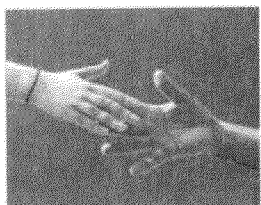




Tuesday, 13 September 2011

Home and community

Dealing with the media



Following a major event in which people have died, press interest in survivors and bereaved families can be intense. Everyone reacts to this interest in different ways - some find the press a valuable way of bringing issues that are concerning them to light, while others prefer no contact. In either case, there are rules and standards the press should follow and help available if you're having problems.

Standards for journalists

Journalists are under an obligation to respect the position of bereaved people and survivors under the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) Code of Practice which states that:

"In cases involving personal grief and shock, enquiries and approaches must be made with sympathy and discretion and publication handled sensitively."

The full code can be found on the Press Complaints Commission website.

[Press Complaints Commission Code of Practice](#)

If you do NOT wish to speak to the media

You are under no obligation to speak to the media. Tell them you do not want to speak to them, perhaps saying something like:

"I do not wish to speak to the media about this issue. I will not be speaking to you or any other journalist about it. I understand that under the Press Complaints Commission Code of Practice you must not persist in contacting me if I have asked you to stop."

Unfortunately, this may not be the end of the story; so, for example, if a journalist, paper or TV channel has your phone number, they may continue to ring you. Be consistent and repeat what you have told them. You may also want to consider getting an answering machine; or for a friend, neighbour or relative to answer the phone for you.

If you still feel that you are being harassed, contact the Press Complaints Commission immediately. Their address is:

Press Complaints Commission
Halton House
20/23 Holborn
London EC1N 2JD

Helpline: 0845 600 2757; or 0131 220 6652 (if calling from Scotland); 0292 039 5570 (if calling from Wales)

Email:
complaints@pcc.org.uk

Similarly, if the media turn up at your home you are under no obligation to admit them. If you do not wish to answer your door, pin a short note to it saying that you do not wish to speak to journalists and do not want to be disturbed.

If you have been assigned a Police Family Liaison Officer you may want to inform them of any problems you encounter with the media. Otherwise, contact details for your local police can be found by using the link below.

Police services in the UK**If you DO wish to speak to the media**

You should consider the following if you decide you do wish to speak to the media:

- always make a note of the person's name and contact phone number at the outset
- consider appointing somebody as a spokesperson for you/your family - this could be a relative or friend or your solicitor. Some support groups have appointed media liaison people who will field questions on behalf of the support group
- don't do anything in a hurry, whatever the journalist says about deadlines. Ask them what they want to talk to you about; ask them to write down the questions they want to ask you; give yourself time to think about what you want to say; write down your answers; ask the journalist to ring you back at a specified time
- ask if you can see what they wish to quote from you before it goes to press - they may not do this, but it will alert them to your concerns about what they are going to publish
- never say anything "off the record" unless both you and the journalist have a shared understanding of what this means
- remember that a journalist is entitled to report anything you say, so don't mistake them for counsellors or friends
- bring the conversation to a close if you are uncomfortable

Photographs

Sometimes journalists will ask for photographs of you, your loved one, and your family. You may wish to provide these, but remember that you are under no obligation to do so. If you do, ensure that you have a copy and ask for the photographs and any other personal items that you pass on to be returned.

Further help

Further detailed advice on dealing with the media is available from the Press Complaints Commission - contact details are above.

The Commission also has a 24 hour advice line for emergencies:

07659 152656 (leave a message and you will be phoned back).

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