

Statement made on behalf of: The Commissioner of Police of  
the Metropolis

Witness: Ed Stearns

Statement No: 1

Exhibits Referred to: ES/1, ES/2, ES/3, ES/4, ES/5

Date Statement Made: 30 March 2012

---

**The Leveson Inquiry into the Culture Practices and Ethics of the Press**

---

**Witness:** Ed Stearns  
**Occupation:** Chief Press Officer  
**Address:** c/o New Scotland Yard

1. I make this statement for the purpose of assisting the Leveson Inquiry.  
Where the contents of this statement are within my own knowledge  
they are true and where the contents are not within my own knowledge  
I indicate the source of my belief and believe them to be true.

**Career History**

2. I am the Chief Press Officer, Directorate of Public Affairs ("DPA") at the  
Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), based at New Scotland Yard.  
(From the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012, the DPA will become known as the Directorate  
of Media & Communication). I was appointed in 2008 having held the  
position of Senior Media Consultant for a public relations (PR)  
company Mason Media from 2006-2008. Prior to that I worked in the  
newspaper industry. Following University I trained at Midland News

Association and then became Chief Reporter at the Shropshire Star, during which time I spent several months working with the parliamentary lobby for the Shropshire Star and the Express and Star. In 1999 I joined the Daily Mail in a junior position on the newsdesk. I carried out various newsdesk roles, with my last appointment being night News Editor before I decided to leave in 2006.

3. I left to go into PR for a variety of reasons including greater career opportunities, more sociable hours, and the opportunity to use a wider variety of skills.

**DPA Statement**

4. This statement has been provided voluntarily by me, on behalf of the DPA, to respond to evidence that has previously been received by the Inquiry. It is not provided in response to a formal request for evidence (which I am told is known as a s.21 notice).
5. My colleagues and I feel that the current evidence to date has not provided the Inquiry with a full representation of the way the News Branch of DPA operates. In some ways the evidence has been at times inaccurate and occasionally taken out of context. This statement came about because we contacted the MPS Directorate of Legal Services (DLS) and asked if it was possible to provide further evidence to the Inquiry relating to the DPA. I explain this by way of background to illustrate the wish of the DPA to clarify information the Inquiry has

received to date and to provide relevant context. The following statement aims to assist the Inquiry with some additional information.

**Breadth of Work of the DPA**

6. The Inquiry has already received evidence as to the scale of the DPA's News Branch work. On an average day the Press Office deals with 200-300 calls from the media. This rises significantly when there is a major or critical incident. On 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005 ("the 7/7 bombings") the Bureau received approximately 1,000 calls on one day alone. At the height of last summer's disorder on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2011 calls peaked at about 1,800 and remained at approximately 1,200 per day on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> August.
7. Every one of these calls requires a considered response, the preparation of press lines in some cases, and liaison with police officers or police staff. The Press Office is not just a call centre.
8. What has not been emphasised in evidence received to date is the breadth of work of the DPA. Dealing with media inquiries is one of its main functions, but it is also responsible for marketing, advertising, social media, co-ordinating the corporate stakeholder engagement and much of the MPS's internal communication.
9. Every day across London the DPA is responsible for organising matters such as filming facilities for broadcasters, setting up interviews with officers, circulating crime appeals, publicising court results, issuing press releases, answering press inquiries, providing strategic

communications advice to officers on critical issues, developing and delivering advertising campaigns, updating and contributing to social media, arranging and advising on stakeholder engagement and communicating MPS updates of key information and developments to our 53,000 staff.

10. Each press desk will often have different reporters who are particularly interested in their specialist area of work. In public appeals for information or anti-crime campaigns, specific periodicals and media may be proactively targeted by the DPA depending upon the target audience the MPS is trying to engage with. It should also be noted that there are times when stories are likely to be of more interest to London media than national media, such as London focused operations, for example car crushing of uninsured vehicles or, the launch of the Trident Gangs Crime Command - a new unit to tackle London's gang crime. Equally, very local issues may focus just on borough specific media. Some issues are going to be more relevant to broadsheet newspapers than to tabloids. For example, complex fraud is more likely to be of interest to the Financial Times whereas a campaign to catch the 20 most wanted MPS criminals tends to have more of a tabloid appeal. Issues such as rape or domestic violence are of particular interest to publications with a large female readership.
11. Engagement is often very effective via radio or social media where we can talk directly to targeted audiences. So, for example, anti-knife crime campaigns aimed at young people are more effectively targeted

by placement on music radio and music television channels, YouTube and Facebook than in the print media.

