

Dear Ms Lumley

**Re: Julian Wilson,**

**GRO**

Thank you for your letter of 11 June to Paula Vennells. I led the Post Office investigations on this matter, reporting to Paula, and have therefore been asked to respond on her behalf.

I must, firstly, underline that the Post Office has gone to great lengths to ensure that the commitments we made at the outset to the people involved have been met. It has always been made clear that mediation is a voluntary process so it is a matter for each party to decide whether they actually wish to proceed with this.

As you are aware, we established the Complaint Review and Mediation Scheme in 2013. This followed a year-long independent inquiry into allegations that had been made about the Horizon computer system which found no evidence of systemic flaws in the system causing the issues alleged but pointed to areas where the Post Office could have done more to support postmasters, for example in training.

The Scheme was subsequently set up in order to provide an avenue for any postmasters to raise their specific concerns directly with the Post Office on an individual basis.

The scheme is, essentially, in two parts – an investigation and independent review into each and every complaint put forward followed by, if appropriate, mediation to attempt to resolve the matters raised and reach mutual agreement.

Each of the 136 cases put forward to the scheme has been rigorously investigated by the Post Office and also receives the benefit of an independent review by Second Sight. Both the Post Office investigation report, with supporting evidence, and the Second Sight case review report are of course shared with the scheme applicants.

Second Sight's reports offer a view as to whether a case might be suitable for mediation but, as I have said above and as the scheme documentation makes clear, mediation itself could never be guaranteed - neither party can be compelled to mediate.

The Post Office completed all our investigations into the cases in February this year, having found no evidence in any of the cases that Horizon has not worked as it should to accurately record branch transactions. We therefore announced in March that, to accelerate the conclusion of the scheme, we would put forward all remaining cases for mediation with the exception of those subject to earlier court rulings which would continue to be considered on a case by case basis.

We have continued to consider each of such cases very carefully, even though mediation cannot overturn a court's ruling. As a prosecutor, the Post Office has a continuing duty

to disclose immediately any information that subsequently comes to light which might undermine its prosecution case or support the case of the defendant and in none of the Post Office's own work, nor through any of Second Sight's work, has any information emerged to suggest that a conviction is unsafe. It is therefore unlikely that mediation would be appropriate in such cases (which are a minority of cases in the Scheme). But I must stress again that each is being carefully considered on its merits.

Applicants to the Scheme remain able to pursue the normal legal avenues open to them to appeal court rulings with any further material disclosed to them, including that produced through the Scheme.

I hope that this explains that the Post Office is meeting the commitments it made to people and taking its duties on this matter very seriously indeed. There have been exhaustive investigations over the past three years which have not found any evidence of problems with the Horizon system causing the issues alleged. Each of the complaints put forward into the scheme is considered on its facts and substance and a number are now resolved.

In all cases, if the Scheme applicant gives consent, the Post Office continues to be prepared to discuss their case, in confidence with their Member of Parliament. I would be pleased to set up such a meeting if you and your constituent wish.

As you have written on this matter to the Rt Hon Sajid Javid, Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, I am copying this reply to him for completeness.

Yours sincerely

Angela Van den Bogerd