



Director's introduction



I occasionally meet people who are cynical about the work of the PCC (and I am aware of the fine definition set out in Yes Minister that a cynic is merely what an idealist calls a realist). But generally their cynicism comes from ignorance about the function of the organisation, and all of the work that it does. Our Annual Review is a vigorous attempt to dispel that ignorance.

2010, the PCC issued around 1,700 rulings on complaints framed under the Editors' Code of Practice; it acted to prevent media harassment 100 times; it made proactive contact with those at the centre of media storms 25 times; it settled over 540 complaints amicably. It made some precedent-setting rulings that will impact on editorial decisions in newsrooms, and therefore the lives of people who might be featured in the press in the future. It hosted 60 seminars to reinforce those rulings, and to educate the industry and so raise standards. It had a meaningful impact on thousands of people across the UK.

But don't just take our word for it. Instead of simply listing what took place in 2010 (although we do that as well), we have put together a document in which those who have actually come into contact with the PCC offer their perspective on what we do. This includes those who represent the most vulnerable in society (an MP like Madeleine Moon, who has worked tirelessly for her Bridgend constituents; the Samaritans; Broadmoor Hospital) and those who represent the most privileged (celebrity PRs and solicitors). The PCC is a democratic system, designed to help people of whatever claim to fame in exactly the same way. For the record, over 90% of our complainants are not public figures at all.

We also asked for the thoughts of the industry itself. The PCC is the independent arm of the self-regulatory system for the press: the industry offers funding (something 9/10 members of the public endorse), an agreed Code of Practice and a commitment to co-operate; the PCC in turn offers independent enforcement and a continued drive to raise standards. Senior editorial figures from across the industry testify to their relationship with the PCC and its effect on newsrooms.

The idea behind this document is to see ourselves as others see us. An independent assessment is never a bad thing. That was what prompted the Governance Review (the first in the PCC's history), which reported in the middle of 2010 after a tremendous amount of hard work. Its Chairman has written a short perspective, but a true measure of its effectiveness should be the fact that almost everything it has recommended has now been - or is being - put into action. The PCC has, of course, its own internal review system in the form of what is now called the Independent Reviewer, who (like us) had a busy year. His report can be seen here.

Such self-scrutiny (which should always stop short of navel-gazing) enables us, I hope, to draw some conclusions about the PCC. It has clear reasons for existence: to remedy the mistakes of the press; to offer support and protection to the public; and to work hard to raise industry standards. It has a proper philosophical underpinning: to preserve appropriate freedom of expression (threatened occasionally by the fulminations of the courts, or the rumblings of parliament), but not at a cost to the individual. And it has never been more active (even proactive) in what it does.

Of course, the PCC faces legitimate criticism, which we must use as impetus for continual improvement. We must do more, for example, to deal with the issue of phone hacking (and have set up an expert review panel to look at this). There are ongoing challenges for journalistic ethics raised by the internet and ever-developing technology. More people should know about us and we should be more accessible to them.

But we should fight the cynical approach to the PCC. As an organisation, we strive to combine idealism (we believe in what we are doing) and realism (we know how hard we have to work to do it, and that the system will never be perfect). We have tried in this report to offer a detailed explanation of how we do what we do.

Stephen Abell
Director

2011 Press Complaints Commission



Statistics 2010

Introduction

Looking at the statistics for 2010 is an interesting exercise. In some areas, there is a remarkable level of consistency between the figures for last year and those for 2009. For example, claims of inaccuracy or distortion remain the overwhelming cause of complaint - just over 87% of complaints with merit in both of the last two years have referred to such issues. Similarly, the proportion of complaints made against national newspapers has remained almost exactly the same: 50.3% in 2010, set against 51.5% in 2009.

In other ways, the statistics show that last year was rather different for the PCC. We did not see, for example, campaign-type complaints on the scale of 2009, when we received over 25,000 emails and letters about a single article. And the number of complaints about matters of taste and offensiveness also fell dramatically - from 196 in 2009 to 78 in 2010.

Yet overall, the key figures show that the PCC remains successful in obtaining redress for those who have been wronged by newspapers and magazines. It is important to set out that, while we received over 7,000 complaints, a large number of these could not be taken forward, generally because they fell outside our remit (for example, complaints about adverts) or because the complainant did not respond to us when we requested further information about their concerns. The figure also includes multiple cases where the PCC would make one ruling to cover a number of complaints.

The more telling statistic is that there were 1,687 cases that fell within the jurisdiction of the PCC and included enough information to make proper assessment possible. We considered all of those cases, and found - following investigation - that 750 raised likely breaches of the Editors' Code of Practice or, in other words, had merit. And in all but 18 cases, the PCC obtained suitable offers to remedy the concerns that had been raised. In those remaining 18 instances, the Commission formally ruled against newspapers or magazines which had breached the terms of the Code. Those rulings were published by the offending titles in full - as the Code requires - and are available for public view on the PCC's website in perpetuity. They provide crucial precedents for the future and form the basis of our educational work (PCC staff and representatives delivered seminars to representatives from over 60 newspapers and magazines in 2010). The PCC successfully mediated or ruled on 557 cases that related to privacy in 2010.

A statistical analysis also shows that the PCC's proactive, pre-publication work has substantially increased. Last year we issued resist requests on just over 100 occasions, enabling individuals to inform the media that they did not wish to speak to journalists (often about distressing matters). This was an increase on 2009's figure of 69 and perhaps reflects greater knowledge about how this system can be best utilised.

More statistical information about a range of PCC activities is set out in this section of our annual report. You can read about: the importance of a [speedy complaints service](#); the work we do to ensure that apologies are published with [due prominence](#); the views of those who [use our service](#) and of the [public at large](#).

But remember that statistics only tell one part of the story. Our section on the year's [key rulings](#) highlights benchmark decisions in areas as diverse as online privacy, suicide reporting, discrimination and financial journalism.

And our [Year at a glance](#) calendar gives a further insight into the range and effectiveness of the Commission's day to day activities.

[2011 Press Complaints Commission](#)



Statistics 2010

Key numbers

7,000

The PCC received well over 7,000 complaints in writing last year, although this figure includes multiple complaints (where more than one person complained about the same article), as well as those that did not fall within the Commission's remit or were not pursued after an initial contact

1,687

The PCC made rulings, or brokered amicable resolutions, in respect of nearly 1,700 cases

750

This was the number of complaints which the PCC judged to have merit under the terms of the Editors' Code of Practice. This means that they raised a likely breach of the Code

557

The PCC successfully mediated or ruled on 557 cases that related to privacy in 2010

544

Resolving complaints to the satisfaction of complainants is a key priority for the PCC. Last year, 544 complaints were amicably settled through the Commission's mediation service

188

There were 188 complaints in respect of which newspapers offered remedial action that the Commission considered to be sufficient, even though an amicable settlement was not reached

C100

The PCC acted to prevent media harassment on just over 100 occasions, by passing on private advisory notices and desist requests to the industry

18

In 18 cases where a suitable remedy had not been offered or was not appropriate, the PCC formally ruled in favour of complainants

2011 Press Complaints Commission



Statistics 2010

What do people complain about?

The major cause of complaint has, for many years, been inaccurate or misleading reporting. Last year, looking at those cases judged by the PCC to have merit, 87.2% raised such concerns - almost exactly the same proportion as in 2009.

