

PCC censures local newspaper for intrusion into child's privacy

The Press Complaints Commission has upheld a complaint under Clauses 3 (Privacy) and 6 (Children) of the Editors' Code of Practice against the Cambrian News.

The article reported criticism of a council decision to put out to tender the contracts for a school taxi service for disabled children. The parents of one of the children complained that the article had included a photograph of their child, his name and age, and details of his medical condition without consent: while they had agreed to the publication of a photograph of their son, it was on the condition that neither his name, nor information about the medical condition, would be also be published.

The newspaper said that the information had been supplied by the existing driver of the taxi service, whom it believed was acting on the parents' behalf, with their consent. It recognised that it ought to have obtained the consent of the parents before publishing information about the child. The newspaper apologised for not having done so, and marked its records to ensure that the details were not used in the future.

The Commission ruled that as the information about the child's medical condition had been provided by a third party, the newspaper had a responsibility to obtain the consent of the parents prior to publication. The fact that it appeared not to have taken any steps to verify independently that consent had been given was "inadequate" in terms of the requirements of Clause 3 and Clause 6 of the Editors' Code.

PCC Director Stephen Abell commented: "The Editors' Code makes clear that 'everyone is entitled to respect for his or her private and family life, home, health and correspondence' and requires editors to justify intrusions without consent. This case demonstrates the paramount need for newspapers and magazines to establish - in advance of publication - exactly which is the competent authority to grant consent. The Cambrian News failed to take the necessary steps prior to publication and the Commission upheld the complaint as a result".

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. The PCC is an independent body which administers the system of self-regulation for the press. It does so primarily by dealing with complaints, framed within the terms of the Editors' Code of Practice, about the editorial content of newspapers and magazines (and their websites, including editorial audio-visual material) and the conduct of journalists.
2. To read the adjudication, which has been published on page 4 of today's edition of the newspaper, please click here: <http://www.pcc.org.uk/cases/adjudicated.html?article=NzI2NQ>
3. For more information, please contact Jonathan Collett on 020 7438 1246 or 07740 896805.

21 July 2011