

**Engaging with Muslims project - Note of meeting with
Press Complaints Commission**

11am 10th March 2005

Attendees

Stephen Abell (PCC), Eleanor Hodge (DCMS), Hamish MacPherson (DCMS), Lyn Salisbury (Government Communications), Tim Toulmin (PCC)

General Points

- The PCC wants to enable people who might want to make complaints, to be aware of them - for example people from LGBT, Gypsy and Muslim communities.
- PCC explained the triumvirate of press bodies relevant to this project: the PCC, the Press Standards Board of Finance Ltd. and the Editors' Code of Practice Committee¹.
- There have been perennial calls to extend the current protection of individuals under the Press Code to groups. These have been turned down because of concerns about freedom of expression and would run counter the Code's focus on protecting the individual. Complaints need to be about accuracy of reporting and the PCC currently help steer people's general complaints towards these terms and misleading reports about groups can be dealt with in this way.
- Some regional editors (those with issues in their area) have called for a codification on something about unsettling community cohesion.
- A range of possible actions to raise awareness of the PCC were discussed (see table below).
- It was agreed that follow up meetings would be held several times over 2005 [suggest meetings in June, September and December]

Hamish MacPherson
DCMS
24 March 2005

¹ [The Editors' Code of Practice Committee is responsible for drawing up the Code of Practice. The PCC is charged with ratifying and enforcing the Code of Practice (and is a non-voting member of the Committee). The Press Standards Board of Finance (Pressbof), is completely independent of the PCC and is charged with raising a levy on the newspaper and periodical industries to finance the Press Complaints Commission.

Suggested actions

What is happening?	What more could happen?	How? (and when?)
PCC are due to advertise for a new member of the Commission to start from 1 st July. Advertising will begin from early April. 60% commissioners are members of public (such as the one being recruited), rest are editors.	Position could be advertised in community specific publications.	GOC to provide names of faith based and BME publications to PCC (Immediately) PCC to advertise forthcoming vacancies (Immediately)
PCC have a person whose job it is to go round the country meeting people to raise awareness of the PCC's role	Additional names could be provide to help extend outreach	DCMS/ HO to provide names of groups and individuals in 6 priority areas that PC might wish to contact (e.g. interfaith bodies) (End April 05)
Upheld (and rejected) complaints are listed on the PCC website	Community-specific rulings could be publicised in relevant publications	GOC to provide names of faith based and BME publications to PCC (End April 05) PCC to release details of successful complaints to relevant publications (as and when)
Publications must subscribe to PCC/ Press BOF to be subject to its judgement	Community publications that are not already signed up could do so.	GOC to provide names of faith based and BME publications to PCC (End April 05) PCC/Pressbof to pursue any that are not signed up (End May 05)
PCC advertise their jobs in publications (current 13 members of staff)	PCC could advertise in community specific publications. Although the readership is relatively small it is also a means of publicising the PCC.	GOC to provide names of faith based and BME publications to PCC (End April 05) PCC to advertise forthcoming vacancies (as and when) GOC to translate adverts if necessary
PCC advertise their services in publications	Although adverts are normally not charged for, PCC could pay the small fees to advertise in community specific publications. Such publications are normally reliant on advertising.	GOC to provide names of faith based and BME publications to PCC (End April 05) PCC to advertise themselves (next advertising round) GOC to translate adverts if necessary
An explanation of the complaints procedure is available in PDF and MS Word format in Urdu, Bengali, Arabic, Somali, Chinese and Welsh	The procedure could be translated into other languages ² .	DCMS/HO/ GOC to consider if other translations necessary (End April 05) PCC to translate if necessary (Summer 05)

² In 2003, the COI Strategic Consultancy Inclusivity team were commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to undertake a review of the ethnic minority languages used by the department. The objectives were to understand the communication needs of each community and make recommendations into which languages DWP information should be translated. The priority recommended key ethnic minority languages (not specified in any order) were noted as: Bengali, Punjabi, Gujarati, Urdu, Arabic, Classical Chinese, Somali, French, Polish, Tamil. Source website: Central Office of Information

<p>Complains are classified by subject matter</p>	<p>The number and proportion of complains on the grounds of race and religion could be pulled out (although not in any more detail) to provide some baseline evidence.</p>	<p>PCC to pull out number and proportion of complains on the grounds of race and religion per year (End April 05)</p>
<p>PCC run 2 open days a year e.g. Manchester (Autumn 03) Belfast (May 05), Newcastle (Autumn 05), Birmingham (early 06). At each of these every community contact is invited to a Q& A session followed by a reception. This is accompanied by local radio, free adverts in papers, newspaper interviews and TV pieces</p>	<p>DCMS/ HO could assist with preparation with Birmingham open day: Offering suggestions for invitees; Offering suggestions for publications/ radio etc. to advertise and offer interviews in; Advising on catering and dates etc. PCC could identify relevant examples of rulings to publicise.</p>	<p>PCC/ DCMS/ HO to liaise on planning of Birmingham event (April 05-early 06)</p>