

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
BUSINESS AND PROPERTY COURTS
OF ENGLAND AND WALES

Claim Number: BL-2020-000410

IN THE MATTER OF THE MOBILE TELEPHONE
VOICEMAIL INTERCEPTION LITIGATION

BEFORE: THE HONOURABLE MR JUSTICE FANCOURT

B E T W E E N:

NATALIE CECIL

Claimant

and

NEWS GROUP NEWSPAPERS LIMITED

Defendant

STATEMENT IN OPEN COURT

Alex Cochrane, Hamlins LLP, Solicitor for the Claimant

1. My Lord, in this action for misuse of private information, I appear on behalf of the Claimant, Ms Natalie Cecil. My learned friend, Mr Silverstone, appears on behalf of the Defendant, News Group Newspapers Limited.
2. The Claimant was married to the well-known British horse racing trainer Sir Henry Cecil from 1992 until their divorce in 2002, during which time they had a son together. The Claimant was in the public eye and a figure of interest to the press as a result of her marriage to Sir Henry, the breakdown of their marriage and their subsequent divorce.
3. The Defendant was the publisher of the *News of the World* which, until its closure in July 2011, was the UK's biggest selling Sunday newspaper with a very considerable readership in this jurisdiction. The Defendant was, and remains, the publisher of *The Sun* which, to this day, enjoys a substantial circulation and readership in this jurisdiction by way of hard copy sales of the newspaper and via its website.

4. In March 2020, the Claimant issued proceedings against the Defendant. The Claimant claimed that her voicemail messages were intercepted by the Defendant's journalists and that, as a result, those journalists were privy to private and confidential voicemail messages left on her mobile telephone. The Claimant also claimed that the Defendant had unlawfully obtained her personal information by deception.
5. The Claimant identified a number of articles which she claimed contained her private information and which were published by the Defendant's newspapers between 1998 and 2009. During this time, the Claimant used her voicemail extensively and would regularly receive and leave voicemail messages.
6. The Claimant further claimed that, as a result of these publications, she became mistrustful of those close to her and she was suspicious as to who might be the source of the private information published by the Defendant's newspapers and it was alleged that the publication of the articles generated distrust and caused her considerable distress.
7. The Claimant is pleased to confirm that she has accepted the Defendant's offer to resolve her claim on terms confidential between the parties and which involve the payment of substantial damages by the Defendant to her as well as her reasonable legal costs of bringing the claim. The Defendant has also provided appropriate undertakings to the Court and the Claimant and has agreed to join in this statement to apologise publicly to the Claimant for the distress caused to her by the invasion of her privacy by individuals working for or on behalf of the *News of the World*. The Defendant makes no admission of liability in relation to the Claimant's allegations of voicemail interception and/or other unlawful information gathering at *The Sun*.

Ben Silverstone, Counsel for the Defendant

8. My Lord, on behalf of the Defendant, I confirm everything my Friend has said.
9. The Defendant is here today, through me, to offer its sincere apologies to the Claimant for the distress caused to her by the invasion of her privacy by individuals working for or on behalf of the *News of the World*. The Defendant acknowledges that such activity should never have taken place, and that it had no right to intrude into the private life of the Claimant in this way.

Alex Cochrane, Hamlins LLP, Solicitor for the Claimant

10. My Lord, in light of the order that has been made, and this public statement, the Claimant considers that the matter is now concluded.

Hamlins LLP

Clifford Chance

.....
Hamlins LLP
Solicitors for the Claimant

.....
Clifford Chance LLP
Solicitors for the Defendant