

Witness: Gill Shearer
Statement No: 1
Exhibits referred to: None
Date statement made: 28 February 2012

The Leveson Inquiry into the Culture Practices and ethics of the press

Witness: Gill Shearer
Occupation: Head of Marketing and Communications
Address: Police Headquarters, Carleton Hall, Penrith

I am Gill Shearer, Head of Marketing and Communications, Cumbria Constabulary. I make this statement in response to a notice under section 21(2) of the Inquiries Act 2005 which was sent to me on 8th February. That notice contained 67 matters or issues which needed to be addressed. For ease of reference I will deal with each matter or issue in turn, applying the same numbering as set out in the section 21(2) notice.

(1) Who you are and a brief summary of your career history.

1.1 I am Gill Shearer, Head of Marketing and Communications for Cumbria Constabulary. I joined the Constabulary in 2005. Prior to this I was a marketing and communications manager for a manufacturing company for 18 months. In 2001, I joined the National Farmers' Union as a Regional Public Relations officer and dealt with the media for the region through the foot and mouth crisis. I had previously spent 13 years undertaking a wide range of roles with NatWest Bank.

(2) Please describe the role and remit of the press office within Cumbria Constabulary.

2.1 The Press Office is established as a single point of contact for both staff and the media. The Press Office deals with reactive calls from the media and also works proactively to highlight the work that the Constabulary undertakes to solve crime, build confidence and provide crime prevention advice.

2.2 The Press Office works alongside Senior Investigating Officers (SIOs) to create media strategies and provide them with media management support for significant, sensitive or high profile investigations.

2.3 The Press office is also responsible for supporting officers in creating key messages for when they speak to the media. This is further supported by a comprehensive media training programme for officers which is managed by the Press Office.

(3) Please describe your role and responsibilities within the press office. To whom do you report?

3.1 I have overall responsibility for the Press Office. My role is to support the press officers and deal with any strategic communication. For example, communications surrounding the budget, police officer numbers. I am responsible for providing direct support to Chief Officers undertaking any media activities. Currently, I report to the Chief Constable.

3.2 In 2006, I led of a review of the Press Office function which led to a complete re-structure in terms of staff and the functionality of the team.

(4) Describe the culture of relations between the press office on the one hand and other Cumbria Constabulary staff/officers on the other. Do you consider that there is a relationship of trust and confidence? What changes, if any, would you wish to make to the working relationship and why?

4.1 Generally, the culture between officers and the Press Office is good. In the last six years the Press Office has worked hard to build up relationships with officers to build trust and confidence, and develop an understanding that the Press office is there to help and support them carry out their work effectively.

(5) Does the press office have a gatekeeper function for controlling the flow of information to the media?

5.1 Yes, the Press Office does provide a gatekeeper function to the information going to the media. Normally, media calls are received by Press Office and they work with the officers on their response. However, the local media in some areas do have direct access to a single point of contact outside Press Office to pick up very low level queries e.g. theft of cycles and crime prevention advice.

5.2 If the media contact officers directly with requests for information or interview, the officers normally keep the press office informed and refer any significant or controversial queries back to the Press Office to manage.

(6) Does the press office have a gatekeeper function for controlling access to Cumbria Constabulary personnel?

6.1 I believe that this question is answered at paragraph 5.1 above.

(7) What is your impression of the culture within Cumbria Constabulary in relation to its dealings with the media (the media in all its forms)?

7.1 The culture within Cumbria Constabulary is to engage with the media and be as open and transparent as possible. We have a unique local media and as a result the Constabulary receives a wide exposure. Many of the officers dealing with the media will engage with them on a regular basis, know the reporters and understand the benefits of engaging with them.

7.2 The Constabulary is in the early stages of engaging with social media and the culture is one of encouraging officer's inline with our policy.

(8) Describe your impression of the culture of dealings between the press office and the media (the media in all its forms)? Do you consider the relationship between the press office and the media to be a successful one? What changes, if any, do you consider should be made to the relationship?

