

The Leveson Inquiry

Witness Statement for Part 1, Module 1

WITNESS STATEMENT OF ANNE DIAMOND

I, **Anne Diamond**, c/o Collyer Bristow LLP, 4 Bedford Row, London, WC1R 4DF will say as follows:

Documents
referred to

1. I make this statement in connection with my role as a Core Participant in the Leveson Inquiry.
2. For the purposes of this statement, a small paginated bundle of documents has been prepared marked "AD1". Where I refer to page numbers in this statement, I am referring to pages in "AD1".

Background

3. I am a journalist and broadcaster. I began my career as a reporter on regional newspapers and in the late 70s I moved into TV as a news presenter on the ATV programme ATV Today/Central News based in Birmingham. In 1983 I was catapulted into a very high profile role in the media in this country when I became the anchor of the UK's new breakfast show TVam. For the first few months, I was treated simply as that – famous yes, but simply because I was a young female journalist in a very high profile job. I have worked in newspapers, TV and radio ever since. I am the mother of five children, one of whom died of cot death – which will be referred to later.

Murdoch: The Mogul who Screwed the News (Channel 4)

4. Earlier this year I was asked to participate in a documentary that covered the phone hacking scandal and in particular focussed upon Rupert Murdoch's journalistic methods and character.

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5. During my interview for the documentary, the interviewer, Jaques Perretti, confirmed that he had conducted an interview with Rupert Murdoch's former butler, Phillip Townsend. In this interview Mr Townsend had described how he had once heard Rupert Murdoch call a number of his Newspaper Editors to tell them his views of me.
6. I had never heard of Mr Townsend before that interview nor have I ever met nor spoken to him.
7. The interview with Mr Townsend features in the documentary. I attach a copy of the documentary and recommend to the Inquiry that they watch all of it – not just the interviews that concern me.
8. During Mr Townsend's interview he recalls Mr Murdoch saying in the early 80's to his editors "do you know this woman Diamond? She was very rude to me the other night, about me destroying people's lives". The way it is described in the documentary is that Murdoch's call to his editors left them in no doubt that they were to "go after" me.
9. The occasion I was supposedly "rude" to Mr Murdoch was at an event commemorating the 200th anniversary of the Times. I do not recall whether it was at this particular event or in a more formal interview in the TV studio that I asked him how he could justify his newspapers pursuing people to the extent that it ruined their lives. Mr Townsend describes my question to Murdoch as "do you enjoy ruining people's lives?" I do recall asking something similar to Murdoch, something like "how do you sleep at night knowing your papers ruin people's lives?" I wanted to ask this question because I was horrified by the behaviour of some of his newspapers such as the Sun and the News of the World – I believed that Murdoch papers were intent on ruining people's lives. I particularly recall being appalled how Princess Diana was being hounded and consistently misrepresented and Elton John was being targeted at the time, as if they would not be satisfied until he killed himself. I am sure I would not have been rude to Mr Murdoch but perhaps, being young and naive, I was precocious. I do remember him answering that if people sought publicity then they could not protest that they had a

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right to privacy. He also said something akin to "my newspapers do not ruin people's lives, people ruin their own lives."

10. I was shocked when I heard that Mr Murdoch had, after our exchange, spoken to his editors about me. The implication was very plain – that he had implied they should attack me in their papers. This did, in hindsight however, make some sense of why I received such hostile and intrusive coverage in the Murdoch tabloids afterwards. I was subjected to prurient interest from his newspapers. They went into my past and dug up facts about me which were extremely painful when distorted, misrepresented or taken out of context.
11. The extent to which Mr Murdoch's view of me was taken as a green light to attack me and my family can be demonstrated to some extent in the publications below (although they are only limited examples and do not demonstrate the day in, day out, coverage). Having asked that one question of Murdoch, I was hounded and vilified on newspaper front pages for many years. The effect upon me and my family truly cannot be overstated. In my view it demonstrates a part of the press with neither conscience nor human values.

