

Mr Andrew Hall v The Argus (Eastbourne)

Clauses noted: 9

Mr Andrew Hall of Eastbourne complained that an article headlined 'Terror of girl in kidnap bid' published in The Eastbourne Argus on May 10 2002 identified his daughter, who had been the victim of, and witness to, a crime, without consent in breach of Clause 10 (Reporting of Crime).

The complaint was upheld.

The complainant and his wife explained that their 12-year-old daughter had been witness to an attempted kidnap of her friend. The man who was responsible for the attempt had not been caught and had warned the girls that if they went to the police he would come and 'get them'. When the incident had been reported in the Argus the complainant's daughter had been identified by name and her partial address had been included. The complainant believed that his daughter should have been protected from potential future danger. The newspaper said that it had only published the details after a reporter spoke to the complainant's wife on the phone.

The complainant's wife said she knew an article was to be written but had not realised that was being 'interviewed' and had not been told that her family address would be included in any article. She would not have agreed to such details being published due to the seriousness of the situation.

Adjudication

Although the newspaper had acted properly in speaking to the complainant's wife and, while the Commission noted that the published details regarding her daughter had come from her, it did not appear that she had been told exactly what was to be published. Clause 10 (Reporting of crime) of the Code says that 'particular regard should be paid to the potentially vulnerable position of children who are witnesses to, or victims of, crime' and the Commission emphasised that the protection of children is an essential part of the Code. In this case while the complainant's wife had spoken to the journalist the inclusion of the daughter's full name and partial address potentially put her in danger. The Commission did not, taking into account the particular circumstances of this case, consider that the newspaper had paid sufficient regard to her position as required by the Code and the complaint was therefore upheld.

Adjudication issued 2002