

Submission 1

Dear Sir/Madam

- 1.1 Firstly allow me to introduce myself. My name is Paul Berry and I am branch secretary for the NLBD (National League Of The Blind and Disabled) in Southwark. Our trade union represents the majority of the visually impaired people at "Action For Blind People". I am writing to you today in response to an article in a south London news paper which wanted to hear from people regarding the difficulty they had in renewing their "Freedom Pass" this year.
- 1.2 Most of our people didn't receive a renewal letter and on inquiring some of them found that their records had been lost. In one case, for instance, we have twin brothers who live in the same block of flats. One of them got a letter asking him to renew his pass while the other didn't. Most everyone had to wait until after the expiry date of their pass before the new date sticker was attached. It seems, in some cases, that a lot of people had to virtually reapply for their passes, Filling in forms and getting photo's done when they had been Southwark residents for years. I know, from talking to these people, that all this caused them some stress.
- 1.3 It was good of Southwark to talk to "TFL" and get an extension for Southwark residents to continue to use their passes after the expiry date. I do understand administering such a system as this must be a huge task. People do rely on these passes to, I hope it's not too dramatic to say, live their lives having limited options for travel.
- 1.4 I hope that I haven't come across as too critical and that what I have said may help? Please could you let me know what the scrutiny panel discovers?

Yours Sincerely

Paul Berry
NLBD Southwark

Submission 1a

Dear Miss Masson,

Freedom Pass Review – An Addendum to the above submission.

- 1a.1 In the last couple of days it has been brought to my notice by another one of my colleagues, although she received and returned her application form back in March, she only received her letter of authorisation within the last three weeks. One of the reasons could have been because when she received the letter she noticed that the wrong postcode was used.
- 1a.2 As I said in my original letter I contacted the disabled unit on several occasions prior to the beginning of March and each time I was given different information and on one occasion I was given different information by two different people on the same day. The first person told me what several other people have told me that the letters were being sent out in batches, whereas the second person collaborated what someone had told me earlier that i was down to TFL changing the rules at the last minute and confirmed that the passes would be extended to 31st May, so another question I think should be asked of the department; why wasn't this information included in the literature?

Submission 2

Hi, Sally

Thank you for your email regarding the next Scrutiny Committee Meeting on 8 September.

- 2.1 By coincidence, I have also - *finally* - received a letter from Kadia Reid-Hill, a Complaint Officer, offering me a total of £377.20 in compensation.
- 2.2 This includes £50 'in recognition of the distress, anxiety and frustration caused' - which is, in my opinion, derisory of the seriousness of the situation.
- 2.3 The bulk of the 'award equates to a weekly travel card for the 6 week period I was without the Freedom Pass' [although it is, in fact, equivalent to 7 weeks, which I will not tell them!] plus £15 for reimbursement of call charges incurred.
- 2.4 I never did receive an explanation from Heather Rodney regarding:
 - Why my Appeal was never acknowledged.
- 2.5 I wrote to her on 6 July and again on 23 July when she said she would look into , but I have heard nothing further, despite writing again on 8 August [which I copied to you].
 - Who I should approach for reimbursement of the fares.
- 2.6 As a direct result of being involved with the Scrutiny Committee, I contacted the CCU on 4 August. I did not previously know of such a department.
- 2.7 Reg Baldwin said I would receive an acknowledgement within 3 working days - I didn't.
- 2.8 I followed up on 11 August and was put on hold, and then found myself talking to Kadia Reid-Hill. She explained that it had been passed to her - but nobody had informed me.

- 2.9 Ms Reid-Hill told me I would hear from her by the end of the week. I didn't.
- 2.10 I called her on 18th August and was told that a letter had been passed to her Manager, to be signed off. It arrived today.
- 2.11 From beginning to end, this matter has taken 3 months and despite finally getting the Freedom Pass a month ago, the 'distress, anxiety and frustration' has continued, because of the continued *appalling* lack of communication by the relevant departments.
- 2.12 I had not thought in terms of being compensated for the emotional side - how does one put a price on it? Evidently Southwark Council sees it as being worth around 50p per day!
- 2.13 Tempting though it is to continue to Stage 2, I think I must draw a line under the matter. I may attend the meeting, depending on how I am feeling.
- 2.14 If you wish to use any of this information, please feel free. I could also scan and send you the letter, if it would be of help.
- 2.15 It is my fervent hope that the people responsible for this disgraceful 'service' are brought to account and that vulnerable people are spared this, next time.

