Complaints Procedure

To make a complaint via this websibe please [**click here**](https://www.ipso.co.uk/oxbxApps/app/complaint1.html).

Before you do so you may find it helpful to read [this information](https://www.ipso.co.uk/IPSO/makeacomplaint/makingacomplaint.html) about making a complaint. The information below explains how IPSO deal with complaints.

1. Initial assessment

Once we have received your complaint we will assess whether it falls within our remit and whether it raises a possible breach of the Code. If not, we will write to you to explain the reasons why we are unable to take your concerns forward. You are entitled to request a review of this decision within seven days.

2. Referral to the publication

If your complaint raises a possible breach of the Code, and you have not previously exhausted the publication's own complaints procedure, we will pass on the detail of your complaint to the editor, who should seek to resolve the matter directly with you.

IPSO can take over the handling of your concerns either once the publisher's internal complaints procedures have been exhausted, or if the matter has not been resolved after 28 days. We may begin to consider the complaint before this, if we consider it is essential for us to do so.

If at any time whilst your complaint is with the publication you have any difficulties dealing with the publication directly, you feel that the process has been exhausted, or believe that our earlier involvement is essential, you should contact us. We will be happy to give you informal guidance on your complaint or the [Editors' Code of Practice](https://www.ipso.co.uk/IPSO/cop.html) at any time during this period and are here to support you in dealing with the publication.

If your complaint is successfully resolved by the publication, please let us know as soon as possible. If we have not heard from you by the end of 28 days, we will write to you to ask whether you wish to pursue your complaint to IPSO and to request that you provide us with copies of your correspondence with the publication.

3. The investigation

If your complaint is not resolved with the publication, the Complaints Committee will write to the editor of the publication to request its response to the complaint, which may include specific questions based on the previous correspondence. It may also ask you to clarify aspects of your complaint, or provide further information to assist its investigation.

You will be provided with a copy of the publication's response to your complaint, and given the opportunity to comment on this. We will also seek to mediate an outcome to your complaint which is satisfactory to you, if appropriate.

We will strive to conclude our investigation of your complaint as swiftly as possible. To this end IPSO requires that both publications and complainants comply with the deadlines for correspondence set out in its regulations. The Complaints Committee is able to take any unreasonable delay in correspondence into account in coming to a view on a complaint.

4. Adjudication by the Complaints Committee

If your complaint remains unresolved, the Complaints Committee will decide whether there has been a breach of the Editors' Code. In line with our commitment to transparency, the Complaints Committee will take into account only information which has been seen by both sides to the complaint, and will publish its decision setting out whether the Editors' Code has been breached, and why, on our website.

The Complaints Committee will consider requests by complainants for the removal of identifying or other details from the Committee's published decisions on a case-by-case basis, but will start from the standpoint that decisions should generally be published in full. This presumption will not apply in cases involving intrusion into privacy.

5. Remedies

If the Complaints Committee determines that the Code has been breached, it can require the publication of its upheld adjudication and/or a correction. The nature, extent and placement of corrections and adjudications will be determined by the Complaints Committee.

6. Review of the process

If your complaint proceeds through steps 2 through 5 but you are unhappy with the process by which the decision of the Complaints Committee was made, you may request a review by the Complaints Reviewer.  The Complaints Reviewer post must be filled by an IPSO Board member, and is currently Richard Hill MBE. You can see more information about him [here](https://www.ipso.co.uk/IPSO/aboutipso/aboutipso.html).

Any request for a review must be made in writing within 14 days after the Complaints Committee issues its decision to the Complaints Officer who has handled the complaint:

Complaints Review Request
IPSO
Gate House
1 Farringdon Street
London EC4M 7LG

IPSO will then decide whether to refer the complaint to the Complaints Reviewer. If the referral is made, the Reviewer will review the process by which the decision was made, and inform the Complaints Committee within 14 days whether it considers that the process was substantially flawed. If the Reviewer does not consider that the process was substantially flawed, the decision will then be issued. If the Reviewer does consider that the process was substantially flawed, the decision will be will be reviewed by the Complaints Committee, taking into account the Complaints Reviewer's findings. The Committee will then issue its final findings.

7. Complaints which are not pursued

IPSO expects both publications and complainants to cooperate with it in the prompt consideration of complaints. Should we not receive an initial response to correspondence, we will generally contact you with a further request for a reply within a specified time period. If you require further time in which to respond, please write to us as soon as possible explaining why you are unable to reply substantively and when you expect to be in a position to reply. We will seek to accommodate reasonable requests.

If we do not receive a substantive reply within the specified period, we may close your complaint as not pursued. Alternatively, the Committee may proceed to consideration of the complaint without the benefit of your comments.

IPSO will not generally reopen a complaint which has been closed as a consequence of a failure by the complainant to provide a timely response. Complainants who seek to revive complaints that have previously been closed as not pursued will be asked to explain the reasons for the delay in their response. IPSO will only reopen a complaint where, in the view of its Executive (having considered the reasons given and the full circumstances of the complaint), to refuse the request would be unreasonable.

8. Unacceptable behaviour by complainants and vexatious complaints

a) In general, the staff of IPSO's Executive will be accessible and courteous to everyone who comes into contact with us.

b) We understand that in some cases complainants will contact us in highly distressing circumstances, and may need significant support and assistance; we will not normally limit the contact which complainants have with the Executive. However, in a small minority of cases, complainants seek to interact with the Executive in an unacceptable way.

c) IPSO's Regulations make clear that it may reject without further consideration complaints which are vexatious or disproportionate. IPSO interprets this provision to apply both to the nature of the complaint, and to the manner in which it is pursued.

d) IPSO does not expect its staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour by complainants. Unacceptable behaviour may involve vexatious or disproportionate pursuit of a complaint. It also extends to any other behaviour that, because of its frequency or nature, hinders IPSO's ability to handle complaints effectively, including:

* i. using abusive, offensive, aggressive, racist or foul language in conversation or correspondence with staff;
* ii. harassing, verbally abusing or seeking to intimidate staff;
* iii. engaging in unreasonably protracted or repetitive communications with staff;
* iv. attending IPSO's offices and seeking to speak with a member of staff without an appointment;
* v. repeatedly refusing requests by staff to follow IPSO's procedures, despite having been provided with appropriate information about these procedures;
* vi. making persistent and/or unreasonable demands of staff and/or the complaints process.

e) IPSO reserves the right to take appropriate action in cases where complainants are exhibiting unacceptable behaviour, including by restricting the manner in which complainants may communicate with IPSO's staff or declining to further consider a complaint.