12. There tends to be a disproportionate amount of interest in the MPS from the national media and politicians as compared to other police forces because of its location and the profile of its work. For example an incident or event that may make a paragraph if it happens outside London, will normally make a page lead if it occurs in the capital.
13. The MPS services some nine national newspapers, eight Sundays, five national TV channels, plus two 24 hours media channels, a wide variety of digital channels with their associated documentary content, two national radio stations and 10 London based radio stations plus almost 100 local newspapers, and a wide range of minority, specialist, online and international organisations. We have over 1000 names of journalists and organisations on our media database who have asked us to proactively provide them with information. In addition, at any one time we have at least one documentary for national television being undertaken. This is in addition to the reactive work of responding to media press inquiries.

#### **DPA Relationship With the Media**

14. For a largely unarmed force to police effectively in as diverse and densely populated a city as London requires the consent of the public. Providing as much information about what police are doing - and why - helps achieve this.

15. Save for personal contact, the police, in the main, reach the public through the filter of the media. The inbuilt tension between police and media as they go about their respective business is a healthy one. Facilitating this relationship requires careful management, particularly during times of heightened tension or activity such as a major incident or public disorder.
  
16. In order to plan DPA work each morning we hold a meeting to review overnight incidents and media coverage and each afternoon I oversee a meeting of emerging issues. Each week I hold a co-ordinating meeting to discuss what is planned for the week ahead. In order to log incoming media requests the DPA uses a system called Solcara. I note that in evidence given from other forces this has sometimes been referred to as Spotlight. Spotlight is the new name for Solcara. DPA pioneered the use of this comprehensive logging system and it is now considered to be best practice and has been rolled out as standard across most Police Forces. I review the Solcara log systems regularly to keep an oversight of inquiries coming in, our responses to them, and what information we are proactively issuing. This system leaves a full audit trail of who created a statement at what time and date and any changes or updates that are subsequently made. It has never been the policy of my press team to favour any particular media outlets.

**Proactivity of the DPA Regarding Release of Negative Stories and Reputation Management**

17. The DPA does routinely and proactively release what many consider to be 'bad news'. This includes information such as officers who have been arrested and/or charged for offences, deaths in custody, police collisions and organisational failings.
  
18. The DPA regularly provides advice on communications in relation to critical incidents and other issues. We are concerned that the impression being given by some journalists is that if information they want, or access to a particular officer, is not forthcoming it must be the DPA which is responsible. Sometimes police officers for very valid operational reasons may not want to give information to the media. There are also occasions when officers reluctance to reveal information is rooted in concerns that the media will not report accurately. It is not necessarily appreciated that, in these circumstances part of the job of the press officer is to challenge and advise firmly that information should be released when appropriate.
  
19. Where these issues are of public interest then the DPA advice to officers is to be open and transparent. One function of the DPA is therefore to regularly negotiate between cautious officers and an insatiable media about where the balance should be struck in giving as much information as possible in order to keep the public informed, but doing so in a way that minimises impact on the criminal justice process or operational effectiveness.

20. It has been suggested that the MPS has now withdrawn from disclosing information to the media. This is not something being promoted by DPA press officers. However I believe there will always be a conflict between a journalist wanting to know absolutely everything and the judgement of the MPS on exactly what information can be released that will not impact negatively on a criminal investigation or would be a breach of confidence with regard to an individual's private information. This is not a new conflict.
21. In my view, the claim of "withdrawing" from the media is to a large extent an issue of journalists' personal police officer/staff contacts deciding that in the recent climate of resignations, arrests of journalists, select committee hearings and this Inquiry, they no longer want to engage on the level they previously did.
22. We are keen that officers continue to engage with the media and interim media guidelines are in the process of being developed as both the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner referred to in their evidence to the Inquiry.
23. One accusation the Inquiry has heard about is press officers lying. We have a choice: to be as open and honest about the facts known at that time as possible, knowing that the facts might change as inquiries progress, or say nothing at all. Saying nothing almost always creates more problems than the former. Any press officer knows that lying is never going to be a sustainable position both for their career and the creditability of the organisation they work for.

