

Leveson Inquiry

Statement by Colin Adwent

Senior Crime Reporter - East Anglian Daily Times and Evening Star, Ipswich

1. Brief summary of my career history

I qualified as a reporter in April 1998. Since then I have been a general reporter, crime reporter, news editor, assistant editor, and head of sport for both the East Anglian Daily Times and Evening Star, Ipswich.

Before re-training as a reporter I spent 18 years in advertising

2. Culture of relations between Suffolk Police and the media

Part of Suffolk Constabulary's core values are openness and honesty. I have always found this to be true. I believe the relationship between the constabulary and our newspapers to be successful. I can recall at least four occasions when offenders, including two murderers and an armed robber, have been convicted due to the publicity in our newspapers.

Personally, I believe the relationship is balanced between our newspapers and Suffolk police. Officers have their job to do and reporters have ours.

3. Contact with police

I have had contact with police staff on a very regular basis throughout my career, as most of it has been spent covering or overseeing our crime coverage.

I returned to the crime reporting role full-time in January 2009, representing the EADT and Evening Star. I have had daily contact with press office staff and frequent contact with police officers, depending on quotes needed for stories.

4. Press office contact

I ring all the area and corporate press offices on a daily basis as part of my job. Sometimes, press officers may take the initiative and call me, for example, if they have news which the force considers should be disseminated to the public, or investigating officers are appealing for help from the public.

5. Personal mobile or home telephone numbers

Very rarely, perhaps on no more than on one or two occasions, I have been given mobile numbers for press officers, either by the press officer in question or by his/her superior. I never obtained these numbers by any other means. I have only twice obtained a press officer's home telephone number, but not through subterfuge. On the first occasion I was invited into a public building where the number could clearly be seen on a whiteboard. I

took a note of the number in case I needed to call the press officer urgently and was unable to contact them through the normal channels. I can not recall an occasion within the last six or seven years when I have needed to do so. The other occasion was not related to my work as crime correspondent. This was in relation to an article I wrote for our sport department in around 2003 or 2004.

6. What are you seeking to gain from Suffolk Police

I am constantly trying to ensure I do not miss anything of public interest, either when offenders appear in the courts or when a live inquiry is under way. I am also looking to ensure I get a clear, accurate, and balanced picture for any story I am working on.

In short, I try to convey as much information as possible to the public while at the same time making sure that I do nothing to compromise police investigations or pending criminal trials.

I also seek the speediest possible release of information.

7. What I consider Suffolk Police is seeking from me

Honesty, integrity, balance, and clarity. In addition, the police want a further avenue to get information to the public through our media, which helps them with their inquiries, for example by making requests in our papers for members of the public to respond to CCTV images or to appeals.

8. – 11. Hospitality from or for Suffolk Police

I have neither received nor provided any hospitality to any member of Suffolk Police, other than buying or being bought, the occasional cup of tea or coffee.

12. Press conferences

I have attended many press conferences by the police. They are always about either messages officers wish to put into the public domain or appeals by officers for information from the public, to assist those officers in their enquiries. Generally, I find them useful.

13. Prior notification of arrests, raids etc

I have been out with police on many raids throughout the years, at the invitation of the police. These are valuable occasions for me, as they provide an insight into police operations and enable me to write from a position of knowledge. The police obviously think they are a valuable way of engaging with the public.

I have also received 'off-the-record' guidance that someone is likely to be arrested, although I don't recall ever being told the identity of the person concerned until news of the arrest was made public by the police.

14. Off-the-record briefings

Yes, I have been offered off-the-record briefings by the police. The reasons vary, for example, it may have been necessary because something I was due to write could have hindered an investigation; or perhaps because of a stance one of our papers may be taking. There were a few occasions years ago where briefings were given to enable background articles to be prepared in advance of an anticipated high-profile conviction in the crown court. However, this has not happened, as far as I can recall, for many years

15. Monitoring hospitality

We have no formal mechanisms for monitoring hospitality with the police. However, the need for me to file receipts for tea/coffee expenses I incur when I meet a contact or someone I am interviewing, acts as a simple but effective way of enabling my [employer] [editor] to monitor my activities.

16. Training, guidance governing contact with police

When I began crime reporting, the virtues of gaining and keeping the trust of the police was emphasised to me. A reputation for fairness and trustworthiness is everything in my role. Trust can only be gained over a period of time, but can be lost in a moment.

Beyond these principles I adhere strictly to PCC rules and the law.

In addition, I have unfettered access to the paper's specialist external solicitors, whom I am able to ask for advice and guidance on any legal issue should I think it necessary.

17. Editorial or management oversight

I keep my editors and news editors updated on a daily basis about what stories I am working on. They also speak to me on a daily basis. If I am dealing with the police, they know what I am doing, and keep in touch with me about my enquiries.

18. Ethical issues

Journalists and police serve the public in different ways. Each has a different agenda, which can sometimes come together. Reporters should never knowingly hinder, or do anything to harm, a police inquiry, nor should they ever break the law or the PCC's Code of Practice.

I also ensure that I do not behave in any way which might compromise me, the newspapers for whom I work, or any of my contacts.

19. Payments

I have never paid anyone for a story whether a police officer, a police civilian staff member, or a member of the public, and would never seek to do so.

20. Access to police

I gain access to the police mainly through the police press office, but on occasions directly, if I already know an officer.

21. Necessity of police press offices

I understand the necessity for police press officers and it is useful for the press to have someone on hand to speak to. Not surprisingly, I find it frustrating when it appears that the release of information is being delayed, or when I feel they are being less than forthcoming. I know this is something my editors have raised at senior police levels, but generally the system works reasonably well.

22. Recommendations of HMIC report Without Fear or Favour

I have no specific views on the recommendations.

23. Appropriate contact between police and journalists in a democratic society

I believe there is a great value for police and journalists to have professional relationships as long as they maintain the integrity of each others' role. Officers make professional judgements all the time and my feeling is they should be left to do so with the media.

In my view an appropriate level of contact is extremely hard to quantify if the best interests of the public are to be served.

Signed



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