POL00028830

Correcting Accounts for "lost" Discrepancies

Ref: g:\gij documents\notes\lost discrepancies.doc
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1. Introduction

This note relates to Peaks PC0204765 and PC0204263 (and also PC0203864 which is a duplicate of PC0204263).

> *Are these really duplicates? I'm a bit confused as to which one to refer to. Can one be closed as a duplicate of the other?*

PC0204263 describes a problem with SU Balancing that will result in a Receipts payments mismatch. A fix is available for this peak which needs to be scheduled via RMF. However any branch encountering the problem will have corrupted accounts and Peak PC0204765 is a Master Peak to record al affected branches and also to define the process for correcting the accounts.

The purpose of this note is to:

- Summarise the problem in terms that are meaningful to Post Office Ltd
- Define a process for identifying all affected branches
- Explain what analysis is needed on each affected branch
- Define what ongoing monitoring is required to pick up further occurrences of the issue until the root cause of the problem is fixed
- Provide a basis for agreeing the necessary data fixes with Post Office Ltd and how they are to be applied
- Explain how each problem branch can be fixed

1.1 Change Control

Initial version 28/09/2010 12:49:00: This version of the note is an initial draft for discussion within development.

Updated version 28/09/2010 13:38:00: Updated following feedback from Dev to be distributed to SSC

2. Overview

The problem occurs as part of the process of moving discrepancies into Local Suspense.

When Discrepancies are found when rolling a SU over into a new TP, then the User is asked if they should be moved to Local Suspense (MSG31316). Should they Cancel at this point the Discrepancy is zeroised in the Local Cache (but nothing is written to the BRDB). Note that there is no corresponding Balancing Transaction generated in the Local Cache and so the Local Cache is in an Unbalanced state.

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If at the next screen (where the options are to: print or preview the trial balance again; to re-attempt the rollover; or to cancel the rollover) the rollover is Cancelled, then no harm is done. However if the Rollover is re-attempted at this point, the rollover will continue with the corrupted Local Cache. This has the following consequences:

- There will be a Receipts and Payment mismatch corresponding to the value of Discrepancies that were "lost"

Note that if the User doesn't check their Final Balance Report carefully they may be unaware of the issue since there is no explicit message when a Receipts and Payment mismatch is found on the Final balance (the User is only prompted when one is detected during a Trial balance)

- The Local Suspense will have no knowledge of this specific Discrepancy
- The Opening Figures for Discrepancies in the new Period will be zero rather than the actual value of the Discrepancy
- The data used for the BTS will also have a zero value for Discrepancies at the end of the period. When the BTS is produced this will result in a similar Receipts and Payment mismatch

Note that if the bug was not present, then the Discrepancy would have been transferred to Local Suspense and that would have been cleared, so there are a number of things wrong with the BTS. However the impact of the bug is that the discrepancy is lost and so the simplest way to correct it is to re-introduce the lost discrepancy in a subsequent period and allow the normal rollover process to correct it.

Note that if more than one SU has the issue then the value will be the total value of all errors.

- The level of Discrepancies when viewed at the Branch will no longer match the level as seen in POL SAP or POL MIS

3. Identifying Affected Branches

The Receipts and Payment mismatch will result in an NT event being generated. These use Event id of 902 when detected during SU balancing and 903 when detected during BTS production.

Processes should be in place such that SMC pick up these events and raise a peak for each occurrence of these events.

I don't believe that this has happened and this needs to be investigated further.

Therefore a check of the Event archives is required to produce all occurrences of these events from HNG-X.

Mark Wright has produced a list of 16 occurrences of event 903 in the last 30 days. This needs to be extended

Also application event 116 or 117 should be written to the BRDB_RX_REP_EVENT_DATA.

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Looking at the BRDB when Dev reproduced the problem only 117 events were found. I need to check what the difference is between 116 and 117.

Therefore an extract from BRSS of all instance of Events 116 and 117 will provide a further check.

Please can SSC arrange to get extracts of the relevant NT and Application events asap (before things get archived) so that we can get the scope of the problem.

4. Analysis Required for each Affected Branch

For each Branch need to ascertain the following:

- When the Receipts Payments mismatch occurred
- What is the value of the Lost discrepancy
- Is it a gain or a loss?
- Is there a corresponding Application Event?
- Affected SU, TP and BP
- Has a call been raised by the Branch?
- Has a call been raised by SMC?
- Has the Branch rolled over to a new TP?

5. Ongoing Monitoring

We need to ensure that SMC processes are changed such that Peaks are generated for each occurrence of events 902 or 903.

As a backstop we should also ensure that a monthly check as described in Section 3 is carried out to ensure that nothing has been forgotten. Note that this check shouldn't come up with any new branches if the processes have been put in place correctly.

6. Communication with Post Office Ltd

Once we have the information from Section 4 which will enable us to identify the full scope of the issue we need to communicate this to Post Office Ltd through the problem management mechanisms. We will then need to get Post Office Ltd to agree if / how we should be correcting the data.

Post Office Ltd should also be able to check up on POL SAP to confirm that these discrepancies are still visible even though they have been lost in the Branch.

It should be noted that as Discrepancies are normally Losses, then a Lost Discrepancy would normally work in the Branches favour and so there is no incentive for the Branch to report the problem. Also if we do amend the data to re-introduce the Discrepancy, this will need to be carefully communicated to the Branches to avoid questions about the system integrity.

Of the cases so far identified there is one for £30,611.16, one for £4,826.00 and the rest are all less than £350.

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I've been unable to work out yet if these are losses or gains!

7. Fixing the Data for each Affected Branch

The data can be corrected by adjusting the appropriate Opening Figures and BTS Data that relates to the current TP. This will result in the Discrepancy needing to be processed when rolling over into the next TP.

I propose that if we are to do this then we take a copy of the data for one branch and check out the proposed changes on a test system and then rollover the branch on the test system to ensure that the discrepancy is handled correctly before we attempt to correct Live data. Having done one example in this way, we then need to agree a timetable with Post Office Ltd to correct the other branches and ensure that this is communicated with the Branches to ensure that everyone involved is happy.

Note that if it is decided not to correct the data in the branches (ie POL would prefer to write off the "lost" discrepancy), then adjustments will be required to the Discrepancy account in POL SAP to align this with the actual level of discrepancy seen at the Branches.