Taking Media on Operations

24. A key part of the role of the DPA is to enable the public to better understand the work of the MPS. Taking the media on operations helps achieve this. It enables the media to report to the public about specific crime initiatives taking place (such as publicising “crack house closure order” powers through “crack house” raids), reassures the public that police are acting upon the concerns they raise and also provides a platform to enable crime prevention advice to be relayed. Taking the media on operations is very closely managed to minimise any impact on the operation, criminal justice process or legitimate privacy concerns. This includes briefing reporters in advance of what they can and cannot cover in order not to prejudice the case or impact on victims. For example not filming potential trafficking victims during brothel raids. We would ensure that the media know where they can and cannot go so that they do not trespass on private property or inappropriately invade privacy. In my time at the DPA we have never invited the media to attend a raid where the individual being arrested is a celebrity.
25. These formal arrangements should not be confused with the media “turning up” on operations or at arrests without press office involvement. This can be because neighbours have called the media, there is traffic disruption leading to media inquiries or because photographers are already at or aware of the location of a celebrity’s home and are regularly keeping a watchful eye out for activity. On occasion we have also been aware of tip offs being given by lawyers or

publicists of the individual being arrested. An example concerning a celebrity tip-off involved a woman who is known for appearing on a television show who was assaulted. The celebrity was an assault victim whose identity would remain confidential as far as the MPS were concerned. However, the MPS were subsequently contacted by a tabloid news reporter asking for details about the incident and the reporter also advised the press officer that the tip-off about the assault had come from a personal contact of the celebrity.

### **DPA Staff and Media Employment**

26. I would like to address the issue of DPA staff's previous employment within the media. I myself come from a newspaper background: I worked at The Daily Mail for seven years and then for two years at a PR agency. It is extremely common for people entering a range of PR jobs to have had a media background as the skill set needed to work in communications has many similarities to working in the news media. In my view and experience, this does not mean that those leaving behind a media career continue to have allegiance to their previous employer. In my case it has meant that I am extremely careful to ensure that no favouritism occurs. Equally, although I have friends and acquaintances who are journalists that I have known throughout my working life, this does not mean that I reveal confidential information to them over a pint in the pub. It is normal for any individual working in a particular job to have both friends and acquaintances who do the same job; these are the people you meet and develop working relationships and friendships with. It is not unusual; it is the same the world over in any profession.

But this does not mean that when I, or any other journalist, leave a newspaper that suddenly we have no respect for duties of confidentiality or integrity and are leaking information back to our former employer.

27. To suggest otherwise shows a lack of understanding of those who regard journalism and PR as a profession and take pride in their work. Most journalists in my experience have a due and proper regard for the bounds of confidentiality; not least because of our experience in protecting sources for whom public identification could be devastating.
28. I would also like to provide context to some of the comment about individuals working in the DPA having worked at Murdoch titles. In my view, if I want to recruit the most capable press officers then I want people with the right skills, such as news sense, good writing skills, good interpersonal skills and good overall communication skills. When we advertise jobs we get a wide range of people applying - including reporters. Sometimes, but not always, ex-reporters are the strongest candidates and therefore I do not feel it is right to exclude a strong candidate on the basis that they have been a reporter.
29. We also follow the recruitment process laid down by the Government Communication Network (GCN). Our current staff range from people with no news media background to those who have worked in newspapers or other news media. In general those that have worked in the news media have worked for multiple organisations - for example, of the six staff who have had paid employment for the Sun or News of

the World (mainly on a freelance shift basis) all have worked for between three to seven news organisations before joining the MPS. In addition, four of these staff left the media over ten years ago. Other staff have worked for a wide range of local newspapers and other national media groups. Therefore I do not believe DPA staff have a particular allegiance to any media group.

30. It is not my experience that once reporters decide to leave journalism to go into PR or other communication roles that they later return to journalism, taking any confidential knowledge with them. In fact my colleagues in DPA and I can only recollect one individual in over 20 years who has moved back into journalism. I believe this illustrates that there isn't, generally, a two way movement between these jobs. There may be practical reasons for this. Print journalism is to a large extent a youthful profession and a fairly brutal environment as one ages. In my experience many people taking a decision to leave journalism do so for lifestyle reasons. An employed job in PR or communications provides greater security for those who have been working on shifts at a newspaper and generally the level of pay is better. Once someone in journalism has taken a decision to leave to take an employed job, such as working for the DPA, these lifestyle choices mean that they rarely go back. Obviously, I am not saying that it never happens, but as the experience at the DPA shows, it is far from common.

