

PCC rules on MP's complaint against Telegraph Media Group

The Press Complaints Commission has today published its adjudication on a complaint from Dr Julian Lewis, MP for New Forest East, over coverage of his expenses claims in The Sunday Telegraph, Daily Telegraph and on telegraph.co.uk.

The complaint centred on the reporting of an approach that the complainant had made to the Fees Office for advice about what he was entitled to claim in relation to the redecoration of his London flat. He had been told by officials that a claim for a £6,000 wooden floor - which he had included as part of a longer list of improvements - would not be likely to be accepted, and "could be seen as extravagant". Following this correspondence with the Fees Office, no formal claim was submitted by Dr. Lewis for the wooden floor.

As part of its coverage on MPs' expenses, Telegraph Media Group had referred variously to the request for guidance, stating that he had "attempted" to claim for it. The newspaper argued that, even if no formal claim ensued, the very fact of the approach effectively amounted to an attempted claim. Dr. Lewis strongly objected to the newspaper's coverage and argued that it was inaccurate and misleading under Clause 1 (Accuracy) of the Code. He raised particular concerns that he had been grouped with other MPs in a special supplement on MPs' expenses under the headline "Making a mockery: 102 MPs who tried to stretch the rules".

While the Commission said that it was "unlikely that readers would be materially misled" by the references to the complainant "attempting" to claim for the floor, it did note that the inclusion of the complainant's name in the list of MPs accused of "stretching the rules" was "more explicit" in its suggestion that wrongdoing had taken place. In these circumstances, it ruled that it was "appropriate for the newspaper to clarify what had actually occurred", as it had offered to do. Such a clarification, together with the publication of the Commission's ruling, would be a "proportionate response". No further action would be necessary.

The clarification was published in The Daily Telegraph and on the newspaper's website on Friday 4 December. To access the online version, please [click here](#).

To read the adjudication, [click here](#).

The Commission has previously upheld a complaint from Dr Lewis against the News of the World over claims it made relating to his two homes. To read this adjudication, please [click here](#).

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