Mr Gavin Bagnall v Burton Mail   74

Clauses noted: 1

Mr Gavin Bagnall of Bagnall Coaches complained to the Press Complaints Commission that an article headlined "Hold-ups after coach crash" published in the Burton Mail on 26 January was inaccurate in breach of Clause 1 (Accuracy).

The complaint was upheld.

The short news item reported that traffic in the Derbyshire town of Swadlincote had been held up after a coach owned by Bagnall Coaches had collided with a car. The complainant said that this was misleading as it implied that the coach and its driver had been at fault. In fact, the coach had been stationary when it had been hit by the car. The complainant thought the newspaper should apologise and publish a correction.

The newspaper accepted that the coach had been stationary, but said that the article had been based on information from the police, something it had explained to the complainant on the telephone while apologising to him for the error. The complainant had appeared to accept this apology, and had made no request for a correction to be published. The editor had spoken to all reporters to remind them to exercise caution when using the verb "to collide", but did not intend to publish a correction in light of the amount of time that had now passed.

The complainant denied that any apology had been made by telephone.

Adjudication

The Commission was surprised that the editor would not resolve this straightforward matter, as most complaints of this type are settled quickly and amicably without the need for a formal adjudication. It was clear that there was a material inaccuracy in the article. All parties accepted that the Bagnall coach had been stationary at the time of the incident, and that it was therefore misleading to state that the coach 'collided with a Renault Clio'. While the newspaper may have been given the wrong information by a third party, Clause 1 of the Code clearly states that "a significant inaccuracy... once recognised must be corrected, promptly and with due prominence". The editor had failed to comply with this requirement, resulting in a breach of the Code.

Adjudication issued 15/06/2006