



A day in the life of the complaints department

8.30

The office contacts a police press office in the North of England to offer its assistance and guidance to a bereaved family following a high-profile death which features heavily in the morning papers. Informal contact is followed up with an email to the relevant individual, providing useful telephone numbers (including the out-of-hours service) and links to the Editors' Code of Practice.

10.15

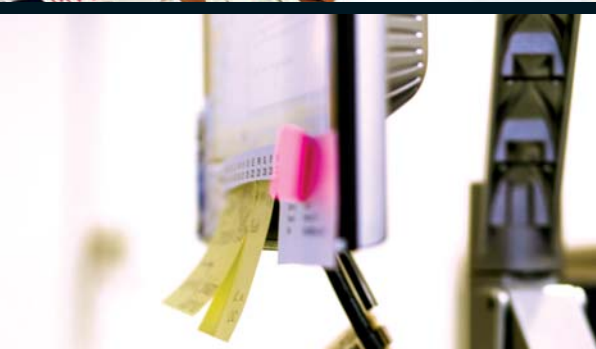
An upheld adjudication is press released, having been published in full that day by the offending publication. Various media organisations and blogs pick up the story and write about it.

11.00

The new complaints – which have mostly arrived by email – are logged on and presented for initial assessment. Numbers vary depending on the time of year, although it is not uncommon for 50 complaints to be considered in one day. Complainants generally receive an acknowledgement of their complaint within 24 hours. Should any complaint appear to raise an issue under the Code, it is taken forward immediately.

11.30

Following an email from a complainant, a member of the Complaints department calls a Scottish local newspaper editor to discuss the possible publication of a correction to which he is amenable. The discussion is followed by an email from the Complaints Officer to the editor in which a draft wording which might well be suitable is put forward for his consideration.



12.15

The Complaints department meets to discuss its cases with the Director. There are normally between 300-400 active complaints at any one time, and significant cases raising important Code issues are considered by the team as a whole.

14.30

The office receives a call from a national newspaper asking for guidance in regard to a photograph of a celebrity which has been provided by a news agency. A member of the complaints staff draws attention to potential Code issues which the Commission might have to consider in the event of any complaint: does the photograph show the person engaged in any private activity?; does the person have a reasonable expectation of privacy in the location?; are there any circumstances of harassment?; is there any public interest? The editor will now decide whether to publish, within the context of the PCC advice.

15.00

Negotiation on a complaint has been unsuccessful. The Complaints Officer involved in the case therefore prepares the matter for formal consideration by the Commission, drafting the text of a possible decision for its approval or otherwise, based on relevant rulings that have previously been made.

16.00

The bereaved family the Commission contacted early in the day has received a number of press enquiries and – aside from issuing a brief statement through the police – does not wish to speak to the media. The office passes on an advisory note on behalf of the family to national newspapers and magazines, and relevant local newspapers, to make them aware of the position.

22.45

The Commission receives a call to its 24 hour emergency helpline after an individual has been telephoned repeatedly at her home by a reporter for a Sunday newspaper. She does not want to comment and feels intimidated. The office then contacts the Managing Editor for the newspaper to make him aware of the position and to pass on the formal request for the journalist to desist. No further approaches are made to the individual.

