

PAPYRUS submission to the IPSO consultation of the Editors' Code of Practice

National charity PAPYRUS Prevention of Young Suicide appreciated the positive changes made to the most recent 2016 revision of the Editors' Code of Practice. We now welcome this opportunity to put our case for the need to tighten further reporting of suicides.

Working with media daily for many years, we recognise and applaud greater empathy and desire to report suicide responsibly.

Clause 5

As we have done in the past, PAPYRUS again urges the removal of the word 'excessive' from Clause 5.

'Excessive' leaves this open to interpretation: it is a subjective issue. PAPYRUS believes that any mention of suicide method 'advertises' to vulnerable young people a way to take your own life. Similarly, detail and photographs of suicide locations, memorialise and romanticise these sites, drawing susceptible others to them. Removing the word 'excessive' challenges the editor and/or journalist concerned to think more deeply about including any detail. This can only be a good thing.

PAPYRUS also receives many concerns from parents and families worried about the impact of excessive detail on young friends of those who have died by suicide.

For example: a father who was concerned about the stressful state of mind of young friends who had to travel to school every morning from the railway station where his 15 year old daughter had taken her own life.

Guidance on use of 'committed'

We also urge the Committee to take a more restraining than permissive stance on use of the word 'committed' when reporting suicide. Suicide was decriminalised in 1961. It is not a crime to kill yourself.

Continued use of the word 'committed' in relation to suicide perpetuates stigma. It is lazy and unhelpful at best. At worst, it is offensive and causes added grief to families, friends, partners, colleagues and those left to mourn the person who has suicided, many of whom may themselves be vulnerable to suicide.

This is often compounded by successive media reports: at time of the suicide, sometimes at time of a funeral or memorial service, following inquest proceedings, and often repeated at future dates to mark events in memory of the deceased.

We hope you will carefully consider our submission and look forward to the outcomes.

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