

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
KING'S BENCH DIVISION
MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS LIST

BETWEEN:

JANET PERCIVAL

Claimant

and

ALEX BELFIELD

Defendant

STATEMENT IN OPEN COURT

Claimant's Solicitor – Jeremy Clarke-Williams, Penningtons Manches Cooper,

1. My Lord/Lady, in this libel action I appear for the Claimant, Janet Percival who is a Detective Constable with Nottinghamshire Police with more than 20 years' service.
2. The Defendant, Alex Belfield, previously worked in radio broadcasting, including for a number of BBC radio stations. He holds himself out as a broadcaster, entertainer, and journalist. He now has his own YouTube Channel, "*Alex Belfield – THE VOICE OF REASON*". At all material times the Defendant's YouTube channel had a substantial viewership, including subscribers, who numbered up to some 360,000, and it was watched by both subscribers and non-subscribers. The Defendant also promotes himself via his website, www.alexbelfield.com where he publishes content behind a paywall. In 2022, he toured the country with a live theatre show, together with Katie Hopkins, under the title '*Two Gobshites Live*'.

Background

3. In late 2019 and early 2020, Nottinghamshire Police received complaints from 5 complainants of online harassment or similar conduct by the Defendant. The matter was initially considered to be a civil one, but, in July 2020, the Claimant's supervisor instructed her to review the file on the Defendant, which she did, and the police investigation into the Defendant was re-opened. The Claimant was, accordingly, the officer in charge of the harassment/cyber-stalking case against the Defendant. During the course of their enquiries, Nottinghamshire Police received complaints about the Defendant from a further 5 complainants.

4. The evidence which emerged from the police investigation indicated that there were grounds to suspect the Defendant was guilty of a number of crimes, and consequently, the Defendant was arrested for a variety of offences under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1998, the Fraud Act 2006 and the Theft Act 1968.
5. On 20 June 2021 the Crown Prosecution Service charged the Defendant with 12 counts of stalking (involving fear of violence or serious alarm or distress) contrary to s 4A of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.
6. The trial of these charges took place before a judge and jury at Nottingham Crown Court from 4 July 2022. At the conclusion of the trial, the Defendant was convicted on 4 counts of stalking. On 16 September 2022, Mr Belfield was sentenced by Mr Justice Saini to 5.5 years in prison.

Defamatory campaign against the Claimant

7. However, in the intervening period, starting in March 2021, the Defendant published videos containing very serious false and defamatory allegations about Janet Percival on his 'Voice of Reason' YouTube channel and on his website.
8. Between March 2021 and May 2022, the Defendant published some 15 videos which alleged, among other things, that the Claimant:
 - Had acted unlawfully in conducting or overseeing police raids on his property
 - Had lied to a Magistrate, persistently lied about her dealings with the Defendant, and lied to him
 - Had threatened the Defendant with prison if he spoke publicly about his arrest
 - Was guilty of harassing the Defendant
 - Had colluded with the BBC in a witch hunt against the Defendant as part of an unlawful conspiracy to destroy him
 - Had repeatedly lied in court, and that there were grounds to suspect many others had been unlawfully detained in prison as a consequence
 - Had failed to carry out any enquiries before arresting the Defendant on at least three occasions
 - Was unable to distinguish truth from lies
 - Had changed a witness statement in order to mislead the court so perverting the course of justice
 - Is corrupt (including receiving corrupt payments to pursue the Defendant) and dishonest and so unfit to be a police officer

- Had changed the Defendant's bail conditions knowing that she had no authority to do so
- Had unlawfully taken equipment from the Defendant stupidly considering them to be evidence of wrongdoing by him thereby making Nottinghamshire Police liable to pay the Defendant substantial compensation

9. These allegations were not only untrue, they were without any foundation. Janet Percival had conducted herself entirely professionally and properly as a police officer, and in her investigations in the criminal case against the Defendant, just as she always has done in her police work.

10. By publishing his allegations on his YouTube channel and website, the Defendant ensured that his allegations were seen by his very significant number of viewers and subscribers. Considerable harm was caused to the personal reputation of Janet Percival, not just within the community where she lives and works, and where her reputation is most important, but also to a much wider audience.

11. As was foreseeable, the Defendant's allegations prompted many highly derogatory, hurtful and unpleasant comments about the Claimant from viewers of the videos causing her further unwarranted distress.

12. As a serving police officer, the Claimant is, unfortunately, used to dealing with hostility from people she has arrested, but the Defendant's online campaign peddling serious untruths about her was something she could not ignore. It was too damaging.

Settlement

13. Following service of these proceedings on him, Alex Belfield has accepted his liability. He is represented in Court today to retract publicly the false allegations which he published in his videos about Janet Percival and to apologise unreservedly for the damage and upset caused to her. In view of the willingness of the Defendant to make an unqualified and public apology, and the fact that he has paid Janet Percival a substantial sum in respect of compensation and her legal costs the Claimant is now prepared to let the matter rest.

Alan Robertshaw - Defendant's Legal Representative/Counsel

14. I agree with everything my friend has said. Alex Belfield offers his sincere and unqualified apology to Janet Percival for the embarrassment and distress caused to her and for the serious harm to her professional and personal reputation. To demonstrate the sincerity of his apology, this statement will now be published on his YouTube channel, on his Twitter feed and on his website.

Claimant's Solicitor – Jeremy Clarke-Williams, Penningtons Manches Cooper

15. With that, the Claimant is content. It only remains for me to seek permission to withdraw the record.