

Statement by the Rt Hon Lord Wakeham, Chairman of the Press Complaints Commission, about the trial of Gary Glitter

"The trial of Gary Glitter concluded in Bristol Crown Court this afternoon. Particular points were made about alleged witness payments by The News of the World which would appear to raise important points about the operation of the Code of Practice in this area.

In view of this, the Press Complaints Commission will now be investigating the matter and hopes to be able to reach a conclusion in the near future.

There are three tests in the Code of Practice itself relating to witness payments. One, was payment in the public interest? Two, did payment influence the evidence of any witnesses? Three, was payment disclosed to the Court? It is these tests the PCC will be applying in investigating this matter."

ENDS

Notes to editors:

1. Clause 16 of the Code of Practice states that: "Payment or offers of payment for stories or information must not be made directly or through agents to witnesses or potential witnesses in current criminal proceedings except where the material concerned ought to be published in the public interest and there is an overriding need to make or promise to make a payment for this to be done. Journalists must take every possible step to ensure that no financial dealings have influence on the evidence that those witnesses may give. (An editor authorising a payment must be prepared to demonstrate that there is a legitimate public interest at stake in matters that the public has a right to know. The payment or, where accepted, the offer of payment to any witness who is actually cited to give evidence must be disclosed to the prosecution and the defence and the witness should be advised of this)

12 November 1999