

L. L. Byrne
11 January 2012
1st
Exhibit LLB 1

IN THE MATTER OF THE LEVESON INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF LISA LORRAINE BYRNE

I, **LISA LORRAINE BYRNE**, Editor of OK! Magazine, of The Northern and Shell Building, Number 10 Lower Thames Street, London, EC3R 6EN, **WILL SAY AS FOLLOWS:**

- A. I am the Editor of OK! Magazine. I make this statement in response to a request of the Leveson Inquiry (the "Inquiry") pursuant to a letter to the solicitors for Northern & Shell dated 16 December 2011.
- B. I confirm that all matters in this statement are true and, unless I specify to the contrary, are based upon my own knowledge and a review of the relevant documents. Where matters are not within my own knowledge, I state the source and believe the same to be true.
- C. For convenience, I have reproduced as subheadings the questions asked of me in the 16 December letter.

Who you are and a brief summary of your career history in the media.

- 1. I began my career in journalism in 1994 as the editor of the Northallerton, Thirsk and Bedale Times. I left that job in 1995 and, upon arriving in London, began work at the Haringey Advertiser. I then briefly freelanced for a number of national titles, including the Sunday People, Sunday Mirror, and the Mail on Sunday. In 1999 I joined OK! Magazine as a freelancer. I was then taken on

as a writer, and was promoted to Senior Writer, Features Editor, then Deputy Editor in turn, before becoming Editor of the magazine in 2004.

How do you understand the system of corporate governance to work in practice at the Magazine where you were/are employed with particular emphasis on systems to ensure lawful, professional and ethical conduct.

2. By way of overview, I consider that OK! Magazine is different to other magazines and tabloid newspapers. The majority of stories/articles in OK! are interviews with celebrities which are given by consent and for which the celebrity is paid. We also have bought-in interviews, celebrity features, news round-ups and celebrity columns. We do not specialize in the celebrity exposes, nor do we set out to promote unsubstantiated gossip; our Magazine specializes instead in showcasing celebrity weddings, or celebrating the birth of children for example.
3. We talk to celebrities or their agents directly, and ask them if we can do a story. If we hear of an interesting development, we will approach the relevant person and offer a fee. We have strong working relationships with agents, and the agent and celebrity is actively involved in the story making process. We negotiate with the agent or celebrity before we do the interview and they often have picture and copy approval rights. Once the celebrity is satisfied we go to press.
4. Where OK! magazine features celebrity news, those stories are often short, and are taken from other publications, their websites, and celebrity tweets. Such stories are checked by our sub-editors who will raise any concerns with me or my senior editors. I am aware of almost every story that goes into the magazine. My senior editors will final read the content of the magazine before it goes to press to ensure accuracy and that it is appropriate for our readership. If they have any concerns they will raise them with me. In addition, the Legal Department reviews the stories before they go to press.

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

5. We do not have any magazine specific codes of practice. However our journalists are required to follow the PCC's Editor's Code of Practice.
6. I consider it a part of my remit to ensure that my team follow the Editor's Code and abide by all relevant laws, rules, and requirements. I successfully completed the NCTJ (National Council for the Training of Journalists) course which included media law and ethics. Of course, the legal team at OK! Magazine also have a role. They review the content of the magazine before it goes to press. They will call me, or my senior editors, or the Chief Sub Editor, to discuss any issues. I am very clear on the lines that can and cannot be crossed; I am very careful about what goes into the magazine.
7. Upon commencing a role at the magazine new reporters will also undergo a briefing from the Features Editor about our practices at the magazine and the Code of Practice. We are a celebrity friendly magazine. It is therefore essential that our interactions with celebrities are particularly respectful. Further, we have a fairly small team at the magazine. There are 9 in-house journalists and three long term freelancers working on producing content for the magazine. It is therefore quite easy for me to keep control of my staff and be aware of all that is going on.

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

8. The policies I put in place, and the Editor's Code, are strictly adhered to. The journalists here know that adhering to strict codes of practice is a requirement of their job. Our relationship with celebrities depends upon it.