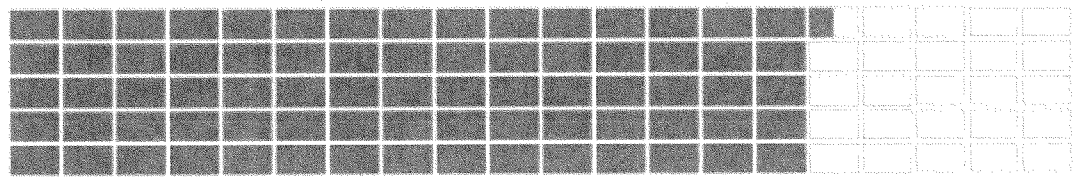
In fact, the figures from the last two years in relation to the issues most commonly raised by complainants are remarkably consistent. As in 2009, the second major area of concern related to invasion of privacy and grief: 23.7% of complaints made reference to one of the Code's privacy clauses, slightly up from 21.4% in 2009.

People may wonder how the figures in this section add up to a total higher than 100%. The answer is quite simple: many complaints raise more than one issue under the Code. So if a complaint is made under Clause 1 (Accuracy) and Clause 3 (Privacy) it will be included in both categories.

Complaints about other aspects of the Code remained small in number, as the graphic below illustrates:

Issues raised by complainants:

Hover over category to see the related figures.

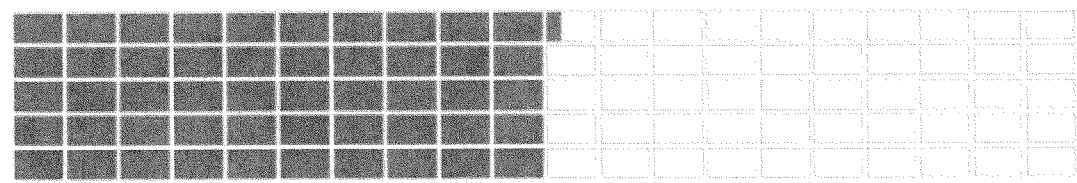


87.2% Accuracy & Opportunity to Reply (Clauses 1&2 of the Code)	23.7% Privacy (Clauses 3-9 & 11 of the Code)	0.9% Subterfuge (Clause 10 of the Code)	3.3% Discrimination (Clause 12 of the Code)	0.4% Others (Clauses 13-16 of the Code)
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Another area of considerable statistical consistency relates to the sectors against which complaints are made. Looking at cases where investigation was warranted (i.e. the PCC requested a response from the relevant editor because the complaint appeared to raise a possible breach of the Code), it can be seen that 50.3% involved national newspapers, slightly down from 51.5% in 2009. Complaints against regional titles rose by just 0.4% to 33.7%. Scottish titles accounted for 8.7%, Northern Irish 2.1% and magazines 4.9%.

Investigated complaints (by sector):

Hover over category to see the related figures.



For Distribution to CPs

50.3%
National
newspapers

33.7%
Regional
newspapers

8.7%
Scottish
newspapers

2.1%
Northern Irish
newspapers

4.9%
Magazines

0.3%
Agencies

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Statistics 2010

Complaints with merit

In 2010, the Press Complaints Commission made rulings on, or brokered amicable settlements to, 1,687 cases – around the same as the previous year's figure.

750 complaints were judged by the Commission to have merit and to raise a likely breach of the Editors' Code of Practice, a very slight rise on the previous year's figure of 738. These were either upheld in a formal, written ruling (which the offending publication was obliged to publish) or were remedied by way of an apology, correction or other suitable action.

It is well known that the Commission places considerable emphasis on its role as a mediator, resolving disputes in a co-operative manner and doing so quickly and at no cost to complainants. Last year, 544 complaints were resolved to the satisfaction of complainants, representing 72.5% of all cases where the Editors' Code of Practice appeared to have been breached. A summary of all such complaints can be seen here.

In 188 further instances the Commission concluded that remedial action taken or offered by a newspaper or magazine was adequate, even though an agreement between complainant and publication could not be reached.

In the remaining 18 cases the Commission issued a formal, critical ruling against titles that had breached the Code and had either failed to remedy the breach or committed an offence that was so serious it could not be remedied.

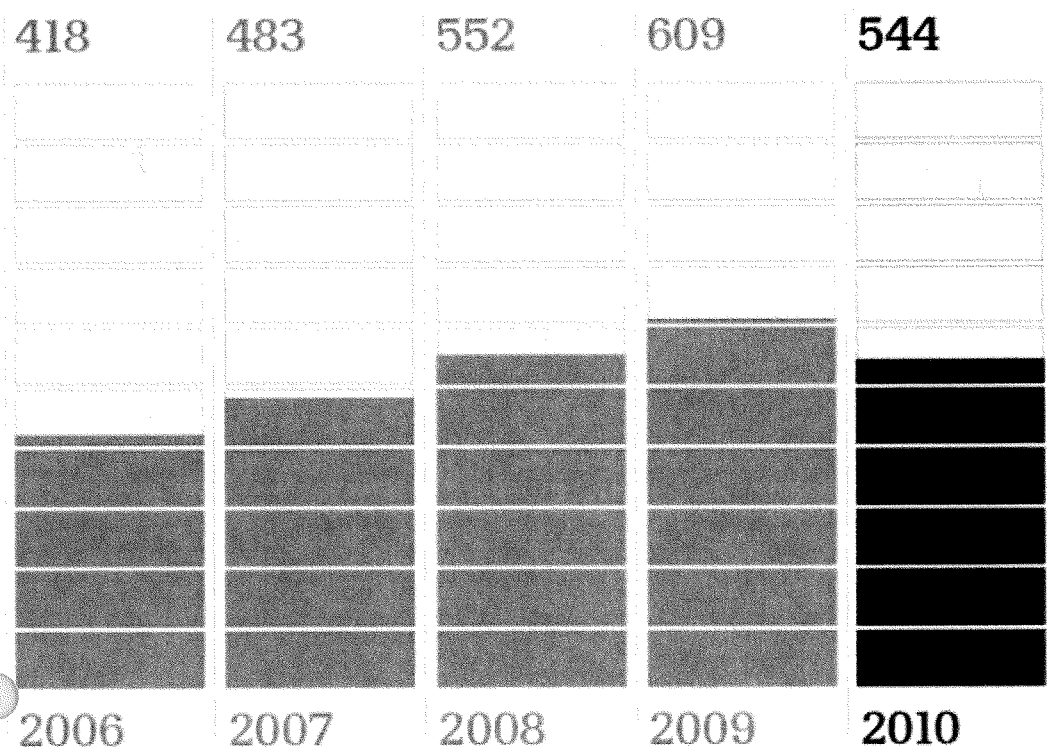
These rulings by the Commission allowed us to set important precedents in a number of key areas, including online privacy, the use of blogs and suicide reporting. To read more about last year's major cases please click here. To see every case the PCC has formally upheld since 1996 click here.

Click below for type of complaint

[Complaints resolved to the satisfaction of complainants](#)

[Complaints where redress was obtained but did not resolve the case to the complainants' satisfaction](#)

[Complaints where the PCC formally criticised editors in public rulings](#)



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Statistics 2010

Complaints without merit

On 937 occasions the Commission ruled that there had not been a breach of the Editor's Code. Most of these rulings were straightforward and did not reveal any new or important principle; as a result they were not published but were, of course, communicated in full to the parties involved in the complaint (and are recorded briefly on the PCC's website, along with every concluded complaint - [see more here](#)). In 19 key cases, the Commission made rulings public in formal adjudications, which can be seen [here](#).

In eight cases no finding was possible because of irreconcilable conflicts of evidence.

Overall, the Press Complaints Commission received written complaints from well over 7,000 people last year, most of them by email - some of those were multiple complaints about the same issue and some were not concluded by the end of the year.

Additionally, a lot of these contacts related to matters that fell outside the Commission's remit (TV programmes and adverts for example) or were not followed up when we requested additional information which was necessary for a proper assessment. It was not possible to take these complaints further, although it is important to be clear that every person who writes to us receives a full, tailored response.

