Witness Name: Paul Anthony Gardner

Statement No.: WITN09550100

Dated: 9 May 2023

POST OFFICE HORIZON IT INQUIRY

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FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF *PAUL ANTHONY GARDNER*

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I, *MR PAUL ANTHONY GARDNER*, will say as follows:

INTRODUCTION

1. I am currently employed by Fujitsu Services Limited ("**Fujitsu**"). I am a Service Manager for the Triole for Services ("**TfS**") Service Management Platform, where I am involved in finance and licensing. I am currently on phased retirement and am due to fully retire in December 2023. I have no involvement in the Horizon project in my current role.

2. This witness statement is made to assist the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry (the "**Inquiry**") with the questions put to me in a Rule 9 Request dated 13 April 2023 (the "**Request**"). It is based on my direct knowledge of relevant matters. I was assisted in preparing this statement by Morrison Foerster, who represent Fujitsu in the Inquiry.

3. The topics in the Request relate to events that took place at least 15 years ago. I have tried to remember matters as best I can but have not always been able to do so.

4. Where I have seen documents relevant to the Inquiry's Request for the purpose of preparing this statement or where I have referred to documents, these documents are referred to using the Inquiry's URNs and are listed in the index accompanying this

statement. I understand that some of the documents referenced in my statement were not previously provided to the Inquiry. These documents are from my own records or are ones that Fujitsu and its external legal advisers showed me in the course of preparing this statement so as to assist my recollections. They have been provided to the Inquiry alongside my statement.

BACKGROUND

5. I graduated from Coventry University with a BSc (Honours) in Applied Biology in 1984.

6. Following graduation, I worked in various management and IT roles at McDonald's Restaurants Limited ("**McDonalds**"). By 1996, and while still employed by McDonalds, I was working as a consultant supporting Fujitsu's provision of the McDonalds' IT service desk.[1]

7. I joined Fujitsu in December 1998. My initial role was as a Team Manger on the same McDonalds IT helpdesk I had been working on previously. In 1999, I was promoted to Helpdesk Operations Manager. I spent several years in that role, working on various helpdesks Fujitsu provided to large retail clients.

8. In November 2005, I joined the Horizon Service Desk (the "**Helpdesk**") as Operations Manager. Prior to joining the Helpdesk, I had no involvement with the Horizon project or the Post Office account. I continued in the role of Operations Manager on the Helpdesk until May 2008.

9. Within Fujitsu at the time, the Core Services group provided various services that were required on multiple customer accounts. The Helpdesk was one such service. I, and the individuals I managed, fell within the Core Services organisational structure. My

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[1] At the time, Fujitsu was known as "ICL".

manager at the time was Helen Robinson (Operations Manager, Service Desks – Customer Services). She managed several operations managers on various different accounts. On a day-to-day basis, however, I worked alongside and was accountable to the Post Office account's Helpdesk Service Delivery Manager (the "**SDM**"). During my time on the Helpdesk, the SDM I worked with most frequently was Liz Melrose.

10. My role as Operations Manager on the Helpdesk involved:

   a. Overseeing and supporting a team of approximately 80 team managers and agents, who delivered first and second line support to Horizon users that called the Helpdesk. As part of this responsibility, I (i) directly managed about five team managers, who in turn each managed about 10 to 15 first and second line support staff, and (ii) had overall responsibility for the training and recruitment of Helpdesk staff and improving existing Helpdesk procedures.

   b. Ensuring that the contractual Service Level Targets ("**SLTs**") for customer service and support to subpostmasters were met.

   c. Managing the provision of technical support for rollouts of new hardware or new software releases to branches.

   d. Supporting the SDM on liaising with the Post Office regarding Helpdesk performance and processes, including feeding into the monthly Service Review Books ("**SRBs**") received by Post Office. While interfacing with the Post Office was primarily the SDM's role, I would sometimes liaise directly with Post Office staff and attend meetings with them alongside the SDM.

11. After leaving the Helpdesk in May 2008, I remained at Fujitsu as a Toolset Implementation Consultant. My role shifted from the management of helpdesks to an internal technical services and financial role. I have, since leaving the Helpdesk (i) supported the set-up of new accounts on the TfS call logging system, (ii) managed the decommissioning of legacy call logging systems on various Fujitsu accounts and their transition to TfS, (iii) led reviews on how Fujitsu could better utilise toolsets such as telephony Individual Voice Response ("**IVR**") to manage helpdesk agent performance across the business, (iv) managed aspects of the decommissioning of TfS and Fujitsu's transition to the newer ServiceNow platform, and (v) managed the revenue recovery for Fujitsu's provision of helpdesk toolset services and licenses to various global customers.

12. Due to my familiarity with the call logging systems used at various points on the Post Office account, I would occasionally be asked how to properly extract call log data from PowerHelp or TfS (as applicable) by individuals working on the Post Office account, even after I had left the Helpdesk. I would not conduct the extractions myself but, rather, would give guidance on how they were to be done. I had understood that the extractions may have been to support the Post Office in investigations of subpostmasters. Save for this, and giving my successor on the Helpdesk some *ad hoc* assistance during our handover period, I do not recall having any involvement with the Post Office account or the Horizon system after I left the Helpdesk in May 2008.

