wondering about the role of other parts of the organisation of Post Office Limited, so I guess for the area managers or anyone else. Before it came to any kind of action against you.

Sian, thinking back to what your -- you know, your father's events and the family, what happened before it got to that stage of taking action against your dad?
SIAN THOMAS: That was the major one, you know. He had a few, he would say to us, up and down with the accounts when he was doing it paper-wise, but when the Horizon one came in, he had no hope, you know. They kept on telling reboot, and there was no help from his area manager, or Mrs van den Bogerd at the time. They just wanted you to carry on.

And the auditors would come in and you would be fine, but that morning on 3 October, when they knocked 35
on the door at 7.30, I had gone to work and, luckily, I only worked five minutes down the road in the industrial estate and that day will live with us for the rest of our lives, really. I had never seen my dad in handcuffs and I wouldn't wish it on anybody, really. They were very hard on him.

But what really got me was they did actually re-open the branch with a gentleman down the road and the auditors worked with him that morning and after about half an hour, they shut the shop and I said "What's going on?" and they said "Oh, he is short", and I was going "Short? Doesn't this ring alarm bells", and unfortunately they just left it at that.

All they wanted was to question Dad on his own and there was no way we were going to let him be questioned on his own. That's why we decided to take him to Holyhead Police Station and he was there until 1.30 in the morning, and I remember the two auditors -- one was helping with the fingerprinting of Dad, and we were just outside the door and I remember one of the auditors coming up to me and saying "lf you've got the money, you can fight this" and, unfortunately, you know, Dad had lost his job, he was allowed to carry on with the Council until the court case, but they basically went from a high to
an absolutely rock-bottom situation, unfortunately.
FACILITATOR: Right, okay.
So, Carol and Wendy and Paul, I just wondered, did you get any kind of advice or support on how to resolve the shortfalls and discrepancies? Was there anything, kind of, before the action was taken that would have helped you from the Post Office Limited that they provided?
WENDY BURKE: If I can just answer that. You asked about area managers as well. I think locally in Northern Ireland we were lucky with our area managers. They were extremely good and extremely helpful and, to be honest, to this day, we're still very lucky with them, but they weren't really there to resolve discrepancies. They were there, and more and more were there to push sales and you had to sell this and sell that and they did it in a really nice manner, but they weren't really resolving anything with the discrepancy or anything.

It was -- you were really depending on the helpline. I mean, I can give -- I could give you loads of examples but I had a shortage of $£ 2,700$ one evening when I balanced. I was very lucky that I have had cameras that were very good in branch and I went through every single transaction against the
transaction $\log$ and it would take hours to do it, and it wasn't the only time I had to do it, and I found a transaction, I knew what it was, I had miskeyed $£ 300$ for $£ 3,000$, which left me at $£ 2,700$ short and I rang the helpline to get help. I mean, they can trace what bank it went into, they can do everything in the background. But they just won't. They just wouldn't help, "You will have to put the money in", and I was told that.

Now, the gentleman who was at the counter used to be a postman when my father had a post office and the postmen, and I knew, more or less, where he lived and I was able to contact a member of his family and he came down with the money a couple of days later, no problem at all. He said it was an account that he seldom used, it paid his mortgage, and he says he probably wouldn't have even got a statement in for two or three months and I would have had to pay that back and that's the way we were treated.

You just -- it was just incredible when you look back on it, but almost expected when you phoned, you know, did you expect a lot of help? Probably not. I could give loads of examples of that and, yes, I made mistakes, everybody makes mistakes. Shortages, yes I had them, I had numerous ones; overages, I would 38
to represent, were all bad 'uns and he basically told Kim to shut up and think about what it would do to the network.
FACILITATOR: When did that call and those events take place?
CAROL CHARLTON: I haven't -- it's in her notes because I did encourage Kim to keep a diary through everything. So it's in her notes there somewhere. I think it was some time around -- just after Christmas, it was.
FACILITATOR: Of what year, sorry?
CAROL CHARLTON: Well, it would have been early 2011, I would think.
FACILITATOR: Right.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Is this -- was this at the time, or shortly after the time when you said she suddenly found a discrepancy of 33,000 ? Is it all wrapped up with that?
CAROL CHARLTON: Well, it -- she was suspended -- | think it was October 2010 -- sorry, I'm a bit foggy on the dates. She was suspended September or October. She had to herself try to find somebody -- like a relief manager to come in to re-open the branch, because they closed the front -- the branch down and defunded it. So she had to run -- do all the running round and try 40
to find people to get the post office back open again for the customers.

In the meantime, there were letters going backwards and forwards between her and I think it was Andy Carpenter, you know, and we were just -- we were basically saying, you know, the postmaster contract says that we're responsible if it's our fault but, you know, we didn't think it was our fault. That was the whole thing and we were digging our heels in rather over that.

But, as I say, as soon as she was suspended, the Federation wanted nothing to do with her whatsoever and it was just really because Dennis was a friend of Kim's that he came along with her to the meeting -well, the investigation that took place. But she was -- all the way through, really, and that, people -- she -- she trusted the people at the Post Office and I think now she realises that was a very silly thing to do.

I mean, when she was audited one of the auditors actually said to her, "Oh, we think we've got problems with Horizon again". So when Kim had her investigation she brought this up and sort of said, you know, "What did she mean by that? Has there been problems with Horizon?" and that was it, it was 41
totally shut down and I think it was not long after that that she got this phonecall from George Thompson.
FACILITATOR: Was that audit taken to -- take place at branch after the 33,000 emerged, do you mean?
CAROL CHARLTON: Well, no, this was about three months later. It wasn't straightaway. This is what surprised me, is that 33,000 -- they didn't send auditors in really straightaway.
FACILITATOR: Yes.
CAROL CHARLTON: There was an audit when they did the transfer over to Horizon Online, but that wasn't -- it was really more a stock take than anything, you know.