Submission 3

From Janet Yatak – Disabilities Rights Campaigner.

3.1 I am writing about the Freedom Pass Dept and Blue Badge dept, again, My understanding was that this was being improved and staff attitude and customer focus should be better and backlog of everything should be done.

3.2 Well my experience today contradicts all of that, As you know Cllr Noakes is off this week and asked me to keep an eye on any enquires of passes etc, which I have been doing, I got a call today from someone that I had passed the details last week of someone with Downs Syndrome who has been waiting since March for a renewal. Anyway they asked me to chase this again today which I did, I phoned ***** , who said he would find out from the team and get back to me tomorrow. I said to him why can't I ring direct to ***** , who will be able to tell me first hand, and he said she was there taking calls and he was surprised that I could not get her, he could not give me her number however.

3.3 I then rang **** , and I asked her if I could speak to **** ***** direct as it seems a waste of everyone's time for me to keep giving details to **** or ***** for them only have to contact ***** , I thought I would cut out the middle man as I wanted a response about two passes today, ***** kindly gave me ***** ***** direct number and I rang her . She would not tell me anything saying it was data protection, when ***** had already told me of one client without mentioning Data Protection, Anyway after some argy bargee again, ***** went off the phone said to ***** "I've got Ms Yatak on the phone I don't know how she got my number" ***** told her she had given it to me.

3.4 ***** then said to ***** who is her line manager I presume " you should not have given her my number don't give out my number again" she said this in a hostile manner to ***** now if a junior member of staff can speak to her line manager like that what chance have the customers got.

3.5 Anyway when she came back on the phone I asked ***** ,

why does she not speak to members of the public as I had heard her telling ***** that she should not give out the number she said she did not say that as she speaks to the public every day so I said well then why can't you speak to me and why can't I have your number she did not answer, and said let's just deal with the passes.

3.6 The lady with Downs Syndrome apparently is getting a national pass letter sent out today as a result of me chasing it, The other man with a blue badge was told by ***** they are still waiting for his GP, I asked her what do they do they just sit and wait for GPs and this person did have a letter from his heart consultant and in my opinion does not need a letter from the GP I told ***** this and she said that there was not enough information on the letter so they are contacting his GP, I have spoken with ***** today and it's now over 6 months he has had to wait, and he has given me his GP number and I am going to ring them tomorrow to find out the problem If I find out that either the GP has responded or Southwark have not been chasing it, then I will be writing further about this. If the GP has not responded then I will of course encourage them to fax it over tomorrow and then the dept can issue this badge by Friday, ***** extremely ill at the moment.

3.7 I am also going to refer him to the complaints dept and make a complaint for him on his behalf as 6 months is totally unacceptable and officers are still sitting around waiting for GPs to respond.

3.8 I also don't think that staff attitude is any better although I have to say that ***** was very polite to me and helpful.

3.9 Can you clarify to me in Cllr Noakes absence if ***** should make herself available to the public and can her number be given, out to the public, It seems that she is the only Manager that knows anything is *** **** but no one can get her number.

3.10 Dear Cllr Humphreys

As you know I have been chasing up a blue badge for ***** who has a serious heart condition, I telephoned his GP today as ***** asked me to do so as Southwark keep saying

they are waiting for his GP to respond and have been doing so for over 5 months.

3.11 I have spoken to the lady who does the applications for the Blue Badges and they only received this form from Southwark on the 29th July, which is about 2 weeks ago, then the GP has a procedure and the form is now with his GP. ***** put his application in some 5 months ago and I am extremely concerned as to why the GP has only just received the form, and even more so that for 5 months the council have told him they are waiting for his GP.

3.12 I have for everyone's information used my powers of persuasion and asked for this to be dealt with urgently and the lady is going to chase the GP and I asked if it could then be faxed over to Southwark, and that was agreed.

3.13 Now this GP does not know me but was very accommodating and fully sympathised , and put it down to council incompetence, GPs are busy people they don't sit around and have time to just fill forms in for Southwark Council unlike the officers in this deptm but there is no way on this earth that any GP would make someone wait 5 months for their form to be processed and I am surprised that officers think the public will swallow that.

3.14 It's evident that Blue Badges have not been being processed while the Freedom Pass was being done as multi tasking is not known to officers in this dept, so that is why officers have only now sent this form to the GP after it was raised by myself, and Cllr Noakes, I suspect and because of that officers should then have the decency to tell ***** and anyone else that is chasing on his behalf that truth about when they sent the form, apologise for this service and be a bit more pro-active in now getting it sorted, to make up for this disgraceful state of affairs.

