

PRESS COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

From the Chairman

Dr Brian Iddon MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

18th March 2009

Brian Iddon,

Thank you for your letter of 13th March about the reporting of suicide.

I can well understand your concerns. The Commission has been active for some time in raising standards in this particularly sensitive area of journalism. Most recently, we investigated – on our own initiative, without a formal complaint – the reporting of a particular suicide in eleven newspapers, in which the individual concerned took his own life with a chainsaw. We issued critical adjudications against a number of titles as a result (copies enclosed).

This, I believe, sent a strong warning to the industry about the need for care in this area. We have also been working with groups such as the Samaritans and Papyrus, and regularly discuss possible complaints with them, which will help improve standards further.

But, I have to say that I do not agree that the new part of the Code is being widely disregarded. To the contrary, I am aware of several stories in newspapers that have been amended to remove excessive detail prior to publication. Recently, the Code Committee issued further guidance on the subject, which has been widely disseminated and reported on. I enclose a copy of the Codebook in which this new guidance initially appeared.

CHAIRMAN
Sir Christopher Meyer

MEMBERS OF THE
COMMISSION
Matti Alderson
Spencer Feeney
Colleen Harris MVO
Vivien Hepworth
John Home Robertson
Simon Irwin
Ian MacGregor
John McLellan
Ian Nichol
Lindsay Nicholson
Esther Robertson
Eve Salomon
Simon Sapper
The Right Rev.
John Waine KCVO
Tina Weaver
Peter Wright

DIRECTOR
Tim Toulmin



I assume that we should take your letter as a formal complaint against The Sunday Times and The Sunday Telegraph for their reporting of the booklet. We will, on that basis, proceed to an investigation.

With kind regards.

*Yours sincerely,
Christopher Meyer*

Sir Christopher Meyer

