**Hanna and Dodd: McNae’s Essential Law for Journalists 25th edition**

**Additional material for chapter 5**

**Crime – Media coverage before any court case**

*Section numbers from the book are used when relevant. The book should be read too. Its content provides fuller explanations and context.*

**Habeas corpus procedure**

A writ of Habeus Corpus may be sought by lawyers, relatives or friends to secure the release of someone they believe to have been unlawfully detained by the police or another official agency. This centuries-old procedure, which involves making an application to the High Court, is now rarely used. ‘Habeas corpus’ is Latin for ‘You shall have the body [person]’, which refers to the writ’s requirement that the police or other authorities take the person to the court to justify his/her detention.

5.10 Legal risks in media identification of crime suspects

Also, as 5.10 in *McNae’s* explains, there can be a libel risk for a media organisation which reveals - by some detail, or name, photo or footage - the identity of a person who is under investigation by the police or another law enforcement agency but not charged with an offence; and such a person may use privacy law to try to stop coverage of such an investigation identifying them, or to seek damages if they are identified in it, if they are not charged. It is now established case law that a suspect normally has ‘a reasonable expectation of privacy’ as regards being under official investigation.

**Case study:** In 2018 a High Court judge awarded the entertainer Sir Cliff Richard £210,000 in initial damages after he won an action against the BBC for misuse of private information and breach of data protection law. He sued because it reported in 2014 - acting on information officially supplied to it by South Yorkshire police - that officers from that force were searching his penthouse flat in Berkshire. The BBC’s reporting revealed that the search was taking place because police had received an allegation that he had committed a sexual assault at an event in Sheffield in the 1980s. Sir Cliff, who said the allegation was false, was not arrested. In 2016 police announced no charges would be brought against him. He was in Portugal when his Berkshire flat was searched. Before the trial the South Yorkshire force admitted liability and agreed to pay Sir Cliff damages of £400,000, and to contribute towards legal costs he had incurred to that point. The trial was to decide whether the BBC was liable to pay a share of the damages and of that costs sum, and further damages. The judge ruled that the BBC was liable. The sequence of relevant events was that in June 2014 BBC reporter Daniel Johnson, who covered the North of England, learned from a confidential source that the South Yorkshire police force had received such an allegation about Sir Cliff, and was investigating it. A month later Mr Johnson told the force’s head of corporate communications Carrie Goodwin that he was aware that it was investigating Sir Cliff. At a subsequent meeting the police asked the reporter not to publish anything at that stage about the investigation because they intended to search Sir Cliff’s home, and because any publicity prior to the search might compromise its effectiveness. It was agreed between the police and the BBC that it would not report on the investigation until the search was underway, but that the police would tell the BBC when the search would take place, so the BBC could report on that immediately, as it was happening. The evidence of South Yorkshire police to the privacy trial was that it felt pressurised by Mr Johnson into making that offer in order to prevent him publishing a story prior to the search. The BBC’s case was that the information was provided voluntarily by the police, and that the BBC was essentially the police’s ‘messenger’ to get information about the investigation into the public domain. The police gave the BBC a day’s notice of the search, enabling it to arrange the attendance of journalists. Also, because of the seclusion of Sir Cliff’s flat and the lack of visibility from the road, the BBC arranged for a helicopter so that footage could be gained during the search of the inside of the ‘gated’ complex which included the flat. In ruling against the BBC, Mr Justice Mann said that when Mr Johnson approached South Yorkshire police he already had information from a source not within that force that it was investigating such an allegation against Sir Cliff, and that Mr Johnson had received that information knowing that it must have been communicated by the source in breach of confidence, and so there was already a breach of Sir Cliff’s privacy rights by that source. When the South Yorkshire force confirmed to Mr Johnson that there was such an investigation, that too infringed Sir Cliff’s privacy rights, and this was a serious breach, the judge said, adding there was then a further serious breach when the force gave Mr Johnson advance notice of the search. But, the judge said, the force had felt manoeuvred by Mr Johnson into a disclosure. ‘Mr Johnson knew, or ought to have known, that what he was getting was exceptional and was provided in breach of confidence.’ The judge said that the BBC was ‘the more potent causer’ of damage Sir Cliff had suffered, and that its breach of his privacy was ‘more significant’ than such breach by South Yorkshire police. Mr Justice Mann ruled that the force should be financially liable for 35% of the damages and the BBC for 65%. The judge heard evidence from Sir Cliff that the BBC’s revelation to the public that he was under such an investigation had disrupted and ‘put on hold’ his career plans, and left him feeling trapped in his own home, and despair and hopelessness leading, at times, to physical collapse. ‘At first he did not see how he could face his friends and family, or even his future’, the judge said, adding that Sir Cliff felt the whole world would be talking about whether he had committed the alleged crime or not. ‘Sleeping was difficult; he resorted to sleeping pills.’ The judge said £20,000 of the £210,000 which he ordered the BBC to pay Sir Cliff was ‘aggravated damages’ because it had submitted coverage of the search for a Royal Television Society ‘Scoop of the Year’ award (which it did not win), despite being asked by Sir Cliff’s solicitors not to do that. The judge said the award submission had caused Sir Cliff additional distress both by demonstrating the BBC’s pride and unrepentance and to a degree repeating the invasion of privacy ‘with a metaphorical fanfare’. In a settlement of outstanding matters after the trial, the BBC also paid Sir Cliff around £2million towards his legal costs. It paid £310,000 of the police’s costs (*Sir Cliff Richard OBE v BBC and the Chief Constable of South Yorkshire police* [2018] EWHC 1837 (Ch); *The Guardian* and *BBC online,* 4 September 2019)