HELPDESK OPERATIONS

13. As I note above, I worked on the Helpdesk between November 2005 and May 2008. The Inquiry has asked me to consider a number of documents that describe Helpdesk processes, and I have done so. These are: ICL Pathway/POCL Interface Agreement for the NBSC and HSH Interface, Version 2.0, dated 13 July 2000 (FUJ00080406), POA Customer Service Incident Management Process Details, Version 3.0, dated 23 March 2005 (FUJ00079939), End to End Support Process, Operational Level Agreement, Version 2.0, dated 17 June 2003 (FUJ00079897), Service Level Targets for Horizon Services, Version 3.0, dated 19 August 2005 (FUJ00001966), Horizon Service Desk Joint Working Document, Version 1.0, dated 27 July 2007 (FUJ00080459), Call Enquiry Matrix and Incident Prioritisation - Reference Data, Version 1.0, dated 23 April 2007 (FUJ00080498), Call Enquiry Matrix and Incident Prioritisation - Software, Version 1.0, dated 23 April 2007 (FUJ00080499), Call Enquiry Matrix and Incident Prioritisation – HSD, Version 1.0, dated 17 April 2007 (FUJ00080501), POA Customer Service Major Incident Process, Version 3.0, dated 7 July 2009 (FUJ00080071), RMGA End-to-End Customer Complaints Procedure – Joint Working Document, Version 2.0, dated 24 December 2007 (FUJ00080034), RMGA Customer Service Problem Management Process, Version 2.0, dated 22 April 2008 (FUJ00080043), and Processes - ID 408501 - Engineer Refused Access Process (undated) (FUJ00138733). Some of these documents appear to have been prepared outside the period I was involved with the Helpdesk. Those documents are: FUJ00080406, FUJ00079939, FUJ00079897, FUJ00001966, and FUJ00080071. While I am generally familiar with the processes described in these documents, and some of them have assisted me in preparing this statement, I am not in a position to

comment in detail on Helpdesk procedures or operations during periods when I was not working on the Helpdesk. Unless I expressly refer to a different time period, my observations in this statement are based on the period I was working on the Helpdesk.

Purpose of the Helpdesk

14. The purpose of the Helpdesk was to provide initial technical support by phone to Post Office branches, including end to end management of incidents reported by callers to the Helpdesk. The support provided by the Helpdesk covered any part of the counter equipment installed at a Post Office branch and the associated software. First line and second line support agents worked within the Helpdesk. Service Delivery Units ("**SDUs**"), including, for example, the SSC, received escalations from the Helpdesk when first and second line agents were not able to resolve a reported incident. These units interfaced with the Helpdesk but did not form part of it.

Roles on and management of the Helpdesk

15. As noted above, I worked alongside the Helpdesk Service Manager in relation to the management of the Helpdesk.

16. The main Helpdesk roles were as follows:

    i. First Line Agent. First Line Agents were the initial point of contact for anyone calling the Helpdesk. In summary, their primary function was to take incoming telephone calls, record relevant information about the incident the caller was reporting, and either resolve the incident or pass it on to another team to progress/resolve.

    ii. Second Line Agent. Second Line Agents were more senior and experienced Helpdesk staff, with greater technical knowledge than First Line Agents.

Second Line Agents provided support to teams of First Line Agents allocated to them. They would directly give advice to First Line Agents during calls if First Line Agents were unsure how to resolve an incident. Alternatively, such calls could also be passed on from a First Line Agent to a Second Line Agent. Second Line Agents were also responsible for training First Line Agents and monitoring calls taken by First Line Agents so as to ensure procedures were being followed and correct advice was being given.

iii. <u>Team Manager.</u> Team Managers each managed a team of about 10 to 15 First and Second Line Agents. Team Managers had overall responsibility for the telephony performance of First and Second Line Agents, and the quality of call logging, incident resolution, and training by those in their teams. While I worked on the Helpdesk, I recall there were usually about five Team Managers, who each reported directly to me.

iv. <u>Incident Management Team ("**IMT**").</u> The IMT was a group of experienced agents, led by a Team Manager, who mainly dealt with major incidents when they arose, though they were deployed to assist with standard frontline calls in periods of high call demand. They had a number of roles. These included:

    i. Identifying and reporting on trends in incoming calls.

    ii. Organising the Helpdesk's response to call storms, which is a situation where many calls are made into the Helpdesk reporting the same incident. This could occur, for instance, after the rollout of a new software release. In these instances, the team would set up a

master ticket and make sure first line support all assign their calls to this master ticket to avoid duplication.

    iii.   Monitoring the desk's SLT compliance for open incidents, and providing an escalation route for Helpdesk Major incidents into the Service Management Team.

    iv.   Managing complaints about Fujitsu or Horizon from end users (as set out in more detail in FUJ00080034).

    v.   Specifically supporting problems at Post Office "Hot Sites" or "VIP Sites". From my recollection, "Hot Sites" were defined by Post Office and usually included newly opened sites or single counter branches (where any technical issues were more likely to have a significant impact on the branch's ability to trade). VIP Sites were also defined by the Post Office, and included "flagship" sites or those that might be regularly visited by Post Office senior management.

    v.   <u>Communications Management Team ("**CMT**").</u> The CMT was a group of experienced agents, led by a Team Manager, who specifically monitored and supported on network issues faced by branches and any issue that prevented a branch from communicating with the central servers. Like the IMT, the CMT was also deployed to assist with standard frontline calls in periods of high call demand.