In total, 2,774 complaints were not pursued after initially being submitted. A further 899 fell outside the PCC's jurisdiction or related to matters of taste and decency not covered by the Code.

We also received a considerable number of complaints from people who were not directly connected to the matters under complaint. We now deal with a great many cases about general matters of fact from anyone who wishes to express a concern. And, while it remains our firm policy that we should not examine a complaint from a third party where there is an obvious first party who could complain (it would be highly inappropriate, for instance, to examine and perhaps rule on a complaint about alleged invasion of privacy unless the person who experienced the apparent intrusion gave their consent), we regularly work proactively to make such individuals aware of our services so they can decide to complain if they so wish.

If we believe that a complainant is not a genuine first party we will explain why their concern may be one with which the PCC cannot deal. However, everyone has the chance to argue their case and, if they choose to do so, the Commission will consider whether there are exceptional reasons to take the complaint forward.

In 2010, the Commission ruled on 102 occasions that it could not consider a complaint without contact or consent from the person directly affected by the article in question.

2,774

Not pursued

78

Matters of taste & offensiveness

102

Ruled out by the PCC as being from 3rd Parties

821

Outside the PCC's remit

2

Disallowed on grounds of delay

8

No finding possible

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Statistics 2010

Speed of service

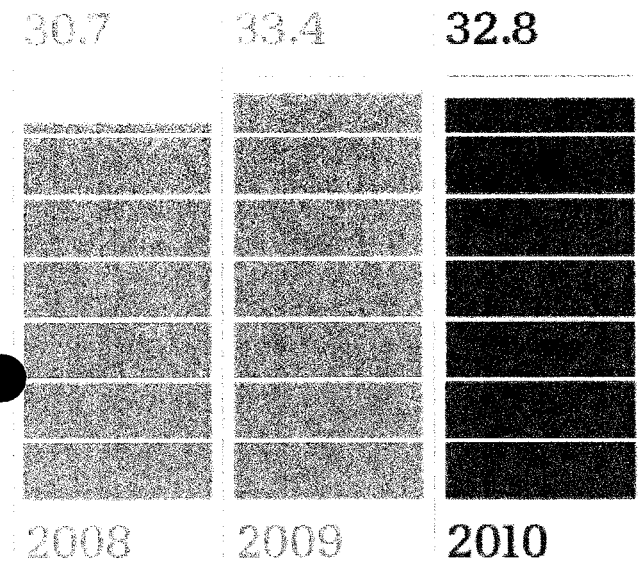
The PCC sets out to be 'fast, free and fair'. The speed with which complaints are dealt with is, therefore, crucial.

In 2010, the average time between a complaint being lodged and it being concluded was - in respect of investigated complaints (that is, those where we wrote to the relevant editor for a response to the case) - 32.8 working days. This was a slight improvement on the previous year. Looking only at complaints that were judged to have merit, the average time was 30.5 working days, also an improvement on 2009.

These results fulfil our aim of dealing with complaints, on average, within 35 working days.

Investigated complaints:

Time taken to conclude, in working days.





Statistics 2010

Prominence of corrections

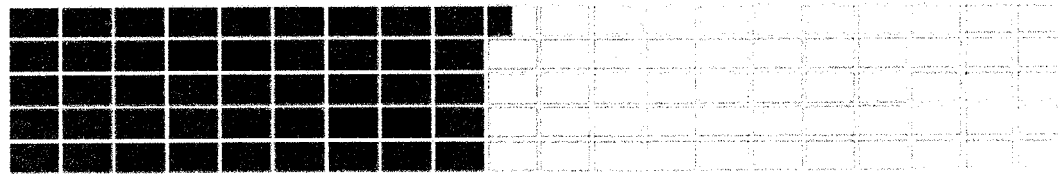
Newspapers and magazines should not bury corrections and apologies. Working towards ensuring that corrective action is published with due prominence is a key aim for the PCC and is something we have monitored since 2005. In that year, 59% of corrections negotiated by the Commission were published on the same page or further forward than the material under complaint. In 2010, the figure was 69.7%. Looking only at corrections that contained an apology, the proportion rises to 81.1%.

Of course, due prominence does not mean necessarily that corrections must appear on a set page. An apology for a serious error might properly be published closer to the front of a newspaper than the original article appeared. A clarification of less significance might - on rare occasions - reasonably be published further back. And some people prefer to have a correction on a particular page, the letters page for example.

However, the overall picture is certainly encouraging, with 89.4% of PCC-negotiated corrections being published no later than two pages further back than the material complained of or in a dedicated corrections column.

Prominence of corrections and apologies:

Hover over category to see the related figures.



45.5%

Further forward than the original article:

24.2%

Same page as the original

10.6%

Designated corrections column

14.4%

Within five pages of the original

5.3%

More than five pages later than the original



Statistics 2010

Desist requests and pre-publication assistance

Desist requests

In recent years the Commission has sought to highlight its vital role in assisting those who find themselves at the centre of a media story, usually through no fault of their own. We never assume that such people ought not to speak to journalists or do not wish to - but if they decide they want to avoid approaches from reporters and photographers we will, where appropriate, help to ensure their wishes are as widely known as possible.

We do this by distributing a desist request - usually an email from the individual concerned (or their nominated representative) - to our contact list of editorial and legal executives across the newspaper and magazine industry. We can also send such requests to certain news agencies and, in some circumstances, to broadcasters too as they have agreed voluntarily to participate in the system we have developed. The outcome of these requests is invariably a reduction in physical media attention. And although there may be rare occasions when it is legitimate for a journalist to approach an individual even after a desist request has been issued (on public interest grounds), it is exceedingly unusual for editors to permit further contact in these circumstances.

Of course, the Commission will only use the desist request system when it is genuinely necessary - usually when the subject of media interest is vulnerable, for instance as the result of a bereavement. We take care to be sure that individuals are not abusing our assistance to prevent legitimate scrutiny or to protect exclusive deals with one media outlet over another.

Last year, the PCC agreed to pass on desist requests on just over 100 occasions, up from 69 in 2009.

Pre-publication assistance

As well as dealing with concerns about harassment, the Commission regularly offers pre-publication advice and assistance - both to complainants who are worried about material they believe will appear, and to editors who require guidance on what the Code of Practice's requirements mean in practice. In fact, it is now rare that a day will go by without one of the PCC's complaints team offering pre-publication help on the phone or by email.

This work, which by its nature remains unseen by the public, is vital. And it reflects a recognition by the PCC that it is better to try to avoid problems arising in the first place, than to seek remedies afterwards. Countless stories never appear - or appear in a considerably different format - as the result of this invisible part of the Commission's service.

Proactive approaches

The PCC does not monitor the press for potential breaches of the Editors' Code of Practice. To do so would be inappropriate and would, in any case, pose huge practical difficulties. However, there are some occasions when it becomes abundantly clear that an individual or individuals are facing a wholly unexpected level of media interest - often in the aftermath of a shocking accident or crime, for instance the shootings in Cumbria last summer.

In situations such as these we believe it is important that people who are unused to dealing with the media should at least be aware of the PCC's services. As a result, we will aim to send information about our work to the person in question - either directly or via an obvious representative such as a local MP or the police. In 2010, the Commission made proactive approaches in this way on 25 occasions.

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Statistics 2010

Complainant feedback and public opinion research

Complainant feedback

The PCC surveys all those who receive a ruling or whose complaint is settled by mediation. We also request feedback from all individuals whose cases were investigated (meaning that we wrote to the editor because the complaint appeared to have merit) even if they did not ultimately pursue their complaints.