But this auditor later on just denied she ever said it, you know, so -- and all the way through it's been the -- you know, prove to us that you didn't do it, you know, and it's very hard to do that when they're lying all the time.
FACILITATOR: Yes. So, Paul, what's your perspective on where -- you know, the events and the reaction -because you didn't report these to the Post Office, is that right?
PAUL BRANNLUND: No, no.
FACILITATOR: Did you ever get audited or anything like that?
PAUL BRANNLUND: I got audited a few weeks after -- a few 42
months -- no, a few months after I first went there.
That was a manual audit, and I certainly had an audit in 2010 but it was fine, it was like $£ 9.60$ or something. I actually found the paperwork. No, I wonder whether, because we didn't ring the help desk and we always put the money, sofar as the Post Office was concerned it was hunky-dory.

But I totally agree I -- what I can never understand is that there doesn't ever seem to be an audit trail with any of this, so when we had a shortage we had no way of trying to find it, other than spending hours going through the daily transaction logs, which weren't exactly helpful, unless you had an error like Wendy talked about just now. I mean, you could look at the transaction logs but you couldn't actually -- they weren't really very helpful at all.

I mean -- and as with so much of the transactions, they instantly left the office, so once they were gone, unless the Post Office were on the ball with an error, it never came back.

I mean we -- we had very few error notices in the, what was it, 14/15 years of Horizon, so all those shortages were never explained, other than being our fault and our mistake.

FACILITATOR: So can I just clarify then, so you're settling the shorffalls, as a matter of course, by the sound of it?
PAUL BRANNLUND: Yes.
FACILITATOR: So because you weren't reporting them, was there any way at all that, outside your four walls, that anyone in the wider Post Office Limited organisation could have known that these shorffalls were happening?
PAUL BRANNLUND: Well, that's the thing about Horizon, I don't really know. I mean, when you did a balance you had to do something called a trial balance. Now, the trial balance was where the system would tell you where your shortages or overs were and then, once you saw that, it would usually tell you how much cash was short because, obviously, if you had stamps short, you couldn't put stamps in, you just had to pay the value of those stamps.

So you would do this trial balance and it would say 150 short, so you would then put that $£ 150$ into your cash and then you would do the balance because, unless you did a zero balance, you could not rollover, so they had a -- they had us by the whatsits really, because you knew that you had to rollover because, if you didn't rollover, you couldn't open on Thursday

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morning.
FACILITATOR: Okay, so --
PAUL BRANNLUND: So yes, but I strongly believe that the Post Office must have the knowledge of my trial balances going back 15 years. They may say they don't, but I don't believe that because if it's gone through Horizon it must be stored somewhere.
FACILITATOR: So -- well, you have kind of answered my next -- I was going to ask you about the monitoring and management of both the trial balances and your trading period balances, and so on. Did you ever discuss those? Was anything ever communicated with you in terms of managing and monitoring --
PAUL BRANNLUND: What, with the Post Office? FACILITATOR: Yes.
PAUL BRANNLUND: I mean, the Post Office -- I had one or two -- in the early days, we did in Cornwall have area managers but they have gradually got cut out and disappeared, but then they came back when there was the move towards locals, and then you suddenly saw these people all the time trying to get you to switch from the fortress office to a local post office.
So no, not really a lot of support at all and, I guess, because we never reported anything, we never really got a lot of -- but I did keep a record. Sadly 45
CAROL CHARLTON: Yes, no problem.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Thank you very much.
FACILITATOR: So, Wendy, I wonder if we could pick up on that theme of data, basically data exchange, information exchange. What were you able to access to help to unravel what was going on, what would you have liked that you couldn't get? If you just tell us a story about that, if you wouldn't mind.
WENDY BURKE: On the system you were able to access sort of every day transactions. You could go back over a number of reports that you have, like the transaction log. As has already been said, the transaction log was very difficult to read and, whilst it was easily accessible, without my cameras, as I have mentioned before, I don't think it would have been an awful lot of use.
The data that was held by Post Office, would they -- certainly I asked for data. I had an issue, for instance, with the changeover day for HNG, for the new generation Horizon, in April 2010 and, on the day of changeover, the system was dropping out. We had two trainers again that day. The system was dropping out. We had a queue at the door. Rang the helpline numerous times to tell them that there was a real issue with the system and, by the end of the day,

I left it in a post office when I retired. I did have a record of all my shortages. I mean, I know for a fact that it -- it used to -- when it was paper it used to almost balance itself out. When it became Horizon, it was always against us, most of the time.
CAROL CHARLTON: Can I just say something about the data that Post Office centrally must have, following up on what Paul has just been saying there?

We wrote to our MP in the December of 2010 and he put a parliamentary question to Ed Davey, who then passed it to Paula Vennells, who wrote back and her response says this -- I'm just going to quote this:
"A transaction log is available for every branch and full audit logs of all system and user activity are securely sealed, backed up and retained to provide an evidential and investigatory repository."

That's hard to say. And it's not true, or if it is true, I don't understand why, when we asked for, you know, sort of transaction logs and things like this, that we -- you know, we were told they weren't available.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Excuse me, the letter that you sent to your MP and the reply which you have just read from, do you think you would be prepared to send that to me so that I can see these documents for myself?

