

PO Box 2278  
Ilford  
Essex  
IG1 9XT

Press Complaints Commission  
Halton House  
20/23 Holborn  
London EC1N 2JD

**T:** 020 7330 8796  
**E:** [info@iengage.org.uk](mailto:info@iengage.org.uk)  
**W:** [www.iengage.org.uk](http://www.iengage.org.uk)

Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2011

Dear Sir,

I am writing to raise a complaint regarding an article in last week's Daily Mail "Café wins fight to fry bacon after Muslim complaints" (Daily Mail, 31 March 2011).

We believe the headline is inaccurate and in breach of Article 1 Clause 1 of the Code of Practice. The headline clearly asserts that the case involved "Muslim complaints" when the complaint lodged with the local council concerning an extractor fan that is at the centre of the dispute involved one "Mr Graham Webb-Lee".

The article continues with the first paragraph stating: "A café owner was yesterday celebrating victory after a six-month legal battle to fry bacon triggered by Muslim complaints."

The Daily Mail has previously covered this case, coverage that solicited complaints to the Commission (not upheld) and we believe there are no grounds for the Daily Mail to revisit this story and to print a headline and paragraphs that are patently misleading.

The deliberate error is all the more disconcerting given that the couple in question posted a comment on the Daily Mail online page when the matter first arose stating:

*"I am the neighbour who complained! Well done DM for asking for my comments on the matter, but if you had there would be No Story To Print! This vent is affecting my children's health and that is why the council denied planning!"*

*"Yes, I have some Muslim friends who it offended, but nothing was said about my English friends who avoid my house within opening hours of the shop!"*

*"Shame on you Daily Mail. You have stirred up lots of racial tension in my area now, so for you its 'mission accomplished.'" (Sarah and Graham Webb-Lee).*

Moreover, Mr Webb-Lee has further stated that his primary motive in lodging a complaint was the effect of the extractor fan on his family's health and that he was "naïve" to have mentioned Muslims in his initial complaint (Daily Express, 31 March 2011).

An earlier decision by the PCC found the Daily Mail not to be in breach of Article 1 Clause 1 on grounds that the headline and article read together could not be construed as "misleading". And yet comments posted on the Daily Mail online pages clearly showed that readers had been misled as to the nature of the complaint and its circumstances.

Having invited complaints on its earlier article it would seem the Daily Mail has exercised excessive latitude in regard of the previous PCC ruling to again print an inflammatory and inaccurate headline and to make the focus of the story “Muslim complaints”.

To read a headline and article together, as the PCC has done with respect to the previous complaints on this issue, is to miss the point of the reader being attracted to a news story by its headline.

The fact that this story has been further developed with interventions by both the complainants and the PCC raises the question of whether the Daily Mail has taken heed of these interventions and sought to learn from its mistakes rather than brazenly repeat them.

We would welcome the PCC’s adjudication on this matter and look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Mohammed Asif  
CEO