

Witness Statement to the Leveson Inquiry

1. We, Audrey Frances Edwards and Paul Bernard Edwards, make this statement in response to the Inquiry's express wish to obtain a flavour of the culture of the press. We recognise that those members of the public who have a genuine grievance against the press will be most likely to make statements drawing attention to potentially illegal or unethical behaviour as is evident from media coverage of the cases of some witnesses who have already appeared before the Inquiry.

2. We are a family stricken with a tragedy of a similar nature to those already considered by the Inquiry who had a very good experience of the performance of the press. As Audrey stated in the introduction to her book "No Truth No Justice" about our family tragedy "They have been a great source of encouragement to us and have also done the community a great service for which they deserve many thanks." While this comment was directed specifically at the local media it was no less true of our contacts with the national press.

3. Our evidence to the Inquiry is based on our experience of dealing with the press following the homicide of our son Christopher in 1994. Christopher was arrested for a breach of the peace and was remanded to Chelmsford Prison for 3 days for psychiatric assessment. He was required to share a cell with Richard Linford, a paranoid schizophrenic with a long history of severe mental disorder associated with violence including previous periods in both secure psychiatric facilities and prison. Within a few hours of entering the prison Christopher had been kicked and beaten to death by his cellmate.

4. We sought to find the truth of what happened and campaigned for an official inquiry which found there had been "a systemic collapse of the protective mechanisms that ought to have operated". We made formal complaints to the appropriate authorities including the Police Complaints Authority, the General Medical Council and the Parliamentary Ombudsman. Supported by Liberty, we took our case to the European Court of Human Rights which in 2002 delivered a unanimous judgment in our favour finding that Christopher had been denied his right to life, and we had been denied both an effective investigation and any remedy in the UK Courts

5. Throughout the eight years from Christopher's death to the ECHR judgment there was considerable press interest in the case and in us both because of the horrific nature of the death and because of our subsequent long struggle for justice, and campaigning on behalf of the mentally ill especially those in prison. During the whole period we found the national and local press to be sympathetic to our situation, respectful of our views, courteous in their dealings with us and as concerned as we were to have the truth of what happened made public.

6. The press were considerably more sympathetic and supportive than the public agencies with whom we had to deal as the latter, we felt, were primarily concerned not with making the truth known but with protecting themselves from criticism. The press representatives with whom we had contact were also more sympathetic to us than the official Inquiry, which made it clear that we were regarded as witnesses to certain facts on exactly the same basis as various police officers, prison officers and medical personnel were witnesses to other facts. There was a lack of sensitivity to the fact that it was our son who had been killed whereas the press representatives were always sensitive to our situation as bereaved parents.

7. We have felt it necessary to make this statement as a result of seeing television coverage of other cases where ordinary citizens, who have become exposed to media interest because of a family tragedy, have given evidence to the Inquiry. We wholly understand the pain they have suffered and we would certainly not seek to justify any illegal or grossly insensitive behaviour by any representatives of the press. We think it necessary, however, to bring to the Inquiry's attention that such behaviour is not characteristic of all of the press all of the time. We were in contact with other families who had lost a loved one in a homicide by a severely mentally ill person and they also had found the press supportive. On the basis of their and our own experience we suspect unacceptable behaviour by the press is to be found only in a minority of cases but this is a matter which the Inquiry will be able to determine.

8. Another reason for our making this submission arises from our experience with public agencies. We most sincerely hope that nothing will be done by Government which could give those in public office or

employed by public agencies protection against legal attempts by the press to make any malfeasance on their part public knowledge.

9. We are perfectly willing to answer any questions which the Inquiry may wish to raise.

10. Attached as part of this statement is a copy of Audrey Edwards "No Truth No Justice"(Waterside Press) which sets out the details of our experience in greater detail.

Statement of Truth

We believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed.

Dated.....31-01-2012..... 31/01/2012.....

Audrey Frances Edwards

Paul Bernard Edwards

16 December, 2011