

Guidance Note on the extension of the PCC's remit to include editorial audio-visual material on newspaper and magazine websites.

The Press Complaints Commission has regulated “on-line versions” of newspapers and magazines that subscribe to the Editors’ Code of Practice since 1997, when usually it meant the internet replication of material that already existed in a printed version of the publication.

However, developments in digital technology mean that newspaper and magazine websites now routinely carry material not available in print form. Increasingly, this includes audio-visual material - some of which is streamed live onto a website - and user-generated material such as blogs and chat-rooms which change rapidly throughout the day.

The newspaper and magazine industry is committed to ensuring that the high ethical standards that underpin the Editors’ Code develop to take account of these changes.

In doing so, the industry recognises that not all material on its titles’ websites lends itself to the Code and the jurisdiction of the PCC. Some websites cannot be categorized as “on-line versions” of newspapers and magazines. Some material – such as syndicated news broadcasts or radio programmes edited by third parties – may already be regulated on-line or off-line by another body. Some of it may be streamed or broadcast or otherwise disseminated live, and incapable of the sort of controls editors normally apply. Some of it, principally user-generated material such as blogs and chat-rooms, is not subject to editorial control. All such material will continue to fall outside the jurisdiction of the PCC.

To ensure that the spirit of the Code and effective self-regulation continue to develop in the common sense manner which has been the system’s hallmark, the PCC’s remit should be seen as covering editorial material on newspaper and magazine titles’ websites where it meets two key requirements:

- 1) that the editor of the newspaper or magazine is responsible for it and could reasonably have been expected both to exercise editorial control over it and apply the terms of the Code.
- 2) That it was not pre-edited to conform to the on-line or off-line standards of another media regulatory body.

ENDS