

Filed on behalf of ANDREW YOUNG
-1st
Exhibits: None
Dated:16. 02.2012

**IN THE MATTER OF THE LEVESON ENQUIRY UNDER THE INQUIRIES ACT
2005 INTO THE CULTURE, PRACTICES AND ETHICS OF THE PRESS
Notice under section 21(2) of the Inquiries Act 2005 dated 2 November 2011**

STATEMENT OF ANDREW WHITE YOUNG

1. My name is Andrew White Young of South West News Service Ltd whose address is Media Centre. Abbeywood Park Emma-Chris Way Filton Bristol BS34 7JU.

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2. I am editor and director of South West News Service Ltd (SWNS), a freelance news agency head quartered in Bristol.
3. The son of a former Fleet Street journalist, I received my training at SWNS before joining Today newspaper as a district reporter / regional news editor.
4. I worked for Today newspaper for three and a half years before I returned to SWNS - then a partnership - in 1989 as news editor / partner. I now run SWNS - which has been operating for 40 years - with lifetime friend and professional colleague Paul Walters (picture editor).

5. SWNS – or South West Media Group - employs over 100 journalists, photographers, feature writers / PR staff through offices in Plymouth, Bristol, Leamington Spa, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen. All staff are full-time employees.
6. We provide news, pictures, video and features to national daily and, to a lesser extent, Sunday newspaper titles as well as the 'women's magazine' market.
7. SWNS is a limited company and as such all employees, including proprietorial / managerial staff, are employed on a fixed salary.
8. Reporters and photographers are paid according to experience with a raw trainee receiving a starting salary of around £15,000 per annum to our most experienced reporters / district news editors earning circa £30,000.
9. Salary is not linked to performance, but as a professional operation that thrives on its reputation, SWNS does seek to employ the best and expects all employees to carry out their duties in an ethical manner.
10. Reporters have no financial and/ or commercial incentive to file interesting/ attractive stories, but SWNS does expect its staff to have a professional understanding of the market we operate in.
11. All staff must adhere to strict code of conduct guidelines set out in their standard contract of employment covering misconduct, gross misconduct, data protection, email / Internet use.
12. SWNS also circulates all Press Complaints Commission (PCC) general guidelines and individual advisory warnings / rulings on specific cases or individuals.

13. We also circulate the criteria set out in the National Newspaper Editor's Code of Conduct and, in light of this Inquiry, all relevant directives from national newspapers to their contributors - including the Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy - to all staff.
14. All copy filed from SWNS reporters is legally checked and subbed by a senior member of staff before being presented to a news editor / proprietor for distribution.
15. Copy will only be re-written for purposes of style or legal necessity. SWNS has a uniform house style that is always adhered to, and while every effort is made to ensure that copy is engaging, it is always written in a professional, ethical manner.
16. SWNS tends to operate as a 'wire service' where all its copy is available to all titles and seldom offers stories on an exclusive basis. It is, therefore, paid on a self-billing model favoured by the newspapers.
17. The payment system is really a basic word / lineage model dependent on number of paragraphs used combined with its position in the newspaper. For example, one paragraph would usually be worth £15-£20, with a page lead (main story on any given page bar the front) around £100-£120 with the front page splash anything up to £400.
18. Around 50 per cent of SWNS income is derived from national newspaper / magazine titles with the other 50 per cent coming from associated PR / multi-media companies / investments and other non-journalistic business.
19. If not traditional news, the majority of SWNS output tends to fall into the 'human interest' category where we may, for example, tell the uplifting 'triumph in the face of adversity' story of a woman defying all odds to beat cancer and have a child.

20. All the information for these stories either comes from the principal subject matter themselves or experts in the medical field and is verified before it is sent.
21. Traditional news sources include the courts, industrial tribunals, inquests etc where the information is provided from a trusted, and often privileged, environment.
22. Any other story or investigation is taken on its merits and, after the reporter / reporters involved have submitted their copy or appraised the facts / source and veracity of the information, news editors / directors will question all contributory sources.
23. SWNS prides itself on its professional reputation and, as such, believes it is imperative that the quality control element of the news editing process remains paramount.
24. This company has never engaged the services of private investigators or any other agency to obtain information that is not in the public domain. SWNS has never paid a public official, police officer or mobile phone company employee for any information or service whatsoever.
25. SWNS does, like every other newspaper or agency, sometimes use genealogists or professional profilers to provide familial information on the subject of certain types of story.
26. All this information is, however, obtained legally and available to any member of the public via legitimate telephone directories / electoral rolls etc.
27. SWNS has always operated in what it believes is an ethical way. As outlined, it is our solid, dependable, professional approach that we believe makes this agency a preferred source of content to most, if not all, national newspapers.

The agency has grown under the ownership and guidance of myself and Paul Walters - and a phenomenal editorial team including news editor / director Martin Winter, over the last twenty odd years to become a respected news gathering organisation.

- 28. We believe it is the integrity of its partners, now directors, and the ethical way in which we operate that has made SWNS a major player in the national news arena.
- 29. We will, as always, continue to run the business in a very 'hands on' way to ensure the quality control of the final product.

I believe the facts stated in this Witness Statement are true.

Signed 

ANDREW WHITE YOUNG

Dated 16/2/2012.....

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