

**Written statement of Dan Wootton**  
**Evidence to the Leveson Inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the**  
**press ("The Inquiry")**

- A I, Mr Dan Wootton, make this written statement further to the notice under section 2(2) of the Inquiries Act 2005 dated 10 August 2011. To ensure that I understood fully what was expected of me from the Leveson Inquiry, and so that I can assist the Inquiry to the best of my capacity, I have taken advice from Mishcon de Reya Solicitors, who have assisted with the preparation of this witness statement. I deal with each question asked by the Inquiry in turn.
- B The facts and matters set out in this statement are within my own knowledge and are true. Where they are not within my own knowledge they are true to the best of my information and belief.
- C As requested, I enclose copies of documents in my custody which may be relevant. These are referred to below as pages in the enclosed bundle. Unfortunately, since the closure of the *News of the World* I have been unable to access my work email and any other documents on my work computer which may have aided the Inquiry, nor any paper documents from the *News of the World* offices.

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

1. ***Who are you and a brief summary of your career history in the media.***
- 1.1 I was born and raised in New Zealand. I obtained a BA degree in Media Studies and Political Science at Victoria University, Wellington, before starting my career in journalism. I worked for national broadsheet newspaper *The Dominion Post* and television station *TVNZ*.
- 1.2 I moved to the UK in December 2004. I started my journalism career here at trade magazine, *FO Week*, where I worked for 2 months. I later worked at Professional Adviser for 6 months and Broadcast Magazine for 18 months, both as staff jobs rather than as a freelancer.

1.3 I started at the *News of the World* as TV Writer in February 2007, under the editorship of Colin Myler. Mr Glenn Mulcaire and Mr Clive Goodman had been sentenced only a month before, and there was a general sense of a new start for the newspaper under the Editorship of Mr Myler. Throughout my employment with News International, my line manager was Mr Jules Stenson, the Head of Features Department. I was promoted to TV Editor in November 2007 and I became Showbiz Editor in September 2008. I launched a weekly showbiz column called XS two months later in November 2008. I remained the Showbiz Editor of the *News of the World* until the paper's closure in July 2011.

2. ***How you understand the system of corporate governance to have worked in practice at the News of the World ("the newspaper") with particular emphasis on systems to ensure lawful, professional and ethical conduct.***

2.1 My understanding is that the system of corporate governance at the *News of the World* was the responsibility of the editor Colin Myler and senior News International executives (Rupert Murdoch, Les Hinton, James Murdoch and Rebekah Brooks).

2.2 I joined the *News of the World* at the start of Colin Myler's stewardship as Editor. While I cannot comment on the practices and policies in place before I started, I got the sense that it was a changed environment. It was made clear to me from the outset that I was expected to work in a legal, PCC-compliant and ethical manner at all times. In the first few weeks of my time at the newspaper, Mr Myler sent a letter to all staff, including me, outlining his zero tolerance policy towards illegality and breaches of the PCC code. I do not have access to a copy of that letter now, but I recall that Mr Myler made clear that any action in contravention of the PCC code would not be tolerated, and in particular that phone hacking would constitute gross misconduct. Additionally, in my first week at the newspaper, I attended a detailed seminar by the PCC, which was rolled out to all members of staff. There were refresher courses each year. Additionally, all members of staff were issued with new PCC codes whenever there was an update, a copy of which is attached [see

pages 1 to 4]. There was a strong emphasis on compliance with the PCC code at the newspaper.

2.3 In addition, when I started at the *News of the World*, I received a Standards of Business Conduct Handbook, a copy of which is enclosed [page 5 to 22]. This outlined the expectation that staff would observe the highest standards of business ethics, including avoiding conflicts of interest with News International, and abide by equal opportunity policies etc.

2.4 Where any legal issues with stories that I wrote arose, they were dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Usually, before my articles were published, they would be read at a minimum by Mr Stenson, the Managing Editor, the Editor, Deputy Editors, some Associate and Assistant Editors and the legal department, headed by the Legal Affairs Manager, Tom Crone. Any one of these people could raise concerns about the article, with Mr Stenson responsible for resolving the issue with those raising it. Mr Stenson would come back to me, for example, if he had queries about the source for my piece of information. In this way, there was a distinct mechanism through which legal matters were discussed and resolved, in isolation of the thoughts and opinions of the journalists themselves. As such, if Tom Crone raised an issue about the risk associated with publishing any of my articles, I would not be the person who made the final decision about whether or how to publish it.

