

RESTRICTED

THE LEVESON INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF BARONESS HOLLINS

I, BARONESS HOLLINS will say as follows:-

1. Further to the evidence that I have already given to your inquiry, I wish to share an experience which may be relevant to module 3 and relates to an article that was an exhibit in my earlier testimony. I have also read the testimony of Paul Dacre and the comments he made about my evidence.

I cannot allow all of his assertions to go unchallenged but will focus my response on just one issue, namely the article published by the Daily Mail on 12th November, 2005.

2. In his evidence, Mr Dacre said that he exposed my son, a vulnerable adult, to risk by printing his name and photograph because it was a 'heartwarming story'. His justification was that it was already in the public domain because the court case about my son's own assault had been held in an open court (actually several years earlier). The so-called 'heartwarming story' contained many inventions (for example, supposed conversations and visits by my son to my daughter in hospital, when in reality he rarely visited because of the distance and his disability, and had a very limited understanding of what had happened to her). It also made an incredible attempt to link the attacks on my two children - quite a disturbing thing to see in the press.

This is exactly the sort of problem with the attitude and culture of the press which I, and many others, hope your inquiry will bring to an end through the introduction of a stronger regulatory system.

3. However, other recent revelations about payments to public servants reminded me of my concerns about the origin of this story. There were things in the story that could only have come from 1 or 2 sources and one of these was the Department of Health. A senior civil servant alerted me to the possibility, without any prompting from me, that he thought it could have come from the Department of Health, because a paper briefing about my son had recently been circulated within the Department (the reason for this briefing remains a mystery). The article was a very unwelcome further intrusion into my private family life. At this time I was somewhat in the public domain as President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, which was opposing draft mental health legislation being debated in Parliament.

4. The civil servant arranged for me to meet the Secretary of State to discuss this possibility. There are no notes of this private meeting, which was not attended by any civil servants. Mrs. Hewitt said that she thought it was a leak from her Department and apologised. She denied knowing who initiated the leak but I recall her saying that it was one of four leaks that month.

Statement of Truth

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

DATED the day *9th July 2012*

SIGNED:

Sheila Professor the Baroness Hollins