I had a large loss.
To me, it was large, it was quite a few hundred pounds, and I rang the Post Office numerous times on a daily basis after that and I have, from the official Post Office call log, because I asked for it, they advised if I can "provide evidence for details of the transactions they claim have caused discrepancies, these will be investigated". That's what they said to me and that's an appalling way to treat anybody because they've got the back-end system that we could not see. So they could have interrogated that system for the full day to see what happened but ...
PAUL BRANNLUND: They don't.
SIAN THOMAS: No.
FACILITATOR: We have talked about support in terms of people and account managers, and so on. Picking up on that, Wendy -- what -- did any of you get any technical support? I think it was you Carol who mentioned thunder storms and things, but did any of you get any interventions which would try and solve a technical solution to the problems you were experiencing?
CAROL CHARLTON: Can I just say when we had a relief manager in after Kim got suspended, the relief manager was refusing to use one of the terminals and Fujitsu 48
came in and they took it away and they replaced it.
Now, we have been saying for ages that we were having problems and nothing was done.
SIAN THOMAS: Dad was the same, actually. Dad had his machine -- the Post Office engineers came out three times in a year to reboot and redo the machine and I remember the day when Dad -- they locked the office door after him, hoovered the office, and then they turned round to us when we wanted the data to prove that Dad was not guilty, they turned round to us and said they had had a fire where the computer systems were and they turned round also and said to us that there was a flood.

So we still, to today, really didn't have any evidence to support that Dad had taken that 48,000, but all we got was that the computer was dead after six weeks and they couldn't reboot it.
FACILITATOR: Who specifically was telling you this about the fire and --

SIAN THOMAS: This was the Post Office -- the Post Office actually told our barrister that there had been a fire and then there was a gentleman from Panorama called John Sweeney did some digging for us, and they told him that it was water damage. So, basically, we couldn't work out, you know -- and we really didn't 49
have anything to support Dad because they physically -- and I mean physically hoovered everything. There wasn't even a chequebook. Every personal thing he had in that office and his sub-post office things were gone, so we didn't have anything to fight really, unfortunately.
CAROL CHARLTON: We were told after -- after Kim's case was actually dropped, after the Second Sight report came out, we asked the Post Office solicitors if we could have a copy of Kim's files because we never had an explanation of why they had dropped it. And we were told that they had lost them, they had lost Kim's file.

FACILITATOR: That was the Post Office solicitors told your solicitors?
CAROL CHARLTON: Yes.
FACILITATOR: Right, okay.
So one of the themes that I'm interested in looking at is kind of this information flow, if you want to call it that. So I will just start, for example -- Paul, I think you mentioned earlier that you felt in a sense -- your experiences mirror those of 10,000 others who didn't go into the suspension stage, effectively. You were paying back the money. Who did you talk to or who have you shared all your 50
did.
FACILITATOR: I just wanted to pick up on that. You used the figure of 10,000. I mean, obviously that's based, to a degree, on an assumption but I'm interested in what you heard from other people. So picking your point you said there, why was it not kind of the thing to talk about? Where did you get that feeling from?
PAUL BRANNLUND: The Post Office. I mean, the Post Office -- you know, I mean, I had 18 years of running a perfectly good shop and post office, but I always feared the auditors because I always feared that they would find something that I didn't know was there, you know, so you live with that fear. You did as you were told. Partly, the reason I didn't report shortages was I didn't want the Post Office to know and I think a lot of people -- a lot of subpostmasters had that anxiety because of the controlling way the Post Office was.

I mean, you know, we're hearing in this Inquiry some of the really nasty things that happened to subpostmasters, but they pretty much treated everybody the same. They were not a nice organisation to work for. I wouldn't work for them again ever.
FACILITATOR: So when you're thinking about your, sort of, informal network that you had in the area, I mean, how 52
widely did you share these concerns or events, just to sort of paint me a picture of how that communication flow happened within yourselves and to the Post Office?

WENDY BURKE: I think what Paul said was right there. You didn't really talk about shortages, or overages, or misbalances, because that was also like you have done something -- it would have been a bit embarrassing and, certainly, Post Office wouldn't have discussed things like that.

I would have discussed it more with mum and dad,
really, because, obviously, with the history in the Post Office and dad knew how passionate I was and he couldn't quite understand what was happening when, like, years back when I was running it we didn't misbalance, maybe a few pence here or there, but that's only to be expected, and he couldn't understand what was going on.

In fact, without mum and dad, I probably could have been in the same position as other postmasters and postmistresses have been because they supported me financially as well as emotionally. Some of them -some of the shortfalls that I had I didn't even tell them about, but there were a couple of large ones that I had that I did because I was being told by

Post Office that they were taking it out of my remuneration, and to lose $£ 500$ a month out of my remuneration would have been devastating. I was a single parent on my own with two boys. But they had a lack of care really, so my father helped me with that.

Yes, it's -- so I think he was really my support.
FACILITATOR: Yes.
So, Sian, obviously in your situation your father was, you know -- the legal action was taken against him and everything. To what extent do you feel -- if we move on -- we have heard about the attitude of the Post Office and things, but do you want to sum up how all that felt from your point of view, as you went through those stages, as things got more and more serious in the legal sense?
SIAN THOMAS: It was horrendous. I actually took my dad to the police station and you see somebody in handcuffs, it's not very nice. We were in court nearly every month. We started in the Magistrates, went to the Crown and then the dreaded day, 3 October 2005, he was sent down. Apparently, they told him "We will drop the theft and we will just go for false accounting", and the morning I went to the 54
knocking on my door nearly every night asking me where he was after 7 o'clock at night because the curfew was 7.00 at night until 7.00 in the morning and I would get up and I would ask them "What do you want?"
"Oh, your dad, where is he, we've got no signal". I said, "We live in a dip. He's not going anywhere". And they would intrude my parent's bedroom and they would be picking up the sheets, the blankets and things to see if he was there, and apparently the tag battery had died and that's why they couldn't find him. So if you just ask, it was just everything went wrong for him. You know, we had to tell his grandchildren, that was two, four and seven at the time, that he has gone to Blackpool on holiday and we had to find (inaudible) rock for him. You know, we couldn't tell them, you know, "Taid is in prison".