17. Having reviewed the Post Office Ltd / Fujitsu Services Retention of the Incident and Communications Management Teams document dated 4 April 2006 (WITN09550101), I recall that the IMT and CMT teams were provided at additional

cost to the Post Office, and they were retained during my time on the Helpdesk as they were considered to benefit the Post Office branch estate.

Recruitment for Helpdesk Roles

18. I reviewed various Helpdesk skill matrixes – specifically the Team Manager HSH Skills Matrix (undated) (WITN095500102), HSD Customer Support Technical Skills Matrix dated 3 November 2005 (WITN095500103), and the D1 – D4 Core Skills Matrix for PSE (undated) (WITN095500104) – to assist me in recollecting some of the observations I make in this section. I refer to these skills matrixes below as they set out the performance framework for the key Helpdesk roles. I do not recall if each of these skills matrixes were in force throughout the entire period that I worked on the Helpdesk. There may have been changes in format or structure over time. However, I believe they do reflect the substance of the performance framework that applied during my tenure on the Helpdesk.

19. First Line Agents were generally recruited using external employment agencies. Most individuals were usually initially employed on a temporary basis, but could later be offered permanent positions. The performance framework for First Line Agents is set out in WITN095500103. The minimum requirements when recruiting for the First Line Agent role were good previous customer service experience and a basic knowledge of IT. Bespoke training on the Horizon system would be provided to any new agent, and so prior knowledge of the system was not required. After recruitment, First Line Agents would continue to be assessed during a probationary period, and I recall individuals were let go if they were not performing adequately. My recollection is that, at the time I worked on the Helpdesk, the standard of IT knowledge of the staff within

a high proportion of Post Office branches was generally considered very low. As a result, many calls into the Helpdesk could be resolved by someone with only basic IT knowledge. As such, while First Line Agents were vetted for IT skills, good customer service skills were generally considered to be more important than advanced IT skills.

20. Second Line/IMT Agents were generally promoted within the Helpdesk from experienced First Line Agents who had gained strong knowledge of the Horizon system and had begun to show the relevant skills required for the role as defined in WITN095500104.

21. Team Managers were generally promoted within the Helpdesk, transferred from other Helpdesks in Fujitsu or, occasionally, joined from the Fujitsu graduate recruitment programme. Potential candidates for Team Manager roles were usually identified by an "Ongoing Management Review" process. This involved operations managers across various Fujitsu helpdesks identifying potential candidates from their teams for management roles. An example of how the process applied can be seen in the OMR for Commercial & Public Sector Call Centres, Customer Services slide deck dated September 2005 (WITN09550105). In order to be selected for the Team Manager role on the Helpdesk, a candidate would need to be assessed by existing Team Managers as performing at Level D4 of the Second Line (PSE) Skills Matrix (WITN095500104) and had to successfully pass a Team Manager Assessment Centre. At the Assessment Centre, individuals would undertake various exercises and would be assessed by me and other Operations Managers on customer service, technical knowledge, and people management. Team Managers were expected to perform in accordance with WITN095500102.

Training for Helpdesk Roles

22. Training for new First Line Agents involved about two weeks of "classroom style" training in the dedicated Helpdesk training room. Training would be conducted by Second Line Agents and, to the best of my knowledge, would cover the use of call logging software, how to categorise and escalate calls, how to use available resources to resolve calls, and how to resolve common issues that came up on the Helpdesk, amongst other things. Trainees had access to fully working Horizon equipment that would replicate the Post Office branch environment. Where possible, the training would also include a visit to a Post Office branch site see how the branch operated in practice. During the course of this training, trainees were required to complete tests on the course material and would have needed to pass in order to be deployed as a First Line Agent.

23. This would then be followed by about a further two weeks "on the job" training where the First Line Agent would take calls under the supervision of a Second Line Agent. Second Line Agents would listen in and record a sample of calls taken by the First Line Agent during this period. Calls would be scored and reviewed with the First Line Agent. We referred to this process as "call coaching".

24. Following the initial "on the job" training period, First Line Agents were routinely assessed by means of call coaching and regular performance reviews relating to defined objectives and call statistics. A call coaching database was maintained to monitor agent performance across the desk. Overall scores were monitored on an ongoing basis. First Line Agents were required to meet the standards in the First Line Agent matrix.

Instructions to Helpdesk agents and resources available to resolve calls

25. All Helpdesk roles had documented processes to follow in terms of receiving calls, categorising them, attempting to resolve them and escalating them. These instructions were covered during initial training. That information may have been available to agents after completing training, though I do not recall this in detail or how agents would have accessed those materials. If instructions needed to be changed or supplemented, these would usually be communicated by me or the team managers using email or at team meetings.