8.1 Generally, our relationship with the media is good. However, the demand from the local media has grown significantly and sometimes this creates tensions as we can not always meet their demands. Our relationship with the local media is open and if they perceive that they encounter any problems they know how to escalate issues to me.

(9) Set out your understanding of the type of contact which press office staff have with the local and national media covering nature, extent, frequency and (in general terms) topics / content.

9.1 The Press Office receives between 30 and 50 calls a day mainly from local media. They deal with the whole range of issues and queries from minor road traffic collisions (rtcs) to fatal rtcs, crime prevention advice, appeals for information and witnesses, supporting SIOs on major investigations, being pro-active and raising the profile of Cumbria Constabulary.

9.2 Generally, any contact with the national media is through Press Association or their regional reporters but this is only for high profile or unusual crimes. We would expect at the very least to have contact with the nationals on a weekly basis.

(10) Are contacts with the media restricted to certain staff or are all personnel within Cumbria Constabulary able to deal with the media?

10.1 It depends on the type of contact from the media. Staff are encouraged to respond to the media if that is part of their job. For instance, we would expect an officer to speak to the media if they put out an appeal for witnesses and the media required further information or an update. If there wasn't an operational or business need we wouldn't expect staff to talk to the media.

10.2 If there is an SIO appointed to a crime then generally all media is restricted to them or a nominated deputy. This is defined through a media strategy which the Press Office will write in conjunction with the SIO.

10.3 All strategic media issues are dealt with by Chief Officers supported by myself or press office.

(11) Does your office prioritise some sections of the media over others? For instance, does it prioritise communications and relations with the national media over those with the local media? If so, please give details and explain why.

11.1 Generally speaking, all the media are treated equally from broadcast to print and from local to national. We do not knowingly undertake exclusives.

(12) Are there mechanisms in place to ensure that information is disseminated widely to the media rather than to select journalists or titles? If so, please specify. If not, do you consider that there should be?

12.1 When we release information this is normally via an email distribution list and any journalist can ask to be placed on this list. This is further supported by the press releases being placed on our internet so that it can be viewed by the public and the media. Often this is now supported by social

media as well. For out-of-hours we have a Voicebank which can be updated by the Communication Centre and officers again this is open to all journalists.

12.2 If a journalist rings to request specific information about an incident and there isn't an operational, investigative or public interest need to disseminate it to all media contacts, then the information is only given to them. However if another member of the media then called about the incident, the same level of information would be released.

(13) What is the media's attitude towards the press office? In particular, are they satisfied by the provision of information and the routing of communications through the press office or do they prefer direct contact with individual personnel within Cumbria Constabulary?

13.1 Usually, the media are comfortable going through Press Office although sometimes they get frustrated if they can't get all the information that they require and often try to approach officers directly.

(14) Describe in general terms and with illustrative examples, the personal contact which you have with the local and national media. The Inquiry would like an overall picture of the type, frequency, duration and content of your contact with the media.

14.1 I rarely speak to journalists and when I do it would only ever be around key strategic issues. For instance I would help explain to a reporter and give guidance for some of the more complex issues around the budget such as council tax precept.

14.2 When I contact the media, it is almost always to discuss an issue that has been escalated to me from Press Office and I will generally speak to the editor or news editor. The purpose of this would be to discuss the problem and attempt to find a solution in a bid to continue our positive relationship. This level of contact occurs perhaps once or twice a month.

14.3 For example, there have been some concerns raised to me recently from local media regarding the level of information they are able to access out of Press Office hours. I have arranged meetings with local editors to discuss the issues they are having and, alongside attempting to find solutions; I am able to explain from a Constabulary perspective why these problems may have occurred. This helps to maintain a positive relationship with our local media and keep a level of understanding between the Press Office and media organisations so we can manage expectations of each other.

(15) Describe what you are seeking to gain for Cumbria Constabulary through your personal contact with the media.

15.1 I believe that this has been answered above.

(16) Describe in general terms and using illustrative examples what you consider the local and national media have been seeking from you in your personal dealings with them?