For further points about the above case, and about whether privacy law applies to reports of arrests made in public places, see *McNae’s* 5.10.2.

**Case study:** In 2020 the Court of Appeal upheld the decision of a High Court judge that the Bloomberg news organisation had breached the privacy of a businessman by revealing that he was under investigation by a ‘United Kingdom Legal Enforcement Body’, which was not specified in the judgment. This vagueness was to help protect the anonymity bestowed on the businessman by the High Court and Court of Appeal in respect of the privacy proceedings, in which he was referred to as ZXC. He is a USA citizen who worked as a corporate Chief Executive. Bloomberg had published in 2016 an online report that the enforcement body had sent a confidential letter to a foreign government requesting banking and business records for an investigation which the body had launched into suspected corruption in that foreign state, including bribery and other offences involving several people, and including into whether ZXC had taken part in a conspiracy to defraud. A copy of the letter had been leaked to a Bloomberg reporter. In 2019 a High Court judge granted ZXC’s application for an injunction preventing Bloomberg from making further disclosures that he was under this criminal investigation (in which he had not been charged), and the judge ordered Bloomberg to pay ZXC £25,000 damages for breach of privacy because of what its article revealed from the letter. Appealing the ruling that his privacy had been unjustifiably breached, Bloomberg argued that someone who was fulfilling a professional role in a large public company was not operating within the sphere of their private life, particularly when it was alleged the person had acted unlawfully. But in the Court of Appeal judgment, which cited Mr Justice Mann’s judgment in Sir Cliff Richard’s case, Lord Justice Simon said: ‘I would take the opportunity to make clear that those who have simply come under suspicion by an organ of the state have, in general, a reasonable and objectively founded expectation of privacy in relation to that fact and an expressed basis for that suspicion. The suspicion may ultimately be shown to be well-founded or ill-founded, but until that point the law should recognise the human characteristic to assume the worst (that there is no smoke without fire); and to overlook the fundamental legal principle that those who are accused of an offence are deemed to be innocent until they are proven guilty’. He pointed out that ZXC had not been arrested and said: ‘I would add that the reasonable expectation of privacy is not in general dependant on the type of crime being investigated or the public characteristics of the suspect (for example, engagement in politics or business).’ Lord Justice Simon went on: ‘To be suspected of a crime is damaging whatever the nature of the crime: it is sensitive personal information and there can be little justification for a hierarchy of offences giving rise to suspicion; although I would accept that there may be some cases where the reasonable expectation of privacy may be significantly reduced, perhaps even to extinction, due to the public nature of the activity under consideration (rioting, for example or….electoral fraud).’ He said that Bloomberg’s article had not pointed to ‘any perceived inadequacies’ in the enforcement body’s investigation into ZXC, and had done little, if anything, more than publish the information from the highly confidential letter. He said too that that the public interest in publication about the problems of corruption in the foreign state to which the legal enforcement body’s letter was addressed was not directly relevant to the specific question of whether there was a public interest in publishing information from that confidential letter about ZXC being under official investigation (ZXC v Bloomberg litigation ([2020] EWCA Civ 611).

**Remember!** As 19.4 and 19.6 in *McNae’s* explain, publication of details about a suspect’s character or background, or criminal convictions, and/or of a photograph or footage showing them identifiably in coverage of crime may breach the Contempt of Court Act 1981 if the case is ‘active’.

**Coverage of police work in streets**

For case studies of complaints made to Ofcom by people shown in TV footage of police activity in streets, see the Additional Material for ch. 4 of *McNae’s*: Showing police work in streets and police stations.

See too 4.3 in *McNae’s* for a case study of an Ofcom ruling on a complaint by a man that a TV programme breached his privacy by showing him being questioned by police and arrested after cannabis was found in a car.

**Journalists showing police ‘raids’**

Police forces may invite journalists to accompany officers on ‘raids’ to search premises or make arrests there, to show the public that the law is being enforced.