26. Those working on the Helpdesk had access to an online knowledge base which served as a repository of information that agents could search to assist in the resolution of calls. I do not clearly recall the name of the database but, having reviewed FUJ00079939 and the Horizon Service Desk Operational Development Plan Current Activities document (WITN09550106), I believe it might, at various points, have been called HSH One or HSD One. For convenience, in this statement, I will refer to the database as "HSH One". The HSH One database held call scripts, articles containing instructions on how to resolve common problems, and also contained the KELs which had been produced by the SSC.

27. My recollection is that call scripts would at least cover the types of points set out at Section 4 of FUJ00080459 - e.g. how to answer a call, what to initially ask a caller, and the mandatory information an agent needed to record on the call log. Having reviewed FUJ00079939, I recall there may have been scripts on how to deal with specific problems or scenarios. However, I do not have a clear recollection of these.

28. The information on HSH One was generally prepared by Second Line Agents and Team Managers, but some information will have been provided by SDUs such as the SSC or the Engineering team.

29. The call history for all branches would also be available on the call logging software (PowerHelp or TfS as applicable) if required.

30. My understanding was that most Helpdesk agents would download or copy onto their own desktops the instructions for resolving most common issues, so they would have them easily to hand. As such, most agents would not be searching HSH One on every call they took.

31. Beyond what I have noted above, I only have a vague recollection about the scripts or other resources available on HSH One. Much of the material had already been prepared before I joined the Helpdesk, and I do not recall having any involvement in drafting scripts or other resources to assist Helpdesk staff with resolving problems on calls.

Procedure for resolving calls

32. As an initial point, I would observe that the procedures set out at pages 11 to 20 of FUJ00079939 and pages 13 to 18 of FUJ00080459 largely reflect my recollection of the procedure Helpdesk staff would follow in order to resolve a call.

33. The Helpdesk received calls on a variety of issues covering a very wide range of scenarios. It would not be possible for me to set out in this statement the procedure that would be followed for every scenario a Helpdesk agent might have encountered. However, I have set out below the typical process that would have occurred for new incidents received by the Helpdesk:

a. When a call was received by a First Line Agent, the agent would first greet the caller and take the caller's branch FAD code and other security details to validate the call.

b. Once validation had been successfully completed, the agent would seek to verify if the call related to a new or existing issue, based on the caller's description of the problem and the branch's records on the applicable call logging system.

c. If the call was about a new issue, the agent would open a new ticket for the call on the call logging system.

d. The agent would take more information about the problem, and seek to classify the call into one of four categories:

    i. Incident. An incident was any hardware or software issue with Horizon.

    ii. Advice and guidance. Advice and guidance calls were calls seeking information on how to use the Horizon system (i.e. they did not report any problem in the functioning of Horizon).

    iii. Out of scope calls. Out of scope calls were calls relating to issues that did not fall within the scope of the IT services Fujitsu was providing to Post Office. Most often, these related to Post Office business issues (e.g. the correct procedure for selling a stamp).

    iv. Quality. Quality calls related to the quality of service the caller had experienced in a prior interaction with the Helpdesk or other Fujitsu staff.

e. If a call was classified as an "advice and guidance" or "out of scope" call, the Helpdesk would not proceed with the call and would advise the caller to contact the NBSC, as described at paragraph 4.1.2 of FUJ00080459. During my tenure on the Helpdesk, we also referred to calls of this nature as "inappropriate calls", as they were calls that were for the NBSC and often related to issues Post Office was best placed to resolve. The Inquiry has specifically asked me how calls about accounting discrepancies were handled. As noted in FUJ00080459, which is a "Horizon Service Desk Joint Working Document" approved by both Post Office and Fujitsu, these were treated as "inappropriate calls" and were directed to the NBSC. I was an approval authority for this document, which was also reviewed by others in Fujitsu and the Post Office. I provide further details below on how these types of calls were dealt with while I worked on the Helpdesk.

f. If a call was classified as an "incident", the First Line Agent would then proceed to classify the incident's severity as Low, Medium, Major, or Critical, according to the criteria set out on page 15 of FUJ00079939. If an incident was considered "Major" or "Critical" it would usually be escalated to the IMT as well as the SDM.

g. If the incident was classified as "Low" or "Medium", the First Line Agent would then attempt to resolve the issue based on their own knowledge or the resources they had available on HSH One.

h. If they were unable to do so, they might seek guidance from a Second Line Agent or pass the call on to them.

i. Having reviewed FUJ00080498, FUJ00080499, and FUJ00080501, I recall that while taking details about a call and attempting to fix the relevant problem, agents would also be required to categorise the problem based on the type of problem, the cause of the problem and (if a fix was successful) the repair that was applied. The available categories were pre-defined by senior Helpdesk staff or the SDUs, and available for selection on the call logging system. These would be modified from time to time as new issues were identified. If a Helpdesk agent was unable to diagnose the problem or fix it, he/she may not be able to complete the categorisation and that would be done when the call was escalated and resolved by an SDU.

