



Courts and Tribunals Judiciary

SUMMARY

Various Claimants -v- Associated Newspapers Limited
[2025] EWHC 1716 (KB): Mr Justice Nicklin
11 July 2025

[References in square brackets are to paragraphs in the judgment of the Court. This summary adopts definitions from the Judgment]

Background

1. This judgment follows the second major case management hearing in ongoing claims brought by seven high-profile individuals against Associated Newspapers Limited (“Associated”), publisher of the *Daily Mail*, *Mail on Sunday*, and *MailOnline*. The Claimants are Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon OBE, Elizabeth Hurley, Sir Elton John CH CBE, David Furnish, Sir Simon Hughes, Prince Harry (The Duke of Sussex), and Sadie Frost Law.
2. The claims concern alleged misuse of private information through unlawful information gathering (“UIG”), including phone hacking, blagging, and the use of private investigators. Associated denies all wrongdoing.

Scope of the Judgment

3. The Court resolved a large number of applications made by the parties (identified in [31]-[34] and the outcomes summarised in [272]). The Court did not determine the truth of the allegations but made important rulings on the parameters of the litigation and how the case will proceed, including:
 - The scope and relevance of the Claimants’ “generic case” alleging widespread UIG.
 - Applications for further disclosure and the removal of redactions from Associated’s disclosure.
 - The control of documents held by the Claimants’ research team.
 - The management of the litigation to ensure proportionality and focus.

Key findings and Orders

(1) Generic Case Narrowed ([36]-[61])

4. The Court ruled that the Claimants’ broad allegations of habitual UIG by Associated over 25 years cannot, by themselves, prove individual claims. The focus must remain on specific articles and journalists. The Court will tightly manage the scope of the generic case to prevent the litigation from becoming a wide-ranging public inquiry: [58]-[61].

(2) Disclosure and Redactions ([62]-[110])

5. The Claimants' application to remove all redactions from Associated's disclosure was substantially narrowed by the Claimants. The Court has ordered targeted unredaction of documents where necessary to assess whether certain journalists had a pattern of engaging in UIG ([104]-[110]) The Court emphasised that only cogent, focused examples are likely to support a case of propensity ([106]).

(3) Knowledge and Limitation ([180]-[208])

6. The Court ordered the Claimants to disclose documents relating to their "*personal watershed moments*" — the point at which each Claimant contends that s/he became aware of potential claims, which is central to Associated's limitation defence ([202]-[208]).

(4) Research Team documents ([209]-[232])

7. The Court found that the Claimants had not adequately disclosed documents held by their Research Team. A further search and disclosure exercise was ordered, along with a witness statement confirming the Claimants' control of documents held by the Research Team ([228]-[232]).

(5) Payments to potential Witnesses ([233]-[251])

8. The Court ordered disclosure of documents relating to any payments or inducements made to potential third-party witnesses, including private investigators. The Court noted that the Claimants had adopted an inconsistent stance on disclosure on this issue ([250]) but was satisfied that any such payments may be relevant to the credibility of those witnesses ([248]-[251]).

(6) Other Applications

9. The Claimants' applications for broader call data ([115]-[129]), further custodian searches ([156]-[160]), and "*train of inquiry*" disclosure ([161]-[164]) were refused as disproportionate or unfocused. The Court also refused applications by the Claimant seeking further information about Associated's disclosure ([138]-[155]).
10. Associated's applications for third-party disclosure from the Metropolitan Police and Information Commissioner, not opposed by the Claimants, were granted ([233]-[251]).
11. Associated was granted permission to amend its Defence in relation to a disputed burglary allegation, but not to include argumentative material ([252]-[256]).

Next Steps

12. The parties must now comply with the disclosure orders that the Court has made, and the Claimants must provide proposed amendment to their Particulars of Claim. The Court will set a timetable for these steps to be taken.
13. The Court will consider any disputed amendments at the third case management hearing on 1–2 October 2025. The trial remains scheduled to begin on 14 January 2026.

NOTE: This summary is provided to help in understanding the Court's decision. It does not form part of the judgment. The full judgment of the Court is the only authoritative document. Judgments are public documents and are available at: www.judiciary.uk, <https://caselaw.nationalarchives.gov.uk> and www.bailii.org