Press Coverage

12. The documentary states that three weeks after my exchange with Mr Murdoch, my romantic relationship with the man who was to become my husband for 10 years and father of our five children (Mike Hollingsworth) was exposed by the Sun. This started the incessant intrusion into my private family life. The next 20 years were marked with one horrible, unnecessary and upsetting story after another:
13. I had, years earlier in 1980 and before I was nationally known and working on a local TV station in Birmingham, been involved in a tragic car accident which was not my fault (indeed the coroner had made a point of saying so at the time – extracts from the Press Council ruling below).
In 1987, seven years later and out of the blue, (and at a time when I was pregnant with my first child, and therefore big news at the time), The Sun printed a front page entitled:
"ANNE DIAMOND KILLED MY FATHER."

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This article covered almost the entire front page of The Sun. When I saw that front page, I was utterly terrified. I thought the world would believe I was a murderer. I was a young mother and a good person, and suddenly I was afraid for my reputation, my good name, my job and even my safety. It still hurts that the damage caused to me by this article was never put to rights.

14. The article was, however, reported to the Press Council. The Press Council ruling found The Sun had "devoted its front page to raking up a seven year old tragedy under a wholly misleading headline". The Press Council further said: "It was an irresponsible and grievous intrusion into privacy".
15. Furthermore the Press Council said; "The newspaper has tried to defend its conduct by asserting that a person in public life has to take the slings and arrows of press publicity. Such an absolute proposition is unacceptable. Its headline "TV's Anne Diamond Killed My Father" while literally true and a quotation, was both misleading and inappropriate."
16. The Sun, however, sought to justify its actions through Thomas Crone, their deputy legal manager who told the Press Council that: "Miss Diamond had a high profile position which owed much to her own efforts at self publicity."
17. "He said she was a legitimate subject of public interest and must expect more than usual coverage of her background in the media."
18. The Press Council ruling was reported months later in The Sun, without apology, and at the bottom of a page deep inside the newspaper, as opposed to the positioning of the original article, which was the front page lead.
19. At the time of the publication of the article "Anne Diamond Killed My Father" I was horrified that The Sun had for apparently no reason other than prurient sensationalism delved back into my past, found an old inquest report that included me, tracked down the son of the man who had died, interviewed him about how he felt about me, and then printed an entire front page devoted to the incident and his remarks.
20. I was both shocked and very frightened that such a misrepresentation of the truth would result in hostile public

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feeling towards me. I was terrified that people, and perhaps even my employers, would turn against me in the belief that I had done something wrong. I was also deeply upset that, despite the Press Council ruling, my character still felt assassinated.

21. In late 1986 I became pregnant for the first time, but before I had told even my parents, I suffered an emergency and had to undergo an ultrasound scan to determine whether or not the pregnancy was still intact. I was told that it was touch-and-go, and that I should go home and get bed rest. Within hours of the scan, a journalist from the News of the World called me and said: "We're going to run a story in tomorrow's paper that you are pregnant – do you confirm or deny?" I was flustered and upset – and actually didn't know myself whether I was holding onto the pregnancy or not. I found myself in an impossible situation. To confirm would have been possibly inaccurate and anyway it was a gross intrusion of my privacy. I was not ready to tell the world. I had not yet told my parents. A "no comment" would have been interpreted as a licence to print whatever they wanted. So I "chose" to deny. The News of the World printed the story anyway – and when I later was indeed pregnant, they chose to call me a liar for many months afterwards.

Such was the climate of the time. The tabloid newspapers felt they had the moral right to know even the most private aspect of a well known person's life and then ask questions to which there was no satisfactory answer, and certainly no answer that would stop them printing what they wanted to print anyway.

22. I gave birth to my first child in a London hospital. While I was actually in labour, the hospital's security chief came into the birthing room to warn us all to be wary of strangers, as they had just caught a Sun reporter in the corridors looking for me, and impersonating a doctor. Our home and the hospital were besieged by the paparazzi and me, Mike and my newborn son [redacted] had to leave the hospital in a laundry van in order to maintain our privacy. Despite our efforts we were chased and hounded on our journey home and had to enter our house by sneaking through a roof entrance.