16.1 The local media come to me for explanatory advice, guidance and to escalate issues. The nationals would rarely approach me although the exception was during the West Cumbria shootings when the Crime Reporters Association spoke to me to lobby for an exclusive briefing.

(17) To what extent have you accepted hospitality from the media whilst working in your current position?

17.1 The only hospitality that I have ever accepted from the media has been one lunch with a local newspaper editor in 2007. The lunch was in office hours and I was accompanying the Chief Constable Craig Mackey. The lunch was entered on the Chief Constable's hospitality register.

(18) Insofar as you have accepted hospitality from the media, what has been the nature of the hospitality that you have accepted? What records have you kept of such hospitality?

18.1 I believe that I have answered this question at paragraph 17.1 above.

(19) To what extent have you provided hospitality for the media?

19.1 Up until 2009 the Chief Constable hosted an annual editor's lunch which was resourced by the Marketing and Communications budget. The aim was to bring all the local editors together to outline the strategic issues for the coming year.

19.2 In 2008, I had a meeting with a local broadcast producer as there had been some tensions between their organisation and the Constabulary. I wanted to hold the meeting in a neutral location and in order for this to take place purchased lunch. This was recorded via my expenses.

19.3 In 2009, I attended a lunch with a local newspaper editor and the Deputy Chief Constable (DCC) who had just arrived in the county and was building a better understanding of the demands of the local media. A record of this expenditure is kept through my expenses.

19.4 My expense claims are approved by my previous line manager the DCC.

19.5 In 2010, I accompanied the Chief Constable to a lunch meeting with a local newspaper editor to discuss the pressures for both organisations in the following 12 months. This was recorded in the Chief Constable's hospitality register.

(20) Insofar as you have provided hospitality to the media, what has been the nature of that hospitality? What records have you kept of such hospitality?

20.1 I believe that I have answered this question at paragraph 19 above.

(21) Have you ever accepted gifts from the media? If so, please give full details (including who gave you the gift, when, what the gift was, and why you believe they gave you the gift).

21.1 I have never accepted any gifts from the media.

(22) Have you ever discussed the media, or media coverage, with politicians? If so, how important is such communication and why?

22.1 Any contact with MPs would occur through the Chief Constable. The only politicians that I would ever discuss the media with would be our chair of the Police Authority who is a county councillor. My contact with the Chair of the Police Authority occurs regularly as they are based within the same building. However discussion about media issues or coverage occurs when the Constabulary and Police Authority make joint announcements for significant issues relating to the budget or police estate for example.

(23) What do you know about the level of hospitality accepted by Cumbria Constabulary, including by officers of the rank of Assistant Chief Constable and above? Do you consider the level to be appropriate now and to have been appropriate in the past?

In addressing this issue please give your reasons and set out what you consider to be an appropriate level of hospitality for police personnel to accept from the media (if any). What records are kept of such hospitality?

23.1 I understand that Chief Officers keep a hospitality register. I would expect any hospitality relating to the media to be discussed and myself or a member of Press Office to be present.

23.2 I had previously thought that the acceptance of hospitality should be at an individual's discretion and judgement but inline with our force policy. However, given the recent developments I will be making recommendations to the Constabulary that police personnel do not accept any hospitality from the media and all declines are reported to the Press Office.

(24) Do you consider that you have been adequately trained and/or given sufficient guidance on the appropriate handling of the media?

24.1 Yes. When we re-structured the Press Office the Chief Officer team gave specific guidance on the standards that they expected from the Press Office.

(25) Do you consider that you have been adequately trained and/or given sufficient guidance to enable you to give sound advice and/or leadership on handling the media to your staff?

25.1 Yes.

(26) Do you provide training or guidance to your staff on (i) conducting and maintaining appropriate relationships with the media; (ii) accepting/offering hospitality; (iii) bribery and (iv) requests for 'off-the-record' comments? If so, please specify. Does that training/guidance reflect/follow the ACPO guidance?