3. ***What your role was in ensuring that the corporate governance documents and all relevant policies were adhered to in practice. If you do not consider yourself to have been responsible for this, please tell us who you consider to hold that responsibility and why.***

3.1 Aside from my responsibility for ensuring my own stories were well-sourced and run by the relevant parties before publication (to give a right of reply in accordance with the PCC code), I had no role in ensuring corporate governance documents were adhered to in practice. I understood that it was the responsibility of the editor Mr Myler and senior News International executives (Rupert Murdoch, Les Hinton, James Murdoch and Rebekah Brooks) to ensure that relevant policies were adhered to, as outlined above.

4. *Whether the documents and policies referred to above were adhered to in practice, to the best of your knowledge.*

4.1 As far as I was aware, working as the Showbiz Editor in the Features Department, the above systems were adhered to. I had no exposure to the practices on desks other than Features, so cannot say whether the above policies were adhered to in the same way in other areas of the newspaper.

4.2 I would like to emphasise that during my four years at the *News of the World* I worked in a legal, PCC-compliant and ethical manner at all times. The Editor, Mr Myler, made it clear this was the expectation of all of his staff, as discussed above. The tainting of the many innocent individuals at the *News of the World*, including myself, from 2007 onwards because of the alleged actions of a previous regime has been devastating. The *News of the World* changed for the better under the editorship of Mr Myler and through the hard work of many new staff members to the newspaper, including me, who worked hard to gain back the trust of readers, contributors and showbiz industry figures. I hope the Inquiry takes this into account.

5. *Whether these practices or policies have changed, either as a result of the phone hacking media interest or prior to that point, and if so, what the reasons for the change were.*

5.1 As far as I recall, no changes were communicated to me.

6. *Where the responsibility for checking sources of information lies (including the method by which the information was obtained): from reporter to showbiz editor to editor, and how this is done in practice (with some representative examples to add clarity).*

6.1 My role as Showbiz Editor encompassed the function of a reporter, as well as the editor of a weekly column. For any story I wrote, I took responsibility for checking the sources of information.

6.2 The *News of the World* covered celebrity stories widely, and a substantial proportion of stories from mine and other desks related to showbiz. The *News*

*of the World* was divided into very separate and independent teams or "desks", including the News desk, the Features desk, the Pictures desk, the Sports desk, and so on. Each desk had separate budgets and reporting lines, and competed for space for their stories in the newspaper. Reporters would sit on one desk only, and report to the editor of that particular desk. The Features desk would sometimes compete with News to interview or cover a 'celebrity' story. I make this point to highlight to the Inquiry that the fact that a celebrity was the subject of a *News of the World* article does not mean that it was the responsibility of the Showbiz Editor.

- 6.3 As Showbiz Editor I was formally part of the Features desk, and did not work with anyone from another desk. I reported to the Head of Features, an Assistant Editor, Mr Stenson, as did the other Features reporters. In turn, Mr Stenson would report to the Editor. I did not line manage anyone. I had an assistant who looked for showbiz stories, wrote copy and completed administrative tasks, but their line manager was also Mr Stenson, rather than me. On rare occasions, for example, if I was working on a particularly big story or one which overlapped with work being done on another area of the Features desk, I would work with other reporters in the Features team. The reporter would still report to Mr Stenson and not to me.
- 6.4 The editors of each desk reported to the Editor. The Managing Editor was responsible in the main for financial, legal and PCC compliance issues.
- 6.5 Everything that I wrote went through the Head of Features, Mr Stenson. I had no input in the Features budget, which was controlled by Mr Stenson under the management of the Managing Editor and the Editor.
- 6.6 The editorial process was centred around a series of "conferences". All Heads of Desks would attend these conferences on a daily basis from Tuesday to Saturday along with the Editor and a Deputy Editor, the Managing Editor and Deputy Managing Editor(s), Legal, and members of "production", a group of "backbench" Associated Editors who were responsible for how stories were set out within the newspaper. At Conference, each Department Head produced a "list", outlining the stories their Desk was working on and the

reporter responsible for each story. The lists would contain only brief details of the story (due to the competition between the Desks), and would never contain details of the source, for example. The Conference was essentially an opportunity for Desk Heads to pitch to the Editor for space in the newspaper on Sunday. Whilst the premise was that attendees would talk about the stories on their list in order for the Editor to decide what would fill pages, it was common for the stories featured at the top of each list not to be discussed, as these were usually the most confidential. The competition at the paper was such that even amongst the Heads of Departments confidential stories or “secret squirrel” stories, were not revealed, for fear of a leak. If a story was particularly sensitive, it may be left off the list altogether and discussed in a smaller group, generally between the relevant Department Head, the Editor, representatives of Legal and sometimes the reporter involved.

