

PCC to host Media Question Time debate in Bridgend on the Reporting of Suicide – Friday 16 May

The Press Complaints Commission is to host a public debate in Bridgend about how the media covered the recent spate of suicides in South Wales.

A panel – chaired by PCC Chairman Sir Christopher Meyer – will take questions from the public and other interested parties about how the cases were reported by the media (including press, television and the internet); what rules apply in reporting situations such as these; and whether or not the coverage was unfair to the local area.

The panel will also include Madeleine Moon MP; Rhodri Williams, Director of Ofcom for Wales; and Spencer Feeney, editor-in-chief of the South Wales Evening Post and member of the Commission. In addition, the PCC will also run an advice session for anyone who has a specific concern they wish to raise privately.

The event will take place at the Dunraven Suite, Bridgend Recreation Centre, on Friday 16 May. From 2.30 – 3.30pm there will be an open surgery for an informal chat with a member of PCC staff or to pick up some information.

From 3.30pm there will be a public Q&A session chaired by Sir Christopher Meyer. Commenting on the Bridgend debate, Sir Christopher said:

“I know that the deaths of so many young people have had a profound effect on communities in and around Bridgend. I very much hope that people will be encouraged to attend this event to share any concerns with us and also with the representatives from the media. It is very important that people understand the role and remit of the Code of Practice, and know how the PCC is able to offer practical support to people affected by tragedies such as these”.

Madeleine Moon, MP for Bridgend, said:

“I’d like to thank the PCC for giving the people of Bridgend County Borough the opportunity to voice their concerns regarding the press coverage of the recent tragedies. I hope that this meeting will help inform media reporting of this sensitive issue in future”.

ENDS

Notes for editors:

1. Clause 5 (Intrusion into grief or shock) of the Code of Practice states:
“i) In cases involving personal grief or shock, enquiries and approaches must be made with sympathy and discretion and publication handled sensitively. This should not restrict the right to report legal proceedings, such as inquests.
ii) When reporting suicide, care should be taken to avoid excessive detail about the method used.”
2. The PCC is responsible for newspapers and magazines, both in print and online. Responsibility for broadcast journalism lies with Ofcom or the BBC.
3. The PCC has issued guidance about what to do if someone is being harassed by a journalist. It is available to read on the PCC website: http://www.pcc.org.uk/code/advice_for_complainants.html?
4. The PCC operates a 24 hour helpline service for those who need assistance in dealing with media attention. The contact number is 07659 152656. In office hours, the number is 020 7831 0022.
5. For more information, please contact Catherine Speller on 020 7831 0022, catherine.speller@pcc.org.uk or 07977 573 321.

15 May 2008