j. If the Helpdesk agents were unable to resolve the incident, they would pass the ticket on to the relevant SDU (e.g. Engineering for hardware issues, the SSC for software issues). Different processes were used for transferring calls to an SDU depending on which SDU was relevant. For SDUs where there was a high volume of tickets transferred (such as the SSC or Engineering), there was a link (known as an "OTI link") set up between the Helpdesk's call logging system and the ticket management system the SDU used (Peak in the case of the SSC, and CRiSP in the case of Engineering). The OTI link allowed information from the call logging system to be automatically copied over into the relevant SDU's ticket management system. For SDUs where there were a much lower volume of calls transferred, a manual email process was used.

k. Once an SDU had resolved the incident, the call was required to be passed back to the Helpdesk and a First or Second Line Agent was meant to call the relevant branch to confirm the incident had been resolved. In practice, SDUs often obtained the caller's agreement to close the call when their issue was resolved, and the Helpdesk would not call the branch back. This was because staff at branches often found it inconvenient to receive calls on issues that had already been resolved. I also recall that, in some cases, IMT may have called branches back regarding call closures, though I cannot clearly recollect the situations in which this happened.

l. Once an incident was resolved, the call would be closed by the Helpdesk. As noted above this was usually done with the caller's agreement. Occasionally calls may not have been closed by the Helpdesk, but directly by the SDU via the OTI link. However, I do not recall how common this was.

Calls about accounting discrepancies

34. The Inquiry has asked me how calls from branches about unexplained accounting discrepancies would be classified in the table set out on page 11 of the Fujitsu Services Post Office Account - Service Review Book (February 2007) dated 14 March 2007 (FUJ00083429). As I note above, these would be classified as "inappropriate calls" for the purpose of FUJ00083429 and were to be directed to the NBSC.

35. During my time on the Helpdesk, it was not generally the Helpdesk's role to resolve unexplained discrepancies in branch accounts. Where a call related to an accounting discrepancy and if the relevant issue was covered by a KEL, I would expect Helpdesk

agents to apply the instructions in that KEL. Aside from that, discrepancies in branch accounts would be referred to the NBSC in accordance with FUJ00080459.

36. While accounting discrepancy calls would initially have been referred to the NBSC, it was open to the NBSC to refer the call back to the Helpdesk if the discrepancy remained following the conclusion of their support process or if it appeared to be attributable to a technical issue. This is noted at footnote 1 of FUJ00080459. Where calls were referred back to the Helpdesk, Helpdesk agents would follow usual call handling procedures, including referring the incident to the relevant SDU if they were unable to resolve the problem.

37. In practice, some Helpdesk agents may have provided initial technical support for a cash discrepancy, such as rebooting the Horizon counter at the branch, as this sometimes cleared discrepancies. However, if the discrepancy still remained, then the call would be referred to the NBSC helpdesk, who I understood would attempt to resolve the discrepancy.

38. The Inquiry has referred me to the First Witness Statement of Amandeep Singh dated 13 January 2023 (WITN06660100). I am aware from reading Mr Singh's statement and watching his oral evidence online that, prior to my joining the Helpdesk, support for accounting discrepancies was provided by members of the Helpdesk to callers. By the time I joined the Helpdesk, that position had changed and calls regarding accounting discrepancies were primarily dealt with by the NBSC. As I was not involved in the discussions around the decision to change the procedure, I cannot provide further detail on it.

Monitoring quality of assistance offered by the Helpdesk

39. The quality of assistance provided by the Helpdesk was monitored by various means:

    a. First Line Agents were monitored via call coaching. I believe this occurred at least quarterly, as call coaching results fed into First Line Agents' quarterly reviews. In addition, IVR statistics were tracked for each agent and used to review individual agent performance for metrics such as speed of answering calls and availability to answer calls.

    b. The performance of the desk as a whole was monitored via daily reviews of the desk's compliance with the SLTs. My recollection is that the SLTs that applied during my time on Helpdesk were of the nature set out in in the "Service Levels for Support Desk Services" section on page 8 and 9 of FUJ00001966. I believe the Post Office received a weekly update on SLT compliance from the Helpdesk Service Manager, and SLT figures also formed part of monthly Service Review Books which reported various metrics relevant to Helpdesk performance.

    c. In addition to the SLTs, I believe a number of other metrics were tracked by the IMT, including the number of complaints received regarding Helpdesk performance, and specific updates on VIP\Hot sites.

BUGS, ERRORS AND DEFECTS

40. I have been asked by the Inquiry whether, during my time working on the Helpdesk, I was aware of any bugs, errors or defects with the Horizon system.

41. I was aware that the Horizon system did have software errors. These errors resulted in calls to the Helpdesk, with relevant workarounds or fixes being recorded in KELs.

However, in my role, I did not have detailed knowledge of specific software errors. I was not directly involved in diagnosing or resolving software errors on the system.

