

**IN THE MATTER OF THE LEVESON INQUIRY PURSUANT TO
THE INQUIRIES ACT 2005**

**FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF LAWRENCE
ABRAMSON**


Lawrence Abramson, of will say as follows:

1. I make this statement in response to a Notice under section 21(2) of the Inquiries Act 2005 ("the Notice") from the Leveson Inquiry ("the Inquiry") dated 22 August 2011 (received 23 August 2011).
2. The Notice sets out issues (1) – (6) which I am required to address in this statement.
3. I have provided written evidence to the House of Commons Culture, Media & Sport Select Committee ("the Select Committee") about my dealings with News International Ltd ("News") on the subject of "phone hacking". My letter to the Select Committee dated 24 August 2011 is attached hereto and marked "LHA1". In that letter I have referred to the letter dated 11 August 2011 from Harbottle & Lewis LLP to the Select Committee and so for the sake of completeness, that letter is attached hereto and marked "LHA2". These 2 letters provide a detailed explanation of the limited nature of the work which News instructed Harbottle & Lewis LLP to do and so I do not consider it necessary to repeat that information again in this witness statement unless of course the Inquiry wishes me to do so.
4. In respect of the specific issues raised in the Notice, I respond as follows (the paragraphs in bold are the issues as set out in the Notice):-
5. **(1) Who you are and a brief summary of your career history as a lawyer and, in particular as a media lawyer.**
6. I am a solicitor of the Senior Courts of England and Wales. I trained as an articled clerk at what was then called Bernard Sheridan & Co (now called Sheridans) from 1986 to 1988. In September 1988, I joined what was then called Denton Hall Burgin (now SNR Denton) where I practised as a solicitor in their litigation department. I joined Harbottle & Lewis LLP as a senior associate in September 1996 and became a partner with effect from 1 September 1998. I left Harbottle & Lewis at the end of May 2010 and joined Fladgate LLP. With the exception of three months whilst I was an articled clerk at Bernard Sheridan & Co, I have spent my entire professional career practising in litigation and the vast majority of that in the media and entertainment industries.
7. I have for a number of years represented News and its various subsidiaries. I no longer have access to any of my files at Harbottle & Lewis LLP so I cannot state with absolute precision when I started to work for News, but I would guess that it would have been around 2000/2001.
8. **(2) The scope of the firm's retainer in relation to News International Ltd.**

9. I refer to my letter to the Select Committee at exhibit "LHA1" and the letter from Harbottle & Lewis LLP to the Select Committee at "LHA2" which set out in detail the firm's retainer in relation to News.
10. **(3) Whether you or Harbottle & Lewis LLP have ever been asked to advise upon the legality of methods of obtaining information including (but not limited to) phone hacking, computer hacking and "blagging"? If so, please give the best particulars that you can about who sought the advice, when, in what context and the advice that you gave (please see the penultimate paragraph of this notice in relation to legal privilege).**
11. I have never been asked to advise News on such matters. I am not aware that Harbottle & Lewis LLP has ever advised News on such matters
12. **(4) Whether you or Harbottle & Lewis LLP have ever been asked to advise upon the legality of paying public servants (including police constables) for information either in cash or kind. If so, please give the best particulars that you can about who sought the advice, when, in what context and the advice that you gave (please see the penultimate paragraph of this notice in relation to legal privilege).**
13. I have never been asked to advise News on such matters. I am not aware that Harbottle & Lewis LLP has ever advised News on such matters.
14. **(5) Whether, to the best of your knowledge, News International Ltd 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 (NB. You are not required to identify individuals, either within the media company or otherwise).**
15. I do not have firsthand knowledge of any payments of the kind referred to above. I am aware from information in the public domain that Clive Goodman had paid a private investigator (Glen Mulcaire) for information. The only other knowledge I have is from reading the emails on the file of Harbottle & Lewis LLP which are referred to in the letter at "LHA2". The Metropolitan Police Service has confirmed that these emails can be provided to the Inquiry and accordingly they are attached hereto and marked "LHA3".
16. **(6) Whether you have played any role in or given any advice in relation to any internal inquiry by News International Ltd into phone hacking and/or computer hacking and/or "blagging" and/or bribery and/or corruption? If so, please set out your role, input and the outcome of the investigation.**
17. My role and advice was limited to the retainer as set out in "LHA1" and "LHA2". Other than that I did not play any role in or give any advice in relation to any internal inquiry by News into phone hacking and/or computer hacking and/or "blagging" and/or bribery and/or corruption.
18. I attach hereto and marked "LHA4" a copy of the Harbottle & Lewis LPP retainer letter dated 14 May 2007 addressed to Jon Chapman at News.
19. As set out above I did not provide advice to News about the legality of phone hacking, computer hacking, "blagging", bribery, corruption, or about any investigation by or on behalf of News of these subjects and so I do not have any attendance notes of such

advice. My advice was limited to the matters set out in the letters at "LHA1" and "LHA2".

20. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed: .....
Lawrence Abramson

Dated: 2 September 2011

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**FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF
LAWRENCE ABRAMSON**

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