

PCC statement on phone hacking

The PCC has remained concerned about the issue of phone hacking, which raises serious questions about journalistic ethics and past conduct by journalists. Of course, the Commission cannot comment about matters that are properly being considered by police at this time. Nor can it interfere with ongoing legal actions, based on information to which we are not currently privy. However, the PCC is resolute in its determination to ensure future good practice in the industry.

On 19th January, the Commission discussed, at length, the issue of phone hacking at its monthly meeting. The Commission undertook to institute a working group, with a lay majority, to consider the new information that becomes available, and make recommendations to the Commission (which will be published). The purpose of this will be to draw together lessons learned as a result of the outcomes of the relevant police inquiries and ongoing legal actions. It will also consider the outcome of the current internal inquiry of the News of the World. The Committee will review the PCC's own previous actions in regard to this matter.

The Phone Hacking Review Committee will comprise the two most recent lay Commissioners (who joined after December 2009), both of whom are experts in relevant legal fields:

Ian Walden, Professor of Information and Communications Law, Queen Mary University of London

Julie Spence, former Chief Constable, Cambridgeshire Police

There will be one editorial Commissioner: John McLellan, the editor of the Scotsman.

It is important to make clear that phone hacking is a criminal offence, and the Commission has been consistent in its condemnation of it. It has also been consistently clear that it is not the role of the PCC (or within its powers) to duplicate the investigations of the police, or to establish criminality. However, its role is to work to raise standards in the industry, and it is committed to take this opportunity (at the conclusion of the relevant processes) to do so in this area.

ENDS

31 January 2011