26.1 When I joined the Constabulary in 2005 I commissioned an external review of our Press Office focusing on internal and external views. As a result, in 2006 the Constabulary agreed a re-structure which replaced the existing structure and staff and brought-in three new press officers.

26.2 As part of the induction training the new members of staff were given very clear verbal guidance of what was expected from them in the new role and the levels of integrity required.

26.3 Our media management policy gives clear guidance that 'off-the-record' comments are not permitted and guidance for personal relationships.

26.4 Our hospitality should be inline with our policy.

(27) Do you consider that press office staff feel confident that they understand what is, and what is not, appropriate contact with the media? When answering this question, please explain what you consider to be "appropriate contact" with the media.

27.1 Part of the induction as a new member of staff is the outline of appropriate contact with the media. We define appropriate contact as having a business reason to speak to the media about an incident inline with the ACPO Communication Advisory Group (CAG) guidelines and our own media management policy.

27.2 Press officers understand their professional responsibilities and do not engage with members of the media outside of work.

(28) Do you consider that press office staff generally feel comfortable briefing the media and responding to media requests for information?

28.1 Responding to the media is a crucial part of the role of a press officer. Again, as part of their training press officers are given clear guidelines of what they can say and at what stage. The small team of press officers deals with between 30-50 reactive queries from the media on a daily basis so have very regular contact with the media and they know that if they are uncertain they can escalate any questions.

(29) Do incidents that attract national media interest present particular challenges? If so, what are those challenges and do you consider that the press office is adequately equipped to respond effectively and appropriately to such media interest?

29.1 Yes incidents that attract national media interest do create challenges in terms of scale and intensity for our very small team of three press officers. Generally, in day-to-day situations other communications staff are re-deployed to the Press Office to give support.

29.2 However, in response to major incidents such as the flooding in November 2009 where tragically PC Bill Barker lost his life and the West Cumbria Shootings in 2010 we brought in additional staff from other departments to support as well as a small amount of mutual aid from Lancashire and Merseyside press offices.

(30) What improvements, if any, do you think could or should be made to the systems, policies and/or training in your office to ensure that press office staff conduct and maintain appropriate relationships with the media?

30.1 I have just returned from maternity leave and my priority is to bring together the findings from both the HMIC 'Without Fear or Favour' and Filkin report into an action plan for approval by Chief Officers. Part of the report will be working with our Professional Standards Department to be explicit about the appropriateness of relationships with the media for both officers and staff.

(31) Are you and/or your staff members of the Association of Police Communicators? From your perspective, what are the benefits of membership of this Association? Could the Association assist or assist further in ensuring that relations between police personnel and the media are appropriate. If so, how?

31.1 I am a member of the Association of Police Communicators. I have found their annual conference to be a good learning environment. I am not sure in its present format that it has the ability in terms of time or resources to define a national policy. I would suggest that this needs to be undertaken by ACPO with the input from Heads of Communication Departments and approved by Chief Constables.

(32) Insofar as you are able to say, to what extent are leaks from Cumbria Constabulary to the media and/or private detectives a problem for Cumbria Constabulary?

32.1 There have been eleven investigated leaks of information to the media in the last five years. The leaks have been irritating rather than having a negative impact on the Constabulary, operationally or reputationally.

(33) Insofar as you are able to say, to what extent are leaks from the press office to the media and/or private detectives a problem for Cumbria Constabulary?

33.1 No leaks have been identified from Press Office. During induction training it is made very clear that leaks from the Press Office will not be tolerated and will be investigated rigorously.

(34) What systems and procedures do you have in place in the press office, if any, to identify, respond to and detect the source of leaks? Do you consider that they are effective? What changes, if any, do you consider should be made?

34.1 We have an automated cutting service and all staff including Press Officers are encouraged to check the articles to ensure stories that they have been involved with are reported accurately.

34.2 When the press office was re-structured we began to challenge any articles that included a response from a 'police source' as we believed that the officer in the case should be named. This together with media strategies has allowed us to move away from 'anonymous' police sources.