For such circumstances, the College of Policing provides for police forces a ‘pro forma’ indemnity agreement for media organisations to sign. This states that it is the media organisation’s responsibility, before entering premises with the police, to obtain the occupier’s consent for entry. The agreement requires the media organisation to indemnify the force against any legal liability (including any arising from the European Convention on Human Rights) caused by any ‘wrongful or negligent act or omission’ in connection with the entry into the premises of the organisation’s ‘representative’. The form thereby seeks to ensure the media are liable for any relevant legal action taken subsequently by the occupier - for example, for breach of privacy.

Privacy law – including the particular protection it gives for people at home, and for the interior of people’s homes - is explained generally in ch. 27 of *McNae’s*, including the public interest defence, and ch. 36 covers trespass law.

Journalists accompanying police or other public agencies on ‘raids’ to arrest or search must normally make clear, to any owner or occupier of the property who is there, that they are journalists – unless the editor can demonstrate, in the event of a complaint, to the relevant regulator that he or she had reasonable, prior belief that a sufficiently-strong public interest justification existed for the journalist(s) not to do that. The complaint could be that a journalist’s failure to make clear who he or she was amounted to misrepresentation or deception. The journalist(s) should leave if asked to do so by an owner or legal occupier unless, again, the editor had a demonstrable, reasonable belief that there was a public interest justification sufficient for the journalist(s) to ignore such a request – see 2.4.1, 2.5, 3.4.13 and 4.1.1. in *McNae’s,* and case studies below on Ofcom and Press Complaints Commission rulings. What is photographed or filmed and what is published must be proportionate to that public interest – for example, the detection or exposure of crime. If an legal occupier or property owner gives verbal consent for the journalist(s) to be there, this should be noted and ideally be recorded on film or audio at the time, so it can be proved later if need be.

Again, reporting of police operations must not breach contempt of court law designed to protect an individual’s right to a fair trial – see above. Contempt considerations may mean that photos or footage of a police operation should not, when it is published contemporaneously, show the face of anyone arrested. Again, media coverage which identifies a person as being under investigation could lead to him or her successfully suing for defamation or intrusion into privacy if no charge follows – see above.

**Relatives and friends**

Care should be taken in press reports of police activity not to identify any relative or friend of those accused of crime unless they are ‘genuinely relevant’ to the story or there is a ‘public interest’ justification. Otherwise, clause 9 of the Editors’ Code of Practice could be breached - see 4.13 in *McNae’s* and the Additional Material for ch. 4 on [www.mcnaes.com](http://www.mcnaes.com).

Section 8 of the Ofcom Broadcasting Code says: ‘People under investigation or in the public eye, and their immediate family and friends, retain the right to a private life, although private behaviour can raise issues of legitimate public interest.’

**Ofcom adjudications on programmes featuring police raids**   
If a complaint is made about a broadcaster filming or recording a police operation Ofcom will consider whether the fairness and/or privacy sections of its Broadcasting Code - in particular rules 7.1 and 8.1 - have been breached. These rules are explained in 3.4.12 and 4.2 of *McNae’s*. The Broadcasting Code’s practice 8.3 states generally that people ‘caught up in events which are covered by the news’ still have a right to privacy. The Code’s public interest exceptions may well apply to some extent, if the programme is justified in the public interest to show the work of the police or to expose crime- see *McNae’s* 3.4.13 and 4.1.1 about those exceptions.

Ofcom guidance warns programme makers that, in covering a police ‘raid’, care must be taken that editorial control remains with the programme company (that is, such control is not passed to the police). See Useful Websites, below, for this guidance.

