

# Post Office IT scandal: compensation scheme launched for victims

**Chancellor unveils scheme to fairly compensate workers who brought Horizon IT system failings to light**



The Post Office Horizon IT scandal led to large numbers of operators being wrongly accused of committing crimes. Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA

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Post office operators who helped uncover the Horizon IT scandal will be able to apply to a new compensation scheme, the chancellor has announced.

The IT system installed by the [Post Office](#) and supplied by Fujitsu falsely suggested there were cash shortfalls, leading to 736 unsafe convictions for theft, fraud and false accounting in [one of the biggest miscarriages of justice in British legal history](#).

On Tuesday, [Rishi Sunak](#) said a compensation scheme would be set up in the coming months targeted at the workers who brought and won the landmark high court case against the Post Office over the failings.

The 2019 ruling paved the way for millions of pounds of future payouts and led to the court of appeal quashing the convictions of workers who were wrongly accused of committing crimes.

Despite winning nearly £43m in compensation in 2019, the group was left financially disadvantaged after having to pay significant legal costs based on a “no win, no fee” agreement with Therium – the company that funded its litigation.

Due to the terms of their legal agreement each operator received a fraction of the settlement, equating to about £20,000 each.

Their action meant they were ineligible to apply to the Historical Shortfall Scheme (HSS), which was set up by the [Post Office](#) after the scandal to compensate workers who had to personally cover shortfalls in their branch’s accounts caused by the Horizon IT system.

The new scheme will ensure that those who uncovered the injustice receive the same level of compensation as those who claimed through the HSS, the government said.

Sunak said: “The Horizon IT dispute has had a devastating impact on postmasters and their families, with many losing their livelihoods or being wrongly convicted for crimes they didn’t commit.

“Without the efforts of these postmasters, this terrible injustice may have never been uncovered, so it is only right that they are compensated fully and fairly.

“That is why we have set up this new compensation scheme for those who played a crucial role bringing this scandal to light, which I hope provides a measure of comfort.”

The scheme comes after the government announced a separate scheme last year to provide funding for full and final settlements for eligible post office operators who have had their Horizon-related conviction overturned, with those eligible to receive an interim payment of up to £100,000 each.

The Treasury said more details of the new scheme, including how people can submit compensation claims, will be set out by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in due course.

The government is “making funds available” to ensure those operators in the Group Litigation Order (GLO) group are “not financially disadvantaged”

by their decision to litigate against the Post Office, the business minister Paul Scully said.

Answering an urgent question in the House of Commons on the compensation scheme, Scully said: “As well as apologies and accountability, people want proper compensation to be paid.

“Those people who exposed the scandal in the first place, the postmasters who won the court case against the Post Office, have not been fairly compensated.

“But those who were not convicted were not entitled to receive Historical Shortfall Scheme compensation themselves, which paradoxically could leave those postmasters eligible for receiving the HSS better compensated than those who won the court case.

“Now the government recognises this just is not right, which is why the chancellor announced today that we’re making funds available to ensure those in the GLO group are not financially disadvantaged by their decision to litigate against the Post Office. The GLO group will now be able to access the same levels of compensation as their non-GLO peers.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/mar/22/compensation-scheme-launched-post-office-horizon-it-scandal>

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