In 2010, 437 people responded to our survey, which is carried out anonymously. Results were generally positive, especially when it is considered that over half of those who sent us their feedback did not have their complaints upheld by the PCC. In 2010:

84%

of those who rated our helpline staff gave them at least 7 out of 10 " and the most popular score was the maximum 10

78%

of respondents said the time it took to deal with their complaints was 'about right'

73%

said their complaint had been dealt with thoroughly or very thoroughly

51%

even those whose complaints were found by the Commission not to raise a breach of the Editors' Code of Practice were more likely than not (51%) to feel that their case had been handled satisfactorily or very satisfactorily.

Following last year's independent Governance Review, the PCC has committed to a new set of performance objectives. As part of this process, we have revamped our complainant feedback questionnaire. The results should enable deeper analysis and provide us with improved information about the experiences of those who use the Commission's services.

Public opinion research

As well as listening to the views of the people whose complaints we examine, the PCC also conducts research into public attitudes and awareness about its work.

In 2010 the Press Complaints Commission commissioned an online attitude survey to be conducted amongst 1,000 nationally representative adults in the UK. Some of the key results of the research were:

AWARENESS

81% of people know of the PCC

EFFECTIVENESS

Of respondents who expressed an opinion, 75% thought the PCC to be effective or very effective

FUNDING

Almost 9 out of 10 people believe the PCC system should be funded by the newspaper and magazine industry (rather than by the taxpayer or by complainants)

PRIMACY OF APOLOGIES

Three-quarters of the population (77%) prefer a quick public apology to a lengthy process and fine.

For more results and to read the research in full please [click here](#).

The sample was drawn from Toluna's online panel. Toluna is a global organisation running communities of 4 million members across 34 markets. Over 1,500 of the world's brands, market research firms and advertising networks use Toluna's online panels and technology to power their research activities. Many of these clients are global media organisations such as the BBC, ITV, Condé Nast, Canal Plus and Gruppo24ORE. Toluna are members of the The Market Research Society and Esomar. Quotas were set to ensure the total sample reflected the latest census data in terms of age, gender, region and marital status.

2011 Press Complaints Commission



PCC year at a glance



We have decided to put together a 'year at a glance' feature, as a means of showing the range of work undertaken by the PCC over the course of last year. We hope that this will show the different working parts of the organisation in action, which can only be a good thing.

It is, however, important to remember that this is not an exhaustive list, but rather a representative selection of the areas in which the PCC operates. Over the course of each month, there will be hundreds of complaints dealt with, and countless examples of advice given to editors, or proactive approaches to vulnerable people, or requests to prevent harassment by journalists.

For example, each month the PCC will send a number of advisory notes across the whole industry. These will generally serve two functions: preventing the harassment of individuals, by asking newspapers and magazines not to contact them; and representing complainants with concerns about the publication of intrusive material. We have included a few representative examples here.

There is also a full programme of conference speaking and training seminars (for working journalists and students), and there are hundreds of direct meetings with interested parties. It would be an arduous task to read through an account of all the work completed in a year, so we have offered a sample instead.

So we hope this album of selected snapshots will be a useful guide to the Press Complaints Commission and what it did in 2010. If you are interested in finding out more about our work, you can sign up to our [mailing list](#), or follow us on Twitter at @UKPCC.



PCC year at a glance

January

PCC rules that term 'tranny' is discriminatory



The PCC ruled for the first time that a newspaper had published discriminatory information about a transsexual. It criticised the Sunday Life for describing a transsexual person as a 'tranny', saying that the term was 'a needless abbreviation, held by many to be offensive' and pejorative to the complainant.

This case is a good example of how the PCC system works: the Code of Practice had been recently changed in order to protect transsexuals specifically; a complaint was made by an affected party; the PCC has upheld the complainant's position and set a clear principle for the whole industry that the term 'tranny' should not be used to describe transgendered individuals.

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PCC year at a glance

January

PCC appoints ex-Chief Constable as public member

Julie Spence OBE QPM who is the former Chief Constable of Cambridgeshire Constabulary was appointed as a public member. Julie now sits on the Phone Hacking Review Committee as well as being a vocal member of the main Commission.

The system for appointing public members has since been amended following the independent Governance Review of the PCC. The first posts under the new system were advertised at the beginning of 2011.

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PCC year at a glance

January

PCC further develops rules on social networking

The PCC issued a ruling against The Sunday Times, which established two principles in regard to the journalistic use of social networking sites:

- It is possible to harass an individual by unwanted contact using Facebook;
- Context is vital when using material (especially in tragic cases) taken from a person's social networking page.

The Commission said:

'Newspapers still remained entitled, when reporting the death of an individual, to make use of publicly available material obtained from social networking sites. However, editors should always consider the impact on grieving families when taking such information (which may have been posted in a jocular or carefree fashion) from its original context and using it within a tragic story about that person's death.'

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PCC year at a glance

January

PCC makes police visit

As part of our [ongoing programme](#) to help expand the reach of the PCC, we are in contact with police services across the country regularly. We visited Derbyshire Constabulary to speak to officers about the PCC and its work.

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PCC year at a glance

January

Advisory notes

In January, they included:

- Asking a Sunday newspaper to discontinue its contact with a family who indicated that they did not wish to comment publicly about their situation;
- Circulating a request that a medical detail relating to a celebrity not be published;
- Circulating a request from a victim of violent crime that gratuitous details of the offence not be republished when the convicted man was shortly to be released.

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PCC year at a glance

February

Update seminar



The PCC ran a seminar for working journalists at The Sunday Times. This is part of a renewed programme for the PCC to offer continuing training to journalists and editors in the application of the Code of Practice.

During 2010, the PCC undertook or arranged seminars at every national newspaper group, as well as magazine and regional titles. This programme is continuing in 2011.



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PCC year at a glance

February

PCC says Minogue pregnancy private until 12 weeks; information appearing elsewhere online not sufficient

● One of the key pieces of privacy case law developed by the PCC is that newspapers and magazines should not generally reveal the existence of a pregnancy until after the twelve-week scan. This piece of jurisprudence has had a clear effect on how pregnancy is covered in the UK.

When the TV personality Dannii Minogue became pregnant, the newspaper and magazine industry (following contact from the PCC) refrained from publication. This included the Daily Mirror and Daily Record. However, they did publish before the end of the twelve-week period, on the grounds that the information had appeared in a blog on an Australian newspaper website.

The Commission did not think that this provided sufficient justification, saying:

'The Code specifically requires the Commission to have regard to the 'extent' to which the information has previously appeared. This was no more than common sense: otherwise, any reference online would represent automatic justification for a newspaper to publish otherwise intrusive material.'

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PCC year at a glance

February

PCC issues decision on Jan Moir column about Stephen Gately's death

This was an important ruling in the context of freedom of expression, which was discussed in last year's [annual review](#). [The ruling](#), despite the controversy surrounding the subject matter, was generally well received.

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PCC year at a glance

February

Working with bereavement support organisations

A member of PCC staff spoke at the Childhood Bereavement Network Annual Conference in Birmingham, explaining the protections afforded by the Code of Conduct to those suffering grief.

Information about the PCC was also included in the Ministry of Justice's new 'Guide to Coroners and Inquests'. It can be downloaded [here](#)

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PCC year at a glance

February

Advisory notes

In February, they included:

- Passing on the wishes of a bereaved family that the press should not attend a funeral;
- Requesting that the press not contact a woman thought to be involved in a relationship with a celebrity;
- Passing on the request of a bereaved family that photographs of a body being placed into an ambulance be removed from online sites.

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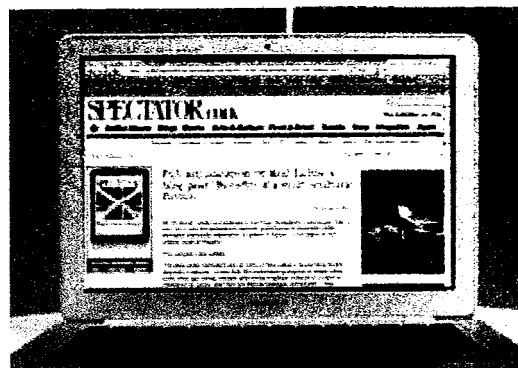
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PCC year at a glance

March

PCC upholds first complaint about journalist's blog



The Commission was asked to judge whether information published on Rod Liddle's blog on The Spectator website was inaccurate or misleading. It judged that it was.