**Case study**: In 2017 Ofcom ruled that the Channel 5 documentary *Undercover: Nailing the Fraudsters* had not unwarrantably infringed a woman’s privacy by broadcasting in 2016 footage of her being arrested in 2012 in her home and of police searching it. She was named in the programme and her face shown. The documentary featured the work of the City of London police investigating fraudulent insurance claims, including her false claims that she suffered from cancer and a miscarriage and – the programme said - ‘all sorts of other misfortunes’, which had led to her getting pay-outs of almost £10,000 and being moved into a specially adapted home to cope with a non-existent disability. In 2014 she was jailed for 22 months after admitting 22 fraud charges and asking the court to take another 43 into consideration. The footage in her home had been shot originally by a crew working for a BBC series. During the filming she had objected to being filmed but was told by one of these original programme makers ‘you’ll be completely blurred’. Her face had been blurred when the footage was broadcast by the BBC in 2012, before her convictions. She complained that Channel 5’s re-use of it in 2016, which identified her by name and included close-ups of her face, breached her privacy by showing without her consent the inside of her home and her belongings – for example, pictures in the wall and personal paperwork. She also complained that the broadcast of the four-year old footage prevented her putting her life ‘right’, and penalised her for ‘a crime’ committed in 2012. Ofcom said that a person filmed being arrested could reasonably be regarded as being filmed in a sensitive situation, but the footage of her being questioned and arrested by police and their search did not show her engaged in any conduct or action that could reasonably be regarded as particularly private or confidential in nature. Ofcom said she had a legitimate expectation of privacy, because anyone filmed in their home could reasonably be regarded as having this. But the footage broadcast of her home’s interior did not reveal any particularly private or sensitive information about her – Channel 5 pointed out it had blurred any personal photos or personal paperwork in it. Ofcom said there was a genuine public interest in showing the work of police and challenges they face, and exploring the rise of fraud-related crime, including the cost it was having on the UK economy, and that the means of obtaining the footage of her was proportionate. Taking all factors into account, Ofcom ruled that the broadcaster’s right of freedom of expression and the public interest in filming and broadcasting the footage outweighed her right to privacy. Ofcom estimated that her convictions would not be ‘spent’ under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 until approximately January 2019. In the circumstances, it did not consider, in her case, that her arrest and these convictions ‘could be seen to have receded into the past’. But it said, in general, that when considering whether infringement of privacy is warranted, broadcasters should periodically review repeat broadcasts of programmes such as *Undercover*, because – with the elapse of time – the public interest in showing depicted events and a person’s identity may no longer outweigh his or her expectation of privacy. It did not uphold, either, a complaint by her that her husband’s privacy was unwarrantably breached by him being filmed during the police search, and brief inclusion of him and his voice in the broadcast footage. The programme described him as her boyfriend, which he then was, but blurred his face (*Ofcom Broadcast Bulletin*. No. 330, 5 June 2017)

**Case study**: In 2010 an edition of *Brit Cops: Frontline Crime*, broadcast on the Bravo channel, showed footage – shot from the public highway – of a woman’s home being searched by the Metropolitan police robbery squad, who suspected that a man living there had an illegal sub-machine gun. The woman complained to Ofcom that the filming was unfair because she did not consent to it, and that her privacy was infringed because the footage showed images of her house. No firearm was found nor was anyone living there charged. Ofcom did not uphold her complaint. It said that although in the programme a woman’s voice could be heard in the background, she was not filmed. As her participation in the programme was minor and incidental, the programme-makers were not obliged under the Code’s fairness rule to seek her consent. The programme made clear no gun was found, did not implicate her as being involved in any offence and obscured the face of a man who was arrested. Ofcom considered that neither the woman nor her property would have been recognisable to anyone who was not already aware of the ‘raid’. No street name or house number was shown, and the location was described merely as west London, and only the exterior of the house, which was visible from the public highway, was filmed. It ruled she did not have a legitimate expectation of privacy with regard to this filming (*Ofcom Broadcast Bulletin,* No. 154, 22 March 2010).

**Case study**: In 2004 Ofcom upheld a complaint by a woman that she was treated unfairly and her privacy was infringed in both the making and broadcast of an item on the *Meridian News* regional programme which showed police raiding her house because they suspected that heroin would be found. The cameraman followed police into her garden and from there filmed the interior of the house through an open door. No heroin was found, though ‘drug-taking equipment’ was seized. The footage included a back view of the woman in handcuffs and in her nightwear. Ofcom said it was reasonable for her to expect privacy while handcuffed and in nightwear, and she had told the programme makers she objected to being filmed. Although her face was not shown, she would have been identifiable to people who knew her. The programme was unfair because it did not report that she was not charged with any offence (*Ofcom Broadcast Bulletin,* No. 6, 6 April 2004).

**BBC Editorial Guidelines on ‘tag-along raids.’**

The BBC Editorial Guidelines cover, in the privacy section, occasions when BBC journalists accompany police, customs, immigration, environmental health officers or other public authorities on ‘tag-along raids.’ The guidelines state that journalists should only go on these when there is a public interest and after careful consideration of editorial and legal issues including privacy, consent and trespass.  
The guidelines say: ‘When we go on a tag-along raid on private property we should normally:

* ensure people understand we are recording for the BBC
* obtain consent from the legal occupier and stop recording if asked to do so
* leave immediately if asked to do so by the owner, legal occupier or person acting with their authority.’