- 6.7 All of the stories I was working on would be put on Mr Stenson’s, the Head of Features’, list. From Tuesday to Thursday, Mr Stenson would attend the daily Conference without me. On Friday and Saturday, I would attend the Conference also, to present my stories on a separate Showbiz list. I understood that from Friday onwards the Editor, Assistant Editor and Art directors would attend a “plot” meeting after the daily Conference. The purpose of this meeting was to decide which items from the lists would appear in that week’s edition of the News of the World.
- 6.8 There was rarely any discussion in Conference about the source of a story, as these meetings focused on the stories they contained. All editorial conversations, including the steps I had taken to verify a story, took place between me and Mr Stenson, or where there were any particular concerns, with News International’s lawyers, Mr Tom Crone and/or Mr Justin Walford. Sometimes I would discuss the source directly with the Editor or Deputy Editor if it was a story they were particularly interested in.
- 6.9 With regard to where I obtained my information, all my journalism, which resulted in me breaking the biggest showbiz exclusives week after week, was brought about through the old fashioned practice of having the best contacts in the business, who could trust me. My contacts included the managers and

agents of numerous celebrities, TV producers and production staff, freelance journalists, the celebrities themselves or PR agents working for them and sometimes friends and family members of the stars. I worked tirelessly to build up these contacts and to gain their trust. Often the stories I wrote appeared with the backing of the celebrities themselves, particularly since I was the primary interviewer at the *News of the World* and so many of my stories would be told directly by its subject. I have never hacked a phone, nor done anything illegal in the sourcing of my stories, and there has never been any suggestion that I am implicated in the wrongdoing at the *News of the World*.

6.10 Where I used a story provided by a professional freelancer, I had a strict policy that however good the information was, I would never run the article without first receiving independent confirmation, from a reliable contact, that the facts set out were true. It was in this way that I gained, and retained, the trust of the celebrities I wrote about and their representatives.

7. ***To what extent a showbiz editor is aware, and should be aware, of the sources of the information which make up the central stories featured in the newspaper each day (including the method by which the information was obtained).***

7.1 As Showbiz Editor, I had no responsibility for, nor knowledge of, the sources of stories in the paper in general, and was only involved in stories which I wrote myself.

7.2 My own story list, which I would present in Conference on Fridays and Saturdays, would only contain stories sourced by either me or my assistant.

7.3 While I was responsible for the content and source of the majority of articles which were published in my name, this was not always the case for the reasons detailed below:

7.3.1 I had 38 days annual leave. For the purpose of continuity, whilst I was on leave my XS Showbiz column would continue to be run in my name, with other Features reporters contributing the stories and

Mr Stenson continuing to have responsibility for it. While the copy for the column was generally run past me even whilst I was on leave, there were times when the column would appear without any of my input.

- 7.3.2 The Editor could move stories from the news list or Mr Stenson's list into my column if he felt the Showbiz section was a more appropriate space for them. I would not know the source of such articles, and would not be in a position to ask.
- 7.3.3 The Editor would sometimes merge 2 stories together, crediting both journalists in the by-line. Where my stories were merged with articles from another Features reporter I would have some control over the content of the merged product. However, on occasion my work would be merged with stories from the News desk. In such cases it was possible that I was credited in the by-line of a story despite having no control over what the other journalist had written or how the stories were merged.
- 7.3.4 Where a Desk Head wrote a story, it was convention that the article would appear under another reporter's name. However, in such circumstances it could be that the first you knew of the article appearing under your name would be when you opened the paper and read it on a Sunday morning. This happened to me on occasion in the early months of my time at the *News of the World* and I did not have the authority to ask the executives what their source for the article was. Similarly, there were odd occasions when the Editor, Deputy Editor or Desk Head would give me information of an exclusive story which they had personally obtained, and I would write the article after running the substance of the story past the relevant parties. On such occasions, I would not be aware of the source of the story or be in a position to ask.