Leaks and Confidentiality

31. As previously stated DPA use a system called Solcara to log the media requests coming in, what information is released or can be released if inquiries occur, who approves the release of the information and any useful background information to inform the press office only. This database contains a lot of highly sensitive information and if I knew that any of this information was being released by my staff without authority then I would take this extremely seriously.
  
32. It is important to emphasise that in practical terms when looked at in context, leaks of information from the whole of the MPS compared to the amount of information actually held by the MPS are comparatively small. If the public had any sense of the vast amount of highly confidential information that is held by the MPS and the DPA that is not leaked prior to prosecution or is never publicly revealed because it would never be appropriate (for example the identity of victims), it really would put the issue of information leaks in a proper context. Of course unauthorised leaks do happen but the vast majority of information remains properly and appropriately confidential until such time as it should, if at all, be made public. And if a leak does occur it is taken very seriously and considered by the MPS Professional Standards teams.
  
33. It is easy for unsubstantiated claims to be made that the MPS and/or press officers leak information. However I believe our track record in relation to journalists who come to us for comment on an exclusive

story is very good. We have an informal system, particularly with CRA members, where they tell us when they are making a 'private' inquiry. We respect this and do not share the response we have provided until it has been published or broadcast in their newspaper, news programmes, etc. We also alert them when other journalists approach us with the same inquiry so that they are aware that it is no longer an 'exclusive.'

### **Media Monitoring**

34. On 15<sup>th</sup> March 2012, Mike Sullivan, Crime Editor of the Sun, gave evidence to the Inquiry that the MPS had a system whereby reporters are graded according to whether they are favourable to the MPS or not. This is categorically not true and has never been true. We do not keep charts on individual reporters rating them on how favourable or otherwise their coverage is to the MPS.
35. Unsurprisingly the DPA, as part of its public relations function, does carry out media monitoring. This is a standard practice for any large organisation and operated at a very general level; there is no focusing on particular reporters at all. We subscribe to a cuttings service and receive press cuttings based around a series of pre-ordained search words relevant to the MPS (such as "Scotland Yard", etc) as well as topical searches. These are circulated to Senior Press Officers and the Management Board. The aims of this process include seeing what coverage the MPS is getting, checking for accuracy in information being relayed to the public, establishing emerging issues and

assessment of public relations - for example whether a particular MPS campaign is having an effect or not. It also enables us to prepare for likely press inquiries, for example, if a government department is reported as discussing a particular policing issue, then during the course of that day we may get queries about that issue. Similarly, the DPA also monitors in-house television news and radio for similar reasons. As an example our monitoring this week identified that some papers have headlined with the story that police were blocking the Mark Duggan inquest. This was incorrect and we took steps to correct it through the papers, on our website and via social media.

36. As I have already mentioned the DPA has a morning meeting at which any of these issues arising from press cuttings and broadcast media may be discussed. If there is anything urgent that has arisen, it may have already been dealt with overnight. There is no formal assessment, recording or grading of media coverage. Separately, in respect of any advertising campaigns, because this involves spending public money, we monitor the effect of the campaign. This is undertaken by the media buying agency that will convene focus groups and monitor media coverage in respect of the particular campaign. In relation to social media we do basic monitoring using tools such as TweetDeck, we check regular blogs, carry out Google searches and on specific high risk issues we monitor social media more closely.

37. This is the nature and extent of media monitoring undertaken by the DPA. In the past surveys have been carried out to determine whether the public were aware of certain policing issues or events which had

been covered by the media and their view of the organisation as a result of the coverage. This did not look at individual reporters and the analysis was used to gauge public confidence in the MPS via media coverage of events. This was outsourced to a third party and the contract was terminated in April 2011 due to the implementation of austerity measures.

### Off The Record Briefings

38. The issue of 'off-the record' and what has been referred to as 'sanctioned' off-the-record briefings has also been raised and there are two points I would like to make about this. The term 'off-the-record' means different things to different people and for that reason many press officers think it should be avoided. If it is used then the police or press officer should clarify with the journalist in advance whether the information is being provided on a 'not-for-use' basis or a 'non-attributable' basis and that the journalist is happy to comply with this.
39. What Nick Davies described as 'sanctioned' off-the-record briefing by press officers is probably reference to what DPA press officers classify as 'not for publication' guidance. This is usually used when we want to assist journalists in understanding what lies behind the information that is being issued. An example would be when someone is charged with a serious offence and is due to appear in court. It wouldn't be appropriate for the MPS to give detailed background information at this stage in the legal process but giving guidance, say, that this charge relates to a man allegedly attacking his next-door-neighbour with an axe, enables

journalists to be better informed about whether it is a case they want to follow-up.

