

Statement

The Post Office is today publishing an interim report into alleged problems with the Horizon computer system used to record transactions in the post office branch network.

The review is being conducted by an external firm, Second Sight. The interim report, based on a review of four of 47 cases being considered, is available on the Post Office website.

The report confirms that no systemic problems have been found in relation to the Horizon system, but suggests that the Post Office should improve its support and training processes for subpostmasters.

Post Office chief executive Paula Vennells said:

"We commissioned this independent review to address concerns that have been raised with us about the Horizon system and we welcome its publication.

"The Post Office is committed to supporting its people and improving the way we do so. While this interim review makes clear that the Horizon computer system functions effectively across our network, it has raised questions about the training and support we offer subpostmasters.

"It is important to stress, as the review itself does, that the Horizon system has around 68,000 users in more than 11,500 branches successfully processing more than six million transactions every day. The review underlines our cause for confidence in the system.

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 regret any concerns we may have caused to any subpostmaster who has felt that our standards of support or training have not met their needs.

We are committed to further improvement in this area and to taking better account of individual requirements and circumstances going forward. I am determined to act on this and will not be waiting for the full report in doing so -- indeed we have already taken significant steps in some areas.'

"I have therefore decided to create a new Branch User Forum to provide a way for subpostmasters and others to raise their concerns around business processes, training and support at the highest level. It will be chaired by a member of our Executive Committee and report to that committee.

"We will be inviting interested parties such as the Justice for Subpostmasters Alliance (JFSA) to take part in this forum. Representative groups such as the NFSP and our trade unions will also be invited on to the forum.

"A key task for this forum will be to review our support processes and training to ensure they meet the standards expected of us. We have made many changes over the last few years but are not at all complacent and again hope that the JFSA and others will take part to consider how we can make further improvements. [We will also look to establish new arrangements for an independent third party that sub-postmasters can approach for help with Horizon issues which they do not feel can be resolved through the normal Post Office processes.]"

"We hope further to work collaboratively with the JFSA and MPs to conclude the ongoing review and will of course act on any further recommendations.

"We are determined to learn from the review and hope the action we are already taking in response will demonstrate our commitment to continually improving the way we support all those who work in our unrivalled branch network."

The Post Office has assessed the interim report and will work with relevant external parties to build on steps already taken to improve processes:

- investigative support to subpostmasters*
- collation of data and approach in relation to disputed cases*
- provision of information to subpostmasters*
- training and support provision*