

Independent Press Standards Organisation: Annual Statement of CN Group Limited for the period 8 September 2014 to 31 December 2014.

CN Group Limited
PO Box 7
Newspaper House
Dalston Road
Carlisle
Cumbria
CA2 5UA
Tel. 01228 612600
www.cngroup.co.uk

Introduction

The CN Group is a multi-media business focused on serving the local communities in the Cumbria, Northumbria and south-west Scotland regions.

The group's history began with the Carlisle Patriot in 1815, which merged with the East Cumberland News in 1910 to become the Cumberland News. The group's titles are independent politically and do not support any one political party.

The group's publishing division now comprises the daily News & Star and the daily North West Evening Mail, the weeklies The Cumberland News, Eskdale & Liddesdale Advertiser, Hexham Courant (including Prudhoe Local), Times & Star and Whitehaven News, the free weekly titles the East Cumbria Gazette, West Cumbria Gazette, and Advertiser, and a Magazines division that publishes the titles Cumbria Life, Dumfries & Galloway Life and Carlisle Living.

The 2014 average circulation per issue was:

News & Star 12,067
North West Evening Mail 10,507
The Cumberland News 21,368
Eskdale & Liddesdale Advertiser 1,325
Hexham Courant 12,560
Times & Star 12,208
Whitehaven News 10,471
Cumbria Life 10,811
Dumfries & Galloway Life 5,190
Carlisle Living 3,278

IPSO Responsible Person: Steve Johnston, Editor, Times & Star. Tel. 01900607650
email steve.johnston@cnmedia.co.uk

Our Editorial Standards

CN Group has adopted company wide IPSO Standard Operating Procedures to which all its journalists adhere. The IPSO procedures are available to all staff on the company's intranet site.

A requirement to adhere to and understand the Editors' Code is set out in the Terms and Conditions of Employment of all journalists in the company.

Annual IPSO and other legal refresher training is made available to all editorial staff as part of their individual annual personal development reviews. The need for legal training including dedicated training about IPSO is kept under review by editors.

The company has adopted a Complaints Protocol which is published along with the Editors' Code on the company intranet site.

The Complaints Protocol includes details of the company's policy regarding verification of content prior to publication. This explains that content is subject to legal and ethical checks by senior editors who may also seek advice from media lawyers and IPSO.

The protocol also requires senior editorial executives and journalists to maintain a full audit trail when it is felt an article being considered for publication in the public interest may include a potential breach of the Editors' Code. This will include a record of any meetings held to discuss the article and a copy of any authorisation signed by the editor or senior executive.

The operating procedures draw attention to the IPSO journalists' whistleblower hotline with full contact information.

The procedures note IPSO harassment policy whereby IPSO may offer pre-publication advice to members of the public and alert publications to any concerns about alleged harassment in breach of the Editors' Code.

Our Complaints Handling Process

All CN Group titles carry prominent complaints panels that include Editorial and IPSO contact details, in print and online.

The company's Complaints Protocol has been agreed by all editors and is published to staff from all departments on the company intranet site.

The protocol includes advice about pre-publication verification and the requirement for a full audit trail if articles considered for publication may be in potential breach of the Editors' Code.

3/

The company will accept complaints by telephone, email or letter and all complainants will receive an acknowledgement from an editor, deputy editor or senior editorial executive within 24 hours of a complaint being received.

The editor will be kept informed of all correspondence and progress throughout the complaints process.

Complainants who appear to raise potential issues under the Editors' Code are informed of the code even it is not cited officially as part of the complaint. They are informed that the publication is regulated by IPSO and are provided with contact details.

The company aims to have all complaints resolved within 14 days.

All complaints that allege a breach of the Editors' Code or which request remedial action are logged and a record is taken of follow-up action. The complaints log is reviewed on a regular basis by senior editorial executives.

CN Group journalists must keep all source documentation including shorthand notes for 12 months.

The protocol includes details of recommended remedial action which includes the removal of contentious online content while investigations are taking place.

Complaints directly addressed by IPSO are notified by editors to the company's Chief Executive Officer.

IPSO resolutions are recorded and published as per IPSO guidance specific to the case.

IPSO Compliance

The following gives information, by title, about IPSO compliance for the period September 8 2014 to December 31 2014

The Cumberland News, News & Star, West Cumbrian Gazette, East Cumbrian Gazette, Eskdale & Liddesdale Advertiser

- CN Group IPSO Standard Operating Procedures have been communicated.
- The Editors' Code is available to all editorial staff.
- Editorial team briefings underline standards and complaints monitoring.
- Before publication of a series of articles about the agencies' care of an individual with Down's Syndrome, the News & Star/The Cumberland News took care to ensure that both publications adhered to the Editors' Code regarding non-publication of inaccurate, misleading or distorted information by ensuring that the reporter sought balanced statements from all sides.