40. Journalists are coming to rely more and more on press officers to supply news worthy stories and to do so instantly. When journalism was better resourced, a local or agency reporter would go to a scene of a shooting for example. They would establish the news worthiness of the incident through talking to neighbours, assessing the environment it happened in, etc. To the police quite rightly a victim is a victim no matter who they are, and a crime is a crime no matter who committed it. However to the media different news judgements are made. Now reporters are not in courts or on the street so much, they are increasingly expecting the press officer's to give this sort of news editing judgement on a story.
41. A recent example of this is the case of the Russian banker who was shot. The press office issued a press release about the shooting to the media. The media did not initially take any interest in it. I believe they assumed it was another gang related shooting and our press lines did not dispel this assumption. The MPS was subsequently criticised by the Daily Mail and the Mail on Sunday for not releasing a more detailed news story: This article is attached and exhibited as ES/1. At the time, we were unable to do so for operational and personal information reasons. If we are too helpful to the media it can undermine the operation and the confidence of victims, families and witnesses. However, if we do not provide the extent of information the media demand, we are then publicly accused of withholding information that

they feel entitled to. This is a fine line to balance and conflict will often arise. There will be times when the media feel we should have given them a better steer on the story. Having been a journalist I understand the frustration when facts important to the newsworthiness of the story are not available from the outset.

### Social Media

42. The DPA has been using social media for several years, including in award winning crime prevention advertising campaigns. One example is the “Who Killed Deon” campaign which was an anti-violence campaign aimed at youths in gangs; it concerned joint enterprise and the fact that a member could still be guilty of murder. The MPS has several Twitter feeds which are used to communicate to Londoners directly, rather than solely on the media.
  
43. The corporate Twitter feed @MetPoliceUK is used as a broadcast tool to provide updates on a range of news and other issues. @MPSOnTheStreet is a Twitter account that is used by different officers on each occasion to do special insights for the public into individual jobs or roles, such as with a new trainee, with officers on the ground policing a public order event, etc. The @CO11MetPolice is used in public order to provide protestors a dedicated Twitter feed with advice and operational updates. The @MPSInTheSky is the helicopter feed which was set up to show the important work done by the unit especially as it has been criticised as a noise nuisance and an expensive toy. Finally the MPS is in the process of an important roll

out of Twitter feeds to all boroughs that will be used to provide information and crucially to engage directly with local communities. These are run directly by the borough, following corporate guidelines.

44. In addition the Commissioner and other senior officers conduct regular webchats with Londoners, both themed and non-themed. We also use Facebook, Flickr and You Tube regularly to provide updates, photos and video content. Following the London riots last summer, Flickr was used to post “wanted” pictures particularly because it is a website that is built for picture sharing and allows reach to a wider audience.
45. We created a Social Media Communication Strategy which has just been signed off and is being implemented. This is attached and exhibited as ES/2. I also attach and exhibit as ES/3 the new MPS Communication Strategy which covers how the organisation now seeks to approach the way it will communicate with the public, staff and stakeholders.
46. A lot of issues that create social media interest often originate from traditional media and vice versa so neither can be ignored at the expense of the other. Twitter and social media also allow current reporters far greater commentary freedom than if they were writing for their paper or broadcaster.
47. We support the use of social media as another channel to communicate to the public through. However we have also experienced occasional difficulties in how social media is now being used by the public. One example of problems caused by use of social

media arose during the “Baby P” case where a reporting restriction was in place.

**Peter Connelly: The “Baby P” case**

48. On 3rd August 2007, the police were informed of the death of Peter Connelly, a 17 month old baby - who was originally identified as “Baby P”. Numerous injuries were identified posthumously and the tragic case received an enormous amount of publicity.
49. The child’s mother, her partner and another man (her partner’s brother) were all charged with murder and allowing or causing the death of the child. On 11th November 2008, the jury returned unanimous guilty verdicts of allowing or causing the death of the child.
50. At that time, it was not public knowledge that there was a further criminal trial due to take place involving the mother and her partner. Prior to this second trial, an order was made under s.4 (2) of the Contempt of Court Act 1981 which prohibited publication of any information likely to lead to the identification of either of these 2 defendants. This was on the grounds that the order was necessary to avoid a substantial risk of prejudice to the administration of justice.
51. Media coverage stated that the mother and her partner could not be named for legal reasons. However, there was a great deal of user generated content on various internet sites (including Yahoo Answers, Bebo and Facebook) which referred expressly to the names of both parties and in some cases, photographs of the mother had been

uploaded. It got to the stage where the names of both defendants became readily ascertainable via Google. There was also a text message forwarded which (as reported in the Daily Mail Online for 21st November 2008) read as follows:

