



The Press Complaints Commission is the independent self-regulatory body for the UK newspaper and magazine industry. It administers a 16-Clause Code of Practice, dealing with issues of accuracy and privacy in reporting and how journalists should behave in gathering the news. The Code – which also covers newspaper and magazine websites, including editorial audio-visual material – can be found at www.pcc.org.uk. Clause 6 (Children) deals specifically with the protection of children. This leaflet sets out in more detail how the PCC can help in such cases.

The child's welfare

The Code does not state that newspapers require the consent of parents for all interviews with, and photographs of, children. Newspapers are entitled to publish innocuous photographs and interviews without such consent. The important issue is whether they involve the child's, or any child's, welfare. In those circumstances, newspapers must first obtain consent from the custodial parents (or similarly responsible adults) to avoid breaching the Code.

Time at school

Children should not be approached or photographed while physically on school property without the consent of the school. The Code also offers special protection for children for the duration of their schooling: it states that they should be free from 'unnecessary intrusion' at such times. An item that unduly impacts upon a child's time at school may, therefore, raise a breach of the Code. For example, the PCC upheld a complaint against a local newspaper for publishing video footage taken by a pupil during class; this was because it identified several children without their, or their parents', consent.

Children in sex cases

Clause 7 of the Code deals specifically with this issue. The Code makes clear that the press must not identify children under 16 who are victims or witnesses in cases involving sex offences. The press must also not publish material likely to contribute to the identification of any victim of sexual assault.

Other PCC services

If a complaint is made, the PCC offers quick and hassle-free redress for the complainant. Named case officers will seek to mediate between the complainant and the editor in order to obtain an appropriate settlement. This can be achieved in a variety of ways, including: the publication of an apology, correction, letter or follow-up article; a private letter of apology from the editor; and the removal of inaccurate or intrusive material from a website. Further examples of successful mediation can be seen at www.pcc.org.uk/cases.

The PCC can also help with physical harassment by journalists. When there is no public interest for doing so, journalists should not follow or persistently question people once they have been asked to desist. The PCC can help with unwanted approaches by journalists by passing desist messages to relevant editors and broadcasters. This service can be accessed by calling 07659 152656 any time of the day or night, 7 days a week.

Before any story is published, the PCC can help reassure individuals that their position has been taken into account at the publication concerned. The PCC can either advise individuals on how to deal with the newspaper or magazine or, in rarer cases, pass on specific concerns to publications. There is no need to make a formal complaint to use this service.

www.pcc.org.uk

The PCC's website is updated on a daily basis and includes details of every resolved and adjudicated complaint, along with news items about the PCC.

Contact details

Press Complaints Commission
 Halton House, 20/23 Holborn, London EC1N 2JD
 Switchboard: 020 7831 0022
 Facsimile: 020 7831 0025
 Email: complaints@pcc.org.uk
 24-hour Advice line: 07659 152656

Or email the PCC's Head of Complaints directly
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www.pcc.org.uk