

PRESS COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

From the Chairman

Jamie Reed Esq MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

7th July 2010

Dear Jamie,

I understand that you will not be able to meet PCC representatives when they visit Cumbria on July 9th. This is a great shame as I know my staff have been keen to meet you (writing to you on four occasions before and after your Westminster Hall speech).

Perhaps I might take this opportunity to update you on the activity that the PCC has taken since the tragic events of 2nd June.

Given the high profile nature and extent of the tragedy, we immediately (on the day of the shootings even before the incident was over) contacted Cumbria Police and local hospitals to offer assistance to the families, including passing on our 24 hour emergency contact details. This was primarily to minimise cases of possible harassment by the media at a time when media attention was very intense, and to protect those who were likely to be grieving. We also contacted the regional group of the Central Office of Information which coordinates the Regional Media Emergency Forum, as well as the local vicar who was representing the family of Derrick Bird.

As the story developed over the next few days, we spoke to the police press office on numerous occasions, offering advice on different aspects of the reporting and explaining the relevant parts of the Editors' Code of Practice. This information was passed on to the family liaison officers who were supporting the families. We subsequently sent out a private advisory notice to national and local editors on behalf of one of the victim's families which made clear that they did not wish to speak publicly. This is a service we have developed over the past few years, and which has been used very effectively by a range of individuals caught up in a big media story. Indeed, we regularly approach those at the centre of high-profile stories to offer our assistance; and offer briefings to police forces throughout the UK to try to ensure that they are fully informed about our services in advance of a major incident.

CHAIRMAN
Baroness Buscombe

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Following this initial activity, we will shortly be visiting Cumbria on 9th July to meet representatives of the police and other organisations to listen to any concerns they may have.

As mentioned on the four occasions we have contacted your office we would like to discuss this further. We are dealing with a number of enquiries from people directly affected by the shootings, and will continue to respond to such enquiries with speed and sensitivity. We would also be happy to discuss your comments in the Westminster Hall debate.

Yours sincerely,



Baroness Buscombe