42. While the Helpdesk staff could provide solutions to known software issues based on the KELs, they were not responsible for diagnosing and identifying solutions to new software issues. If a software incident could not be resolved by consulting the KELs, the appropriate process was for the ticket to be passed to the SSC for analysis and resolution.

EVIDENCE OF SOME SUBPOSTMASTERS REGARDING THEIR EXPERIENCES WHEN CALLING THE HELPDESK

43. The Inquiry has informed me that it has heard evidence from a number of subpostmasters who allege that, when they called the Helpdesk with a technical issue, they were told they were the only one experiencing the problem they had called about.

44. To the best of my knowledge, during my time on the Helpdesk, Helpdesk agents were never instructed to inform callers that they were the only person experiencing a particular issue. I do not recall anyone giving such advice to a caller. If this was overheard by a Second Line Agent or Team Manager, or picked up by the call coaching process, I would have expected it to be corrected.

EMAIL OF 7 NOVEMBER 2007 (FUJ00138214) AND SPREADSHEET ATTACHED TO FUJ00138214 (FUJ00138215)

45. The Inquiry has referred me to an email from me to John Casey, Paul Hailey, Sarah Hill and others, subject heading "FW: Process issues at HSD", dated 7 November 2007 (FUJ00138214), which contains a chain of emails. The first email dated 2 November 2007 is from Mik Peach to Liz Melrose, and contains a number of criticisms

of Helpdesk staff's interactions with the SSC. Liz Melrose subsequently forwards the email to me on 6 November 2007. On 7 November 2007, I forwarded it to the team managers who reported to me at the time.

46. Due to the time that has elapsed, I do not recall the emails on FUJ00138214. However, my recollection is that the issues described in Mik Peach's 2 November email were not common. In any case, some errors in correctly or punctually routing calls were to be expected given the Helpdesk was handling thousands of calls a month.

47. While I do not recall the email from Mik Peach, the Helpdesk's general practice at the time would have been to take such procedural issues seriously and to resolve the alleged issues. While I do not recall the specific action taken in this case, Team Managers would usually identify the agents involved and provide some one-to-one coaching on areas where they had been lacking.

48. I would agree with Liz Melrose's assessment in her email of 6 November that the rollout of the new TfS call management system did lead to pressure on the Helpdesk. Having reviewed an email chain involving FSL Amber Alerts, me and others, subject heading "RE: Amber Alert Ref 998 – Various T4S Customers – UPDATE REPORT" dated 22 January 2008 (FUJ00152279) and an email chain involving me and others, subject heading "FW: HSD – Update on Telephony Failure" dated 31 January 2008 (FUJ00152280), I recall there were initial performance issues with the TfS system, specifically intermittent problems with the OTI interface that passed tickets from the Helpdesk to the SDUs, which resulted in those tickets having to be transferred manually. A summary of the issues that occurred is contained in the documents I mention above and in the TFS Issues Log (undated) (WITN09550107). These issues

resulted in an "Amber Alert" where I believe all issues were captured and resolved. My recollection is that the difficulties with the TfS system continued sporadically for several months before they were fully resolved.

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF AMANDEEP SINGH

49. The Inquiry has referred me to paragraph 6 of the First Witness Statement of Amandeep Singh (WITN06660100). The behaviour described there is unacceptable and disgraceful. I do not recall ever witnessing such behaviour on the Helpdesk or becoming aware of such behaviour. I believe that, while I was working on the Helpdesk, if such behaviour had been observed, it would have resulted in disciplinary action.

DOCUMENT FUJ00002254

50. I can confirm that I was not involved in the production of the Audit Trail Functional Specification, Version 12.0, dated 8 October 2010 (FUJ00002254).

ADEQUACY OF SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE HELPDESK TO SUBPOSTMASTERS

51. I believe that the Helpdesk generally did provide adequate support to subpostmasters. I have this view for the following reasons:

   a. Our SLTs were generally met, and our performance on those could have a direct impact on the overall quality of a subpostmaster's experience when calling the Helpdesk.[2]

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[2] To assist my recollections about the Helpdesk's SLT performance, I reviewed the SRBs from the period I worked on the Helpdesk. These are: Service Review Book (November 2005) dated 15 December 2005 (FUJ00152251); Service Review Book (December 2005) dated 16 January 2006 (FUJ00152252); Service Review Book (January 2006) dated 14 February 2006 (FUJ00152255); Service Review Book (February 2006) dated 7 March 2006 (FUJ00152256); Service Review Book (March 2006) dated 18 April 2006 (FUJ00152258); Service Review Book (April 2006) dated 15 May 2006 (FUJ00152259); Service Review Book (May 2006) dated 27 June 2006 (FUJ00152260); Service Review Book (June 2006) dated 14 July 2006 (FUJ00152261); Service Review Book (July 2006) dated 14 August 2006 (FUJ00152262); Service

b. The Helpdesk strived to improve the service provided to branches by applying a "Sense and Respond" methodology. In 2007, the Helpdesk proactively reviewed high volume call categories and produced action plans to reduce call volumes and improve the end user experience of subpostmasters. Having reviewed the report from that review, the Post Office Ltd and Fujitsu Services Sense & Respond Action Plan dated 24 September 2007 (FUJ00141282), the activities that resulted from that review included (i) an Epson Printer refresh rollout (ii) providing branches with cleaning kits for their Pinpads, (iii) an improved reboot process, (iv) revision of relevant scripts to improve diagnosis of hardware faults, and (v) improvement of the quality of spares given to engineers to reduce "fail on fit" issues.

