

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NUMBER OF DEFAMATION CASES FALLS BY A THIRD IN A YEAR

-New Defamation Act driving decline- new 'serious harm' requirement for claimants

-Number of cases relating to social media increases

London, UK, November 16 2015 - The number of reported defamation cases in the UK has fallen by almost a third (27%) over the last year*, from 86 to 63, representing the lowest number recorded since 2008/9, according to research by Thomson Reuters, the world's leading source of intelligent information for businesses and professionals.

Thomson Reuters say that the number of defamation cases which were linked to social media was one of the only types of case in which an increase was recorded- up 38% from 8 in 2013/14 to 11 in 2014/15.

The number of cases brought by businesses fell by 45% - down from 31 in 2013/14, to 17 in 2014/15.

Thomson Reuters explains that the new Defamation Act came into force in January 2014 and is likely to be driving the overall decline. The Act introduced requirements for claimants to show actual or probable "serious harm" as a result of alleged defamation. Where the claimant is a business entity, evidence of financial loss must be provided. The Act also aimed to address so-called "Libel tourism" by making it more difficult for cases with little connection to England and Wales to be brought before the UK courts.

"The new Act offers stronger protections to those accused of making defamatory statements. The 'serious harm' threshold is making claimants, and particularly companies, think hard about whether they will really be able to demonstrate the necessary harm to their reputations. Fewer trivial defamation cases are now making it to court as a result, and claimants are looking to bring alternative causes of action," says Harry Kinmonth, a Senior Associate in the Media team at City law firm RPC and a contributor to Thomson Reuters' Practical Law service.

"The fact that the number of cases relating to social media continues to rise is not necessarily surprising. Someone is far more likely to find themselves the subject of online postings than of stories in the more traditional media, and there is the perception that such postings risk being shared widely and at speed."

"As a result, claimants view the potential for damage to be high. It remains the case that the majority of these claims are being brought against the individuals posting the material rather than the platforms hosting it."

Thomson Reuters say that despite the overall decline, a number of notable defamation cases have been recorded over the past year:

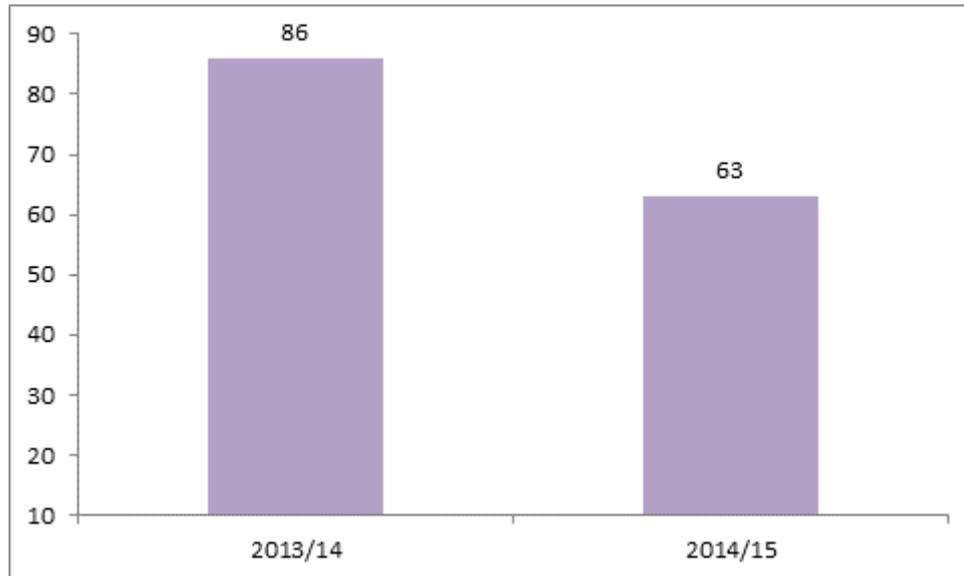
Public figures involved in defamation cases over the last year

- Sir Roger Moore v Associated Newspapers LTD (2015): Sir Roger Moore won damages over an inaccurate story published in the Daily Mail
- Russell Brand, Jemima Goldsmith v Szilva Berki (Aka Sylvie Berki) (2014): Russell Brand and Jemima Khan sought the continuation of an injunction against a professional masseuse

Businesses involved in defamation cases over the last year

- Bussey Law Firm PC, Timothy Raymond Bussey v Jason Page (Aka Jay Page) (2015): Damages were paid to Bussey law firm after a defamatory post on Google maps by a UK citizen
- Hodge Jones & Allen LLP v Times Newspapers LTD (2014): Hodge Jones & Allen LLP- the London law firm- was paid damages by The Times following the publication of an article which contained inaccuracies
- ReachLocal UK LTD, ReachLocal Europe BV v Jamie Bennett, Craig Anderson, Hardeep Singh Khabra, Tracey Vennard, Your Online Digital Agency LTD (2014): Damages were paid to an online marketing and advertising company, ReachLocal UK

Number of Defamation Cases falls by 27% in a year



*Year ends 30 June 2014 and 30 June 2015

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