8. *The extent to which you consider that ethics can and should play a role in the print media, and what you consider 'ethics' to mean in this context.*



- 8.1 I believe that ethics can and should play a crucial role in the print media. I understand ethics in this context to mean that a reporter should be moral and abide by the law and the PCC Code at all times. For example, I would never reveal that a celebrity was pregnant before receiving confirmation of a three month scan, and would never write about someone's sexuality unless they had given their approval or had previously discussed it.
9. *The extent to which you, as showbiz editor, felt any financial and/or commercial pressure from the proprietors of the newspaper, the editor or anyone else, and whether any such pressure affected any of the decisions you made as showbiz editor (such evidence to be limited to matters covered by the Terms of Reference).*
- 9.1 As Showbiz Editor, I never felt any financial or commercial pressure from the proprietors, the editor or anyone else at the paper. I never had any day-to-day contact with the proprietors and understood that the Editor, Mr Myler, had full confidence I was performing to the best of my ability at all times.
10. *The extent to which you, as a showbiz editor, had a financial incentive to print exclusive stories (NB it is not necessary to state your precise earnings).*
- 10.1 There was no specific financial incentive for me to print "exclusive" stories as Showbiz Editor, in that I did not receive bonuses, for example, for front page stories. My performance appraisal, and my remuneration, was judged on a number of factors, including breaking exclusive stories, my relationships with key showbiz industry figures, and my adherence to the law and PCC code.
11. *Whether, to the best of your knowledge, the newspaper used, paid or had any connection with private investigators in order to source stories or information and/or paid or received payments in kind for such information from the police, public officials, mobile phone companies or others with access to the same: if so, please provide details of the numbers of occasions on which such investigators or other external providers of information were used and of the amounts paid to them.*

- 11.1 I have no knowledge of whether the newspaper used, paid or had any connection with private investigators. During my time at the paper, including over two years as Showbiz Editor, I never used, paid or had any connection with private investigators of any kind.
- 11.2 I also have no knowledge of whether the newspaper paid or received payments for information from the police, public officials, mobile phone companies or others with access to the same. Again, I can categorically say that during my time at the paper, including over two years as Showbiz Editor, I never paid or received payments for information from the police, public officials, mobile phone companies or others with access to the same.
12. *What your role was in instructing, paying or having any other contact with such private investigators and/or external providers of information.*
- 12.1 None. I had no role in any contact with any private investigators or other external providers of information.
13. *If such investigators or other external providers of information were used, what policy/ protocol, if any, was used to facilitate the use of such investigators or other external providers of information (for example, in relation to how they were identified, how they were chosen, how they were paid, their remit, how they were told to check sources, what methods they were told to or permitted to employ in order to obtain the information and so on).*
- 13.1 I have no knowledge of these matters.
14. *If there was such a policy/ protocol, whether it was followed, and if not, what practice was followed in respect of all these matters.*
- 14.1 I have no knowledge of these matters.
15. *Whether there are any situations in which neither the existing protocol/ policy nor the practice were followed and what precisely happened/ failed to happen in those situations. What factors were in play in deciding to depart from the protocol or practice?*

- 15.1 I have no knowledge of these matters.
16. *The extent to which you are aware of protocols or policies operating at the newspaper in relation to expenses or remuneration paid to other external sources of information (whether actually commissioned by the newspaper or not). There is no need for you to cover 'official' sources, such as the Press Association.*
- 16.1 The majority of my stories came from unpaid leads, in the form of information from contacts. Where I did pay for a story, all payments had to be authorised by my Desk Head, Mr Stenson. The majority of such payments were for less than £1,000. In fact it was common for a headline story to attract no more than £750. In the rare event that payments were agreed which were in excess of £1,000, I was required to seek pre-publication authorisation from Mr Stenson. He in turn sought the approval of the Managing Editor, Bill Akass, or Deputy Managing Editor, Paul Nicholas, before the payment could be agreed in principle. Such payments included consideration paid to celebrities in return for exclusive interviews.
- 16.2 The physical payment process could not occur until after publication, at which point it would be known whether the story made it in to the paper or not. Prior to making any payment, I was required to provide Mr Stenson's assistant with the name, address and bank account details of the payee, the story page and date, and the amount to be paid. Mr Stenson's assistant would then pass these details to Mr Stenson who would either approve, disapprove or ask questions regarding the payment. If Mr Stenson approved, the Managing Editor or Deputy Managing Editor would then need to give their approval again before the money could eventually be paid to the provider of the information. This process was followed for payments of any value. As such, in my experience the process of paying for information, while bureaucratic, was vigorously transparent.
17. *The practice of the newspaper in relation to payment of expenses and/or remuneration paid to other external sources of information (whether*

*actually commissioned by the newspaper or not). There is no need for you to cover 'official' sources, such as the Press Association.*

17.1 See my answer to question 16, above.

18. *In respect of editorial decisions you have made to publish stories, the factors you have taken into account in balancing the private interests of individuals (including the fact that information may have been obtained from paid sources in the circumstances outlined under paragraph 11 above) against the public interests in a free Press. You should provide a number of examples of these, and explain how you have interpreted and applied the foregoing interest.*

18.1 As Showbiz Editor, it was ultimately not my responsibility to make the decision on whether a story was in the public interest or not, and what showbiz stories would eventually be printed. The final decision would be made by the Editor or Deputy Editor in his absence.