3.15 I have phoned ***** today and told him and I have also told him I will be contacting his GP to find out the progress of it all But could I ask that you ensure that officers also do the job they are supposed to do and so as I am not having to spend any more of my time and money on this issue.

3.16 I have given this information to ***** also as I have made a formal complaint for ***** on his behalf as he is too ill at

the moment to do it himself. Hopefully the council can provide him with his blue badge so he at least has time to benefit from it.

3.17 I thought I would give you this update so as you are aware and officers can not give you different information, about this case, and which may suggest y the GP is at fault, as they are doing so.

3.18 Dear Cllr Noakes

3.19 Can you call me when you are free, as I want to talk to you about the shambles of the phones of the freedom pass, blue badge dept, I have mystery shopped all day today and it's a disgrace, one minute a recording comes on saying that ***** is on the phone, then it rings and ***** , voice comes on and says it's not available that is number 2141, the other number 2306 just rings and rings, and rings.

3.20 I also did get through and got inaccurate information again, and I was told that there is automatic criteria but they did not know what that was and that they did not know what the discretionary criteria is.

3.21 Cllr Noakes

3.22 I was looking at the Southwark Council website for Freedom passes, and it states about the re-assessments, it says that if you have applied for a freedom pass but have not heard anything yet, please do not destroy your current pass as you are able to use it until the re-assessment is completed, This is now August and Southwark should not be encouraging people to use their pass but I did tell you this some weeks back. (See appendix at the end of this submission)

3.23 It should certainly not be on a public website that it is okay to use their old passes, when it is illegal to do so but again I have told you about this kind of thing and you all ignore it.

3.24 What you now choose to do with this information is entirely up to you, I have fulfilled my moral obligations in bringing this to

your attention.

3.25 Dear Councillors

3.26 I thought I would write and submit further evidence, for the Scrutiny from the time of the last Scrutiny Meeting till now, I also think it will help to show that officers have not been responsive, and have not improved the service in the early weeks after the scrutiny, and even when concerns are raised they are not addressed, and I will be providing evidence for this.

3.27 WEEKS AFTER SCRUTINY

3.28 In the first two weeks after scrutiny, there was no change whatsoever, I was still getting people that had not had their Freedom Pass or Blue badge which there then seem to be a problem with, It seems that whilst the dept were doing Freedom passes the Blue badge service had been put on hold and there was a backlog.

3.29 EXAMPLES

3.30 One person with Downs Syndrome and Learning difficulties contacted me who had not heard anything about their application since February, Their mother had been refused and was not able to appeal, as the family did not have English as first language and therefore not able to fill the forms in. The mother, had to go to Southwark Carers to do this, She got no help or assistance with the appeal procedure from the council, I then had to chase the person who had Downs syndrome's. I passed on the details to the relevant people and still had to chase it about a week or so later, and it was only as a result of persistent intervention, that this person then got their pass.

3.31 A person with severe heart condition contacted me about their Blue Badge around the 18th July. They put their application in early April on the advice of their heart consultant, and the consultant gave them a letter stating about their condition, Every time this person chased it, they were told the council was waiting for their GP to respond and it was questionable why they needed to contact their GP when they had a letter from a heart consultant and this should have sufficed.

3.32 Again I brought these details to the relevant people. Again some weeks passed and we were still being told that they were waiting for the GP, I contacted the GP myself, some time late early August with the permissions permission and was told by the GP that they had only received the paperwork from the council two weeks before and I then asked the GP if it could be dealt with urgently and this person got their Badge a week later,, At no time had officers chased this regularly, enough, they did not ask the GP to urge it and even worse they at no time told the applicant that they were late in sending it to the GP . The paperwork was sent to the GP some 5 months after they put it in, This person was severely ill, and this incompetence caused unnecessary delay. A GP can not tell the council anymore than a heart consultant can and as you are aware a heart consultant is the top of their field and I don't understand why the letter from them is not recognised by the council, but is acceptable within the Dept of Transports' guidance. At the time of chasing these two cases officers were neither helpful, or co-operative in fact ***** was very rude and I am enclosing an email that I wrote about it. This person finally got their Blue badge around the 15th August about 4 weeks after I first brought it the council's attention, and only after a lot of chasing from myself.