c. The Helpdesk would often receive compliments from subpostmasters for the service given. I recall that the Helpdesk team was proud of the work that it did in support of the Post Office and there was even a noticeboard in the

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Review Book (August 2006) dated 14 September 2006 (FUJ00152263); Service Review Book (September 2006) dated 13 October 2006 (FUJ00152264); Service Review Book (October 2006) dated 14 November 2006 (FUJ00152265); Service Review Book (November 2006) dated 14 December 2006 (FUJ00152266); Service Review Book (December 2006) dated 15 January 2007 (FUJ00152267); Service Review Book (January 2007) dated 14 February 2006 (FUJ00152268); Service Review Book (February 2007) dated 14 March 2007 (FUJ00152269); Service Review Book (March 2007) dated 17 April 2007 (FUJ00152270); Service Review Book (April 2007) dated 15 May 2007 (FUJ00152271); Service Review Book (May 2007) dated 14 June 2007 (FUJ00152272); Service Review Book (June 2007) dated 13 July 2007 (FUJ00152273); Service Review Book (July 2007) dated 14 August 2007 (FUJ00152274); Service Review Book (August 2007) dated 14 August 2007 (FUJ00152275); Service Review Book (September 2007) dated 12 October 2007 (FUJ00152276); Service Review Book (October 2007) dated 14 November 2007 (FUJ00152277); Service Review Book (December 2007) dated 15 January 2008 (FUJ00152278); Service Review Book (January 2008) dated 15 January 2008 (FUJ00152281); Service Review Book (February 2008) dated 14 March 2008 (FUJ00152282); Service Review Book (March 2008) dated 14 April 2008 (FUJ00152283); Service Review Book (April 2008) dated 15 May 2008 (FUJ00152284); Service Review Book (May 2008) dated 15 June 2008 (FUJ00152285); and Service Review Book (June 2008) dated 14 July 2008 (FUJ00152286).

office containing excerpts of messages from subpostmasters (or other branch staff) praising the service the Helpdesk had given.

d. The Helpdesk was also nominated as one of three finalists for an award given by the Helpdesk Institute ("**HDI**") (now known as the Service Desk Institute), an industry wide body promoting best practice on IT service desks. While we didn't eventually win, I believe such external recognition shows the passion the Helpdesk team had to go the extra mile.

52. For completeness, I note that subpostmasters' experience of the support process would usually be affected by factors aside from the Helpdesk's performance. By way of illustration, if there were delays within Engineering around the delivery of appropriate parts, that could affect the length of time it took before a problem was resolved, thought this would not be attributable to the Helpdesk's service.

Statement of Truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed: GRO

Dated: 9 May 2023

INDEX TO FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF PAUL ANTHONY GARDNER

Exhibit No.	Description	Control Number	URN
1.	ICL Pathway/POCL Interface Agreement for the NBSC and HSH Interface, Version 2.0, dated 13 July 2000	POINQ0086577F	FUJ00080406
2.	POA Customer Service Incident Management Process Details, Version 3.0, dated 23 March 2005	POINQ0086110F	FUJ00079939
3.	End to End Support Process, Operational Level Agreement, Version 2.0, dated 17 June 2003	POINQ0086068F	FUJ00079897
4.	Service Level Targets for Horizon Services, Version 3.0, dated 19 August 2005	POINQ0008137F	FUJ00001966
5.	Horizon Service Desk Joint Working Document, Version 1.0, dated 27 July 2007	POINQ0086630F	FUJ00080459
6.	Call Enquiry Matrix and Incident Prioritisation - Reference Data, Version 1.0, dated 23 April 2007	POINQ0086669F	FUJ00080498
7.	Call Enquiry Matrix and Incident Prioritisation - Software, Version 1.0, dated 23 April 2007	POINQ0086670F	FUJ00080499
8.	Call Enquiry Matrix and Incident Prioritisation – HSD, Version 1.0, dated 17 April 2007	POINQ0086672F	FUJ00080501
9.	POA Customer Service Major Incident Process, Version 3.0, dated 7 July 2009	POINQ0086242F	FUJ00080071
10.	RMGA End-to-End Customer Complaints Procedure – Joint Working Document, Version 2.0, dated 24 December 2007	POINQ0086205F	FUJ00080034
11.	RMGA Customer Service Problem Management Process, Version 2.0, dated 22 April 2008	POINQ0086214F	FUJ00080043
12.	Processes - ID 408501 - Engineer Refused Access Process (undated)	POINQ0144928F	FUJ00138733
13.	Post Office Ltd / Fujitsu Services Retention of the Incident and		WITN09550101

