

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
QUEEN'S BENCH DIVISION
MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS LIST
B E T W E E N:**

LEE ANDERSON

Claimant

-and-

GOOGLE IRELAND LIMITED

Defendant

JOINT STATEMENT IN OPEN COURT

Counsel for the Claimant:

1. I appear for the Claimant Lee Anderson, the Member of Parliament for the Ashfield constituency, in these Part 8 proceedings, which follow the settlement of a threatened action for defamation and breach of data protection law and rights. The Claimant was first elected to Parliament in December 2019 and previously served as a councillor on Ashfield Council.
2. The Defendant is a well-known technology company, providing amongst other things world leading internet search facilities and online advertising services. It runs the AdSense advertising programme which allows websites in the Google Display Network to display adverts placed by advertisers using the Google Ads platform.
3. On 15th February 2021 the Claimant was informed by a colleague in parliament of a Google Ads advert being displayed on the Guido Fawkes website, a popular political news source attracting hundreds of thousands of regular readers.
4. The advert linked to a fringe campaign group called Keeping Kids Safe, and featured a picture of the Claimant next to the headline "MP Office protect paedophile" and the underlying text "The office shared information with council accusing residents of criminal activity".
5. The Claimant and his family were extremely distressed by the advert, which falsely suggested he was protective of or sympathetic to the abuse of children and those who perpetrate such abuse. This was highly defamatory, threatening to erode the confidence of the Claimant's constituents in him as their elected representative.
6. The Claimant informed the Defendant of his objections to the advert and the Defendant removed the advert from its Google Ads platform.

7. The Claimant sought further information from the Defendant for details of the number of times it displayed the advert and whether the advert had appeared on other websites beside Guido Fawkes. The Defendant refused to provide these details. This compounded the Claimant's distress and meant he was uncertain of the full extent of the harm caused to his reputation.
8. The Defendant also did not answer the Claimant's requests for information under the General Data Protection Regulation.
9. The Defendant is clear that all adverts submitted for display via its Google Ads platform are required to comply with the Google Ads policies, and that it uses a combination of automated and human review to ensure policy compliance.
10. The Defendant also purports to place all adverts relating to elected officeholders in a dedicated Political Advertising Library, thus providing a central place where political advertising can be checked and reviewed. Despite the inflammatory nature of this advert, and the use of the words "MP" and "paedophile", the advert was approved for display following an automated review for policy compliance, with no additional checks carried out by the Defendant's staff, and the Defendant failed to place the advert about the Claimant in its Political Advertising Library.
11. I am here today to announce that the Defendant accepts that the advert was not true, that it should not have been displayed as it did not comply with the Google Ads policies, and that the Claimant has suffered distress as a consequence.
12. The Defendant has agreed to join in this statement and publicly apologise to the Claimant for the distress caused to him and his family, and for any loss of confidence his constituents have suffered in their Member of Parliament as a result of seeing the advert. The Parties have agreed terms of settlement and the Defendant has paid the Claimant's reasonable legal costs.

Counsel/Solicitor for the Defendant:

13. The Defendant is here today through me to sincerely apologise to the Claimant for any distress the advert has caused to him and his family, and for any loss of confidence his constituents have suffered in their Member of Parliament as a result of seeing the advert.
14. The advert should not have been displayed as it did not comply with the Google Ads Policies.
15. The Defendant removed the advert as soon as the Claimant alerted it to it.
16. The Defendant is clear that all ads on its platform must comply with its policies and applicable law, and it is constantly working to improve its services to provide a good experience for users and advertisers. Anyone can report non-compliant or unlawful ads to the Defendant by using an ad's "Report this ad" function or through its publicly available "Report an ad" form.

Counsel for the Claimant:

17. My Lord/Lady, in the circumstances, the Claimant, in view of the remedies he has obtained considers his reputation is vindicated and the matter is concluded.