

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
W: www.iengage.org.uk

Wednesday 16th January 2013

Dear Sir,

We are writing in regards to the article published in the Evening Standard on Tuesday 15th January, '*Muslim sex gang accused of grooming 'troubled' underage girls*' (article enclosed).

The article opens with the sentence, '*Nine Muslim men "groomed" and sexually abused underage girls as part of a child sex ring, a court heard today*'.

The article goes on to relay the legal statements made on the opening day of a trial at the Old Bailey involving nine men who stand accused of various charges relating to child prostitution and trafficking.

We would argue the article headline and opening sentence contravenes Clause 12, Article 2 of the Editors' Code of Practice which expressly states that "Details of an individual's race, colour, religion, sexual orientation, physical or mental illness or disability must be avoided unless genuinely relevant to the story."

We contend that the religious affiliation of the nine men standing trial, where it can be established, has no relevance whatsoever to the story. Moreover, the Evening Standard in labelling the men 'Muslim' engages in an act of presumption, assuming that the ethnic sounding names indicate a certain religious affiliation, and in prejudice, by suggesting that such an affiliation bears relevance to the story.

News articles on sex grooming which have, with no regard for the Editors' Code, referred to the supposed religious affiliation of suspects have been exploited by far right groups to target and harass Muslim communities, not least in Rochdale where one such case took place.

We would welcome the PCC's clarification on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Shenaz Bunglawala