**PCC rulings on reports of police ‘raids’**A complaint to Ipso about a journalist being present during a police ‘raid’ on someone’s home or business premises, or about how this was reported is likely to allege breach of clause 2 (privacy) of the Editors’ Code of Practice. If there is such a complaint, an editor relying on a public interest justification must under the Code be able to explain to Ipso why he/she reasonably believed – before the complained-of journalistic activity took place and before the complained-of article was published – the activity/article would both serve and be proportionate to the public interest. See 2.4.1, 4.1.1, 4.2 and 4.3 in *McNae’s.*

**Case study:** In 2014 the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) did not uphold a complaint made by Ann Madarbakus about a *Derby Telegraph* article headlined ‘Squalor: Three arrested after drug fears spark raid at ”cluttered” house’. She said it breached (what is now) clause 2 of the Code. The article was written after Derbyshire police invited a *Telegraph* reporter and photographer to accompany officers in a search of her home, following complaints from local residents of suspected drug-dealing and anti-social behaviour. The article said that the officers raiding her home executed a drugs warrant and a dangerous dogs warrant, and that three men had been arrested and suspected drugs, cash and six dogs seized. It said too that the home was filled with ‘rubbish and the stench of stale excrement’. It included four photographs of the interior of the property. She had not consented to the presence of journalists there. She complained that the publication of the photographs taken inside her home intruded into her private and family life. She also complained that clause 1 of the Code (requirement to avoid inaccuracy) was breached – for example, she said the house was not ‘filled with rubbish’ but that items were being stored in one area because of a redecoration. The *Telegraph* said that the police raid had been prompted by ‘large amounts’ of information from the community claiming that drug dealing was occurring at the property and that dogs, potentially of prohibited breeds, were kept there in poor conditions. It said that the publication of the photographs was justified to expose crime; in particular, they demonstrated the conditions in which the dogs were kept. It provided to the PCC a statement from a police inspector stating that activity at the premises was ‘dragging down the environment with crime and anti-social behaviour’, and that it was vital that the public were made aware of the police action in order to ‘restore confidence’. The statement said that the most proven way of doing this was via ‘positive media engagement’, that had been why the press was asked to attend, and that the resulting coverage was ‘necessary and appropriate’. Ann Madarbakus told the PCC that according to the guidelines of Nottinghamshire police - a nearby constabulary - the police were allowed to invite journalists onto a private property only where they had the permission of the property owner. But in this case, no such consent had been obtained, she said. The PCC said that the presence of journalists on the raid, though intrusive, was justified by a reasonable belief that the raid would reveal information that was relevant to the exposure of crime and anti-social behaviour (NB: exposure of crime, or the threat of crime, or ‘serious impropriety’ is specifically included in the Code’s public interest categories). The PCC said the publication of photographs of the interior of her home constituted a distinct and more significant intrusion, adding that a general public interest in publicising the activities of the police and improving public confidence in their effectiveness was insufficient to justify that publication. So, the PCC said, it was necessary for the newspaper to demonstrate that the publication of these photographs made a specific contribution to the public interest. The PCC said it had not been ‘easy’ to make a decision in this regard, but on balance it had concluded that publication of the photographs was justified. Firstly, it said, the home was the site of the alleged criminal behaviour and was therefore directly relevant to the claims (rather than, for example, simply being the location where arrests had occurred). The PCC noted that while no charges had been brought in relation to the raid (as of the time it considered the complaint), the raid had resulted in seizures of suspected drugs, cash, and dogs, along with three arrests. Additionally, there were broader concerns, apparently raised by members of the public, that the complainant's home and the activities taking place there posed a danger to the health and safety of the local community (protecting public health or safety is another of the specified, public interest categories in the Code). The photographs were directly relevant to this issue, the PCC said. Therefore, it was satisfied that the newspaper had demonstrated that it had acted in the reasonable belief that publication of the photographs would be in the public interest. While the complainant said the state of the home was due to redecoration, the photographs corroborated the newspaper's description of the property, as did the comments by police, the PCC said, ruling there was no breach of the Code’s clause 1 (*Ann Madarbakus v Derby Telegraph*, 11 April 2014).

**Case study**: In 2008 the PCC upheld a woman’s complaint that a newspaper’s report of a police ‘raid’ on her home to search for stolen goods breached clause 2 of the Editors’ Code. The report was illustrated by photographs, including a pixelated shot of the woman’s 17-year-old son, handcuffed and sitting in his bedroom. The article said there were no arrests, but the woman was concerned that a reporter and photographer entered her home and took photographs without her consent. She told the PCC that several people had recognised both her son (despite the pixilation) and her home’s interior. The PCC said taking and publishing the photograph of the inside of the woman’s home was clearly very intrusive, regardless of whether the boy's face was obscured in the published picture, and there was no adequate public interest justification for this behaviour, bearing in mind that no stolen goods were discovered and no arrests made – ‘something which should have made the editor realise that using the picture would be difficult to justify in the public interest’. The PCC said it was no defence to rely on the fact that the police invited the paper on the ‘raid’ – it was the responsibility of the editor, not the police, to get the necessary consent for publication or otherwise to comply with the Code when deciding which material to publish (*A woman v Barking and Dagenham Recorder*, 21 October 2008).

