

### **PCC criticises Liddle's Spectator blog**

The Press Complaints Commission has upheld a complaint about an entry by Rod Liddle in his blog for the Spectator. This is the first time that the PCC has censured a newspaper or magazine over the content of a journalistic blog. The piece in question was published on 5 December 2009 and claimed that "the overwhelming majority of street crime, knife crime, gun crime, robbery and crimes of sexual violence in London is carried out by young men from the African-Caribbean community". A reader complained that the statement was incorrect.

In concluding that the article was indeed in breach of Clause 1 (Accuracy) of the Editors' Code of Practice, the PCC recognised the magazine's argument that the nature of a blog post is often provocative and conducive to discussion. It was certainly true in this case, for example, that a number of readers had taken issue with Mr Liddle's claim and had commented on the blog. However, the Commission did not agree that the magazine could rely on publishing critical reaction as a way of abrogating its responsibilities under the Code. While it had provided some evidence to back up Mr Liddle's position, it had not been able to demonstrate that the 'overwhelming majority' of crime in all the stated categories had been carried out by members of the African-Caribbean community. Nor could it successfully argue that the claim was purely the columnist's opinion - rather, it was a statement of fact. As such, the Commission believed that "the onus was on the magazine to ensure that it was corrected authoritatively online". In the absence of such remedial action the Commission upheld the complaint.

PCC director, Stephen Abell, said: "This is a significant ruling because it shows that the PCC expects the same standards in newspaper and magazine blogs that it would expect in comment pieces that appear in print editions. There is plenty of room for robust opinions, views and commentary but statements of fact must still be substantiated if and when they are disputed. And if substantiation isn't possible, there should be proper correction by the newspaper or magazine in question."

To read the Commission's full decision, which has now been published by the Spectator on its website, please [click here](#).

**ENDS**

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