

A woman v Sutton & Epsom Advertiser

Clauses noted: 6

A woman from Sutton complained to the Press Complaints Commission that a reporter from the Sutton & Epsom Advertiser interviewed her 15-year-old son on a matter involving his and other children's welfare without parental consent in breach of Clause 6 (Children) of the Code of Practice.

The complaint was upheld.

The complainant said there had been a fight between two gangs at her son's college. Subsequently, a reporter from the newspaper interviewed her 15 year old son on the subject without her consent. An article appeared shortly afterwards in which her son was named and quoted.

The newspaper was concerned to hear that the complainant's son was 15. The journalist understood that the college only taught students of 16 or over. The paper removed the article from its electronic library system and its website. The editor also reminded all reporters about the importance of abiding by the Code.

Adjudication

This was a clear breach of the Code resulting from the journalist's assumption that the complainant's son was over the age of 16. More care should have been taken in researching and publishing the story, particularly given that the subject matter – gang violence at the college – had, according to the article, left some pupils 'too scared to give their full names for fear of reprisal attacks'. While the Commission was pleased that the editor had recognised the seriousness of the matter and taken steps to ensure that the problem would not be repeated, this was nonetheless a regrettable breach of the Code.

Adjudication issued 2005