

Ms Helen Edmonds v The Mail on Sunday

Clauses noted: 3

Ms Helen Edmonds of Devon complained to the Press Complaints Commission that an article headlined "A far cry from Crinkley Bottom" published in The Mail on Sunday on 24 July 2005 intruded into her privacy in breach of Clause 3 (Privacy) of the Code of Practice.

The complaint was not upheld.

The complainant said that the article intruded into her privacy, and that of her children, by identifying the whereabouts of her new home. She was concerned that this might make her property vulnerable to criminal activity.

The newspaper argued that, while it regretted causing any upset, an individual's address is not intrinsically a private matter. It added that it did not consider that the complainant was in a particular category of high profile individual who was likely to attract the inconvenience of fans besieging her home if they discovered its location. Nonetheless, it placed a note on its library file drawing attention to the complainant's concerns.

Adjudication

The Commission has previously made clear that there may be circumstances in which identifying the whereabouts of an individual's home can amount to a breach of the Code. This is generally the case when there is a realistic danger that obsessed fans or stalkers may cause a nuisance, or otherwise when there are particular and obvious security concerns.

In this case, the complainant accepted that she herself was not a celebrity – and as such was unlikely to attract obsessed fans. Her concern was more that the article may have attracted the attention of those with criminal intentions.

The Commission accepted that the information published could have enabled a determined individual who had no prior knowledge of the house's location to find it. The Commission sympathised with the complainant, who clearly felt more vulnerable as a result of publication of the piece. However, even though it may have been possible to find the property as a result of the piece, the Commission did not consider that it contained information – such as times at which the complainant was away, or what the security arrangements were – that would realistically lead to the house being more of a target than would otherwise be the case for a dwelling of that type. The complaint was not therefore upheld.

Relevant rulings

A well-known entertainer v Mail on Sunday 2000

An army officer v The News (Portsmouth) 1998

Adjudication issued 2005