

**PCC criticises Take a Break over breach of 'Payment to Criminals' rule**

The Press Complaints Commission has upheld a rare complaint under Clause 16 (Payment to criminals) of the Editors' Code of Practice, which outlaws payments to criminals or their associates, following a complaint against Take a Break magazine.

The magazine published the story of Christine Chivers, who had pleaded guilty to an arson attack on the home of another woman, Christine Wishart. The article was based on information provided by Ms Chivers' daughter, who was paid £1,000, and it included Ms Chivers' claim that, in spite of her plea, she had not carried out the attack. Take a Break argued that it was important to highlight a potential miscarriage of justice.

The Commission, which had received a complaint from Christine Wishart about the piece, did not accept the magazine's defence. "It was clear that Ms Chivers' crime had been exploited for money in breach of the Code..." and there was nothing in the article of "sufficient public interest to justify the payment...It did not point to any clear evidence of a miscarriage of justice, and it was not part of a campaign to have the conviction quashed." Indeed, the piece said that Ms Chivers had pleaded guilty in order to reduce her sentence because she had been told that there was a considerable body of evidence against her.

The magazine was not prohibited from publishing Ms Chivers' story. But the Commission concluded that "the decision to offer payment was misguided and the editor should have recognised that immediately". The complaint was therefore upheld.

To see the full adjudication, which is to be published in a forthcoming issue of Take a Break, click [here](#)

**ENDS**

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