34.3 The majority of leaks are identified by Press Officers when they receive calls from reporters who have a significant level of detail that has not

previously been released. These suspicions are then raised to me to progress.

(35) In the last 5 years, how many investigations have been conducted into actual or suspected leaks from the press office and how many have led to the successful identification of the source of the leak? What was the outcome of the other investigations?

35.1 None

(36) In the last 5 years has disciplinary action been taken against any member of press office staff for leaking information to the media and/or private detectives? If so, please identify the number of cases and their outcome. There is no need to identify the person or persons the subject of the disciplinary process.

36.1 None

(37) Insofar as applicable, what do you consider are the driving forces behind, or the main causes of, leaks from (i) police press offices and (ii) the police service in general?

37.1 Unable to comment on the police press office as we thankfully have never had that experience. To-date the officers within Cumbria Constabulary that have leaked information have, in my view, done so out of naivety.

(38) To what extent do you believe bribery of police personnel by the media to be a current problem for Cumbria Constabulary (if at all)?

38.1 I am not aware of any issues relating to bribery during my time with the Constabulary.

(39) Do you or, to your knowledge, staff working for the press office, ever give "off-the-record" briefings or have "off-the-record" conversations with the media (both local and national)? If so, please give full details and illustrative examples. Please also explain why they take place and what you consider to be the benefits of such communications.

39.1 Our policy is not to give 'off the record' briefings to the media and these will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

39.2 However, we have undertaken 'confidential pre-sentence briefings'. We only undertake such 'confidential pre-sentence briefings' to the media in exceptional circumstances. For example: Operation Addington followed a drugs seizure with a street value of £14million. This was a complex police operation and investigation with the court case being held in Manchester. This was such a key case for the Constabulary and many of the local journalists could not attend court for the duration of the case. We wanted to ensure that our communities could understand that we can dismantle an organised crime group that was putting a large quantity of drugs on the street.

39.3 The most recent 'confidential pre-sentence briefing' relates to a rape of a 16 year-old female from Carlisle. The offender pleaded guilty. We wanted to, ahead of sentencing, share with the media CCTV footage, family statements and a detailed statement from the SIO for publication after sentencing under strict embargo so the media had time to prepare their coverage. We wanted the community to understand the strength of the victim, the thoroughness of the investigation in bringing the rapist to justice.

39.4 Also, we do provide the media with guidance so that we don't raise the fear of crime unnecessarily. For example: we are investigating a male that has been found deceased in a pool of blood. Our initial stage is to investigate this as a suspicious death and we release a statement to that effect. The media ask for guidance around whether this is likely to be scaled up to a murder investigation or whether it is going to down-graded to 'not suspicious'. Press office are able to give guidance that it is unlikely to be scaled up to a

murder. In turn the media run the story about a suspicious death factually, accurately and without sensation in a less prominent position in their newspaper or broadcast - causing less distress to the family.

(40) Do you or, to your knowledge, staff working for the press office ever confirm information for the media (i.e. information which the media have obtained from other sources) on an "off-the-record" basis? If so, please give details and explain why this is done.

40.1 We would not confirm any information on an 'off-the-record' basis.

(41) Insofar as applicable, what records are kept of the information shared on an "off-the-record" basis? Are records kept of all "off-the-record" briefings and the information provided at them?

41.1 Any information given to the media as guidance is logged into our internal call log software called Solcara.

41.2 Any information and scripts from 'confidential pre-sentencing briefings' are retained.

(42) What do you understand "off-the-record" to mean in this context? Do you believe that members of the media always interpret it this way? Is there scope for the media misunderstanding the intentions of the police officer/police staff member when s/he provides information on an "off-the-record" basis?

42.1 I can best describe 'off-the-record' to mean not for publication.

42.2 When we have held 'confidential pre-sentence briefings', clear documentation has been written up by Press Office for journalists to read, understand and often they are required to sign up to.

(43) What is your view of the practice of police officers and police staff having "off-the-record" communications with the media?