	Communications Management Teams document dated 4 April 2006		
14.	Team Manager HSH Skills Matrix (undated)		WITN09550102
15.	HSD Customer Support Technical Skills Matrix dated 3 November 2005		WITN09550103
16.	D1 – D4 Core Skills Matrix for PSE (undated)		WITN09550104
17.	OMR for Commercial & Public Sector Call Centres, Customer Services dated September 2005		WITN09550105
18.	Horizon Service Desk Operational Development Plan Current Activities, Version 0.3, dated 6 January 2006		WITN09550106
19.	Fujitsu Services Post Office Account - Service Review Book (February 2007) dated 14 March 2007	POINQ0089600F	FUJ00083429
20.	First Witness Statement of Amandeep Singh dated 13 January 2023	WITN06660100	WITN06660100
21.	Email from Paul Gardner to John Casey, Paul Hailey, Sarah Hill and others, subject heading "FW: Process issues at HSD", dated 7 November 2007	POINQ0144409F	FUJ00138214
22.	Spreadsheet attached to FUJ00138214, dated 7 November 2007	POINQ0144410F	FUJ00138215
23.	Email chain involving FSL Amber Alerts, Paul Gardner and others, subject heading "RE: Amber Alert Ref 998 – Various T4S Customers – UPDATE REPORT" dated 22 January 2008	POINQ0158473F	FUJ00152279
24.	Email chain involving Paul Gardner and others, subject heading "FW: HSD – Update on Telephony Failure" dated 31 January 2008	POINQ0158474F	FUJ00152280
25.	TFS Issues Log (undated)		WITN09550107
26.	Audit Trail Functional Specification, Version 12.0, dated 8 October 2010	POINQ0008425F	FUJ00002254

27.	Service Review Book (November 2005) dated 15 December 2005	POINQ0158445F	FUJ00152251
28.	Service Review Book (December 2005) dated 16 January 2006	POINQ0158446F	FUJ00152252
29.	Service Review Book (January 2006) dated 14 February 2006	POINQ0158449F	FUJ00152255
30.	Service Review Book (February 2006) dated 7 March 2006	POINQ0158450F	FUJ00152256
31.	Service Review Book (March 2006) dated 18 April 2006	POINQ0158452F	FUJ00152258
32.	Service Review Book (April 2006) dated 15 May 2006	POINQ0158453F	FUJ00152259
33.	Service Review Book (May 2006) dated 27 June 2006	POINQ0158454F	FUJ00152260
34.	Service Review Book (June 2006) dated 14 July 2006	POINQ0158455F	FUJ00152261
35.	Service Review Book (July 2006) dated 14 August 2006	POINQ0158456F	FUJ00152262
36.	Service Review Book (August 2006) dated 14 September 2006	POINQ0158457F	FUJ00152263
37.	Service Review Book (September 2006) dated 13 October 2006	POINQ0158458F	FUJ00152264
38.	Service Review Book (October 2006) dated 14 November 2006	POINQ0158459F	FUJ00152265
39.	Service Review Book (November 2006) dated 14 December 2006	POINQ0158460F	FUJ00152266
40.	Service Review Book (December 2006) dated 15 January 2007	POINQ0158461F	FUJ00152267
41.	Service Review Book (January 2007) dated 14 February 2006	POINQ0158462F	FUJ00152268
42.	Service Review Book (February 2007) dated 14 March 2007	POINQ0158463F	FUJ00152269
43.	Service Review Book (March 2007) dated 17 April 2007	POINQ0158464F	FUJ00152270
44.	Service Review Book (April 2007) dated 15 May 2007	POINQ0158465F	FUJ00152271
45.	Service Review Book (May 2007) dated 14 June 2007	POINQ0158466F	FUJ00152272
46.	Service Review Book (June 2007) dated 13 July 2007	POINQ0158467F	FUJ00152273
47.	Service Review Book (July 2007) dated 14 August 2007	POINQ0158468F	FUJ00152274
48.	Service Review Book (August 2007) dated 14 August 2007	POINQ0158469F	FUJ00152275
49.	Service Review Book (September 2007) dated 12 October 2007	POINQ0158470F	FUJ00152276

50.	Service Review Book (October 2007) dated 14 November 2007	POINQ0158471F	FUJ00152277
51.	Service Review Book (December 2007) dated 15 January 2008	POINQ0158472F	FUJ00152278
52.	Service Review Book (January 2008) dated 15 January 2008	POINQ0158475F	FUJ00152281
53.	Service Review Book (February 2008) dated 14 March 2008	POINQ0158476F	FUJ00152282
54.	Service Review Book (March 2008) dated 14 April 2008	POINQ0158477F	FUJ00152283
55.	Service Review Book (April 2008) dated 15 May 2008	POINQ0158478F	FUJ00152284
56.	Service Review Book (May 2008) dated 15 June 2008	POINQ0158479F	FUJ00152285
57.	Service Review Book (June 2008) dated 14 July 2008	POINQ0158480F	FUJ00152286
58.	Post Office Ltd and Fujitsu Services Sense & Respond Action Plan dated 24 September 2007	POINQ0147477F	FUJ00141282