

THE LAWYER

Silverman Sherliker prepares for potential NotW class action

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City law firm Silverman Sherliker has launched a *News of the World* (NotW) action group for employees of the axed tabloid with the aim of launching a class action against the newspaper.



News International Offices – Pictured left.

The firm has set up the action group on its website and is urging NotW employees to register interest with a view to potentially launching a class action against News International for ‘stigma damages’ and long-term impact on their careers following the Sunday newspaper’s on-going phone-hacking scandal.

Silverman managing partner Chris Sherliker, who created the action group today (8 July), said the firm was already liaising with a steering group of about 20 NotW employees and expected the number could reach 100 by next week.

“The appetite for a class action has not yet been established. However the possibility of that action is going to drive negotiations,” he said. “There’s certainly an intention [to launch legal action] by this firm if there’s an insufficient support package offered to staff by News International.”

Sherliker and employment partner Nicholas Lakeland believe their sacked NotW clients could have a strong case to claim compensation for stigma damages and career damage, reminiscent of the long-running BCCI litigation.

“These employees are going to have a difficult time finding other positions because News of the World’s reputation has been fairly tainted,” Sherliker said.

The firm may also look at fairness of dismissal issues on behalf of the employees, and Sherliker said a lot would rest on whether News International launches a replacement Sunday tabloid and what job prospects that might present for NotW employees.

“If they’re closing the entire establishment I expect it would be a straightforward case of redundancies,” Sherliker said. “But if the employees are transferred over to a new publication then I doubt anyone will sue.”



Christopher Sherliker – Pictured left.

A spokeswoman for the National Union of Journalists said the organisation was also waiting to see what job prospects or redundancy packages were offered to NotW employees before contemplating any legal action.

“Last night we condemned the offer of 90 days’ payment without consultation. This is another example of News International and the Murdoch empire ignoring the law –they’re not learning any lessons,” she said.

“At the moment we’re waiting to hear about the terms of the redundancies or whether employees will be transferred to *The Sun*, or whether they’ll be sacked and made to reapply for jobs.”

The NUJ regularly instructs Thompsons Solicitors and Bindmans on legal matters.