

Dear Cllr Orson,

On behalf of the NUJ chapel at BBC Leicester, I'd like to raise the following concerns.

As part of the 'Stage 2 transfer' from the old Police Authority set-up, Sir Clive Loader, like many PCCs, appears to be taking over staffing of the communications/public relations department at the constabulary.

We think this should be challenged on two grounds.

Firstly, on editorial grounds:

- a. Media handling is an element of operational activity with regards to any ongoing investigation or during any newsworthy incident.
- b. The Police need to remain independently accountable and directly answerable for their operational actions. This is not within the remit of the OPCC nor, therefore, should it pass through the hands of OPCC staff.
- c. This puts a third party between the BBC (and media in general) and the Police, which could prevent us from fairly and accurately reporting what is happening within the police or with police activity – a threat to our editorial integrity, accuracy and efficacy especially in times of crisis.

We consider the following areas of BBC Editorial Guidelines/values to be most greatly threatened by the OPCC handling of Police public relations:

1.2.6 Serving the Public Interest

We seek to report stories of significance to our audiences. We will be rigorous in establishing the truth of the story and well informed when explaining it. Our specialist expertise will bring authority and analysis to the complex world in which we live. We will ask searching questions of those who hold public office and others who are accountable, and provide a comprehensive forum for public debate.

6.4.13

Contributors sometimes try to impose conditions on us before agreeing to take part. We must not surrender editorial control. Any contractual agreement with a contributor... must allow us to ask questions our audience would reasonably expect and tell a fair and accurate story.

How can we establish the truth of a story when it's going through a separate organisation to get to us? Are police still not publicly accountable? How can we be assured we can hold people to account when we have to seek third party permission to do so or our requests are handled by a third party with a vested interest in what is said?

Secondly, practically; there is already confusion at our end resulting from a complete lack of clarity over who handles which story, and which staff work where. This needs to be clarified as soon as possible to save wasted time and effort on both sides. This impacts on our ability to do our job. We have previously experienced problems in the effective handling of our enquiries during what we consider to be newsworthy events. We understand that these are being addressed. However, we struggle to see how getting a third party involved would improve the situation.

We would not expect staff from the Leicester Hospital Trusts to handle press enquiries about what happens at the Clinical Commissioning Groups. A similar situation is unacceptable in the policing of our area.

Many thanks for considering these concerns. We look forward to the Panel examining a suitable way forward to ensure both the police and the media can work as effectively and efficiently as possible.