But after a few years we had to explain, because they were going to school, because me and my dad made it such a -- in the first three years, we were told it was only you, but after that three years we had a gentleman called Sean Teckwyn(?), he was my dad's friend, he was a journalist, and he said "Noel, it's not just you", and from that day we have been -- our faces have been everywhere for the right reasons, you know. We fought this for the right reasons for 56
him and I don't regret, you know, 16 years I have lost of my life, really, fighting for him. The only place I didn't go with him was jail. I have done everything else for him.

FACILITATOR: I wonder if you can describe to Sir Wyn how the feelings sort of moved between feeling it was just you, or just your dad, and then being told it wasn't and then realising it wasn't? What's the kind of movement of those emotions?

SIAN THOMAS: You can't describe it, and Lorraine Williams she was with us in London, she was testifying the Tuesday after. She only lived two miles down the road to us and we hadn't known about her either. You felt isolated. You were scared, like everybody says, talking about it because, you know, this was the Post Office, you were against the Queen. It wasn't something you -- you just hid, basically, and still today we find it very hard, you know, especially my mum to go outside and things.

She needs somebody with her because even now he has been exonerated, we still feel that people have been saying "Oh, your father got away with it", you know. But once we got people, and things started rolling, and going to meetings and finding that, you know, "Gosh, these are just ordinary people, how 57
can this happen?" and we were all different ethnic -you know, it was a broad variety of people and it was an amazing feeling, but, you know, it's still been a hard battle as well and it's still, unfortunately, going on.

My dad was 75 at Christmas and he is retired at last, but he still finds that -- you know, you've got to wake up in the morning and I have been living with him for 16 years because of the financial hardship and, if anything happens to them tomorrow, they live in a pensioners' bungalow. Unfortunately, I had to sell my house at the time with proceeds of crime and we couldn't afford -- because Dad was bankrupt, Mum didn't have -- only her pension. I think I paid back around 9,000 , so I had to sell the house. So if anything happens to my family tomorrow, my mum and dad, I will be homeless.

You know, it's still a kick on effect, but there has been a bit of relief as well, and sadness. We lost my brother two years ago this month and he wasn't here to see the final verdict, really. That was hard. Six weeks of cancer and we really went through the mill with him and trying to fight for Dad, but I'm glad and I'm proud of everybody. You know, every single person that's been speaking in this Inquiry has 58

It was like, you know, "Horizon is untouchable, Horizon is this" -- I mean, we still cringe today every time we hear the word "robust", you know.
FACILITATOR: Can I just ask for some of the specifics of that, just so I can understand those events. So who would those conversations have been with that were telling you it was robust or telling you not to talk about Horizon? What's the story there?
CAROL CHARLTON: Well, after this happened, I mean, I -we were told we were the only ones it had ever happened to. We now know that there are quite a cluster around sort of Newcastle area, and Marion who gave testimony yesterday, you know, we used to go down to the sort of -- the JFSA meetings, and that, with Marion and Pete. Pete was a lovely man. But you were told "You're the only ones", that's the thing, so you do feel isolated.

So I needed to do something practical, so I was trawling the internet every night when I got in from school, doing searches on different things and that, trying to dig and find out information and, in the end, I found Alan's name, Alan Bates, and we got involved with the Justice for Subpostmasters Alliance and the relief of knowing that it wasn't just us, that we weren't these, like, master criminals and --
you know, the first time we went to a meeting I remember turning round to Kim and saying "Well, these look like a bunch of villains, don't they?" because there were all these just ordinary people and, you know, sharing teas and coffees together and people had brought snacks and things, and it was just -- the relief of knowing that it wasn't us.

But then it was the sense of helplessness because you were trying to fight this big organisation and they had all the power and, basically, if they said you were a wrong 'un, you were a wrong 'un, you know. It was so hard. You just kept feeling like you were batting your head against a brick wall all the time.

But I did do a lot of searching, as I say. I even found out that the gentleman who was her independent appeal manager, who did her independent appeal, actually wasn't independent at all. He was involved in the team that was drumming up business for the Post Office franchises, so nothing, sort of like, remotely independent about him at all.

But I was coming across more, and more, and more, sort of like, cases all the time and -- I mean, the effect that it had on us, I mean, it --
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Before you get to the effect, can 61

I just be clear that I have understood something you said earlier. It got to the stage, did it, that criminal charges were brought against Ms Whiley --
CAROL CHARLTON: Yes.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: -- but then dropped, right, have I got that right?
CAROL CHARLTON: She had two appearances at Magistrates' Court and the first time she went to the Magistrates' Court, a security guard asked her who she was defending, you know. So she must look a bad 'un! And then she had one, sort of like, appearance at Crown Court and it was -- it was all being delayed because the Post Office didn't have the evidence ready and then, in the end, there was the Second Sight report came out and Kim's was one of three cases that was dropped in the aftermath of the Second Sight report, and all they did was drop the charges and basically said it wasn't in the public interest.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Right.
CAROL CHARLTON: So, in a way, Kim felt like she has never had her day in court. She has never been able to prove she hasn't done it. She hasn't got a not guilty verdict at all. It's just that they dropped it because it wasn't in the public interest. 62

