
Question 1 of the Inquiry's Call for Evidence

What impact did the operation & management of the Horizon IT system have, & what effects were personally experienced as a result?

My name is [REDACTED] My late husband Martin Griffiths and I bought Hope Farm Road Post Office in 1995. Martin was 41 and it was his intention to remain there until his retirement.

We paid in the region of £100,000 for the business which also included a retail side called [REDACTED] Cards – selling gift cards and stationery. Martin ran the post office and I was involved with my mother-in-law in the running of the retail side of things.

I personally had nothing to do with the post office but knew the basics – In those early days Martin balanced at the end of every day and end of each week and of course if there were any shortfalls he was responsible for making good the money. I wasn't aware there were any problems. Martin successfully ran the post office for many years and the retail side of things was thriving.

The problems started in 2009 (around the time the Horizon system was brought in) when the branch started to lose money. The discrepancies became more frequent and some quite large. The Post Office offered no support or assistance in relation to the losses.

Martin was required to go for interviews without any legal support. He was repeatedly asked how he was going to pay back the money. He was always made to feel he was the only sub-postmaster with these problems. At no point did they ever suggest there was a problem with the Horizon system.

Martin was suspended twice without pay and in July 2013 was served 3 months' notice of his termination.

Martin's mental health since 2009 greatly deteriorated. He became very insular and basically our family life together ceased. He would come home from the post office and just sit looking into space, with no conversation, not wanting to do or plan anything. A shadow of his former strong, confident and outgoing self. I found it particularly hard and tried incessantly to try and bring him round. We had countless visits to the doctors, he was in deep depression and was prescribed various anti-depressants. The doctor also organised a counsellor, but unfortunately to no avail as Martin just wouldn't engage.

My mother and father-in-law, Martin's parents helped us repay many of the shortages to the sum of £62,000 and we managed ourselves through savings and more borrowing to pay the rest. In total we paid back to the Post Office £102,000.

Around this time in 2013 there was also an armed robber of the post office where Martin was attacked with a crow bar and suffered a broken thumb, the robbers made off with more than

£10,000. Martin was treated horrendously by the Post Office after suffering this ordeal and was told he was to pay back the money stolen in the robbery.

Things were going from bad to worse and with the thought of termination looming closer and having to tell his staff and customers Martin hit rock bottom. On 23rd September 2013, a month before his termination, Martin deliberately walked in front of an oncoming bus. He was taken to hospital with multiple injuries, he was there for 3 weeks on a life support machine. He never regained consciousness, and he passed away on 11th October 2013.

We were and still are completely devastated at losing Martin. I lost my husband, my children their Dad and my elderly in-laws their son. The pain and suffering we have endured as a family has been immense. We as a family completely hold the Post Office responsible for his death.

He was a proud, strong, clever man, a very able sportsman in his time, a loving husband and a fantastic father to his two children [REDACTED]. The Post Office took all this away from us.

Interviews taped, all exact amounts of money, dates, etc. are in the hands of solicitor [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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