*“The papers may be banned from naming and shaming the cruel vile killers of Baby P but I aint. They r [Mother’s Name] and [the Boyfriend’s name] of (name of street and area). Jason Owen [was] living with them. I urge everyone to pass this on so everybody can name and shame them. Also pls sign the petition to have justice for that poor little boy. Rest in peace little man. Thanks.”*. This article is attached and exhibited as ES/4.

52. This kind of posting and messaging was in breach of the court order and carried with it a risk of prejudicing the second trial. The public did not, and of course could not, appreciate that the order was not to protect the defendants but was rather to ensure they could be fairly tried for another offence. The MPS wrote to the national papers asking them to monitor their websites with regard to the web-based forums and the online comments concerning the newspaper articles and to block or remove prohibited names or images.
53. The extent of public postings contrary to the order resulted in the MPS having to proactively contact Internet service providers to notify them of the order and request that they block any communication that was in breach of it. I understand from the MPS Directorate of Legal Services that in nearly all cases where individuals were contacted directly (for

example those who were posting prohibited information on their personal blogs), once the reasoning behind the order was explained to them, they readily co-operated in taking down the material in breach.

54. The trial took place in April 2009, when the mother and her partner, under aliases, faced charges related to the rape of a two-year old girl. The mother was found not guilty of child cruelty charges and her partner was found guilty of rape. All arguments made concerning their inability to have a fair trial due to their true identities being published failed.
55. This case illustrates the challenges that social media can pose for the criminal justice system. This is particularly so where the public are under the mistaken impression that freedom of speech is being curtailed irrationally.

#### **DPA Engagement with the Crime Reporters' Association (CRA)**

56. The subject expert for national media on policing is the CRA. Like any relationship it has its ups and downs, but I do believe there is a need for there to be continued subject experts. This is because they have more understanding than perhaps a general reporter might about the impact their story could have on an operation and how to try to avoid such problems, a knowledge base around policing issues, or specific crimes. This means that an explanation about the basics of tactics or case history isn't needed at the start of each inquiry. It also means from a public scrutiny perspective that because of their knowledge they

normally know what questions to ask to ensure that the MPS is held to account where required.

57. For clarity, I would like to outline the nature of events and briefings that occur with the CRA.

#### 1) CRA briefings

58. When I joined DPA, there was a formally arranged monthly briefing with the CRA - this was normally reportable but was not filmed press conference style. Sometimes interviews would be given on camera after the briefing. The briefing was normally led by the Commissioner and was an opportunity for him to address any topical issues, answer media questions and provide an opportunity for officers with specialist knowledge on a variety of issues to brief the media on a range of operational or policy work. We continue to run the CRA briefings but they are now rotated with different members of management board (including the Commissioner) leading them. The intention is that they are not just based at New Scotland Yard as they will visit other MPS units as well. They provide an opportunity to take CRA to different parts of the MPS to brief and show them a range of initiatives first hand.

#### 2) Formal CRA lunches

59. I understand that around 2005 Dick Fedorcio and DAC Peter Clarke agreed that there was a need for the media to be more informed specifically about terrorist related issues and the threat the UK faced. It

was decided that a regular informal, not for publication or broadcast meeting would be a good way for this to be achieved and that doing this in small groups would allow for general discussion with reporters who were expert in their field of reporting. These meetings were in the format of a lunch with rotating members of the CRA. They were completely separate from the CRA briefings outlined above and were not timed to coincide.

### 3) Networking

60. The CRA and DPA both hold a couple of informal networking opportunities each year where senior officers and media attended. The aim of the functions held by DPA and CRA (normally an evening function over the Christmas period, and sometimes a summer evening function) was to develop working relationships, understanding and confidence. There may also have been occasions such as leaving drinks where CRA, press officers and police officers might meet in a social environment.

