

The Post Office today issued the following statement in response to the publication of an interim report into alleged problems with the Horizon computer system, which is used to record transactions in its branch network.

The report is being published by an external firm, Second Sight, who were commissioned by the Post Office last year. It confirms that no system wide problems have been found in relation to the Horizon software, but suggests that the Post Office should examine its support and training processes for sub-postmasters.

Post Office chief executive Paula Vennells said:

"We commissioned this independent review to address concerns that have been raised about the Horizon system and we welcome the broad thrust of its findings.

"The Post Office is committed to supporting its people and improving the way we do so. The interim review makes clear that the Horizon computer system and its supporting processes function effectively across our network. As the review notes, it is used by around 68,000 people in more than 11,500 branches, successfully processing more than six million transactions every day. The review underlines our cause for confidence in the overall system.

"It does however raise questions about the training and support we have offered to some sub-postmasters and we are determined to address these issues.

"The people who work in the post office network in communities across the country are the lifeblood of our business and we take our responsibilities to them very seriously.

"We therefore regret very much any concerns we may have caused to any sub-postmaster who has felt that our standards of support or training have not met their needs, and we are grateful to James Arbuthnot MP and the Justice for Sub-postmasters Alliance (JFSA) for raising these issues with us.

"In many of these cases I am confident that steps have already been taken which have improved support and training but we are always open to feedback and insights from sub-postmasters. So we will make further improvements in this area and take better account of individual requirements and circumstances going forward."

The Post Office is proposing to respond to the Second Sight report with three new initiatives aimed at addressing historic issues, improving future processes and examining potential structural changes to support sub-postmasters:

1. The creation of a working party to work collaboratively to complete the review of cases started by Second Sight last year. This would examine the themes identified by Second Sight and consider all cases brought forward by the JFSA and MPs, together with any new themes which emerge. The JFSA have been invited to join this working party.

2. A review chaired by an independent figure to determine how an independent safety net might be introduced to adjudicate in disputed cases in the future. Again the JFSA and other stakeholders will be invited to take part in this process.

3. A new Branch User Forum to provide a way for sub-postmasters and others to raise issues and insights around business processes, training and support, directly feeding into the organisation's thinking at the highest level. A key task for this forum will be to review support processes and training to ensure they meet the standards expected of the Post Office.

Ms Vennells added: "We have an obligation to protect public money and take action when there is evidence of wrongdoing. However, we hope the action we are already taking and these additional proposals to work collaboratively with the JFSA and sub-postmasters demonstrate our commitment to improving the way we support all those who work in our unrivalled branch network."