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Was she actually charged with theft or false accounting, or both?
CAROL CHARLTON: Theft.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Obviously, from what you have said,
a substantial sum of money?
CAROL CHARLTON: Yes. The police were never ever involved in our case.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: No, no, I appreciate that. Then my final question is, apart from, I take it, the Post Office lawyer telling the judge in court it wasn't in the public interest to continue with the case, was there any other kind of detailed explanation ever given to her as to why it was dropped?
CAROL CHARLTON: No, not to us. This is why we asked for the solicitors, if we could have Kim's file, which we thought we were entitled to, and that's when they said it had been lost.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, all right. Sorry for intervening like that but I just wanted to get those details and I think you were then going on to tell me about the effect all that had on you both.
CAROL CHARLTON: Oh, yes. Well, I mean, we -- we kept going really because -- I went back to teaching full-time, so we managed to keep ticking over, but we owed a lot of money. I mean we owed a bank loan still 63
to help buy the post office. We owed on, sort of like, credit cards and things like this, and that all had to be paid off. At the time we were living in a very little -- little sort of studenty flat in Heaton and living, you know, quite frugally, really. Kim's mum and dad had been brilliant through all of this. I mean, you know, they have supported Kim through thick and thin and they had actually lent us the money to keep paying the staff when the Post Office -- when we were trying to get the post office reopened for the customers. So Kim had to sort of actually keep paying them, right, and we borrowed a huge sum of money from Kim's mum. So when she died last week, you know, awful but we still owed her money and we will never be able to put that right at all.

I mean healthwise, you know, Kim's dad is angry all the time about it. You have just got to mention the Post Office and he blows up and it really worries us because he had already had a heart attack.

Kim herself has thyroid problems. The pair of us have both been on anti-depressants since the beginning of this and that sort of has a knock-on effect with the way you sort of deal with everything in life. It puts a blanket on all your emotions. You 64
don't feel the bad stuff, but you also don't really experience the good stuff as well.

We both had counselling. It -- you know, it has had that effect on all family and friends.

I mean, one of the worst things was finding out who your friends actually are. I mean, it's lovely for the -- the people who supported us are brilliant, but I remember one case of us sitting at home and Kim was trying to speak to one of the members of staff on the phone and this member of staff was shouting abuse at her down the phone, you know, telling her that she wasn't -- Kim wasn't allowed to speak to her because she has been suspended and Kim -- as I say --
FACILITATOR: A member of staff where, sorry? Where was that member of staff?
CAROL CHARLTON: Kim was on the phone with her.
FACILITATOR: In the post office?
CAROL CHARLTON: Yes. And this is it, it was somebody who Kim had thought a lot of and had made a fuss of, you know, her children and things like this, because that was just Kim, and it's just -- it's really hard because you -- I mean, to this day, we haven't been able to go back up, really, to the village, you know, Winlaton, where it is.

I know a lot of people when we have bumped into 65
them in shops and things, some of them have said to our face, "You know, we never thought you had done anything but, you know, there were all sorts of rumours going round". And a lot of people, even, you know, after -- even after sort of charges were dropped and that, think, you know, "no smoke without fire, you know, they have dropped the charges but it's because she hid it so well". And it's just -- you can't prove that you haven't done something. It's very difficult to prove a negative.
FACILITATOR: Yes. So reflecting on all of that, how would you sum up kind of the emotional impact it has had on you, and I'm particularly interested in how it has changed the people who you are, compared with the ones who opened the post office.
CAROL CHARLTON: A lot really. I mean, some -- in some ways it has changed us for the better. We are more resilient now than we have ever been, you know. When anything sort of crops up, we don't go to pieces about it, we just look for solutions. We do, sort of, problem solve a lot.

But it's hard to explain really, in that it's -it's a bit like, you know, when you've got a mobile phone and you get a message to say that background things are running and you feel like it's stealing 66
that.
Wendy, I wonder if you could talk to Sir Wyn a little bit about the impacts all of this had on you and the outcomes and how you're feeling.
WENDY BURKE: I'm just very thankful that I haven't had the experiences that other people have spoken about and it's quite harrowing to listen to.

Over the years did I think I was making mistakes? Yes, I probably did. When I look back was it me all the time? No, it probably wasn't. In hindsight, would I have changed anything I did? I don't know, I just don't know. I had Mum and Dad, as I say, they supported me, and latterly my partner and my two boys, who are now older and I -- I do think there was still a serious lack of trust for Post Office management and that's a really sad place to be because it could be so different.

We were told, and hands up, I was part of Federation, I was an executive officer, and we were told time and time again it was "robust" and that word, still to this day, I find it difficult to use. I can see changes within parts of the business, which is a positive. I think there has to be a closure to this and there has to be an outcome for all of those that were impacted and, I mean, all of them, right 68
from the person that maybe didn't have a loss but struggled with Post Office and the attitude, right through to those ones that have had a huge impact on their lives.

I just -- I just want to see a closure and ultimately a proper apology from Post Office and I think until that happens we will all be left sitting in a kind of state of limbo to a certain extent. The network -- it could have been so different.

FACILITATOR: You talk about the difference there. What sort of consequences has it had for you financially and in your wider life?
WENDY BURKE: Well, as I say, at the time I was a single parent with my two kids. Financially, I struggled every day. I was very lucky, I'm now living where I was brought up, so I'm actually living in the same building now where the post office was. I could -long story. I had a nine-year divorce and I couldn't stay living in my house because I couldn't financially do it, so my dad allowed me to move into what was the empty property at the time with the two boys, so, I mean, that was a huge -- that was huge for us.

Emotionally, I suppose, I'm a bit of a -I sometimes find it difficult to think about and feel that you failed your family at times, but I didn't. 69

Sorry.
FACILITATOR: That's all right. I will come back to you in a moment.

WENDY BURKE: Thank you.
FACILITATOR: So Paul, just -- I'm just interested -- if you were able to sort of sum up financially, roughly, what you think you put in that wasn't recognised by the system, that you were just making up the shortfalls.

