

PCC censures magazine for payment offer to witness

The PCC today publishes a key adjudication under Clause 15 (Witness payments in criminal trials). It has censured Full House magazine, after a journalist sent a written request for an interview to a witness during the trial of Kate Knight, who was subsequently jailed for 30 years for poisoning her husband with anti-freeze. This request included an offer of payment. The witness brought the offer to the court's attention and the Commission was informed that there was no impact on the proceedings. The magazine accepted that the letter had been sent prematurely and has since changed its working practices.

The Commission considered that this was a serious matter and a clear breach of Clause 15 of the Code, which was designed to prevent payments having any real or perceived influence on the administration of justice. It made clear that it was never acceptable for witnesses to be approached with offers of payment while they are giving evidence. It censured the magazine on that basis.

Full House has since published the Commission's ruling. To read the full adjudication, [click here](#)

ENDS

For further information, please contact Stephen Abell on 020 7831 0022.

Notes

- The PCC launched a formal investigation into this matter – as it often does in “victimless” cases, involving concerns about payment, that fall under Clauses 13 (Financial journalism), 15 (Witness payments in a criminal trial) and 16 (Payment to criminals) – of its own volition, without a formal complaint being lodged.
- The terms of Clause 15 were toughened in March 2003, following consultation with the Lord Chancellor's department. For further information, click [here](#).

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