3.33 People like myself and councillors etc have had to chase the same cases over and over again, and to this day people are still being told that they are waiting for the GP to respond, some of which have not even been written to or have responded and it has been lost.

3.34 MYSTERY SHOPPING INCIDENTS,

3.35 I and others have been doing some "mystery shopping" This consisted mainly of ringing the numbers to see the response times and efficiency of the staff, etc, The number 2141 , either had a voice mail , The voice mail is absolutely ridiculous it gives you the name of the officer, then pauses and then after about 1 minute says is on the phone then it says begin speaking after the tone, It does not state that anyone will ring back, If it's not this message its then a different officers voice and , and says leave a message and someone will get back to you. I have tried ringing at different times of the day but mainly from about lunchtime through to the

afternoon it was like that. When I did get through I asked different officers about the discretionary criteria and what it was no one was able to tell me. One officer did not know the criteria for both a national pass or discretionary. They just say it's automatic, It seems only one officer ***** has any knowledge on this but then he was not able to tell someone the discretionary criteria,, and said that the other one is automatic, but did not say exactly what that is, Home visits for severely disabled housebound people are not promoted , not even mentioned, when you ring, no one can tell you anything other than you have to get an application form and send it in, I rang Richmond Council ,, the authority that Cllr Noakes works for, and is a top performing council I asked the same questions about criteria and discretionary I was told exactly what I wanted to know and they told me the 7 criteria laid down in the Transport Act, They had a clear policy about discretionary London Only . They were helpful and offered any assistance I needed.

3.36 CRITERIA AND DEPT OF TRANSPORT

3.37 I am enclosing an email from the Dept of Transport, about the whole issue around Freedom Passes, I wrote to them mainly to ask what this new guidance was that had been issued to local authorities, and to check if the criteria had changed. There was guidance , issued by the Secretary of State in February of this year, but it was just the guidance that was always in place it was just slightly amended to state about national travel, The guidance states that GPs should not be used, It also does not say anything about "tightening up" of the rules and process as stated in Eleanor Kelly's report, Of course because of the new law about national travel, there did have to be a clear distinction between the set criteria, which allows a national pass and the discretionary criteria which can only be a London Only pass,. This is however quite clear anyway if you follow the Transport Act 2000. To this day I have not had one officer that can tell me what Southwark's policy is for "discretionary criteria" nor have I seen any policy for it, Most councils do give a "discretionary" pass and it's only usually on the grounds of Mental Health and relates to people that have got an Enhanced Care Package. It does state on the application form that you may still be considered for a pass on the grounds of Mental Health but it does not state, that is 'a "discretionary London only" pass. As you can see by the email from the Dept of Transport the cost of the London only passes are borne solely by

the council. These passes cost £90 and I believe that Southwark gave out about 400 to 600 London Passes after the May deadline, I leave the sums to you, I am told that there are problems with issuing passes to people with mental health and Southwark Mind are looking into it, If this was the only guidance that was issued which officers say was partly to blame for this, the council went against that guidance by using GPs, and if it was the only guidance, it does not state about new procedures or changing policies or criteria, It was just anyone that fitted the 7 criteria of the Transport Act now got a pass which allowed national travel and anyone that did not get a pass, The council could then assess for their discretionary criteria, It's not rocket science, it's quite clear.

3.38 FREEDOM PASS WEBSITE

3.39 It was brought to my attention on the 18th August that the Council's webpage for Freedom Passes has a section about the re-assessments. It states that the re-assessment are being processed and that people should not throw away their current pass as they can still use it, It has not date on it. It's now August and the council should not be encouraging service users to use an old pass, as it's illegal and people face prosecution, if they are caught, The webpage also states that people should not chase their application as they want officers to be able to process them I accept that was back in the time before the deadline, but even so it is not helpful to tell service users not to chase their applications it was probably as a result of some people not chasing, it that they did not have them after the deadline.

3.40 I brought the issue of the webpage in particular the issue of people still being able to use their passes to Cllr Noakes and I copied in Eleanor Kelly and Dominic Cain, Some four or five days later the webpage had still not been changed, Cllr Noakes told me he would be emailing on the day I brought to them I don't know if he did as I did not hear anymore about it, I have asked Shelley Burke to print out this webpage on the first day and on the Friday of that week, Both are included in this evidence.

3.41 At this time, after all what has happened surely the webpage should have been updated and urged anybody that did not have a pass etc, to get in touch with the dept. I am also told that webpages should be updated as a matter of course anyway.