PAUL BRANNLUND: Yes, well, it's quite difficult because most of our records are gone. We still -- once you get to seven years in retirement you've got no paperwork. We had a little bit and we found 2,000 or 3,000 for the last 18 months that we were in the Post Office, so I would estimate probably between 10,000 and 20,000 was put in, but that's over a period of 16 years, so it was never big amounts -- well, £150, £200.

I think for me -- you know, I have been very lucky compared to many, many of my colleagues that we had a thriving business, we had the money, we never had the really big shortages, but I think I would still like to know what the hell was going on with Horizon because, like so many, many people for many years, I thought it was just us making silly mistakes 70
and not being able to prove it one way or the other.
The other thing I often thought was that I had staff with fingers in the till. You know, we did all sorts of things with training to try and alleviate any errors, so I just would like to know the truth because I began to suspect that it wasn't just us because, every time we had a shortage, we worked through what we thought we were doing wrong but we still had a shortage the following week and, you know, it -- so I would like to know what was going on with Horizon, really.
FACILITATOR: Can I just take you back to the period of those events. I wonder -- presumably you had other suppliers into your business, you know, other companies, technically and otherwise. How did the behaviour and performance of the Post Office compare with "AN Other" big company who you were dealing with, would you say, at that time?
PAUL BRANNLUND: We were dealing with a company called Cost Cutter that were supplying our shop stock. They had a very sophisticated computer system. We could -as I said earlier, we could actually go back into it and they could support us.

I just felt that the Post Office Horizon System was never up to much. I mean, do you know they never 71
even provided a till so that -- in all other EPOS systems, your till is linked to your printer and your screen and to complete a transaction you have to take the cash or cheque or whatever it is, and then the till opens but the Post Office never provided tills, so, you know, there were lots of errors that you could make yourself.

I keep on talking about the stack. I'm sure everybody here knows you could leave things in the stack and then pay it twice. If we had had a till, that would have been alleviated but they never gave us tills. It was a -- to me, it was never thought through. I never felt as if there was somebody who worked in the Post Office actually designed it. It was typical big business, I guess.
FACILITATOR: If you take a step back from it, as you say you are out of the system now, you say you feel lucky that you weren't worse hit, if you want to think of it this way, but how has it affected you in terms of your kind of -- just your own mental landscape about how you are now, compared with when you started out in Cornwall?

PAUL BRANNLUND: Well, I think I was pretty disappointed when I finished with the Post Office. I really didn't warm towards them at all. I had a presentation from 72
them when I had done ten years' service. You used to get a little certificate and a badge, and when I finished I had done 18 years service with the Post Office, which, to this day, has never been acknowledged. There was no thank you, no nothing, they just -- you just left and I found that rather sad, especially as they -- I was told that, you know, the majority of people don't do 18, 20-plus years. Most people come and do a period and leave.

So I have no time for the Post Office. I don't use the Post Office very often any more, other than -I use my local post office, but I don't listen to the Post Office propaganda or anything like that.
FACILITATOR: Thank you. So, Sian, if we come back to you for a moment, I know obviously we're still in the midst of the Inquiry and everything and it was only a few weeks ago you went to London, but how do you feel the continued impact of this in your life, would you say?
SIAN THOMAS: It's affected me a lot. Luckily, Hudgells Solicitors have been very good with my dad because I had been doing all his paperwork and I -- we have become good friends with them all. They have supported me as well, not just Dad.

I have had 13 psychiatry sessions, which I think 73
has helped a lot because the problem is you relive things and I have been listening to the Inquiry as well, not with just Dad. I have been listening to the others and I thank God I still have my dad with me, but my impact, I have lost a lot of friends regarding this and like a lot of it is trust as well, you know.

The early days when Dad went to prison, it was hard. It was really hard to adjust and especially going home because my mum couldn't come with us at the time to court, and saying to her that, you know, she looked round and said "Where's Dad?" because that was the reason of the plea bargain was, you know, "We would drop the theft and go for false accounting and we will give you a suspended sentence".

You know, unfortunately that never happened to our family and to lots either but I'm lucky my mum and dad are still here. They're celebrating 53 years tomorrow. The Post Office have tried to break us but, thank goodness, their love and trust has been so strong. So we have been one of the lucky ones and we have been open together and we have spoken about everything to the grandchildren, to my eldest brother. You know, we have all done this as a team and I'm grateful to all of them, really.
FACILITATOR: Yes. I mean, it is lovely to hear all that 74
you know, to continue fighting for all the ex-postmasters.

There's not just the ones that have been through the court, there's everybody to think about.
You know, they have all been through hell and back and
they should be compensated, and we need an end. My dad is getting -- he's not getting any younger and I hope to God that he is still around to see the end of this. That's my prayer.
FACILITATOR: You say it has changed him. I just wonder how has it changed you?
SIAN THOMAS: It has changed me a lot. I'm very protective of my family. That's why I have sacrificed and stayed at home. I have stopped my life. I have not married. I'm -- but I tend to be overprotective sometimes when we go out and people come to your face, because some people are still not taking a grasp of all this. My dad was in a local store a couple of weeks ago and he turned round and says, "Well, you're the lucky people getting away with it" and I'm thinking, "What?" you know.

People think, "Oh, it's finished, it's over".
It's not over. You know, we still have a long way to go but I'm very optimistic now with all the things that are happening with the Inquiry that one day we 76
can -- you know, it's never going to go away. I'm only 50 . It's never going to leave me. It's still going to haunt me. Even nightmares still happen when I see somebody with handcuffs, it reminds me of Dad. I get nightmares still. I can't even watch a programme like Paddington, when he goes to jail, I just start crying, and that's a cartoon supposed to be.