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23. The Sun newspaper "bought up" my first children's nanny. After several weeks, I decided to terminate her employment – and this was achieved amicably. However, as she was preparing to move out of my flat, I was rung by a journalist from The Sun who told me that he had just bought her story – and what was my reaction? I was shocked, as I had thought she and I were still on reasonable terms – indeed she was still living with us. When she returned home, I asked her what had happened and she told me a Sun reporter whom she had met on many occasions (as he had so often been outside our front door) had offered her £30,000 for a story about our private lives with our new baby. I had no idea my nanny (and my child) had been exposed to such journalists almost as an every day occurrence). The journalist, [redacted] sought to obtain details from her of petty marital squabbles and other intrusive and unpleasant details of our private home life.

I reminded her that her job with me was confidential, and after a discussion, she agreed to ring the reporter and tried to pull out of the deal. He told her they would print everything she'd already told them anyway, and they refused to honour the payment to her. Both she and I were distraught. We both felt, from our different perspectives, that we had been abused.

24. My husband Mike then went before a judge in chambers that night and succeeded in gaining an injunction on The Sun to prevent publication. We were told they had to stop the presses rolling and remove the story – a costly process. The presses were indeed stopped, but not before some editions of The Sun were printed and distributed.

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25. Our solicitor confirmed that he had been told by News International that they would never forgive us for stopping the presses.

26. Several days later, Murdoch went ahead and printed the whole story in another News International paper, Today, instead.

27. Because of our horrendous experience with journalists during [redacted] birth, we decided to fly to Australia for the birth of our second child to get some calm and privacy from the press.

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Our efforts were foiled by The Sun who went to the extraordinary step of hiring an Australian photographer and installing him in our next door neighbour's house. This photographer took unflattering photographs of me in a towelling robe having emerged from a swimming pool. This was published in the Sun alongside a comment that I had "let myself go" – Headline "Has Anne Diamond lost her sparkle?" I was nearly 9 months pregnant and enjoying total privacy in my own back garden.

28. In December 1987, when I bought a new house, (the subject of the attached cutting from The Sun) the Today newspaper (Murdoch owned) got a copy of the house brochure from the estate agent and printed the details in full, including measurements, description of windows and doors etc – which was not only a gross invasion of privacy but also a burglar's charter. Indeed, I felt I had already been effectively burgled and was most distressed. At enormous expense, I had to employ security guards to live in my house when I was sent away for three months to Australia to broadcast. Page 4
29. Perhaps the most shocking episode was following the tragic death of our baby son, Sebastian, in 1991. Sebastian was a victim of "cot death". Within an hour of me finding Sebastian dead, the media were on our doorstep. There were so many photographers and journalists outside our front door that our local priest said he was too scared to brave them, and he turned away. My agent was inundated with phone calls and when he came to our house to try to help he spotted a photographer sitting on our back wall attempting to photograph us in our back garden. The press were massed outside our house and on one occasion a journalist forced herself through our front door on the pretence of delivering a bunch of flowers. She was ejected by the police.
30. Following a post mortem, we arranged for Sebastian's funeral. The Today newspaper printed a story, 'Hand in hand, Anne and Mike say a lonely goodbye', which featured a photograph of Mike and me on our way to the funeral parlour. We had no idea we were being tailed at the time of possibly our greatest private grief and despair. Page 5

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31. The press scrutiny was intense and having seen how the press had mobbed Eric Clapton's child's funeral, we were anxious that it be a private affair. It should go without saying, but it was obviously a highly traumatic time for Mike and me in any event. We wrote personally to every Fleet Street editor begging them to stay away from the small, private family funeral. Despite our express wishes at this most sensitive time, one photographer attended, whom we later learned was a freelance. The Sun subsequently bought and ran the picture of myself, my husband and our son's coffin, all over its front page the next day.
32. This seemed to us to be a very great violation of privacy and a gross intrusion into private grief.
33. The Sun newspaper sought to justify the use of the picture by running a simple appeal for funds into cot death research at the bottom of the page. But they prefaced the words with "Anne's plea", which implied I had sanctioned their words and their use of the photograph, when I had made no such plea.
34. Several days later, we were approached by [redacted] [redacted] who met with us to discuss how The Sun could help us raise more funds into cot death research. Reluctantly and hesitantly we met him. He told us that together with my fame and The Sun's huge circulation, we could reach an enormous amount of people and raise a great deal of money. When at first we seemed hesitant, he told us that if we didn't join with them, they would do it anyway, and we might look bad for failing to support them. This felt like blackmail. However, upon reflection, we did agree that with their massive circulation, we could achieve a great deal. So we went ahead and created a fund raising campaign.
35. However, we were shocked to be put in this position so closely following the trauma of having lost a child. It was indicative of how tabloid newspapers behaved and how their editors manipulated people into playing by their rules – rules which in any other circumstances would be considered utterly grotesque.
36. There is no doubt in my mind that the Sun's decision to support this charity was a cynical attempt to justify the

