

PCC ruling: News of the World not in breach of the Code over Beckham kidnap case

The Press Complaints Commission has completed its investigation into a payment by the News of the World to Florin Gashi, a man who was a potential witness in the trial of men accused of plotting to kidnap Victoria Beckham. Using its powers to investigate a matter of its own volition - and in line with its normal procedures in such cases - the matter was considered under Clause 16 of the 2002 Code of Practice, which was in effect at the time that the payment was made. This clause related to payments to witnesses and payments to criminals.

The Commission is grateful to the Attorney General for his office's co-operation on a number of matters. Taking into account the Attorney General's position and the comments of the newspaper, the Commission found no breach of the Code. The most significant reason was that the payment to Mr Gashi took place before there were current criminal proceedings relating to the Beckham kidnap plot. However, the Commission considered a number of other factors including the facts that:

- Contrary to reports at the time, the News of the World had notified the police of the payment before the charges were brought against the men. It was not correct that details of the payment only emerged later - something it was important to consider when examining why the kidnap charges were dropped;

- Based on the information available to the editor at the time, the payment was made in the public interest - one definition of which is to detect or expose crime;

- The payment was necessary;

- The payment had nothing to do with Mr Gashi's own criminal conviction and there was therefore no breach of the restrictions on paying criminals.

- The Attorney General has confirmed that he is not taking any action under the Contempt of Court Act and the DPP has decided not to bring any criminal charges.

The Commission also resolved to work closely with the Attorney General on any similar matters in future, took the opportunity to remind editors that any payment should be notified promptly to the authorities, and suggested that all details of such transactions are set down in writing as far as possible.

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

ENDS

For further information, contact Guy Black or Tim Toulmin on 020 7353 1248 (o) or 07659 138809 (pager)

19 September 2003