In another adjudication, the PCC said that a *Scarborough Evening News* report of a police ‘raid’ in which a small amount of cannabis was found in a woman’s home breached the Code. Police had invited the newspaper on the raid. She was not charged with any offence. By showing a video and publishing a picture of the interior of her house, without her consent, the report was clearly highly intrusive, particularly because it contained information likely to identify her address, the PCC said. It added that there were two strands to the public interest defence; the first was that the footage showed an important part of local policing in operation; the second was that it allegedly exposed a specific criminal offence. The PCC said that while it may have been in the public interest to illustrate the police campaign against drugs, insufficient regard had been paid to the woman’s right to privacy. Showing the video of her home involved a degree of intrusion that was out of proportion to any such public interest (*Carolyn Popple v Scarborough Evening News*, 6 June 2008)

From the above cases, it can be seen that an adverse adjudication is less likely if what is published does not include pictures taken inside properties. The PCC did not uphold a complaint by a man who said his privacy was infringed by a newspaper’s report of his arrest during a police ‘raid’ at his home. He said the police had not named him in connection with the raid. The newspaper said there was nothing private about the incident, which had involved 60 officers and had been witnessed by neighbours and members of the public, and there was no reason why a photograph of his home taken from the public highway should not be published along with the name of his street. The PCC said that that no photographs had showed his home’s interior, and that it did not consider that an arrest was a private matter even when, as in this case, no charges followed. The PCC said that references to his house and publication of an innocuous photo which only showed his face was not intrusive, adding that reporting on police action was inherently in the public interest and part of an open society unless there were formal reporting restrictions in place (*Luke Dann v The Herald (Plymouth)* 24 September 2009).

The evolution of privacy law in the Cliff Richard case – see above - may influence Ipso adjudications in the future on whether the fact of a police search, or an arrest, is in some circumstances a private matter. How public the location was is likely to be a factor, if police make no comment about the raid or arrest.

**Listening to radio messages of the police and other emergency services**

In the days of analogue radio signals, some journalists listened to police radio messages. It was illegal then and is illegal now, when such eavesdropping is almost impossible in that such messages are sent digitally, encrypted. Section 48 of the Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006 makes it an offence to listen by radio to any message which that person is not authorised to receive. So it is illegal to use a radio or scanning device to eavesdrop without permission on, for example, police radio networks, or those of other emergency services and air traffic controllers. It is also an offence to disclose information gained by such eavesdropping, unless in a report of such information being aired in court proceedings. See Useful Websites, below, for Ofcom guidance.

5.13 Accused teachers given anonymity

Section 13 of the Education Act 2011 – by creating sections 141A-H in the Education Act 2002 - gives automatic lifelong anonymity to teachers in respect of any allegation that they have or may have committed an offence against a pupil at their school.

The ban makes it illegal to publish anything likely to lead members of the public to identify the teacher as being the subject of the allegation.

Section 13 makes it unlawful, for example, to identify a teacher accused of assaulting or sexually abusing a child at his or her school if that teacher has not been charged with a criminal offence—even if the accusation is referred to in public, for example at an employment tribunal hearing at which the teacher claims

But the anonymity ends if the teacher is charged with an offence or a court agrees to an application that it should be lifted in the interests of justice. It also ends if the Education Secretary publishes information about the individual in connection with an investigation or decision relating to the allegation, or if the General Teaching Council for Wales publishes information about the individual in connection with an investigation, hearing or decision on the allegation.

This law was created because teachers complained that they were vulnerable to false allegations. A teacher may waive his/her anonymity, by giving written consent—for example, to a media organisation—to being identified. The consent is not valid if it is proved that it was obtained by unreasonable interference with his/her peace or comfort. The anonymity also ends if the teacher himself/herself publishes information about the allegation—for example, on a social media page.

Publication of anything which breaches the anonymity is punishable by fine unlimited by statute. Those liable to be prosecuted are the same as for breach of the ‘section 49’ anonymity provision covering youth court cases, see *McNae’s* 10.3.4.

It is a defence for anyone accused of publishing information which breaches the Education Act anonymity to show that at the time he or she was not aware, and did not suspect or have reason to suspect, that the publication included the information in question, or that the allegation had been made.

**5.14 Juveniles in investigations**

In 2014 *The Sun* was the only mainstream media organisation to name Will Cornick as the 15-year-old pupil arrested for the murder of teacher Ann Maguire. He stabbed Mrs Maguire in front of a class at a Leeds school. *The Sun* could legally name him early in the police investigation, because this was before he had automatic anonymity in law, which covered him as soon as he appeared in a youth court – see 10.3 in *McNae’s* for that law. At Crown court he was protected by an anonymity order which the judge lifted after Cornick admitted the murder.

