



Department for  
Business & Trade

## Horizon Compensation Advisory Board

### Report of twentieth meeting held on 22 January 2025

Members present: Prof. Christopher Hodges (Chair); Lord Arbuthnot; Prof. Richard Moorhead, Lord Beamish (formerly Kevan Jones MP). Also present: Carl Creswell, Rob Brightwell, Eleri Wones, Charlotte Heyes, Beth White (all Department for Business and Trade – “DBT”).

#### Report of the Business and Trade Committee

1. The Board discussed the recommendations made by the BTC in their 1 January report and also noted criticisms of schemes received from other sources.
2. Board members emphasised the importance of the Department being clear about what legal advice is available to claimants in each scheme, either at the start of their claim or when their claim is sent to a panel for review. The Board was of the view that legal advice should be offered to HSS applicants at the appeal stage, rather than for first offers, and that the appeal mechanism should be focused on those seeking to challenge first offers.
3. Board members reiterated their position that the introduction of penalties for exceeding binding timeframes for redress schemes would not achieve the desired outcome of speeding the delivery of fair compensation to victims of the scandal. They saw the intuitive appeal of this idea but considered that it would not work. Such limits:
  - would not change the behaviour of those responsible for the schemes;
  - would not adjust to complex cases or allow for the variable quality of independent reports; and
  - would not be fair on those who had been paid within time.
4. The Board discussed the desirability of a more comprehensive view on timetabling and the current focus on first offers.
5. The Board also considered the impact that setting deadlines would have on claims which have not yet been submitted. Board members expressed an interest in seeing data on the proportion of claims handled by each law firm which are yet to be submitted for consideration.

6. The Board also noted criticism of the level of offers being made by DBT under the schemes. The involvement of panels in the setting of offers, or ability to refer cases to reviewers independent of DBT and the Post Office were important mechanisms established to deal with such concerns fairly. They encouraged DBT to do more to reassure postmasters and other stakeholders of this when criticism of offers was made.
7. The Board supports the aim of ensuring HSS claims are administered separately from the Post Office as far as possible.
8. DBT agreed to consider the Board's advice and will submit a full response to the Select Committee's report in due course.

### **Review of the progress of schemes**

9. DBT officials updated the Board on the rate of progress in each of the schemes, based on the Department's published statistics as at 3 January 2025. They noted that:

#### **10. OC:**

- The great majority of claims for convictions overturned by the Courts (82 of 111) had now been received. 66 of these had already been settled.

#### **11. GLO:**

- Full claims had been received for three quarters of cases in the GLO scheme (370 of 492), with at least partial information for a further 83.
- The Department had not yet received any claim in just 39 cases. Claimants' solicitors expected to submit several more cases during January. The remaining cases generally involved vulnerable individuals who found engagement with the process difficult. The Department was working with claimants' lawyers to help these people to claim.
- Offers had been made in response to 346 of the 370 claims received, with 24 offers still to be made. The Department had made offers in response to 89% of claims within its target of 40 working days, the target being 90%.
- Full payment had been made to 237 people; many more had received substantial partial payments. The Department was confident that the great majority of GLO members would have received substantial redress by 31 March.

#### **12. HSS:**

- The Post Office was implementing the £75,000 fixed offer in respect of the Horizon Shortfall Scheme. This had enabled a large number of claims to

be settled during December: many more settlements were expected during January.

- The Post Office's recent letter to current and former postmasters had prompted 2010 further claims. Well over 90% of these were for the fixed sum offer and so could be dealt with quickly: the Post Office was automating some of its processes to help with that. Once all responses to the letter had been received, and all fixed offers paid, it would be possible to make a proper assessment of the remaining challenge in the HSS. The Board noted that such estimates suggested a significant number of cases would need substantial resolution outside of the fixed fee approach and the good reasons for having those handled independently of the Post Office.

### 13. HCRS:

- As of 3 January 2025, DBT had received claims from 321 eligible postmasters, issued 317 interim payments. 176 postmasters had already decided to opt for the £600,000 fixed offer, of which DBT had to date paid 165. The Board welcomed the rapid progress of this scheme.
  - i. *Based on the Ministry of Justice's publication of quashed convictions management information on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2025, the DBT officials further updated on the progress of HCRS. They noted that:*
- The Ministry of Justice had assessed 100% of the 944 records received from the Post Office and CPS in February 2024 where there was sufficient data to trace any relevant convictions.
- In addition to the records received from the Post Office and the CPS in February 2024, 53 individuals had identified themselves through contacting the Ministry of Justice Post Office convictions casework team or through the Horizon Convictions Redress Scheme website. As there was no time limit for individuals to self-identify, this number may continue to increase over time.
- As of 10 January 2025, there were a total of 951 individual cases, either received from the Post Office and CPS in February 2024 or from individuals who had self-identified, that had been or were being considered. As of 10 January, the Ministry of Justice had assessed 98% of these total cases. Of the 98% of cases that had been assessed, 582 people had been identified as having at least one conviction quashed by the Act. As of 10 January 2025, 549 of the 582 people had been sent a letter informing them that their conviction has been overturned.

## Updates

14. DBT provided a progress update on the development of an HSS Appeals process. DBT hoped to publish a fuller update shortly. They also continued to review the case for transferring to DBT responsibility for OC and HSS redress.
15. DBT had held a round-table discussion with HSS claimants' solicitors at the end of 2024. This had come up with some good practical ideas for accelerating decisions on HSS cases, which the Department and the Post Office were now discussing. The Board agreed to hold another of its periodic meetings with claimants' solicitors when this process was concluded.
16. DBT provided an update on the ongoing work on Capture and related historical prosecutions.
17. The Board welcomed an update on latest work from DWP on historical prosecutions of Post Office staff.