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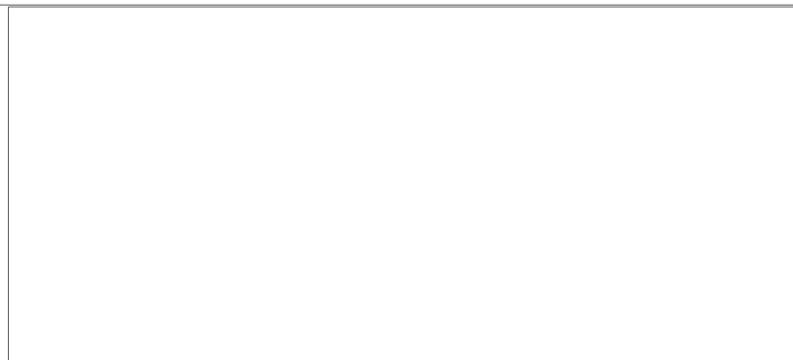
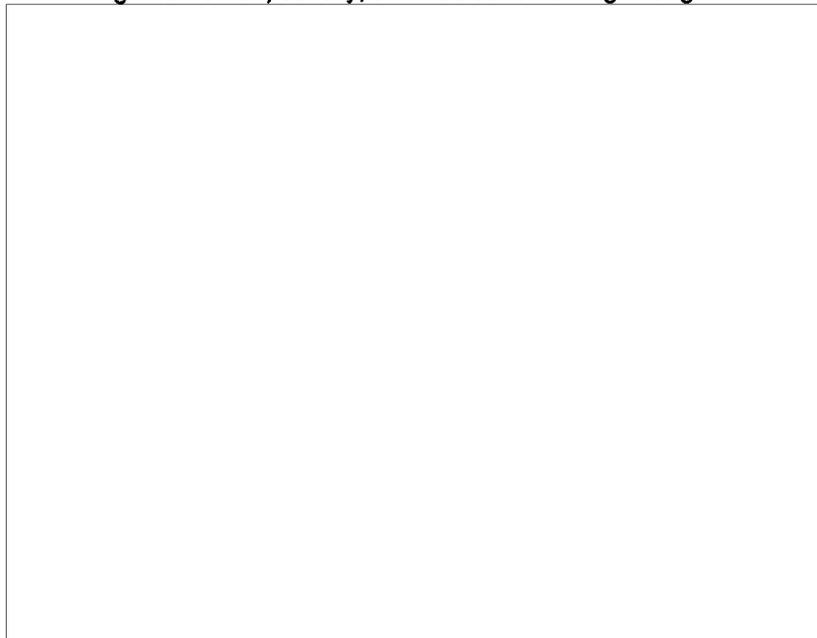
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- publication of the photograph, to maintain our exclusive support and to keep us away from any other paper. I have since been an active supporter of The Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths and have worked to raise awareness of cot death and the risk reduction campaign.
37. Once we agreed to co-operate with the Sun, we then found ourselves accused publicly by several other papers of always having had a relationship with The Sun, and of asking the other papers to stay away from the funeral in order to allow The Sun exclusive access.
38. This shows, I feel, how journalists at the time, and actively encouraged by the actions particularly of the Murdoch tabloids, saw news events and even tragedies as nothing more than an opportunity for exploitation.
39. I became so used to the reporting into my private life that I almost became numb to it. I always assumed that information was being leaked even from professionals and acquaintances. This makes you suspicious and wary. On many occasions my family, friends and I would find someone rooting through our rubbish bins, and would suspect that it was a journalist. We almost expected it. And then, if they confronted you with a hitherto private piece of information, you almost accepted that they had the right to ask you about it. This, I feel, is how we allowed our values as a society to be warped by the twisted morals of the Murdoch press.
40. We have become a society where we almost believe that, if you are famous, you deserve anything and everything the press throw at you.
41. That if you take part in an innocuous photo shoot for Hello magazine (or any other) – say for a Xmas family photo - then your private life is open season.
42. That you are famous only because a newspaper has made you famous – and that you are therefore obliged to them for your very success. This has become perceived as the truth yet it is far from so. I became well-known because my TV programme reached 14 million viewers over the week – a circulation hugely more numerous than the circulation of any national newspaper.