43.1 As Head of Marketing and Communications I would need a great deal of convincing that 'off-the-record briefings' are the right thing to do and what benefit would be obtained especially as this would take us outside our media management policy.

43.2 If we issue guidance to the media my recommendation is that this comes from Press Office which has fully auditable systems and processes.

(44) In your experience, insofar as applicable, where information is provided on an "off-the-record" basis, do the media tend to honour the wishes of the person providing the information? Please give illustrative examples.

44.1 We do not provide the media with 'off-the-record' information.

(45) What was the media strategy for the investigation into the shootings in Whitehaven?

45.1 Further details are provided at paragraph 47 below.

(46) Who set this strategy?

46.1 I set the media strategy which linked into the Gold Commander's Strategy. The initial Gold Commander was Assistant Chief Constable Jerry Graham and he was responsible for setting the overall strategy including appointing the SIO and spokesperson.

(47) What was the goal of the media strategy? What was Cumbria Constabulary seeking to achieve?

(a) The goal of the strategy was to manage our media response to the shootings.

(b) Communicate public safety messages effectively to save life and prevent serious harm being caused to members of the public.

- (c) Provide timely updates to staff and the media in association with other agencies to ensure that public safety is maintained.
- (d) Deter sensationalist reporting by providing accurate and factual information on a timely basis, meeting media deadlines where possible.
- (e) Maintain public confidence in Cumbria Constabulary and the emergency response.
- (f) Reassure members of staff and the community about the effectiveness of the police response.
- (g) Ensure members of staff have access to relevant advice and support if needed

(48) To what extent do you consider that the media strategy was successful in delivering the outcomes for which Cumbria Constabulary was aiming? If the media strategy was not entirely successful, please outline what the issues were. Were any lessons learned incorporated into any force policy, guidance or operating procedures? If so, please specify.

48.1 In my professional opinion the media strategy worked well. The Warning and Informing saved lives that day. We were able to reassure our communities and maintain public confidence. This was supported by no public complaints and public confidence through our satisfaction surveys remained consistent.

48.2 The strategy worked well in terms of the Constabulary communicating important information with the community via the media however the main issues we encountered surrounded the immense pressure that the families of the victims experienced from reporters. The press office worked very closely with Family Liaison Officers and directly with family members throughout the whole incident, funerals and inquests to offer support and prepare them for the amount of media interest in their loved ones deaths. However, the unprecedented level of interest and pressure they faced they found intrusive and highly distressing – so the press office developed links with the Press Complaints Commission for the first time to offer additional support and information.

48.3 The Press Office took part in a number of de-briefs including multi-agency and to-date we have not made any changes to our media management policy. The Policy is due its annual review.

(49) Who directed and controlled police contact and communications with the media?

49.1 I managed our media response and this included the management of contact with the media. On the 2nd June DCC Stuart Hyde was our spokesperson, 3rd June CC Craig Mackey and SIO Iain Goulding, 4th June CC Craig Mackey supported by DCC Hyde, 5th June DCC Hyde.

49.2 All press releases were approved by the Gold Commander or SIO before being released.

49.3 The SIO held a briefing on the 3rd June for all officers involved in the investigation and it was clearly stated that all media contact should be via the Press Office.

(50) What role did the press office have in handling and briefing the media? To your knowledge, what was the media's attitude towards the press office during this investigation? Were they happy for communications to be routed through the press office or did they prefer to speak to individual police personnel?

50.1 The press office was the central and single point of contact for distributing and handling information from the media during the incident. Press officers were on scene, at all press conferences and in the press office at police HQ to manage the release of information to the media. After issuing updates to reporters via email, press officers were handling calls and further queries from journalists. They were also tasked with briefing the media on a regular basis to manage their expectations on what new information to expect

and when. Press officers also accompanied the Constabulary's spokespeople during the incident to offer support and facilitate any interviews.

50.2 There was a noticeable difference between the attitudes of local and national reporters from a press office point of view. This perception was also reflected in feedback officers received from the community. Members of the press office were shocked at the aggression that national journalists showed throughout the duration of the incident – but particularly on scene. Reporters were seen to literally stamp their feet and evade a press officers' personal space, forcing them to take a step back. This made their time managing the media and their increasing demands quite uncomfortable.