4/

- IPSO Reference 0001.14 Mills v Cumberland News/News & Star. Website video was removed following complaint to IPSO. The complainant confirmed that this action had resolved the complaint.
- IPSO Reference 0143.14 Balfry v News & Star. A complaint about the alleged inaccuracy of a benefit fraud offence was passed on to the publication by IPSO. The publication confirmed the accuracy of the charge via the Department of Works and Pensions and corresponded this to the complainant. No further action was requested.
- IPSO Reference 01392.14 Cooke v News & Star. Complaint over accuracy of online vote. Complainant accepted the company's explanation about its online voting system.
- IPSO Reference 01395.14 Davidson v Cumberland News. IPSO notified the publication that a complaint did not raise a breach of the Editors' Code.
- IPSO Reference 01887.14 van Wissen v News & Star/Cumberland News. Request for removal of court report from website. IPSO forwarded request, and the publication contacted the complainant to confirm the accuracy of the report. No further action was requested.

North West Evening Mail (including The Advertiser)

- CN Group IPSO Standard Operating Procedures have been communicated.
- The Editors' Code is available to all editorial staff.
- Editorial team briefings underline standards and complaints monitoring.
- No details of pre-publication verification were available during the period.
- IPSO Complaints Committee Reference 1448.14 Broadbent v North West Evening Mail decided that no matters had been raised which showed a breach of the Editors' Code.

Hexham Courant

- CN Group IPSO Standard Operating Procedures have been communicated.
- The Editors' Code is available to all editorial staff.
- Editorial team briefings underline standards and complaints monitoring.
- No pre-publication verification was sought during the period.
- No complaints related to alleged breach of the Editors' Code were received during the period.

Times & Star

- CN Group IPSO Standard Operating Procedures have been communicated.
- The Editors' Code is available to all editorial staff

5/

- Editorial team briefings underline standards and complaints monitoring.
- No pre-publication verification was sought during the period.
- IPSO Reference 01395.14 Davidson v Times & Star. IPSO notified the publication that a complaint did not raise a breach of the Editors' Code.

Whitehaven News

- CN Group IPSO Standard Operating Procedures have been communicated.
- The Editors' Code is available to all editorial staff.
- Editorial team briefings underline standards and complaints monitoring.
- No pre-publication verification was sought during the period.
- No complaints related to alleged breach of the Editors' Code were received during the period.

Magazines Division (including Cumbria Life, Dumfries & Galloway Life, and Carlisle Living).

- CN Group IPSO Standard Operating Procedures have been communicated.
- The Editors' Code is available to all editorial staff.
- Editorial team briefings underline standards and complaints monitoring.
- No pre-publication verification was sought during the period.
- No complaints related to alleged breach of the Editors' Code were received during the period.

Appendix

1. Copy of Editors' Code circulated to all editorial staff.
2. Copy of CN Group IPSO Standard Operating Procedures available to all staff

CN GROUP

IPSO STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

1. All CN Group titles carry prominent complaints panels including Editorial and IPSO contact details, in print and online.
2. All our editorial staff are inducted into accepting and understanding the requirements of the Editors' Code and adherence to IPSO. This is communicated via the company handbook, individual Terms and Conditions, job descriptions and inductions.
3. We draw attention to the IPSO journalists' whistle blower hotline. Any journalist who feels they are being pressured to act in a way not in line with the Editor's Code, and who would like to register concern or seek advice, can call IPSO on 0300 213 2220 and speak in confidence to a member of IPSO staff or contact IPSO Chief Executive Matt Tee via matt.tee@ipso.co.uk
4. We note IPSO harassment policy, whereby IPSO may offer pre-publication advice to members of the public and alert publications to any concerns about alleged harassment by journalists in breach of the Editors' Code.
5. Annual IPSO and other legal refresher training is made available to all editorial staff.
6. Our Editors supply information for an annual company statement which is then compiled by one responsible person for submission to IPSO and subsequent publication on both CN Group and News Media Association websites.
7. The company has adopted a clear and consistent Complaints Protocol which is followed across all titles, as follows:

Complaints Protocol:

- (a) Verification of content prior to publication – potentially contentious content is subject to legal and ethical checks via senior editors who may also seek advice from News Media Association or other newspaper lawyers.
- (b) Editors ensure that senior editorial executives and journalists maintain and keep a full audit trail when it is felt that a story being considered for publication in the public interest may potentially breach the code. This will include a record of any meetings that discuss the reasons for publication and a copy of authorisation signed by the editor or senior executive.
- (c) All complainants receive an acknowledgement from an editor, deputy editor or senior editorial executive appointed by the editor within 24 hours of a complaint

being received. The Editor is kept informed of all correspondence and progress throughout the complaints process.

