

THE LEVESON INQUIRY INTO THE  
CULTURE, PRACTICES AND ETHICS OF THE PRESS

SUPPLEMENTARY WITNESS STATEMENT OF JOHN MULLIN

I, JOHN MULLIN of Independent Print Limited, 2 Derry Street, London W8 5HF, WILL SAY:

1. The Leveson Inquiry has asked me to comment on a specific matter relating to the Independent on Sunday's coverage of the aftermath of Mr Gary Speed's death towards the end of 2011.
2. The death of Gary Speed, a well-known footballer and latterly manager of Wales' national football team occurred on Sunday 27th November. It caused considerable shock among football players, managers and fans. 3. The following Saturday, at Leeds United's home ground of Elland Road, where Mr Speed had played for several years, a planned tribute was made to him before the Leeds game against Millwall. Louise, Mr Speed's widow, attended the match with her teenage sons. The club made the press aware through the Press Association the day before the game that Mrs Speed and her children would be in the crowd, and at no time was there any suggestion that any requests about possible non-publication had been made. As the Inquiry will know, the newspaper industry regularly receives private advisory messages via the Press Complaints Commission from individuals who find themselves in the media spotlight but who are concerned about material appearing in print.
4. During the day of the match, images of Mrs Speed and at least one of her sons appeared regularly on television news programmes, including Sky. When a still image came to our attention for possible publication, we felt that it was one we might be able to use. But there were a variety of criteria we had to consider against the Editors' Code of Practice - in particular, Sections 3 (ii), 5 (f) and 6(ii) - before deciding whether to publish. We concluded that there were several factors which would allow us to do so.

\* While we had not approached Mrs Speed to obtain consent to use the image, the fact that the club had highlighted her and her sons' attendance led us to conclude that she would be aware of the likelihood of media coverage and - particularly since there was no advisory from the PCC - did not object to it;

\* The game was a very public occasion and the subject of considerable public and media attention;

\* Images of Mrs Speed and her son at the game had already appeared extensively on television, and the material was therefore well-established in the public domain;

\*Mrs Speed and her son are showing little signs of overt distress: in fact, the photo depicts a family showing dignity and even pride in the most terrible of circumstances, and it is that sense we hoped to convey by publishing.

5. I did consider another factor, outside the Editors' Code but which should be dealt with in conjunction with it. Bereaved families, rather than viewing media interest as intrusion, can sometimes welcome it as a way of paying public tribute to those they have lost. When I was a reporter, I believe I was on enough 'doorsteps' to know the difference, and I think the circumstances that day allowed me, now as an editor, to make a similar judgement. These suggested to me that the family was determined that the world could see their feelings for Mr Speed. Our headline ('Family, friends and fans join in tribute to Gary Speed' ) echoes that,

and the tone of our coverage is clearly sympathetic. I know it has been raised with the inquiry that another newspaper did pixilate Mrs Speed's son, but to me that somehow would have felt disrespectful both to the boy and to his father, given what I say above about overt distress.

6. The two most important factors were the public domain argument and the issue of implied consent. It may be of interest to know that there has been no complaint from the family. In contrast to there being no advisory notices sent through the PCC ahead of any of the several tribute matches, the family did indeed use the PCC to send round a request concerning Mr Speed's funeral, stipulating it was to be a private affair, and asking the media to stay away. This was unanimously observed.
7. I hope I have given some indication of the consideration we gave ahead of publication. These are often fine and difficult judgements, but I do care very much that what we do at The Independent on Sunday is fair, accurate, decent and adheres to the Editors' Code. I do think, therefore, our use of the photo in these circumstances and in this context was, on balance, the right decision, for the reasons outlined.

#### STATEMENT OF TRUTH

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



John Mullin Editor, The Independent on Sunday

Dated 6<sup>th</sup> January 2011