50.3 Generally speaking, I think that the media were happy to get information from the press office as we were supplying regular, timely updates and were satisfying their thirst for information. Frustrations from the media came after the incident when reporters – both local and national - wanted to speak to local officers about their experiences. Due to the impending inquests, the international spotlight and subsequent pressure that this would put on the officers who were suffering from shock themselves, a strategic decision was made that only senior, appointed spokespeople would undertake interviews with the media as they had access to the relevant information and press office support.

50.4 Local members of the media did attempt to use their local police officer contacts to get more information or detail than press office was issuing, but they were directed to police press office.

(51) What was the senior investigating officer's role in handling the media?

51.1 The SIO supported the media response by taking part in a press conference along with CC Craig Mackey on 3 June.

51.2 After that day the SIO was integral in providing further information for the media but didn't have any further direct contact.

(52) How were the media briefed? Were briefings confined to open press conferences or were there occasions where reporters/titles were briefed individually or in small groups?

52.1 2 June – DCC Stuart Hyde was our spokesperson in Whitehaven. This was a mixture of press conferences and 1-2-1 interviews.

3 June – CC Craig Mackey and SIO Iain Goulding addressed an open press conference with questions at the end

4 June – CC Craig Mackey addressed an open press conference giving significant details of the incident. Afterwards CC Craig Mackey undertook 1-2-1 interviews with broadcast media and DCC Stuart Hyde spoke directly to all the print media. Reporter's feedback that this had worked well for them. There were more than 100 journalists/

5 June – DCC Stuart Hyde addressed a small number of reporters at a press conference and then gave 1-2-1 interviews.

(53) How were ad hoc enquiries from the media dealt with?

53.1 The ad hoc enquires were dealt with through the Press Office. In general these were answered in the press statements that were being released regularly.

(54) What records were kept of contact with the media? Please explain how contact with the media was recorded, if at all. Were records kept of all information shared with the media? If not, why not?

54.1 Press Office operates a piece of software (Solcara) that allows the details of calls to be logged and the response that has been given. We kept a record of all the information that was released into the public domain. This information can be found on our internet.

54.2 Also, we recorded any press conferences so that we had our own records to check accuracy.

(55) Were there any leaks/unauthorised disclosures to the media in respect of the investigation which were believed to have originated from Cumbria Constabulary? If so please give details and the results of any investigations conducted into the leaks.

55.1 There was only one leak of information in regard to the West Cumbria shootings. An article appeared in the North West Evening Mail that disclosed more details than we had released and quoted an 'investigating officer'. We referred this to our Professional Standards Department. The Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) identified the officer.

55.2 The matter was referred to the Basic Command Unit and they gave the officer formal advice about data security and confidentiality.

(56) Was any of the contact between the media and you, or to your knowledge, any press office staff, in relation to the investigation into the shootings on an "off-the-record" basis? If so, please give full particulars, including details of the information provided.

56.1 The Crime Reporters Association asked for an 'off-the-record' conversation. This was not considered as whilst the incident was an investigation it was not a live criminal investigation as the perpetrator had committed suicide and as such we were releasing all new information as soon as it had been confirmed to all the media. Together with that we don't undertake 'off-the-record' or exclusives.

56.2 I spoke to a local newspaper editor about the request from the CRA and to ascertain his professional view about exclusive 'off-the-record' conversations with this group of reporters. The editor asked that they be included in any discussions as they wanted to have consistent access to information irrespective of being a national or local journalist.

56.3 In 2011, ahead of the Inquests the SIO and I attended a meeting with two local newspaper editors to give guidance on the structure of the inquest, an outline of the additional information that would be released and some of the sensitive issues to the families. It was felt important to do this as the local media is extremely well read and we wanted to make sure that they understood the important facts. I do not consider this to be an 'off-the-record' briefing.