(d) Complainants who raise concerns that appear to raise a potential issue under the Editors' Code are informed of the code even if it is not cited within the initial complaint. They are informed that our publications are regulated by IPSO and are provided with full contact details.

(e) We strive to have all complaints resolved within 14 days.

(f) All complaints that either allege a breach of the Editors' code or request other remedial action are recorded in the company's Complaints log, with a record taken of follow-up action. The log is subject to regular review by senior editorial executives across all titles.

(g) Our journalists keep all source documentation including shorthand notes for 12 months in line with IPSO requirements. Storage space for documents may be requested from a line manager.

(h) Offers of remedial action for complainants in the first instance include clarifications and apologies, balancing follow-up articles and letters to be published in the next available print edition. Contentious online content will be removed while investigations are taking place.

(i) Complaints which are directly addressed by IPSO are notified by Editors to the Managing Director, and any complaints that may require legal support are also notified to the group Finance Director. Potential libel claims are also notified as a matter of course to the Finance Director.

(j) All IPSO resolutions are recorded and published by our titles as per IPSO guidance specific to that case.

Updated 30.06.15

The Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), as Regulator, is charged with enforcing the following Code of Practice, which was framed by the Editors' Code of Practice Committee and is enshrined in the contractual agreement between IPSO and newspaper, magazine and electronic news publishers.

The Code

All members of the press have a duty to maintain the highest professional standards. The Code, which includes this preamble and the public interest exceptions below, sets the benchmark for those ethical standards, protecting both the rights of the individual and the public's right to know. It is the cornerstone of the system of self-regulation to which the industry has made a binding commitment.

It is essential that an agreed code be honoured not only to the letter but in the full spirit. It should not be interpreted so narrowly as to compromise its commitment to respect the rights of the individual, nor so broadly that it constitutes an unnecessary interference with freedom of expression or prevents publication in the public interest.

It is the responsibility of editors and publishers to apply the Code to editorial material in both printed and online versions of publications. They should take care to ensure it is observed rigorously by all editorial staff and external contributors, including non-journalists, in printed and online versions of publications.

Editors should co-operate swiftly with the Independent Press Standards Organisation CIC (the 'Regulator') in the resolution of complaints. Any publication judged to have breached the Code must publish the adjudication in full and with due prominence agreed by the Regulator, including headline reference to the Regulator.

1 Accuracy

- i) The Press must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information, including pictures.
- ii) A significant inaccuracy, misleading statement or distortion once recognised must be corrected, promptly and with due prominence, and – where appropriate – an apology published. In cases involving the Regulator, prominence should be agreed with the Regulator in advance.
- iii) The Press, whilst free to be partisan, must distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture and fact.
- iv) A publication must report fairly and accurately the outcome of an action for defamation to which it has been a party, unless an agreed settlement states otherwise, or an agreed statement is published.

2 Opportunity to reply

A fair opportunity for reply to inaccuracies must be given when reasonably called for.

3 *Privacy

- i) Everyone is entitled to respect for his or her private and family life, home, health and correspondence, including digital communications.
- ii) Editors will be expected to justify intrusions into any individual's private life without consent. Account will be taken of the complainant's own public disclosures of information.
- iii) It is unacceptable to photograph individuals in private places without their consent. Note – Private places are public or private property where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy.

4 *Harassment

- i) Journalists must not engage in intimidation, harassment or persistent pursuit.
- ii) They must not persist in questioning, telephoning, pursuing or photographing individuals once asked to desist; nor remain on their property when asked to leave and must not follow them. If requested, they must identify themselves and whom they represent.

- iii) Editors must ensure these principles are observed by those working for them and take care not to use non-compliant material from other sources.

5 Intrusion into grief or shock

- i) In cases involving personal grief or shock, enquiries and approaches must be made with sympathy and discretion and publication handled sensitively. This should not restrict the right to report legal proceedings, such as inquests.
- ii) *When reporting suicide, care should be taken to avoid excessive detail about the method used.

6 *Children

- i) Young people should be free to complete their time at school without unnecessary intrusion.
- ii) A child under 16 must not be interviewed or photographed on issues involving their own or another child's welfare unless a custodial parent or similarly responsible adult consents.
- iii) Pupils must not be approached or photographed at school without the permission of the school authorities.
- iv) Minors must not be paid for material involving children's welfare, nor parents or guardians for material about their children or wards, unless it is clearly in the child's interest.
- v) Editors must not use the fame, notoriety or position of a parent or guardian as sole justification for publishing details of a child's private life.