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

9. No. There is no reason for our practices to change. OK! Magazine has never been involved in phone hacking and I am proud of our policies and procedures, the way we adhere to them, and our working relationships with celebrities.

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

10. As I have stated above, the majority of stories in OK! Magazine are consensual interviews given by celebrities. Those stories are sourced directly from celebrities or their agents, and as they have a strong active role in the final product we can be confident about the information put into our magazine. We very rarely use sources. In the event that the story has been sourced from the weekly news, that story will nevertheless be checked by my team and will then be seen by the Sub Editors, the Deputy Editor, and the Legal Department.

To what extent an editor is aware, and should be aware, of the sources of the information which make up the central stories featured in your magazine each day (including the method by which the information was obtained).

11. My senior editors and I are aware of the source of every piece of information that goes into the magazine.

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.

12. Ethics has a strong influence upon the way we work at OK! Magazine. As the Editor it is my role to tell my staff where to draw the line. Again however, most of our stories are obtained directly from the celebrities themselves and as such we are not often confronted with a situation where I feel that something should be changed, or a piece of information withheld. On occasion we are contacted by people selling salacious stories on celebrities and rather than running the stories I have alerted the celebrities' agents.

To what extent have you, as an editor, felt any financial and/or commercial pressure from the proprietors of your magazine or anyone else, and whether any such pressure affected any of the decisions you made as editor (such evidence to be limited to matters covered by the Terms of Reference).

13. Of course I feel pressure in my job from the proprietor of my magazine to make OK! Magazine the biggest selling publication of its type. However I do not think that any pressure that has been felt has ever been exerted inappropriately nor has any pressure I have felt affected any ethical decision I have made. Again, the nature of our magazine means that there is no pressure to push a particular story as we receive most of our stories direct from celebrities.

The extent to which you, as an editor, had a financial incentive to print exclusive stories (NB. It is not necessary to state your precise earnings.)

14. I have a financial incentive in that I am entitled to receive a relatively small bonus payment if certain profit figures for the magazine are achieved but this does not influence the ethical decisions I make. A copy of my contract of employment is at Exhibit LLB1.

Whether, to the best of your knowledge, your magazine 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 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 (NB. You are not required to identify individuals, either within your magazine or otherwise.)

15. At OK! Magazine we never use private investigators, nor have we ever paid the police or public officials for information.

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).

16. This question is not applicable.

If there was such a policy/protocol, was it followed, and if not, what practice was followed in respect of all these matters?

17. This question is not applicable.

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?

18. This question is not applicable.

The extent to which you are aware of protocols or policies operating at your magazine in relation to expenses or remuneration paid to other external sources of information (whether actually commissioned by your magazine or not). There is no need for you to cover "official" sources, such as the Press Association.

The practice of your magazine in relation to payment of expenses and/or remuneration paid to other external sources of information (whether actually commissioned by your magazine or not). There is no need for you to cover "official" sources, such as the Press Association.

19. For convenience, I answer these two questions together. As above, we deal directly with agents or celebrities themselves. If we make an arrangement with a celebrity for a photo shoot, or for an interview, we will negotiate directly with the celebrity or their agent and make a payment to them. We do source our pictures from picture agencies however, and will pay them according to their terms and conditions. Other than that, we do not pay external sources.

Anything else which you consider will assist the Chairman to arrive at considered conclusions on any aspect of the Terms of Reference, set out above.

20. At OK! Magazine we are reliant upon our relationship with celebrities in order to publish the magazine. This relationship is borne out of the trust that we have built up with them and it is paramount that we do not act in any way to damage that relationship. That is why celebrities continue to work with us.

STATEMENT OF TRUTH

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

LISA LORRAINE BYRNE

Dated: 11 January 2012

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WITNESS STATEMENT OF
LISA LORRAINE BYRNE

rosenblattsolicitors

9-13 St Andrew Street
London EC4A 3AF
DX: LDE 493
Tel: (020) 7955 0880
Fax: (020) 7955 0888
Ref: AF/EXP9-95

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EXHIBIT LLB 1 TO THE
WITNESS STATEMENT OF
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