(57) Did you, or to your knowledge, any press office staff confirm any information to the media, relating to the investigation into the shootings, on an "off-the-record" basis? If so, please give details and explain why this was done.

57.1 I did not to my knowledge confirm any information to the media.

(58) Insofar as applicable, where information was provided on an "off-the-record" basis, did the media honour your wishes/the wishes of the person providing the information? Please give illustrative examples.

58.1 We do not provide 'off-the-record' information.

(59) Did you, or to your knowledge, other police personnel ask the media or any individual reporter(s) to keep confidential particular information relating to the investigation into the shootings (including information obtained by the media/reporter(s) from non-police sources)? If so, did the media or the individual reporter(s) comply with the request? Please give details of the circumstances concerned.

59.1 We did not.

(60) In your experience when police officers/staff ask the media to delay publishing particular information because of the risk of prejudice to a criminal investigation or future criminal trial, to what extent and in what circumstances do the media comply with the request? Please give illustrative examples.

60.1 There is one example of a 'confidential pre-sentencing briefing' where the local media were incredibly supportive. This involved an individual being found guilty after a sex attack and not publishing their picture. I can't disclose any further details as this is still an active investigation.

(61) In your experience, when police officers/staff ask the media not to publish particular information at all because of the risk of harm to the public interest, to what extent and in what circumstances do the media comply with the request? Please give illustrative examples.

61.1 On the few occasions that this has happened the media have been very supportive. For example, changes to a front office counter service that had not been agreed.

(62) Have there been occasions where, to your knowledge, the media have obtained information (from whatever source) and voluntarily not published the information because of the harm it might do the public interest or the interests of justice? Please give examples of the circumstances in which this has occurred.

62.1 This happens rarely. The only example of this happening was when a local journalist came into possession of some information that may have prejudiced an investigation if it was published.

62.2 The journalist had visited a crime scene and found a business card identifying a key individual in the investigation. As a result of a conversation between the journalist and the SIO the decision was made not to publish.

(63) What limitations, if any, do you consider there should be on police officers and police staff leaving the police service to work for the media and vice versa?

63.1 I don't think there should be any limitations and that we should trust the integrity of our staff. I appreciate that there have been times when this integrity has fallen down but we should not place limitations on a few cases.

63.2 My experience is that ex-journalists with the right training and support make good press officers. And when press officers leave the organisation they take with them a good understanding of how the police service works and can share the good practise. Although to-date no press officers have returned to journalism.

(64) In relation to dealing with the media in general, do you consider that there is a basis for applying different standards and rules to police staff from those that apply to police officers (the latter having the powers of the office of constable). If so, (i) do you consider that different standards and rules should apply and (ii) please specify what you consider the differences should be.

64.1 In my opinion in dealing with the media the same standards consistently should be in place for both police officers and police staff. We actively encourage our PCSOs who are police staff to engage with the media to demonstrate the work that they are doing with the community to address their issues.

(65) What is your view of the recommendations contained in the HMIC's recent report "*Without Fear or Favour*" insofar as they concern relations between the media and the police? (If you have not seen it, the report is available online).

65.1 Presently, I am working with the Head of Professional Standards and the Director of Personnel to address the actions required from the report. Whilst, the work is only in the very early stages I will be looking to strengthen our training and polices around integrity, hospitality and ensure that systems are auditable.

(66) What is your view of the recommendations contained in Elizabeth Filkin's report "*The Ethical Issues Arising from the Relationship Between Police and Media*"? (If you have not seen it, the report is available online).

66.1 My review that it a comprehensive report with sensible recommendations for a very complex and high profile organisation.

(67) Do you consider that there are different or further steps which could *and/or* should be taken to ensure that relationships between police personnel and the media are and remain appropriate?

67.1 Given the events over the last 12 months I will be taking the opportunity to review the way that we engage with the media and social media as a police service. The CAG guidelines should be reviewed and developed to ensure that there is a consistent approach to dealing with the media across the police service.

I believe the facts in this witness statement are true:

Signed:

Dated: 28/2/12