

## Message

**From:** Mark R Davies [GRO]  
**on behalf of** Mark R Davies [GRO]  
**Sent:** 04/07/2013 21:06:48  
**To:** Paula Vennells [GRO]; Alwen Lyons [GRO]; Susan Crichton [GRO]; Lesley J Sewell [GRO]; Martin Edwards [GRO]; Simon Baker [GRO]; Hugh Flemington [GRO]; Rodric Williams [GRO]  
**CC:** Ruth X Barker [GRO]; Nina Arnott [GRO]  
**Subject:** Statement

All

I have been working today with Nina, Ruth and Portland to formulate our overarching statement for Monday. I am pasting it as it stands below. It takes in comments and overall positioning set out by Paula earlier.

This is of course in draft but I felt it helpful to get this to you ahead of tomorrow (just!). I also paste below a key question and answer (the full Q&A document is being updated with some new elements following receipt of the first half of the SS report.

Grateful for comments and thoughts.

Mark

Statement

The Post Office is today publishing an interim report into alleged problems with the Horizon computer system used in 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 suggests that there are no systemic problems with the Horizon system, but calls on the Post Office to improve its support and training systems 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.

"We take this very seriously and apologise to any subpostmaster who has felt that our standards of support or training have not met their needs or believes we simply have not been "human" enough in our dealings with them. 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.

"All those who work in the post office network in communities across the country are the lifeblood of our business. We take our responsibilities to them very seriously and recognise that we can always improve the way we support them and their business.

"I have therefore decided to create a new Branch User Forum to provide a way for subpostmasters and others to raise issues 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.

"We will also be conducting a review of 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 in a working group to consider how we can make further improvements.

"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.

"It is important to stress, as the review itself does, that the Horizon system has around 68,000 users in more than 11,500 post offices and processes more than six million transactions every day. The vast majority take place without any issues, underlining our cause for confidence in the system.

"But 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

Q&A

You have accepted that your support processes could be improved. Do you think this means subpostmasters have been unfairly convicted?

We cannot comment on individual cases. Where cases have been prosecuted through the courts, there are avenues open to those who feel they have been wrongly convicted.

We take forward very few prosecutions - approximately 50 a year - and with a network of 11,800 post offices that means such cases are not commonplace.

We have a duty to investigate where there is suspicion of wrong-doing. Subpostmasters are pillars of the community and must abide by high standards of probity in that role. The public would be surprised if we did not take action where public money may have been misappropriated.

Sent from my iPad