3.42 With all the issues I have and continue to raise about this service, and the lack of response , or change to the service, shows that officers are not responsive. I have raised many within the last weeks or so, all of the same type of issue that has always been there. I am enclosing a few emails as evidence and more of the issue, I have not ever had any official response to any emails about my concerns in the last few weeks. (see above).

3.43 I felt it important for the committee to have an update on this and I hope it's been helpful.

Janet Yatak
Disability Rights Campaigner

3.44 Ms. Yatak,

(Sent from the Concessionary Travel Division - Department for Transport).

3.45 Thank you for your e-mail of 28th July addressed to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, concerning the eligibility criteria used to issue Freedom passes. Your correspondence has been forwarded to the Concessionary Travel Division and I have been asked to reply.

3.46 As you will know, since 1st April the statutory minimum entitlement has been improved, allowing residents of England aged 60 and over and eligible disabled people free off-peak local bus travel in any area of England , whether using the bus within their local area, or when visiting other parts of England .

3.47 You are right to say that the categories of eligibility remain unchanged from the criteria which were set out in the Transport Act 2000, for people living outside London , and the Greater London Authority Act, for people living in London . People who are eligible for statutory concessionary travel in England as listed in these two Acts, are those who are aged 60 and over and those whose disability is within one of the seven categories of disability listed in the Act, which includes someone who:

(a) is blind or partially sighted,

(b) is profoundly or severely deaf,

(c) is without speech,

(d) has a disability, or has suffered an injury, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to walk,

(e) does not have arms or has long-term loss of the use of both arms,

(f) has a learning disability, that is, a state of arrested or incomplete development of mind which includes significant impairment of intelligence and social functioning, or

(g) would, if he applied for the grant of a licence to drive a motor vehicle under Part III of the Road Traffic Act 1988, have his application refused pursuant to section 92 of that Act (physical fitness) otherwise than on the ground of persistent misuse of drugs or alcohol.

3.48 Guidance was issued by the Secretary of State to local authorities to explain these categories in February this year, not April as you were informed. This updated guidance seeks to prescribe the statutory minimum requirement that authorities must observe to satisfy the law. I have enclosed a copy of the document and it is also available on the Department's website at:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/buses/concessionary/informationlocalauthorities/guidancedisabled/>

3.49 As you will be aware, local authorities have the flexibility to offer benefits over and above the statutory minimum to their residents, taking into account local needs and their overall financial priorities, and the majority do offer some form of enhancement, such as the London-only Freedom pass. I should point out, however, that such local discretionary concessions are not and have never been funded centrally, but by the Council from its council tax and business rates. This remains unchanged by the introduction of the new England-wide concession in April. Any decision to add, amend or withdraw local discretionary elements of

concessionary travel, such as the London-only Freedom pass, is therefore entirely a matter for each local authority.

3.50 If you are unhappy with the services offered by your local authority, you may wish to consider making a formal complaint to them.

I hope this explains the position.

Concessionary Travel Division

Updated from the Londonwide Local Medical Committee (LMC)

As of the 19 September 2008

- 1 GPs have still not been paid for the reports they were expected to carry out earlier this year to ascertain whether their patients met the criteria for new freedom passes.
- 2 Normal payment was re-instated through the PCT and as a result, GPs continued to fill in the reports. However, through a contact at the PCT they found out that Southwark are still yet to process over a thousand claims. When the contact enquired as to why they were not being processed, Southwark advised that it was because the person responsible was off sick.
- 3 GP's had been promised that there would be quick resolutions to this problem and on that basis have been continuing to do the reports. However, currently this situation seems to be static without any indication of when the matter may be resolved.

