

PCC rejects complaint from Patricia Hewitt MP over reporting of son

The Press Complaints Commission has today rejected a complaint from Patricia Hewitt MP, over a front-page article in The Sun which had reported that her son had been charged with possession of cocaine.

Ms Hewitt objected to the article on the grounds that it was intrusive into her son's privacy under Clause 3 (Privacy) of the Code, and unnecessarily referred to her and her husband in breach of Clause 9 (Reporting of crime). While accepting that her son had committed a criminal offence, she nonetheless believed that the newspaper only published the story with such prominence due to her public role as an MP, and that of her husband, who was a judge. This was unfair, she claimed, because she and her husband had been careful never to speak publicly about their children and her son deserved to be treated as a private individual.

The newspaper defended the article on the basis that criminal charges are not private. Furthermore, it argued, the roles of Ms Hewitt and her husband were clearly relevant to the story: Ms Hewitt was a former Health Secretary and her husband was a judge who was on the record as having spoken out about the issue of drugs.

The Commission could understand Ms Hewitt's concerns about unwelcome media attention of her son. Indeed, it frequently helps those in the public eye to protect the privacy of their children, and does an increasing amount of work to minimise media harassment. To read more about this work, please click [here](#).

However, it did not rule that there had been a breach of the Code on either count. In its adjudication, it said: "it is in the interests of society as a whole that the administration of criminal justice is as transparent as possible. The press is entitled to report such proceedings and naming him in connection with the charge was not itself an intrusion into privacy". It also agreed with the newspaper's argument that their current and previous roles in public life made Ms Hewitt and her husband "genuinely relevant" to the story.

The complaint was not upheld as a result. Click [here](#) to read the full adjudication.

ENDS

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