7 *Children in sex cases

1. The press must not, even if legally free to do so, identify children under 16 who are victims or witnesses in cases involving sex offences.
2. In any press report of a case involving a sexual offence against a child –
 - i) The child must not be identified.
 - ii) The adult may be identified.
 - iii) The word 'incest' must not be used where a child victim might be identified.
 - iv) Care must be taken that nothing in the report implies the relationship between the accused and the child.

8 *Hospitals

- i) Journalists must identify themselves and obtain permission from a responsible executive before entering non-public areas of hospitals or similar institutions to pursue enquiries.
- ii) The restrictions on intruding into privacy are particularly relevant to enquiries about individuals in hospitals or similar institutions.

9 *Reporting of crime

- i) Relatives or friends of persons convicted or accused of crime should not generally be identified without their consent, unless they are genuinely relevant to the story.
- ii) Particular regard should be paid to the potentially vulnerable position of children who witness, or are victims of, crime. This should not restrict the right to report legal proceedings.

10 *Clandestine devices and subterfuge

- i) The press must not seek to obtain or publish material acquired by using hidden cameras or clandestine listening devices; or by intercepting private or mobile telephone calls, messages or emails; or by the unauthorised removal of documents or photographs; or by accessing digitally-held private information without consent.
- ii) Engaging in misrepresentation or subterfuge, including by agents or intermediaries, can generally be justified only in the public interest and then only when the material cannot be obtained by other means.

11 Victims of sexual assault

The press must not identify victims of sexual assault or publish material likely to contribute to such identification unless there is adequate justification and they are legally free to do so.

12 Discrimination

- i) The press must avoid prejudicial or pejorative reference to an individual's race, colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or disability.

- ii) 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.

13 Financial journalism

- i) Even where the law does not prohibit it, journalists must not use for their own profit financial information they receive in advance of its general publication, nor should they pass such information to others.
- ii) They must not write about shares or securities in whose performance they know that they or their close families have a significant financial interest without disclosing the interest to the editor or financial editor.
- iii) They must not buy or sell, either directly or through nominees or agents, shares or securities about which they have written recently or about which they intend to write in the near future.

14 Confidential sources

Journalists have a moral obligation to protect confidential sources of information.

15 Witness payments in criminal trials

- i) No payment or offer of payment to a witness – or any person who may reasonably be expected to be called as a witness – should be made in any case once proceedings are active as defined by the Contempt of Court Act 1981.

This prohibition lasts until the suspect has been freed unconditionally by police without charge or bail or the proceedings are otherwise discontinued; or has entered a guilty plea to the court; or, in the event of a not guilty plea, the court has announced its verdict.

ii) Where proceedings are not yet active but are likely and foreseeable, editors must not make or offer payment to any person who may reasonably be expected to be called as a witness, unless the information concerned ought demonstrably to be published in the public interest and there is an over-riding need to make or promise payment for this to be done; and all reasonable steps have been taken to ensure no financial dealings influence the evidence those witnesses give. In no circumstances should such payment be conditional on the outcome of a trial.

- iii) Any payment or offer of payment made to a person later cited to give evidence in proceedings must be disclosed to the prosecution and defence. The witness must be advised of this requirement.

16 *Payment to criminals

- i) Payment or offers of payment for stories, pictures or information, which seek to exploit a particular crime or to glorify or glamorise crime in general, must not be made directly or via agents to convicted or confessed criminals or to their associates – who may include family, friends and colleagues.
- ii) Editors invoking the public interest to justify payment or offers would need to demonstrate that there was good reason to believe the public interest would be served. If, despite payment, no public interest emerged, then the material should not be published.

The public interest

There may be exceptions to the clauses marked * where they can be demonstrated to be in the public interest.

1. The public interest includes, but is not confined to:
 - i) Detecting or exposing crime or serious impropriety.
 - ii) Protecting public health and safety.
 - iii) Preventing the public from being misled by an action or statement of an individual or organisation.
2. There is a public interest in freedom of expression itself.
3. Whenever the public interest is invoked, the Regulator will require editors to demonstrate fully that they reasonably believed that publication, or journalistic activity undertaken with a view to publication, would be in the public interest and how, and with whom, that was established at the time.
4. The Regulator will consider the extent to which material is already in the public domain, or will become so.
5. In cases involving children under 16, editors must demonstrate an exceptional public interest to over-ride the normally paramount interest of the child.