

Sunday Times magazine did not breach PCC suicide rules

The Press Complaints Commission has not upheld a complaint from Bridgend MP Madeleine Moon that the Sunday Times magazine breached Clause 5 (Intrusion into grief and shock) of the Code of Practice in an article about the spate of suicides in the area. The complaint centred on photographs of the deceased alongside a large image of a noose, which she said was insensitive and could encourage others to take their own lives.

The newspaper acknowledged that relatives of those who had died might be upset by the juxtaposition of the pictures, but argued that the illustration was important in highlighting the apparent happiness of the young people in the pictures with the harsh reality of what they had done.

Under Clause 5, the Commission has traditionally considered three questions when deciding whether this part of the Code has been breached:

- does the coverage break news of a death?;
- does it treat it in a light-hearted way?;
- and does it include gratuitous detail, such as gruesome descriptions about unusual deaths?

In this case, it concluded, "the answer to all these questions was negative". The Commission also had regard to the wider context of the article, and noted that it "explored this difficult subject in a serious and sensitive manner".

Although there was no breach of the Code, the Commission acknowledged that the pictures in the article would "be an upsetting and stark reminder to the families about how their relatives had died, and the Commission regretted the distress that this had caused". The Commission also drew attention to a private advisory note it has now circulated on behalf of some of the families concerned, which contained their request that photographs of their relatives not be used in any further stories about Bridgend.

To see the ruling in full [click here](#)

This adjudication is the latest on the reporting of suicide. In July, the Commission upheld a complaint against the Daily Sport for publishing "an entirely gratuitous guide to where [and how] individuals have killed themselves". For the Daily Sport adjudication [click here](#)

The Commission has done a considerable amount of work throughout 2008 on the issue of the reporting of suicide. Tonight, in partnership with the LSE-based think tank Polis, the PCC will host a seminar to explore further where the boundaries should be drawn.

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For further information about the Commission's ruling please contact Stephen Abell on 020 7831 0022.

For further information about the Polis seminar please contact Catherine Speller on 020 7831 0022.

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