



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. This leaflet sets out how the PCC can help, specifically regarding issues involving court cases and inquests.

Unless restricted otherwise by the courts, newspapers are generally entitled to report most details that emerge in court cases and inquests. This will often include the names and addresses of the parties involved. This is an important part of open justice. However, there are numerous rules in the Code that are relevant to court or inquest reports:

- The press must take care not to publish inaccurate or misleading information;
- The press must not include excessive detail when reporting suicide, in order to minimise the risk of copycat cases. For example, a newspaper which published an inquest report that revealed precisely how a man had electrocuted himself was therefore criticised by the Commission;
- The press must not identify victims of sexual assault or publish material likely to contribute to such identification. Minor details – such as a description of a detail of the victim's appearance or the location of the assault – have been found to be in breach of the Code;
- The press must also pay particular regard to the potentially vulnerable position of children who witness, or are victims of, crime. As such, a newspaper breached this part of the Code when it identified a child who had been subject to an attempted assault, at a time when the perpetrator was still at large.

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. If you know that you are to be involved in a trial or inquest, you can contact the PCC to talk through any issues of concern in advance. The harassment 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

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 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