

**STATEMENT by JAMES HEATH of ATKINS THOMSON  
Lead Solicitor for the Claimants in the Mirror Newspapers Hacking Litigation**

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Today's Judgment of Mr Justice Mann is an important result for all victims of press intrusion. It contains valuable guidance for all future phone hacking claims and for all future privacy claims more generally.

The guidance that the Judge gives in his judgment is based on the evidence he heard at the four week trial in March 2015, as well as the various admissions made by MGN in the course of the first wave of claims brought by victims of phone hacking against them.

The Judge found that phone hacking by Mirror Group's newspapers was widespread, institutionalised and long standing. He found there to be intrusion into the private lives of the claimants, which ranged from "serious" to "enormous". The very substantial awards of damages reflect this gross intrusion. They are greater than any other publicly available award of damages in a privacy case and more substantial than in many libel cases, ranging from £72,500 for Lauren Alcorn to £260,250 for Sadie Frost. The high awards in these cases reflect the serious and repeated intrusions into the claimants' privacy and the lasting impact that it has had on their lives.

Understandably, a lot of the claimants involved in this trial were reluctant to come to Court to relive difficult periods in their lives and to speak of their horror, distaste and distress at the discovery that Mirror group journalists had been listening, on a regular and frequent basis, to all sorts of aspects of their private lives. It is therefore a great relief to them that the Judge has recognised the grave impact the unlawful activity of MGN had on their lives and that the emotions they felt were genuine, not exaggerated and entirely justified.

Until relatively recently, Mirror Group firmly and publically denied knowledge of any phone hacking activities at any of its titles. Its conduct in these claims have been criticised and the apologies it finally made to these claimants, and all other victims of its phone hacking activities, were found to be, at least in part, tactical. It has taken a brave and determined group of claimants to finally bring this newspaper group to account. It has been a long and drawn out battle to bring this initial phase of the litigation to a conclusion and the claimants are pleased to be able to finally close this difficult chapter in their lives.

As for the future of this litigation, I am currently co-ordinating a large number of other claims being brought against Mirror Group Newspapers, and anticipate many more to come. A Case Management Conference for new cases is being arranged for as soon as possible, in order to enable the Judge to decide how to manage the much larger second wave.

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