### 4) Other media

61. In addition to the engagement with CRA I hold meetings and briefings with other media. These include a regular meeting with London media which covers forward planning and where relevant briefings on specific issues are given. Now twice a year the local papers, London radio and London TV group editors are invited to a meeting hosted by the Commissioner to ensure they have access to him to ask him questions

and raise any concerns. We also work with the Foreign Press Association where there are issues or cases of international relevance.

**Response to Particular Matters of Concern**

62. The DPA wishes to correct evidence received by the Inquiry from journalists which is based on inaccurate or misleading information. Two examples are from the Times reporter Sean O'Neill's evidence on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2012.
63. To support criticism of the DPA impeding rather than facilitating the flow and disclosure of information Mr O'Neill cited the following: *'There was a press release they put out about two weeks ago about a PC who was convicted of assault at Westminster Magistrates' Court. The Metropolitan Police press release simply said, "PC X has been convicted of assault, he will be sentenced at a later date", something like that, "two other PCs were found not guilty". What it didn't say was that he had pulled a 14-year-old boy from a car and head-butted him. So what they said was not misleading, but it was not the full picture.'*
64. Mr O'Neill did not say that in fact this case was the result of an Independent Police Complaints Commission investigation. The Met press office made it clear to journalists that it had been investigated by the IPCC. The IPCC quite properly issued a press release detailing the assault on the teenager. Rather than both press offices duplicating work and information the details of the IPCC investigation was issued

- by them and in liaison with them we referenced the conviction proactively.
65. It was also misleading to support his criticism of the DPA acting as 'gate-keepers', by using the following example. He told the inquiry that *'...I believe some of my colleagues in the broadcast media are having quite a difficult time with them at the moment over release of some footage in a major court case that has been played to the jury, I think.'*
66. It's understood Mr O'Neill was referring to the case of five year old Thusha Kamaleswaran who was shot and paralysed in her uncle's grocery shop in Lambeth in March last year. The incident was captured on CCTV and the footage was shown to the jury. The media applied for its release during the trial and the judge declined. To meet the significant media demand for material about this case a police press officer had put together a package of material for the media for release at the conclusion of the trial - including the footage. Originally the family had requested to police that only the section of the film showing their little girl playing in the moments before the shooting should be released to the media but they later agreed that it could be released in its entirety. Such arrangements need to be handled sensitively and both police and press officers have helped, not hindered, the media gaining access to the footage in this tragic case. The DPA is spending a significant amount of time trying to meet the demand from the media for information shown in court in the absence of capacity by the CPS or the courts. Often this needs hours of attention to make it suitable for release, such as pixilating innocent members of the public, and could

be argued that this is not necessarily a police press officer's job but, where we can we do it we will in order to meet media demand and to enable the public to understand the case better and see the criminal justice outcome.

67. The Thusha case is a good example of how the media can help victims of crime. Officers working on the case were so affected by it and the plight of the family that they decided to raise funds to help them. Details of how to donate were published in several papers. That publicity means the account has many thousands of pounds more than the officers expected at this stage of the appeal.

#### **Recording Contact With the Media**

68. A central part of a press officer's job is to talk to the media. Where media put in a new media inquiry this information is logged on our Solcara system. We do not routinely make a record of every phone contact press officers have with the media, such as check calls to see if there is anything going on, as this is minimal contact and recording everything of this nature would be too bureaucratic to enable the job to be done productively. Since the summer we have introduced a requirement for any meetings or briefings with the media that DPA staff attend or are involved in to be recorded. We have a central register for this which I audit. The purpose of this register is to ensure that we have the records in place to enable us to be open and accountable about the contact that we have.

#### **Awards and Industry Recognition**

69. The DPA, like many boroughs/units in the MPS, receives a regular flow of international visitors. In the last few months we have already welcomed four delegations from different parts of Asia and Europe who wanted to learn from the work we carry out. I understand foreign governments have asked DPA to give them advice and training in crisis communications, such as the support DPA gave to the Greek Government in 2004 for the Olympics and in 2007 to the Carribean Islands for the Cricket World Cup.
70. DPA is an active member of the Association of Police Communicators (APCOM) and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Communications Advisory Group and its Deputy Director is vice chair of the Association of Police Communicators
71. The DPA, over a number of years, has won a range of awards for the professional, often cutting edge and effective communications it delivers. I attach and exhibit as ES/5 a list of these awards.

---

**I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true**

Signed

Dated 30 March 2012