The PCC's jurisdiction extends to blogs published by the mainstream press (whose content would otherwise be subject to the Commission's jurisdiction). The Commission recognises that blogs can be a conversation, a more informal means of broadcasting information, and this affects how complaints should be considered about them. The default position, however, must still be that the terms of the Code of Practice apply.

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PCC year at a glance

March

Baroness Buscombe: 'Freedom of speech is non-negotiable'

An article by Baroness Buscombe about the work of the PCC was published in the [British Journalism Review](#), in which she discussed her experiences in her first year as Chairman.

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PCC year at a glance

March

POLIS debate on social networking

The PCC hosted, in conjunction with [POLIS](#), a discussion seminar on the rise of social media and its impact on journalism. The PCC's Director, Stephen Abell, sat on a panel, which included the Guardian's Janine Gibson, the BBC's Torin Douglas and Professor Ian Walden from Queen Mary, University of London (and also a public member of the PCC). There is a report of the seminar [here](#).

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PCC year at a glance

March

PCC update seminar in Belfast

Three members of PCC staff visited the Belfast Telegraph and Sunday Life newsrooms to host a seminar.



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PCC year at a glance

March

Advisory notes

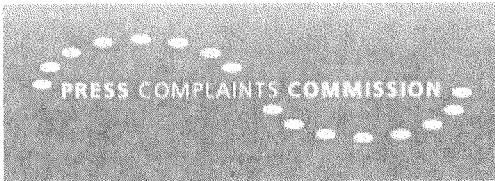
In March, they included:

- Passing on a request from the solicitors of a bereaved family asking the press, ahead of an inquest, not to approach the family;
- Passing on the request of the wife of a man seriously injured in an accident that her local paper stop contacting her.

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PCC year at a glance

April

MOD visit



A senior staff member visited the Ministry of Defence's [Defence Operations Centre](#) to talk about the role of the PCC and generally dealing with the media in an emergency. The PCC has sought to develop a relationship with the MOD, given the amount of (legitimate) media attention that can occur when soldiers die in active service.

The key for the PCC is to make itself available to help family members in those circumstances.

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PCC year at a glance

April

Accumulated inaccuracies raised breach of the Code of Practice

The PCC upheld a complaint from a family against The Sun, which had published two articles on the subject of the gender transition of a young child. While some of the inaccuracies may have been minor, the Commission ruled that their accumulation was significant.

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PCC year at a glance

April

Advisory notes

In April, they included:

- Passing on the request of a couple going through a divorce, who were concerned about the presence of journalists at their home, that they not be contacted by the press;
- Communicating the wishes of a celebrity couple that editors take care not to publish intrusive photographs of the mother and new baby. The couple also made clear that they would not seek publicity for their child, and requested that editors not publish identifiable pictures.

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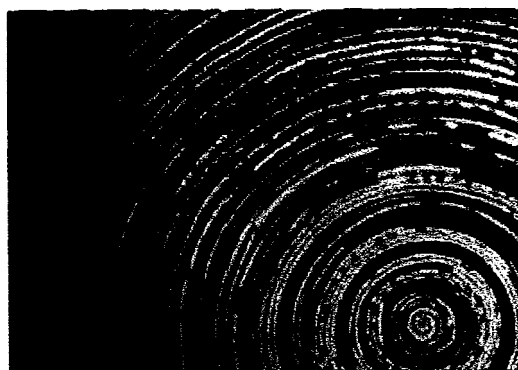
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PCC year at a glance

May

Independent polling shows support for the PCC



The PCC published the results of the research of nationally representative polling it undertook about public attitudes to the PCC and self-regulation.

Some headline figures:

- 81% of people were aware of the PCC;
- 75% of those who expressed an opinion thought the PCC to be effective or very effective. Only 14% of the public thought that the PCC was ineffective;
- Almost 9 out of 10 people believed the PCC system should be funded by the newspaper and magazine industry (rather than the taxpayer or individual complainants).

The research can be viewed [here](#).

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PCC year at a glance

May

PCC publishes Commission meeting minutes

As part of the bid to improve its transparency and accountability (in advance of the independent Governance Review, which was looking at these areas), the PCC published minutes of its meetings for the first time.



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PCC year at a glance

May

Ombudsman conference

A member of PCC staff attended the Annual Conference of the Organisation of News Ombudsmen at the Reuters Institute and spoke about how different regulatory structures can work alongside one another most effectively. The PCC is just part of a patchwork of media regulation in the UK, which is why we maintain close links to others working in the same area, including Ombudsmen and Readers' Editors.

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PCC year at a glance

May

Advisory notes

In May, they included:

- Passing on the request from a family liaison officer of a Scottish police force that a grieving family not be contacted;

- Advising that the press should not reveal the identity of a lottery winner, who had won more than a hundred million pounds and wanted to keep their anonymity. The PCC passed on the request not to be identified from Camelot, on behalf of the winner, with a reminder to editors of the PCC's [guidance note](#) about lottery winners.

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PCC year at a glance

June

PCC hosts seminar on mental health reporting



The PCC, partnering the Royal College of Psychiatrists and Shift, held a seminar on mental health reporting which was chaired by Trisha Goddard. This was the first event of its kind, and was attended by senior figures from every newspaper group. It allowed experts in the field of mental health to share concerns with the industry, and establish grounds for agreement to improve mental health reporting in the future. A PCC representative also spoke at a seminar for those working in the mental health sector in Scotland.

The PCC sees events like these as key to its role of maintaining and improving standards.

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PCC year at a glance

June

Proactive approach: the Cumbria shootings

Throughout the year, PCC staff become aware of incidents that attract widespread or intense media attention. At that point, we make ourselves available to those who might need our help. This may include approaching family representatives, police, lawyers, hospitals or local MPs.

On 2nd June, the PCC became aware of the shootings in Cumbria, in which Derrick Bird killed 12 people. When the first reports came in, the PCC immediately got in touch with the local police, hospitals and other emergency service providers. Over the ensuing days, we were in regular contact with the police, and helped one family who did not wish to be contacted by the press.

The Director of the PCC later visited Cumbria, to speak with those affected by the tragedy. He also wrote an [open letter](#) to the local paper, calling for any complaints. In 2011, we have worked with police and the Coroner to pass on the requests of several local families that they should not be further contacted by the media.

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PCC year at a glance

June

Health Network event

A senior member of PCC staff spoke at the West Midlands NHS Communications Network. The PCC has sought to establish and improve its links with health care providers, as they represent a constituency of people (those suffering ill health and their families) who are accorded strong protections under the Code of Practice and may be in need of the PCC in dealing with concerns about the press.

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PCC year at a glance

June

Oxford Union debate

Baroness Buscombe took part in, and was on the winning side of, an [Oxford Union debate](#) entitled 'This house believes that a public person has no right to a private life'. She opposed the motion, alongside celebrity lawyer Keith Schilling, Max Mosley and Andrew Caldecott QC.

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PCC year at a glance

June

Director appears before Scottish Parliament Committee

Stephen Abell, the Director of the PCC, was invited before the Equal Opportunities Committee of the Scottish Parliament, as part of its Migration and Trafficking Inquiry, to discuss coverage of migrants in the Scottish Press.

His evidence can be seen [here](#).

