

PCC publishes revised guidance note on reporting of mental health issues

The Press Complaints Commission is today publishing a revised Guidance Note to Editors on the reporting of mental health issues. To see the note click [here](#)

The new Note reminds Editors of the importance of terminology in reporting, pointing out that people are detained under the Mental Health Act 1983 in "hospitals" not "prisons", and are "patients" not "prisoners". Furthermore, the terms "jail", "cell" and "cage" are inaccurate under the terms of the Act when referring to the accommodation of patients.

Editors are also reminded that epithets such as "nutter" and "schizo" may raise a breach of Clause 12 (Discrimination) of the Code of Practice in discriminating against individuals who are mentally ill, or Clause 1 (Accuracy), and points out such language can result in both distress to patients as well as contributing to a climate of public fear or rejection.

The Note follows consultation with organisations specialising in mental health, including Mind, Rethink, Sane, SeeMe and Shift and the revised Note now includes their contact details. The PCC itself looked at the reporting of mental health at the request of the Charter Compliance Panel, an independent audit committee tasked with overseeing the work of the PCC. Further details of this informal assessment are available upon request.

For further information, please contact Will Gore on 020 7831 0022 or will.gore@pcc.org.uk.

ENDS

Notes for editors:

1. The Press Complaints Commission is an independent body which deals with complaints from the public about the editorial content of newspapers and magazines. Its service is free.
2. The PCC upholds a Code of Practice, a set of rules on editorial standards to which Editors are obliged to adhere. The Code is drafted by members of the media industry and is reviewed periodically by a special committee of editors (the Code of Practice Committee). Further information about the Code can be found at <http://www.pcc.org.uk/cop/practice.html>
3. The Charter Compliance Panel examines cases selected at random to ensure that the PCC is meeting its service commitments to complainants. Copies of its annual reports can be found at <http://www.pcc.org.uk/reports/index.html>
4. The revised Note replaces the PCC's previous Guidance Note on this subject, 'Patients detained in hospital under the Mental Health Act 1983' which was produced in 1997.
5. The PCC also publishes guidance notes for editors on a range of other issues such as refugees and asylum seekers, harassment and court reporting. Full details are available at <http://www.pcc.org.uk/advice/editorials.html>

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