

Ms. Vivien Hepworth
Chairman
Independent Governance Review
Press Complaints Commission
Halton House
20-23 Holborn
London EC1N 2JD

Friday 22 January 2010

Dear Ms Hepworth

Re: Press Complaints Commission Governance Review

PPA is responding to the above review as the representative body for UK magazine, journal and business media publishers. PPA members are an important part of the UK press which, in the opinion of PPA, is effectively regulated by the Press Complaints Commission ("PCC").

PPA protects and promotes the interests of print and online publishers of consumer and business media in the UK. PPA has over 200 publishing companies in its membership, which collectively produce more than 2,500 consumer and business media publications, including magazines, journals, directories, websites and events.

A full list of PPA members is available at: <http://www.ppa.co.uk/cgi-bin/go.pl/ppamembers/index.html>

The PCC and Press Self-Regulation

The magazine industry is committed to effective self regulation through the editors' Code of Practice and the jurisdiction of the independent PCC, with its majority of lay members. Indeed, it is a condition of PPA membership that members abide by the PCC Code, accept and act upon PCC findings and register with and contribute to the funding of the Press Board of Finance ("Pressbof").

It is PPA's view (shared by the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee in its 2003 and 2007 inquiries) that standards of reporting have been raised markedly since the PCC and the Code were established in 1991.

And, whilst change has been incremental, the PCC has facilitated improvements in addressing a wide variety of sensitive areas, including: the treatment of children and the sick; harassment; intrusion into grief; and the protection of personal privacy.

Furthermore, press self regulation has fostered a culture of correcting inaccuracies and other breaches of the Code speedily and effectively (and at no cost to the complainant).



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Complaints statistics from the PCC show more complaints than ever being resolved, and in record time.

Transparency

One must also bear in mind that a large number of complaints never reach the Commission: instead they are sorted out by publishers to the satisfaction of the complainant without the need for the intervention of the PCC. This is a substantial - and hidden - success of self regulation.

PPA supports the desire of the PCC to increase transparency, but transparency is not always possible due to requests by complainants to remain anonymous or for complaints to be handled "behind the scenes". It is, and should remain, the prerogative of a complainant to seek redress without the complaint being made public.

Flexibility

The PCC system is flexible, adapting not only to public expectations (for example in the wake of the death of Princess Diana) but also to changes in technology. In 2007, the PCC's remit was expanded by the industry to include online audio-visual material on magazine and newspaper websites (where such websites had a corresponding print title).

And, at the end of 2009, Pressbof announced that the industry had agreed to extend the PCC remit to include online-only publications.

The flexibility and speed that changes can be made under the PCC system would not be possible under any form of statutory system.

Industry funding and compliance with the PCC

One symbol of the magazine and newspaper industry's commitment to effective self regulation is the substantial investment that it has made in the PCC. Between 1991 (when the PCC was established) and 2009, the industry invested close to £30 million into the work of the Commission through Pressbof.

Conclusion

Press self-regulation under the PCC system works well for the vast majority of people that choose to use the system (whether instead of or in addition to legal redress).

The PCC offers a quick, cheap, flexible, (sometimes private) and effective remedy for the general public across a wide range of areas. It is important that the system is not inadvertently damaged by changes to the PCC's constitution or in an attempt to increase transparency or accountability.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'James Evans', written in a cursive style.

James Evans
Senior legal executive