18.2 I prided myself on having strong relationships with the PRs and managers for most of the celebrities I would frequently write about. I would often spend hours on a phone with them talking through a story before publication to determine the facts. If any legal or public interest factors were raised by the celebrity or representative, I would immediately refer this to the Head of Features, who would deal with the matter or escalate it to the Deputy Editor, the Editor or Managing Editors and the lawyers, who would make the final decision on publication.

18.3 One example of this was my story entitled "*We Call Time on TV Con*" published on February 25, 2007, which can be seen at page 23. In this story, I revealed that the BBC had been asking callers to phone into a popular "live" BBC cookery show "*Saturday Kitchen*", using a premium rate phone-line, in order to speak to that week's guests. However, I received initial information from someone working in the TV industry that the show had been pre-recorded the previous week, and so callers had no chance of getting through to speak on air. After receiving the initial tip-off I proceeded to investigate the story thoroughly. As part of my investigation, it was necessary for me to

“door step” the presenter, James Martin, on private property at Cactus TV, where he was filming the next week’s show. We believed that there was a clear public interest in doing this because Mr Martin was aware that the show was not being filmed live and yet he continued to front the phone competition.

- 18.4 We also gave both Cactus TV and the BBC a right to reply, so they were fully aware of the story before publication, with the BBC providing the quote that “mistakes were made by James Martin in his presentation. They were simple cock-ups”. The story had big ramifications for both Cactus TV and the BBC and, as a result of the story, both companies introduced stringent new procedures regarding phone competitions. In addition, the phone competition element of *Saturday Kitchen* was dropped, ensuring no further viewers were deceived.
- 18.5 A further example of the lengths I would go to to ensure the private interests of individuals was balanced with public interest considerations was the story of the death of Stephen Gately. I was provided information in a phone call from a close friend of the Boyzone singer that he had died after midnight on Sunday, October 11 2009. I phoned and received on-the-record confirmation of Stephen’s death from two more close friends of Stephen – his manager Louis Walsh and band mate Shane Lynch. However, after discussions with the Deputy Editor at the time, Jane Johnson, we decided to hold off printing the story until Stephen’s representatives could confirm his death to ensure his next of kin had been informed. This meant the story missing out on being printed in over two million editions of the newspaper. Eventually, after 1am, I was able to receive formal confirmation from Stephen’s PR representative Stuart Bell that Stephen had died.
- 18.6 Only at that point was the decision made to publish the story online and in the last few hundred thousand copies of the newspaper in the fourth edition. These sorts of decisions were made on a weekly basis.
- 18.7 For me to maintain my credibility and reputation as a British Press Award winning Showbiz Editor, it was crucial I ensured that I maintained the highest professional and ethical standards. In my final year at the paper, one of the

main reasons I received the highest possible mark in my performance assessment was because I had received no PCC complaints and had no legal action taken against any of my stories. This is quite unheard of for a Showbiz Editor at a Sunday tabloid.

19. ***Whether you or the newspaper ever engaged in or procured others to engage in 'computer hacking; in order to source stories, or for any reason.***

19.1 No, I have never engaged or procured others to engage in any form of computer hacking or any hacking of any form. I cannot answer on behalf of the newspaper, although I never saw any examples of this during my entire time at the newspaper. It was made clear to me that hacking of any form would represent gross misconduct when I joined in 2007. The Editor, Mr Myler, sent a letter to all staff at the newspaper, including me, outlining his position on this.

20. ***If you cannot answer these questions, or take the view that they could be more fully answered by someone else, you must nonetheless provide answers to the extent that you can, and to the extent that you cannot you must provide the Inquiry as soon as possible with names of those who would be able to assist us further.***

20.1 I have answered these questions as fully as I can. But I should stress to the Inquiry that as Showbiz Editor of the *News of the World* I was only responsible for my own stories and not for stories published by other reporters on the Features Desk, or reporters on the News Desk, Sports Desk, Pictures Desk, Online Departments, or in Fabulous Magazine.

20.2 From a personal perspective, I would also like to state to the Inquiry that when I joined the *News of the World* in 2007 I was given categorical assurances by the newspaper, which were backed by the police, that phone hacking, or any illegal behaviour, had been contained to one rogue reporter, who had already been jailed. I would not have joined the newspaper if I had known that the problem was more widespread. If it is proven that this is the case, and that senior executives of News International were aware of this situation, it would be a huge disappointment to me.