Southwark Scrutiny Invitation - Freedom Pass Renewals

Dear Sally,

- 1 Thank you for the invitation for Post Office Ltd to provide you with a summary report of issues experienced locally in Southwark Post Office® branches during the Freedom Pass renewal period earlier this year.
- 2 Firstly, it would perhaps be helpful to share some volume information on the activity that was undertaken in Southwark branches to issue or renew Freedom Passes, in order to place into context the relative scale of the local issues, proportionate to London overall.
- 3 In Greater London during the renewal period which essentially ran from 4 February until 31 March 2008, Post Office Ltd undertook over 700,000 Freedom Pass transactions. During April and May (the extended period whereby people could renew), another 175,000 transactions were undertaken giving an overall total of 875,000. In the London Borough of Southwark, during the same period (4 February to 30 May), Post Office branches undertook approximately 26,000 transactions, which is consistent with similar inner London boroughs.
- 4 As you are aware, the Freedom Pass is an entitlement to all elderly and disabled citizens within the London boroughs, and the planning and complexity to deliver a scheme of this size requires strict controls. This is particularly relevant for the branches that have to deliver the service as they are required to follow an agreed set of instructions and guidelines when serving these customers. During the planning stages running up to February, a comprehensive communication exercise was undertaken to all branches in Greater London. This laid out the rules and processes that branches must follow and was agreed with London Councils. These instructions and the principles of how the Freedom Pass renewal exercise would work were also devolved to local authorities for implementation; particularly to the self-issuing boroughs but for every borough whose disabled citizens would be renewing through the Post Office®.

- 5 The key principle for both elderly and disabled applicants is that renewal applications have to be made during the defined period. This was originally 4 February to 31 March. A subsequent extended or "grace" period until 30 May 2008 was put in place to capture renewals which, for exceptional circumstances, had not been done before. All stakeholders, including London Councils, Transport for London, Post Office Ltd and the participating London boroughs had planned for the above.
- 6 Within Post Office Ltd, the operational control and management of the scheme is undertaken centrally and details of any complaints or local issues for resolution are administered and worked through. From central records, there are limited details which refer specifically to problems in Southwark branches, and this demonstrates that many of the issues were managed locally in the branches without the need to escalate these centrally. This is a testament to the professionalism and dedication of branch staff who served over 26,000 elderly and disabled Freedom Pass customers in Southwark during the time frame set out previously.

7 London Borough of Southwark

- 8 Through nearly the entire renewal period, there is no evidence to hand which suggests there were any issues in Southwark branches. Issues seem to have arisen only at the beginning of June 2008, running for a couple of weeks.

There were essentially two factors which prompted this.

- Southwark Borough Council appeared to have delayed the letters of authority to its eligible disabled citizens. This meant that many customers presented these to Post Office branch staff in order to get their pass renewed, after the end of the extended renewal period in May.
 - As a result, stock levels were low in branches that had had no earlier knowledge of the problem and had not anticipated additional demand on stock beyond the end of May.
- 9 From the centrally logged information, our records show a number of issues encountered in Southwark and below is a bulleted summary of events.

- 2 June: - Internal query and complaint arose from Walworth Road branch where disabled customers were looking to renew their passes. On informing them they needed to apply as a first-time applicant, customers were advised to return to the council. It then seems that the renewal box on the original letters was altered by hand for customers and the first-time box on the application section of the letter/form was ticked. Post Office Ltd was not made aware of the Council's intention to amend letters in this way and was unable to brief branches as to the approach to take when presented with an amended letter. Understandably the branch expressed concerns about accepting forms that had been amended in this way and asked Post Office Ltd to clarify the position.
 - 2 June: - Post Office Ltd was able to brief colleagues at Walworth Road branch to process any amended applications where they were confident the customer had been back to the council, although a new letter should have been issued.
 - 12 June: - London Councils alerted Post Office Ltd to media reports that branches had run out of Freedom Passes and a claim that this was exacerbated by Southwark Council administration of the entitlement letters.
 - 16 June: - Telephone calls by Post Office Ltd central support functions were placed to the branch to confirm their stock position. Staff gave details of how many Freedom Passes and renewal stickers they had on hand.
 - Priority stock orders were placed and despatched on 16 June from central stores to the branches.
- 10 The above points were recorded centrally and activity was undertaken in response to branches placing stock orders. Discussions with the branch staff have identified that the impact felt in the branch for customers and staff was significant.
- 11 From the 2 June, each customer was issued a new Freedom Pass and this quickly depleted the supplies held in branch. Under normal circumstances, the branches would place orders for stock and keep supplies consistent with established trading patterns. The sudden unplanned influx of disabled applicants - after the end of the extended renewal period - who had to be issued with a new pass, simply meant the branches did not have sufficient quantities of passes on hand to deal with them. This regrettably resulted in some significant

inconvenience for those customers and some understandably tense scenes which staff did their best to resolve.

- 12 Post Office Ltd was not party to the planning events in Southwark Council for the administration of disabled passes and therefore the above comments are offered as an open account of the local impact felt in branches, in order to assist the scrutiny committee.

I sincerely hope the above information is useful.

Yours sincerely

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