Controversy about this and other (rare) instances of the press identifying juveniles under police investigation led to a change in 2018 to clause 9 of the Editors’ Code of Practice, so that in some circumstances such identification could breach that clause. See 5.14 in *McNae’s* about clause 9.

If the identification is by publication of an image, a complaint could also be made under the Code’s clause 6. Under that clause there must normally be parental consent for publication of an image of a child under 16 if this could affect his or her welfare. The clause also forbids unnecessary intrusion into any school pupil’s education. Intrusion could occur because the pupil was identified in the press as a crime suspect. But clauses 6 and 9 are subject to the Code’s ‘public interest’ exceptions – see 2.4.1 in *McNae’s.*

**Case study**: In 2018 Ipso ruled that *The News (Portsmouth)* had not breached clause 6 of the Editors’ Code by publishing online an image showing a 13-year-old boy. It was among images of 30 people from CCTV at a football match, all published at the request of the police. Police wanted the public to help identify the 30, to assist an investigation into disorder in the stadium - including a pitch invasion - and outside it. The boy’s mother complained that her son’s image should not have been published. She said that this had caused them both great distress and that police force had not prosecuted him but had said it would take steps proportionate to his age and lack of previous convictions.  Ipso said that the fact that the boy was suspected of being involved in criminal activity was a matter which clearly related to his welfare but that the public interest in exposing or detecting crime is specifically recognised in the Editors’ Code. The newspaper had considered the public interest prior to publication, albeit not in relation to clause 6, as it had not been aware of the boy’s age. Ipso said that although editors should be vigilant regarding the ages of photograph subjects to prevent an inadvertent breach of clause 6, in this case there was an exceptional public interest in publishing the boy’s photograph, and therefore was no breach of clause 6. But Ipso welcomed the publication’s decision to swiftly remove the boy’s photograph when the police confirmed that he had been identified (*Perrin v The News (Portsmouth*) 10 January 2018).

For more about clause 6 of the Code, see 4.11 in *McNae’s* and case studies in the Additional Material for ch.4 on www.mcnaes.com.

**Other ethical considerations in media coverage of crime**

As stated above, the detection or exposure of crime is included in the ‘public interest exceptions’ of both the Editors’ Code of Practice and Ofcom Broadcasting Code – see 2.4.1, 3.4.13 and 4.1.1 in *McNae’s*. This means, for example, that publication prior to any resultant court proceedings of images of a crime being committed by an adult (in this context, someone aged 18 or over) is unlikely to be deemed to breach either code, although the extent of intrusion into a person’s privacy will be taken into account should there be a complaint about that publication.

Reflecting this regulatory approach, Ipso’s predecessor the Press Complaints Commission said: ‘An individual’s criminal behaviour – however low grade – is not generally regarded as part of their private life deserving of protection under the [Editors’] Code of Practice’ (*Brian Souter and his son v the Scottish Sun*, October 30, 2007).

But PCC issued a guidance note ‘on the reporting of people accused of crime’ which, as well as warning against publication of conjecture, states: ‘Editors should not rely on the fact that someone has been accused of a criminal offence as justification for publishing material that would otherwise be held to be intrusive, unless the material ought to be published in the public interest or is in some way relevant’.

As illustrated below, media coverage of police ‘raids’ to arrest or search may lead to complaints under the codes about breach of privacy.

**Legal considerations in media identification of those assisting the police**

Once court proceedings have begun, a court may, under various statutes, prohibit the identification of a witness in any media report of the case. In a youth court case, juvenile witnesses automatically get anonymity. The various laws which can provide anonymity for people as regards published reports are explained in *McNae’s* chapters 10, 11 and 12. For example, it is illegal to publish the identity of any victim/alleged victim of any sexual offence.

**New identities of police informants**

There is also law which can provide anonymity to police informants, before or after any court proceedings begin, to protect them from violence or intimidation by criminals.  
Sections 86–89 of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 make it an offence, punishable by up to two years in jail, to disclose at any time the new identities (for example, changed names and new addresses) given to informants as part of police protection, or to disclose other protective arrangements. The ban is on any disclosure, not just in publications.

The Act, which is not aimed specifically at the media, sets out limited defences for anyone accused of disclosing information about the new identity. There is no liability if the disclosure was made with the agreement of the protected person and was not likely to endanger anyone’s safety. Under the Act’s schedule 5 the category of ‘protected person’ can also include an informant’s relatives, or any juror, judge or police officer for whom protective arrangements have been made.

**Investigation anonymity orders**

Section 74 – 78 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 empowers a magistrate – if requested by the police or by public prosecutors – to make, without holding a court hearing, an ‘investigation anonymity order’ to protect a person assisting or willing to assist the police or the National Crime Agency during investigations into murder or manslaughter. The order can be made if the death was caused by a gun or knife and if the person likely to have committed the offence was, when it was committed, aged at least 11 but under 30 and was likely to have then been a member of a similarly aged ‘group’ apparently engaged in crime.