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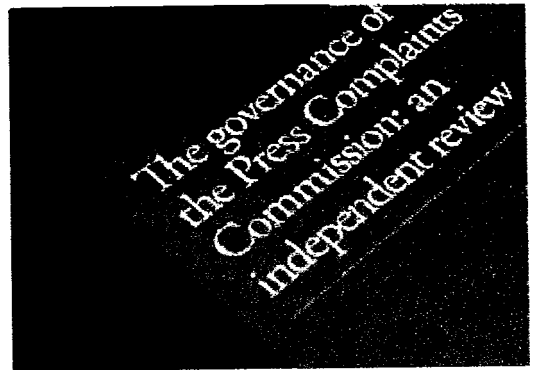
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PCC year at a glance

July

Independent Governance Review reports



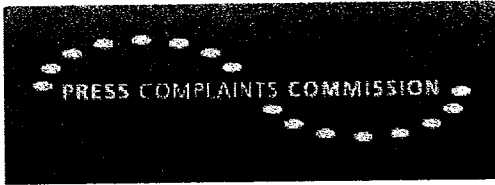
had examined the structures and work of the organisation for the preceding nine months. It produced a lengthy and detailed report, amounting to 75 discrete recommendations. The PCC welcomed its findings, and began the process of their implementation.

The report was also commended by external observers, such as the media commentator Roy Greenslade.

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PCC year at a glance

July

PCC conference speaking

A PCC member of staff spoke at The Future Services for Bereaved Children: Best Practice and Reform Conference. A member of the PCC was on the panel for the Westminster Media Forum debate debate 'Reflecting diversity - the LGBT community and the media'.

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PCC year at a glance

July

PCC rules on undercover filming; criticises paper

The PCC upheld a complaint, making clear two (connected) points of principle: undercover recording is extremely intrusive; and there is, therefore, a high bar for any public interest defence.

● The Sunday World was seeking to expose an individual for organising 'bukake' sex parties. It secretly filmed their organiser and ran stills from the footage.

The Commission said:

Both the filming and the published images constituted a serious intrusion, which required a high level of public interest to justify. The newspaper could not reach that level in its defence.

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PCC year at a glance

July

Advisory notes

In July, they included:

- Helping an MP regarding possible harassment of their partner, communicating their concerns to the relevant paper;

● - Passing on the concerns of a celebrity couple regarding photographers taking photographs of their new baby outside their home.

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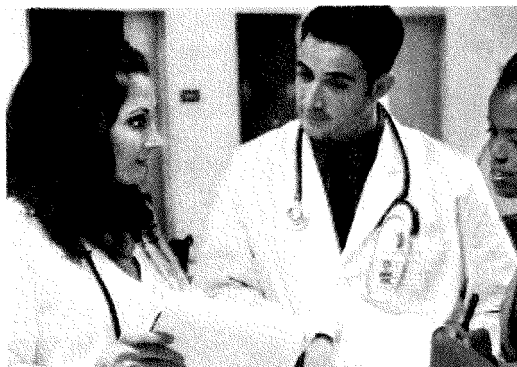
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PCC year at a glance

August

PCC rules on photos of psychiatric patients



The Commission had a difficult case to consider, when a Mental Health NHS Trust complained about a local paper's decision to publish pixelated images of patients said to be distressed at the closure of a hospital. The patients had, apparently, been willing to be photographed.

This case raised challenging issues about the competing rights of a hospital and its patients, and what constitutes informed consent.

The Commission found no breach of the Code, saying:

"In the end it found that the newspapers had managed to balance their duty to behave responsibly towards vulnerable individuals with the need to cover a story of important public interest."

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PCC year at a glance

August

PCC consultation on journalists and Twitter

In 2010, the PCC established its first online working group, a standing committee of public and editorial Commissioners charged with considering ethical issues relating to online journalism.

It began by considering whether the PCC's remit should be expanded to cover editorially-controlled Twitter accounts. It undertook an initial consultation across the industry, and found broad support for the idea that tweets, coming from accounts clearly identified as containing the editorial product of the title, should adhere to the terms of the Code of Practice. Such accounts would be different from the personal accounts of journalists.

The industry has now been asked formally to consider whether the remit of the PCC should be expanded in this area.

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PCC year at a glance

August

Identification of defendants in rape cases

PCC staff met with senior officials of the Ministry of Justice, to discuss the idea floated by a minister to introduce the compulsory anonymisation of defendants in rape cases (either before charge or conviction). The PCC discussed the relevant issues, and the protections afforded by the Code.

The proposal to legislate in this area was subsequently dropped.

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PCC year at a glance

August

Support for National AIDS Trust's video guide for journalists

The PCC Director was interviewed by the National AIDS Trust as part of a project designed to challenge stigma and improve the way that HIV and AIDS are reported in the UK. The video can be [viewed here](#). We maintain an ongoing relationship with the NAT and have dealt with a number of complaints from them in the past.

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PCC year at a glance

August

Advisory notes

In August, they included:

- Passing on a bereaved family's concerns about press attention at an upcoming funeral;

- Passing on concerns from an individual, whose family were abroad and being apparently persistently contacted by the national press.

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PCC year at a glance

September

PCC criticises The Sunday Times for 'dyke' reference



The PCC issued a landmark ruling, when it judged that a reference to TV presenter Clare Balding by columnist AA Gill - in which he called her a "dyke on a bike" - was pejorative in breach of Clause 12 (Discrimination) of the Code of Practice.

The Commission upheld the complaint, saying that the article had referenced "the complainant's sexuality in a demeaning and gratuitous way".

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PCC year at a glance

September

PCC holds event in Holyrood

Members of the Commission visited the Scottish Parliament in Holyrood, to discuss the work of the PCC. The event was hosted by the Cross-Party Group on Culture and Media, and provided the opportunity to advertise - in front of an audience of MSPs and interested parties - how the PCC can help those with concerns about the press.

The PCC was represented by three of its Scottish Commissioners (one editor, John McLellan of the Scotsman; and two public members, Esther Robertson and John Home Robertson), and the Chairman and Director.

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PCC year at a glance

September

PCC conference speaking

PCC staff attended the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux Annual Conference in York, seeking to ensure that CABs are able to use the PCC's services effectively. A member of PCC staff also spoke at the Samaritans Annual Conference.

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PCC year at a glance

September

Advisory notes

In September, they included:

- Passing on the concerns of a celebrity couple about repeated paparazzi harassment;

● - Asking newspapers and broadcasters not to contact a family, who did not wish to speak during the course of an inquest.

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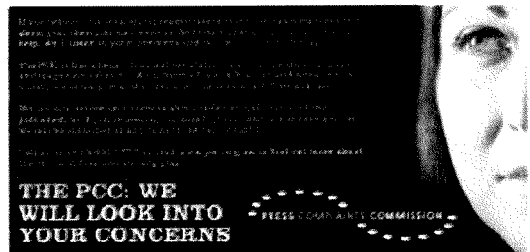
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PCC year at a glance

October

New advertising campaign for the PCC



The PCC released new adverts, and asked the industry to offer free space to run them. They have since appeared in every major national and regional groups, and some magazines.

These adverts are part of a bid by the PCC to reach as many people who may need our services as possible.

They can be downloaded [here](#).

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PCC year at a glance

October

Digital Editors' Forum

The PCC spoke at the [Digital Editors Network](#) in Manchester, using the opportunity to discuss relevant online issues: journalists on Twitter; and how journalists use material taken from social networking sites.



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PCC year at a glance

October

Training students

The PCC sees one of its functions as training the next generation of journalists, and sends speakers to every major journalism college. This month, we ran a seminar for journalism students at Westminster University. We also offered practical training to student journalists at the Cambridge Student, a paper that formally subscribes to the PCC and is therefore covered by the Code of Practice.