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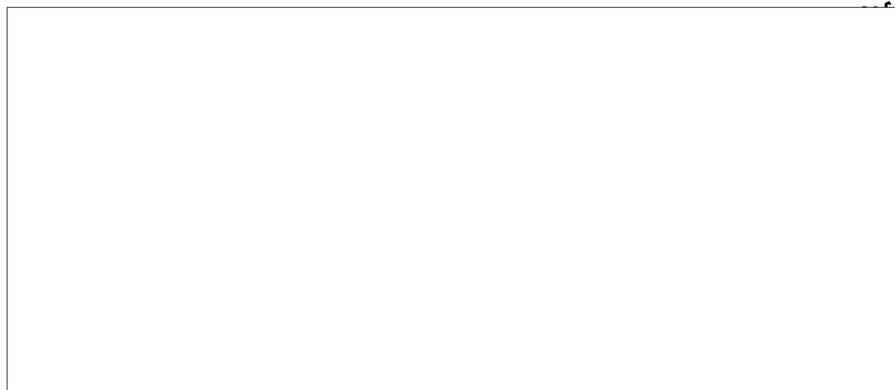
43. On the contrary, newspapers used celebrities to sell their newspapers. Of course, in many cases it is a symbiotic relationship BUT does not justify gross press intrusion nor inaccuracy, misrepresentation or plain lies.
44. I am a working journalist. I was trained on newspapers before going into radio and TV. I have written columns for all of the major tabloid newspapers, hoping that perhaps being part of them would stop their excesses at least with regards to my private life. But this has not stopped them.
45. Through my career newspaper journalists have pursued my family, and wrote upsetting stories about them. For instance, when my sister, who was a hairdresser, had to terminate the employment of one of her stylists, the newspaper (either the Sun or the News of the World) ran an interview with the employee. The article denigrated my sister in the most hurtful and untrue terms. My sister is a private person, has never sought fame nor publicity, and had done nothing wrong.

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Conclusion

47. I have not been contacted by the police in relation to phone hacking, however I have recently asked my lawyer to check with the police as to whether they have any information that would suggest that my voicemail has been hacked. To me, hacking is symptomatic of the sad state that tabloid journalism had reached– it had become an environment in which those working for and running these newspapers seemed to have lost any idea of what is acceptable and what is simply immoral.
48. Without confirmation from Murdoch himself or one of his editors at the time, I cannot be sure to what extent the reporting of me and my family was the product of a calculated agenda, as suggested by the documentary. What is not in doubt however is that the coverage was persistent, cruel, grossly intrusive and enormously damaging and hurtful. At the time, it did indeed feel as though I was being targeted, and that journalists were going out of their way on what they call “fishing expeditions” to find out anything they could that may be damaging about me or my family.
49. I feel that we at last have a chance now to examine some outrageous practices which had become common practice by default (and through the warped values of some of the tabloid press) and ask what sort of journalists we want in Britain.
50. Do we want journalists who, instead of using the finest practices of investigative journalism, instead hire private investigators to stalk, covertly film and even listen into private phone conversations and messages?
51. Do we really approve of such “fishing expeditions” – where a paper decides to target a person, and trawls through their

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private past in the hope of digging up something titillating or destructive - something which is not relevant to what that person is doing, or being, now? And which is ultimately private?

That's surely a grotesque intrusion into privacy and is it really journalism?

52. This is where I hope my contributions may help in the ensuing debate in this important inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

DATED the 11th day of November 2011

[Redacted signature area]

Anne Diamond

[Redacted name area]