This anonymity protection was introduced to counter the intimidating effect of street gang culture among young people, which makes it hard to for police to get information about such killings. This law is not aimed directly at the media, but section 76 of the Act makes it an offence for anyone to disclose (other than internally and officially within an investigating or a prosecuting agency) any information that would or might identify this person to others as someone who is such an informant or willing to be one. The penalty for disclosure is a fine or a jail term of up to five years or both. A person accused of breach of the order will have a defence if he/she did not know and had no reason to suspect that the order had been made or that the information disclosed would breach it; or if the disclosure was made to someone already aware that the person given anonymity by the order was or was willing to be an informant. The ban is on any disclosure, not just in publications.

A magistrate, if requested by a relevant investigating or prosecuting agency or by the person protected by the order can cancel it if there has been a material change of circumstances since it was imposed.

Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) guidance says: ‘The granting of an investigation anonymity order does not guarantee that anonymity will be granted at the trial’. It says that a separate application has to be made by the prosecution for such trial anonymity – that is, for a ‘witness anonymity order’. See Useful Websites, below, for this guidance.

**Witness anonymity orders**

Sections 86 – 89 in the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 empower a court to make a ‘witness anonymity order’ that the identity of a prosecution witness should not be disclosed to the defendant (and therefore will not be disclosed in court). Defendants can also apply for an order that the identity of a defence witness should not be disclosed to the prosecution. This law is not aimed directly at the media, but breach of the order by the unauthorised disclosure of a witness’s identity can be dealt with as contempt of court. The ban is on any disclosure, not just in publications. The CPS guidance says that ‘witness anonymity orders’ made under the 2009 Act are generally for ‘those persons who have provided crucial evidence and against whom there is a substantial threat.’  The orders may be used, for example, in prosecutions of defendants alleged to be violent gangsters.

Defence lawyers may argue against such an order, because if their client is not told who is giving that prosecution evidence it is usually harder to challenge its veracity. The CPS guidance requires prosecutors to consider if a lesser measure – for example, an anonymity order made under section 46 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act - would suffice. See 12.9 in *McNae’s* for explanation of section 46 orders, which do not stop the defendant knowing who the witness is but ban anyone from identifying the witness in publications referring to the case. *McNae’s* chs. 10, 11 and 12 deal with other law and orders which prevent media reports of cases identifying some witnesses.

**Advertisements for return of stolen goods**

The Theft Act 1968, section 23, makes it an offence to publish an advertisement offering a financial reward for the return of stolen or lost goods and including an assurance to the effect that “no questions will be asked” about where such goods have been. Magistrates convicted the advertising manager of a weekly newspaper under this law in 1982, after publication of an advert offering £5 for the return of a ‘brass, 12 inch coffee grinder’. On appeal, the High Court upheld the conviction, confirming that this was a ***strict liability*** offence (*Denham v Scott* (1984) 77 Cr App R 210).

**Useful Websites**

[**http://www.editorscode.org.uk/**](http://www.editorscode.org.uk/)  
Editors’ Codebook

[**http://www.editorscode.org.uk/guidance\_notes\_6.php**](http://www.editorscode.org.uk/guidance_notes_6.php)

Press Complaints Commission guidance on the reporting of people accused of crime

[**http://www.editorscode.org.uk/guidance\_notes\_10.php**](http://www.editorscode.org.uk/guidance_notes_10.php)

Press Complaints Commission guidance on the reporting of cases involving paedophiles

[**https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/engagement-and-communication/media-relations/#taking-the-media-on-police-operations**](https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/engagement-and-communication/media-relations/#taking-the-media-on-police-operations)

College of Policing ‘Guidance on Relationships with the Media: Taking the media on police operations’

[**https://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidelines/crime**](https://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidelines/crime)

BBC Editorial Guidelines on reporting crime

[**https://www.bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidelines/privacy/guidelines**](https://www.bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidelines/privacy/guidelines)

BBC Editorial Guidelines on tag-along raids

[**https://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidance/indemnity-forms**](https://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidance/indemnity-forms)

BBC Editorial Guidelines on access agreements

[**http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/**](http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/%20)   
National Crime Agency

**https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/witness-protection-and-anonymity**

**https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/witness-anonymity-directors-guidance**

Crown Prosecution Service guidance for prosecutors on ‘investigation anonymity orders’ and ‘witness anonymity orders’

**https://www.ofcom.org.uk/spectrum/interference-enforcement/spectrum-offences/radio-interception**

Ofcom guidance on illegality of ‘listening in’ to radio messages