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PCC year at a glance

October

Advisory notes

In October, these included:

- Passing on the concerns of the Samaritans, who felt that excessive detail about methods of suicide may have been published. The PCC reminded editors of its clear guidance on [suicide reporting](#).

- Sharing with the national press the concerns of a law firm, who were concerned that information illegally obtained from its files was being made available to the media.

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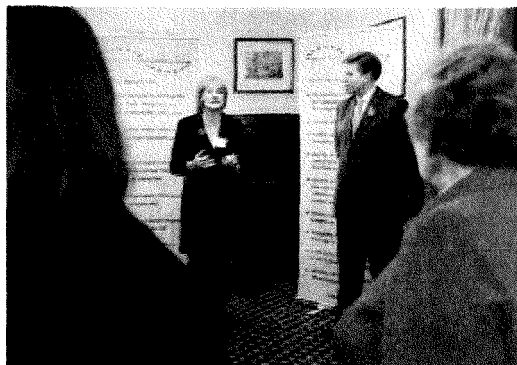
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PCC year at a glance

November

PCC in Parliament



A central aim of the PCC is to encourage people to use our services. MPs are in a unique position because not only do they appear in the press themselves, but also they represent every citizen of the UK.

The PCC hosted a reception in the House of Commons for all MPs, so that they could be aware of how we can help them and, just as importantly, their constituents. We want every MP to know they can call the PCC at any time, if their constituents need help. The event was also open to Peers.

Madeleine Moon MP and Graham Brady MP sponsored the event and gave introductory speeches. Ms Moon, in particular, was able to testify to how the PCC had helped when tragedy struck her constituency of Bridgend.

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PCC year at a glance

November

PCC holds open day in Southampton

As part of its annual programme of open days, the PCC came to Southampton. It hosted a private surgery for any member of public with concerns about the press, and then held an open Q & A. The panel members were: Baroness Buscombe, Chairman of the PCC; Stephen Abell, Director of the PCC; Simon Sapper, public Commissioner; and Ian Murray, editor of the Southern Daily Echo.

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PCC year at a glance

November

PCC rules on online contact with child

The PCC upheld a complaint against the Wanstead and Woodford Guardian for soliciting email comments from pupils in connection with a story that their sex education teacher was a 'porn star'.

● It subsequently published a comment apparently sent from a schoolgirl. Her father complained that she had not actually sent the comment, and that - in any case - she should not have been quoted in a newspaper, as she was 14 years old.

The Commission upheld the complaint, and the newspaper changed its policy so that it no longer requested comments in connection with school stories.

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PCC year at a glance

November

Annual meeting of the Alliance of Independent Press Councils of Europe

Each year, the PCC participates in the annual meeting of AIPCE, the Alliance of Independent Press Councils of Europe. AIPCE is a loose network of independent content regulators for both press and broadcast media. Its annual conferences provide a forum for Media and Press Council representatives to discuss topical issues, to exchange ideas and to offer and receive advice.

The 2010 conference was held in Amsterdam, and a PCC representative was able to provide an update to all delegates on notable rulings and developments over the course of the previous year.

For more information, please see www.aipce.net

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PCC year at a glance

November

Advisory notes

In November, they included:

- Collating concerns from various authorities about how a child sex abuse case was being reported. To prevent 'jigsaw' identification, the PCC communicated with the relevant news organisations, so that each was aware what information was in the public domain;
- Passing on concerns from a well-known singer about persistent pursuit by photographers.

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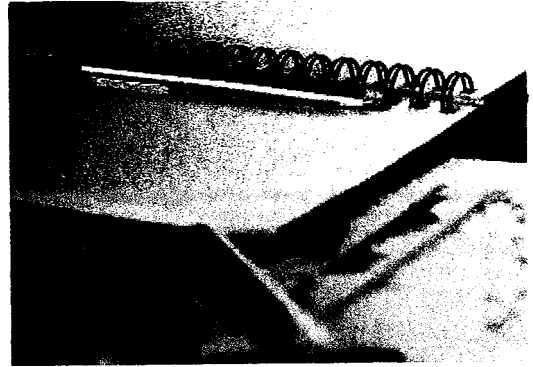
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PCC year at a glance

December

PCC responds to Governance Review



The PCC was pleased to be able to welcome the Governance Review positively. We provided an itemised response to each of the 74 recommendations, taking the vast majority of them forward.

The PCC, at the same time, announced the first ever appointment of a Deputy Chairman, in a role designed to increase the authority of the public members on the Commission. The first appointee was Ian Nichol, a former partner of PricewaterhouseCoopers, and a Member of the Criminal Cases Review Commission.

Baroness Buscombe said: "Our response focuses on five key areas for the Commission: effectiveness, transparency, accountability, working independence and clarity about our function. We pledge that the work begun by the Governance Review will be continued by the Commission. I am delighted that Ian Nichol has accepted the position of Deputy Chairman. Both Ian and I are determined to ensure that the PCC operates at the optimal level of trust, performance and focus."

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PCC year at a glance

December

New register of interests for Commissioners

As part of the Governance Review reforms, the Commission published an updated and expanded [register of interests](#). This allowed editorial members to make publicly clear that they are excluded from the consideration of complaints about their own papers, and those with which they are closely connected.

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PCC year at a glance

December

First ruling on financial journalism since 'City Slickers'

The year ended with the first ruling under Clause 13 (Financial journalism) since the City Slickers case of 2000. However, the new cases were very different and the Commission found that The Daily and The Sunday Telegraph had acted properly in how they had made share recommendations. However, given the concerns that had been raised, the newspapers made a voluntary undertaking that the Questor editor would not buy or sell shares in the future.

The Director of the PCC said: "After the City Slickers case in 2000, specific guidance was introduced in the area of financial journalism by the Commission. This guidance was updated five years ago to take account of relevant legislation, which derived from an EU Directive. This complaint was the first occasion on which the updated guidance has been tested and the Commission was glad to establish that the newspaper was following all the requirements. The fact that the Telegraph decided to take further voluntary action to prevent any suggestion of a conflict of interest shows the strength of the self-regulation in this area, which seeks to promote high standards of accountability. The PCC will host a seminar on this subject in 2011 to ensure that journalists across the industry remain up to date with the Commission's thinking, and aware of our vigilance."

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PCC year at a glance

December

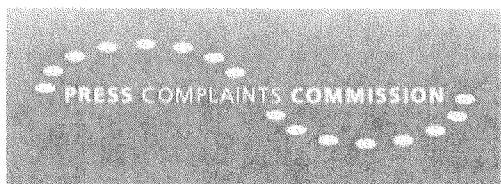
Cruse Bereavement Care speaker addresses Commission

December saw Liz Taylor, the Director of Fundraising from Cruse Bereavement Care, address Commission members about the work of the organisation. This was the first in a new series designed to allow Commissioners to speak directly to organisations whose work overlaps in some way with an aspect of the Editors' Code of Practice. There was an excellent discussion centring around Clause 5 (Intrusion into grief or shock) while some very good suggestions were made as to how the PCC could continue to work with Cruse to promote its services to those in need.

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PCC staff



The Commission has a permanent staff of 16 people, plus the Chairman

Based in Holborn, the secretariat deals with thousands of written complaints and telephone enquiries each year. Our staff train journalists and engage with complainant groups; they work to protect the vulnerable and are on call 24 hours a day. These are the people at the heart of the PCC.

Complaints department

The Complaints department comprises seven staff, each of whom manages a caseload of between 40 and 50 complaints. In addition to dealing with formal complaints, Complaints Officers also give advice to both editors and members of the public who have a query related to the Editors' Code of Practice.