But I have been at my mum and dad's (inaudible) and it has hit me hard. I have been lucky with where I work that they have been such a good support to me. I work in a doctor's surgery and they have been amazing with me, and my mum and dad, so, you know, I can't fault them. But let's get a closure, you know. I would like to hopefully enjoy -- Dad have at least a bit more of his life to enjoy, instead of wondering every morning, you know, "What's happening today?"

It's an ongoing -- you know, get the Post Office to pull their finger out; you know, give people proper compensation for us to be able to live. We have just lived, you know. We have scraped for everything that we have, but it's life, unfortunately.

FACILITATOR: Just before I move on to the others in the room, you used the word "sacrifice", a few times, that 77

Wendy, I would like to just come back to you.
We've got about ten minutes to run and I just wondered, Wendy, if you could kind of sum up where you are now and perhaps what you would be saying to the individuals in the organisations involved in all of this, just to sort of give some final summaries to Sir Wyn, so he can see how you are feeling now.
WENDY BURKE: I still currently work with Post Office because I now have a role where I support postmasters across the network, and I'm very passionate about it, through the NFSP, and there have been mistakes in the past. We've got to make sure they never happen again.

I want the Inquiry to find the truth and that is the most important thing that has to come out of this, and it's just not to be bits of it, it has to be the whole truth and it has to be from all, involving -all involved, including the Royal Mail Group because, ultimately, this happened under their watch. The system was rolled out while Royal Mail Group CEO was in place.

I would like to -- it was in the Crown network first and we have to remember our colleagues that were not even postmasters -- not postmasters, but were Post Office employees that suffered under all of this.

The CEO and management of Post Office through 79
you have had to sacrifice. I just wonder what you feel you have missed out on as part of that sacrifice in supporting your father?
SIAN THOMAS: Well, I wouldn't go out much, you know. I was a middle-aged person, really, I could have gone out to the pub and things, but I used to rather stay at home with my family. It was the worry that, if I went out, who would say something to me, you know, because we have been very much in the limelight, myself and Dad, for all the right reasons but a lot of my -- a lot of people around Anglesey still haven't got the grasp of what's actually happened in our lives. So I really literally I have been going to work, coming home and that's been my life, really, for the last 16 years.

Working with Dad, doing his emails and finding evidence, you know, paperwork for him and things like that, so I have been his secretary for the last 16 years, to be honest with you. But I don't regret it, but if you sent an email to Dad today you would be lucky to get an answer in a year, you know. He is not that technical minded, unfortunately, so that's why I felt for all they have given me that I had to step in and help him, and I will never regret that really.
FACILITATOR: No, no, I can see that. Thank you, Sian. 78 gon it, but if you sent an email to Dad today you would be
the years, we've got to hold them to account. We've got to. And, ultimately, the Government ministers who oversaw year after year and changed so many times. We even had two in one year that have not taken responsibility for it.

They are ultimately responsible and they've got to stand up and be counted along with the rest.

Fujitsu, who seem to have been very quiet throughout, I really hope that they are held to account as well.

Post Office, I think from that time, showed a complete dereliction of duty. They allowed these people, many, many people to have a considerable impact on their life, whatever that impact was.

Right now, I know that Nick Read is saying that he is resetting relationships. Is that really happening? I think there's too many layers of middle management within the company still and I don't think he is actually --if he is hearing the truth, is he actually, actively acting to fix it? I very much doubt it.

In fact, I was quite thrown when I heard that some of the Post Office management who left with money in their back pockets through various schemes are now back in the business, even working in the HSS scheme, 80

| 1 | and I just -- I just couldn't take it in. I really | 1 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 2 | was quite taken aback by it. | 2 |
| 3 | Going forward, as it has been said, there needs | 3 |
| 4 | to be a closure and there needs to be an outcome and | 4 |
| 5 | that needs to be sooner rather than later because | 5 |
| 6 | there are still families out there that are suffering | 6 |
| 7 | dreadfully. | 7 |
| 8 | I'm very lucky, as you know, and I have already | 8 |
| 9 | said, I had loads of support and wasn't impacted in | 9 |
| 10 | the way that many others weren't, but we need closure. | 10 |
| 11 | We just need to hear -- to find the truth. | 11 |
| 12 | FACILITATOR: Yes, so that -- could you describe to | 12 |
| 13 | Sir Wyn then what closure would look like from your | 13 |
| 14 | specific point of view? | 14 |
| 15 | WENDY BURKE: That's a really good question but very | 15 |
| 16 | difficult to answer. Post Office need to change | 16 |
| 17 | completely from the company that they are now to a | 17 |
| 18 | company that cares, that listens and takes on board -- | 18 |
| 19 | and really takes on board -- people's views, where | 19 |
| 20 | postmasters are remunerated properly for what they do | 20 |
| 21 | and the work is done within communities is | 21 |
| 22 | appreciated. | 22 |
| 23 | Government really, really need to take a look | 23 |
| 24 | and actually step up and be accountable for what is | 24 |
| 25 | happening within the network. Paying lip service is 81 | 25 |
| 1 | have the finance to pay it and then we were given the | 1 |
| 2 | opportunity to pay it back over six months, so that's | 2 |
| 3 | all I had to go on. | 3 |
| 4 | I know there was an awful lot more, to be | 4 |
| 5 | honest, and I don't, for one minute, think that I will | 5 |
| 6 | ever know. | 6 |
| 7 | Yes, we had overages, usually quite small in | 7 |
| 8 | comparison to some of the shortages. Can we blame it | 8 |
| 9 | all on Horizon? I don't suppose we can because | 9 |
| 10 | everybody can make mistakes, you know, there are | 10 |
| 11 | errors that can be made, but we couldn't find those | 11 |
| 12 | errors because the system wasn't an open system where | 12 |
| 13 | we could actually find them. Yes, it -- yes, I did | 13 |
| 14 | and yes I got a payout. | 14 |
| 15 | SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Right, and before Jerome wraps it up | 15 |
| 16 | with Ms Charlton and Mr Brannlund, can I ask him: you | 16 |
| 17 | would also be eligible to make an application under | 17 |
| 18 | that scheme, have you done so? | 18 |
| 19 | PAUL BRANNLUND: Yes, I did make an application and, like | 19 |
| 20 | Wendy, the biggest problem was ascertaining what I had | 20 |
| 21 | put in. Because of, as I say earlier, the rules on | 21 |
| 22 | disposing of documentation, I only have 18 months. So | 22 |
| 23 | at the time, I think I had two years of records left | 23 |
| 24 | and, on the basis of that, I did make a claim, yes, | 24 |
| 25 | which they have paid me. | 25 |

