Initial Post

Quite possibly one of the biggest system failures was the Fujitsu Horizon System adopted by the Post Office in 1999. The Horizon System was introduced to streamline tasks in Post Office branches such as stocktaking, different transactions, auditing and accounting and was seen to be a dependable system (Lloyd, 2022). Post Masters, however, began to see irregularities with these systems and during audits it showed monies disappearing and no accountable reason for this other than by fraud.

Sub Postmasters and employees, who were prosecuted, pleaded their innocence, however they were still found guilty and some even jailed (McCormack, 2016), in fact there were some 918 successful prosecutions against Sub Postmasters and their employees (Bowers and Bajwa, 2021). Due to the amount of these prosecutions taking place you would think the Post Office would have had doubts about the system, however there were was and independent review over three years by Second Sight Support Services who concluded in 2015 that "the Post Offices' Horizon System is operating as it should".

It took until 2020 for the Government to admit there may have been problems with the system and a landmark legal case with those prosecuted now going to receive compensation, and with an official apology from by Boris Johnson (Prime Minister), Rishi Sunak (Chancellor of the Exchequer) and Paul Scully (Postal Affairs Minister) in March 2021. Ironically, Fujitsu were aware that the system had issues (Moorhead, Nokes, and Helm 2021), however at no point did they support Sub Postmasters and employees.

Is this the end for Horizon, well no, it is still being used, in fact the Ministry of Defence use this system for certain software applications and as someone employed within that area I can report it constantly causes systems to freeze or crash in the middle of transactions. The term "lessons learned" is bandied about when things go wrong, however have they?

References

Lloyd, I., 2022. Lessons on Robustness and Reliability of Software Solutions from the Horizon System for UK Post Offices. *Computer Law Review International*, *23*(1), pp.6-12.

Christie, J., 2020. The Post Office Horizon IT scandal and the presumption of the dependability of computer evidence. *Digital Evidence & Elec. Signature L. Rev.*, *17*, p.49.

MARSHALL, P., (2021)Marshall spells it out: speech to University of Law.

McCormack, T., 2016. The post office horizon system and Seema Misra. *Digital Evidence & Elec. Signature L. Rev.*, *13*, p.133.

Moorhead, R., Nokes, K. and Helm, R., 2021. Post Office Scandal Project: Issues Arising in the Conduct of the Bates Litigation. *Available at SSRN 3894944*.

Zhongming, Z., Linong, L., Xiaona, Y., Wangqiang, Z. and Wei, L., 2021. Government strengthens Post Office Horizon IT inquiry with statutory powers.

https://insights.doughtystreet.co.uk/post/102gtzh/private-prosecutions-after-the-post-office-debacle

https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/658605/response/1576986/attach/4/FOI2020%2000186%20FOI%20Request%20Response.pdf

https://www.postofficehorizoninquiry.org.uk/