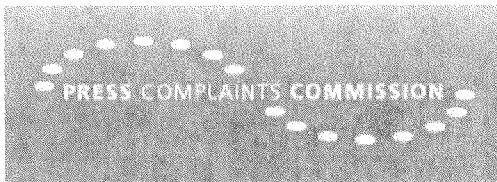
Administration

The Administration department works with the Complaints department to ensure that all correspondence connected to a case is processed efficiently. It also offers general advice to members of the public and looks after the day-to-day running of the PCC

Communications and Public Affairs department

The Communications and Public Affairs department is responsible for the PCC's public relations work. It also runs the organisation's outreach work, training seminars and the PCC events programme, as well as managing the PCC website.

2011 Press Complaints Commission



Report of the Charter Commissioner 2010



Annual Report of the Charter Commissioner by Lt Gen Sir Michael Willcocks KCB CVO

1. 2010 marked my first full year in the post of Charter Commissioner for the Press Complaints Commission (PCC). Although there was discussion of the limits of this role in the context of the Independent Governance Review of the Commission, which I cover below, my function has remained that of considering those instances where complainants, having received a decision from the PCC, were dissatisfied with the way in which the Commission had handled the matter.
2. This year has seen a marked increase in the number of complaints I received compared to last year: 63 as opposed to 35 in 2009. This total represents approximately 1.8% of those cases that fell within the PCCs remit to consider (1% in 2009). Once again, although complainants invariably cited "handling" as the cause of their grievance, in only five cases was this absolutely so: all the remaining 58 mixed complaints over handling matters with those of the Commission's decision itself. In every instance I was able to study the full case file and to discuss the issues raised with the Director and staff of the PCC where necessary.
3. In 15 cases, the complainants sought clarification of the PCC's decision. In those cases where it was simply a matter of lack of familiarity with, or misunderstanding of, the Commission's composition, procedures, or powers, I was able to clear up the issue myself. There were three cases, for instance, where I was able to explain the Commission's stance on third party rulings. Where, however, a complaint involved seeking a better understanding of the Commission's reasoning behind its decision, then I referred it back to the PCC for it to elaborate directly with the complainant. The Director of the Commission invariably agreed to do so in such cases.
4. There were a worrying number of cases, 11 in all, where serious delay was incurred before the complaint was brought to the Commission for resolution. These delays, running sometimes into weeks, were almost invariably caused by the newspaper or magazine, against which the complaint had been made, failing to respond to the PCC's request for answers to complainants' concerns or for additional information. It is made quite clear to the editors that a response time of no more than seven days is sought for this process but this is frequently ignored, despite repeated prompting by the Commission. There are, of course, sometimes valid reasons for the delay, but I recommend that the PCC continues to stress to Editors the need for timeliness of reply.
5. In many instances complainants sought reassurance that all the views, concerns and information that they had provided were indeed seen in full by the Commission before it reached a decision on their case. There were, in addition, four direct accusations of bias by the PCC towards the industry. Having full access to all the correspondence and information in a case and the having the ability to track the deliberations of members of the Commission, I was able to assure complainants of the absolute impartiality of the PCC and the thoroughness with which it considers every case. Indeed, I am constantly struck by the efforts made by the PCC to reach satisfactory outcomes for complainants.
6. There were five occasions where aspects of the handling of a case by the PCC were at fault, and in every instance the complainant received an apology or an explanation which satisfied them. I had only once, at the request of a complainant, to seek a legal view on a PCC decision, which subsequently was upheld.
7. The Independent Governance Review of the PCC, which reported in July 2010, recommended that my title be changed to that of the Independent Reviewer. I welcome this re-naming, which became effective on 1st January 2011, as I believe it will make my role clearer to the public. The Review also recommended, whilst agreeing with my view that a single individual cannot be allowed to overturn the decisions of 17 Commission members, that the process of accountability as embodied in the role should be strengthened, allowing the function to be augmented to be able to assess objections about substance as well as process. This was an important recommendation, but one that needs to be applied with care.

8. I believe it to be essential to make it clear that the Independent Reviewer is not tasked with overturning PCC decisions. Currently, however, whilst considering the handling of all complaints brought to me in detail, I do also recommend that the Commission might re-consider cases where I believe there are grounds for so doing. In 2010 this concerned seven cases only. The Commission has responded positively in every instance and, although none have resulted in a change to the Commission's findings, the complainants do feel that their concerns are being fully and sympathetically considered: they often receive further clarification of the logic behind decisions, and sometimes an apology. I am content, therefore, that my current modus operandi works to the benefit of complainants without exceeding the limits of my role.
9. The most unsatisfactory issue that I faced this year was a complaint against the Daily Express which was long delayed, again by the newspaper's failure to respond to the PCC, and then was unable to be dealt with because of the withdrawal of the Northern & Shell Titles from the press self-regulatory system. This was most unfortunate, but it remains a structural issue for the industry outside my remit.
10. Finally, once again, I wish to record my thanks to the members of the PCC and particularly their staff for their unfailing patience, courtesy and helpfulness in dealing with my many queries and demands over the course of 2010. I continue to be impressed by the work that goes into ensuring that complaints to the Commission are fully, properly and sympathetically considered. I look forward to continuing to ensure that any cases brought to me are, as I hope my new title makes clear, indeed independently reviewed.

Sir Michael Willcocks

04 April 2011

2011 Press Complaints Commission



The Commission



All Commissioners bring their own personal expertise to the PCC, coming from different backgrounds and with different experiences.

Cases brought before the Commission are discussed at length and different Commissioners put forward their own understanding and opinion. Rulings are reached by consensus following discussion.

There are 10 public members, including the Chairman, who have no connection to the industry. The 7 editors on the Commission - brought in to provide industry knowledge and the weight of peer judgement - are in the minority to ensure the independence of the PCC.

Following the independent review of the PCC's governance, a new Nominations Committee of the Commission has now been instituted by the PCC to handle appointments; this replaces the Appointments Commission which was previously in operation throughout 2010. The Nominations Committee consists of three lay members, including the Chairman of the PCC (who is Chairman of the Nominations Committee). An independent assessor has been appointed from outside the PCC to ensure the selection process of lay members is robust and fair in accordance with sound diversity and equal opportunities principles.

The two vacancies for public Commission members were recently filled by Lord Grade of Yarmouth CBE and Michael Smyth CBE.

There is more information about the Nominations Committee - including information about membership - [here](#).

The PCC would like to record its sincere thanks to the following members of the Appointments Commission who served in 2010.

- The Chairman of the Press Standards Board of Finance (Lord Black of Brentwood);
- Andrew Phillips OBE (Lord Phillips of Sudbury);
- Lord Evans of Temple Guiting CBE; and
- Dr Elizabeth Vallance (Lady Vallance of Tummel).

The Rt Rev John Waine, who served as a member of the Commission during 2010, retired after a lengthy and dedicated service. We would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his work.

The PCC now publishes the minutes of its meetings so as to be more open about its processes. It also has an online register of interests.

2011 Press Complaints Commission



Financial report

The PCC's income comes from the raising of levies on press organisations. In order for the PCC to retain a suitable distance from the industry, this funding is organised by a third party, the Press Standards Board of Finance (PressBof).

Here are extracts from the Commission's accounts for 2009, the most recent year for which figures are available. They have been audited by Saffery Champness.

Item	Expense £
Staff and Commissioners' costs	1,145,031
Accommodation, including insurance	153,356
Telephones and faxes	15,347
Newspapers and other publications	10,531
Office equipment and leases	47,534
Stationery, printing, and sundry costs (inc. monitoring)	35,221
Postage	12,068
Lawyers	78,387
Audit and tax consultancy	45,724
Charter Commissioner/Charter Compliance Panel	34,766
Consultants	40,143
Design and literature	45,730
PR/conferences/entertainment	83,227
Travel and subsistence	28,767
Website and IT costs	23,583
Depreciation	30,788
Bank charges	2,432
Total	1,832,635

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