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, all right.
Well, I may say something more about that in a few minutes but I will let Jerome wrap up this part of the session first.
FACILITATOR: Thank you, Sir Wyn. So, Paul, if I were to ask you to give one objective to Sir Wyn to take forward in his Inquiry, what would you be requesting?
PAUL BRANNLUND: To get to the truth really, to find out what we all suspected, what was going on with Horizon and, if it was a cover-up, to get to the bottom of it.
FACILITATOR: Fair enough, thank you.
Carol, so finally, if we could just come to you for your sort of final reflections and, again, your request -- anything you would like to put before Sir Wyn to take into the Inquiry stages.
CAROL CHARLTON: I think more than anything else I think everybody needs to feel that they have had justice. The justice system, as used by the Post Office, let everybody down and that needs to be addressed. It's so important and so fundamental to our, sort of, citizenship of the UK, and that, that we trust our systems. We were let down.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Ms Charlton, can I ask you, so to speak, on behalf of Ms Whiley, to confirm, I think, my understanding, but you tell me if l've got it wrong: 84
because she was a member of the 555 , she is excluded from -- at the moment, from the Historical Shortfall Scheme or any other compensation scheme?
CAROL CHARLTON: Yes.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Because she wasn't convicted but had her case dropped, she is not eligible, either, for an interim payment, is that the position, as you understand it?

CAROL CHARLTON: That is correct.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, fine. Thank you.
FACILITATOR: Right, thank you. That brings us to the end of the two hours and I think Sir Wyn and I probably could have had two hours with each of you to hear what you have had to say, but thank you so much, all of you, for sharing with us and with each other and with the wider world.

Do any of you want to make any final comments that you would like Sir Wyn to hear? It is important that you've got the chance to say anything.

Anything else, Sian, that perhaps you would like to say in closure?
SIAN THOMAS: I would be interested to find out why -well, a couple of days before Dad was sent to jail, they knew that he hadn't taken the money but nobody would stand up and say anything, so, basically, we 85
like you, there would be no Inquiry and I wouldn't be doing anything. So it is because you were prepared to come forward and speak that we have a meaningful Inquiry.
Now, I want to tell you something that -- just to put the seed in your heads, so to speak. Because this is in the nature of a focus group, where we have been exploring things, I haven't seen any written evidence from you, like a witness statement or anything like that, and you are probably aware that many people have made witness statements and obviously some of those have given evidence at the public hearings, but in the future -- in the not too distant future, I may ask members of the legal team, or even the Secretariat team, to invite you to make witness statements about some of the things that you have told me this morning.
Now, you may know that I have powers to compel people to make witness statements. I wouldn't dream of doing that in your cases. It's a purely voluntary thing, as far as I'm concerned, but I just wanted to alert you to the fact that I may do that in the future because -- obviously because I didn't know in advance what you were going to say, I couldn't judge how important it was going to be and so now that I know
have had to live with this behind us for the last 16 years but my question is: why? Why did they send an innocent person to jail when they knew?

That's how Dad got his limb 1 and limb 2. Why -- why did they -- they have not just ruined my dad's life, they have ruined the whole family's life, really. The impact has been horrendous on us all, to be fair. But I need to know why. Why send him to jail when they knew, you know, four days before that, he was innocent?

FACILITATOR: Thank you, Sian, and thank you for everything you have shared.
SIAN THOMAS: Thank you all.
FACILITATOR: Does anybody else have any final comments they would like to give to Sir Wyn?
WENDY BURKE: I think, from me, really, just a thank you for taking time to listen to us and, again, we're putting our trust in him for the outcome of this. I know it's been harrowing for many but just to thank you for everything.
CAROL CHARLTON: Yes, thank you very much.
SIAN THOMAS: Thank you. Diolch yn fawr iawn.
PAUL BRANNLUND: Thank you very much.
SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Because I get the last word, it is I who should be thanking you because, without people 86
what you've got to say, some of the things are very important so I may wish to ask you to make a witness statement in the future, so please don't be surprised if you get that request. As I say, if you don't want to, that's fine, but if you feel able to, that would be good.

So finally, thank you very much. Good afternoon to you all. Prynhawn da to you, Ms Thomas. I look forward to the next focus group session, which I think will be next Friday. So thank you all very much and I'm now going to depart and mute myself and if you want to have one or two minutes having a chat to each other on this very good facility, then please do so.
SIAN THOMAS: Diolch.
CAROL CHARLTON: Thank you.
PAUL BRANNLUND: Thank you very much. WENDY BURKE: Thank you.
FACILITATOR: Thank you, Sir Wyn. We will stop the live stream there, but thank you everybody.
( 12.05 pm)

## (The session adjourned)

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(41) walks - worked

(42) worker - zero

