

Newbury News Limited

Founded by W J Blacket and T W Turner in 1867

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NEWBURY NEWS LIMITED ANNUAL IPSO REPORT 2016

Covering the period 1.1.16 to 31.12.16

Introduction

Newbury News Limited is the publisher of the paid-for weekly Newbury Weekly News (established 1867), the free Newbury and Thatcham Advertiser (which mainly contains stories previously published in the Newbury Weekly News), the monthly Newbury Business Today newspaper that is inserted in the Newbury Weekly News, the monthly Out & About magazine, also inserted in the Newbury Weekly News, and newburytoday.co.uk.

It is a family-owned, independent publisher principally covering West Berkshire and North Hampshire.

The responsible person is group editor Andy Murrill (andy.murrill@newburynews.co.uk).

Our editorial standards

Newbury News Limited is committed to upholding the highest standards of integrity, professionalism and honesty. Indeed we have a long and proud track record in this regard.

We strive to avoid mistakes and take all steps to minimise these, but when errors do occur it is equally important that we handle complaints in the right way.

We follow the Editors' Code of Practice and all reporters are aware of this.

The changes to the Code from January 1, 2017, were communicated to staff through a printed copy handed to each of them and by an accompanying email as follows:

"Dear all

The Editor's Code of Practice has been revised from January 1 and you all have a printout of it.

For the full details of how the Code has changed, please click on this link:

<http://www.newsmediauk.org/Latest/editors-code-of-practice-revised>

Here is a brief summary of the changes:

For the first time, specific reference is made to headlines not supported by the text of the article beneath.

The reporting of suicide becomes the subject of a stand-alone clause, reflecting concerns about the publication of excessive detail about methods of suicide.

Gender identity is added to the list of categories covered by the discrimination clause, which protects individuals from prejudicial and pejorative reporting.

The duty of editors to maintain procedures to resolve complaints swiftly, and to co-operate with the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), becomes enshrined in the Code's preamble.

The Code's definition of the public interest, and the circumstances in which editors can invoke it, has been updated and expanded in line with the Defamation Act, Data Protection Act and Crown Prosecution Service guidance.

The Code is now also available in a mobile-friendly format so that journalists can consult it in all circumstances.

The Code sets the framework for the highest professional standards that members of the press subscribing to the Independent Press Standards Organisation have undertaken to maintain. It is the cornerstone of the system of voluntary self-regulation to which we have made a binding contractual commitment. It balances both the rights of the individual and the public's right to know.

Please take the time to have a good look at the revised Code and please ask me if you have any questions."

Newbury News Ltd is a founding member of IPSO and fully supports its aims and principles in the regulation and promotion of the highest ethical and professional journalistic standards.

The editorial director attended the IPSO Parliamentary Reception in June 2016 to personally express our full support for the organisation. In response to a request from the director of external affairs, he also wrote a message aimed at smaller local publishers explaining why they should join IPSO.

We are a member of the News Media Association and consult its legal team prior to publication if we have any legal concerns about a story. We would not publish a story unless we were confident that its facts were correct and had been soundly verified.

We are also aware that IPSO offers pre-publication advice on the Editors' Code and the public interest, both during office hours and out of hours where necessary. We would always seek this advice if we have any concerns (as we did previously with the Press Complaints Commission) and would seek to follow it in all conceivable situations.

We would also seek guidance from IPSO if we found ourselves having difficulty resolving a complaint.

Our complaints-handling process

We accept editorial complaints in person, by phone, by letter or by email. All editorial staff can accept complaints, which they report to the group editor or group deputy editor, and they will usually be resolved with guidance from the group editor or group deputy editor.

Records of editorial complaints are kept on email in the first instance and if they are not resolved quickly a file will be kept.

We would seek to resolve complaints in the first instance between the journalist concerned and the complainant. If this is not possible the group editor or group deputy editor would attempt to find a resolution, possibly inviting the complainant for a meeting.

Details of our internal process for editorial complaints and IPSO are published on both page 2 and the first letters page of the Newbury Weekly News every week. Page 2 is also where corrections would usually be published.

On page 2 it reads: Newbury News Limited publications are regulated by IPSO – the Independent Press Standards Organisation. If you have an editorial complaint about a Newbury News Limited publication, you should, in the first instance, contact the publication concerned. If it is not resolved to your satisfaction, you should contact IPSO by telephone: 0300 123 2220, or visit its website: www.ipso.co.uk.

On the first letters pages it reads: HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT: Newbury News Limited publications are regulated by IPSO – the Independent Press Standards Organisation. If you have a complaint about a Newbury News Limited publication, you should, in the first instance, contact the publication concerned. If it is not resolved to your satisfaction, you should contact IPSO by telephone: 0300 123 2220, or visit its website: www.ipso.co.uk. Members of the public are welcome to contact IPSO at any time if they are not sure how to proceed, or need advice on how to frame a complaint.

In the Newbury and Thatcham Advertiser the following is published each week: HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT: Newbury News Limited publications are regulated by IPSO – the Independent Press Standards Organisation. If you have a complaint about a Newbury News Limited publication, you should, in the first instance, contact the publication concerned. If it is not resolved to your satisfaction, you should contact IPSO by telephone: 0300 123 2220, or visit its website: www.ipso.co.uk. Members of the public are welcome to contact IPSO at any time if they are not sure how to proceed, or need advice on how to frame a complaint.

On newburytoday.co.uk the following is published under website terms and conditions: HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT: Newbury News Limited publications are regulated by IPSO – the Independent Press Standards Organisation. If you have a complaint about a Newbury News Limited publication, you should, in the first instance, contact the publication concerned. If it is not resolved to your satisfaction, you should contact IPSO by telephone: 0300 123 2220, or visit its website: www.ipso.co.uk. Members of the public are welcome to contact IPSO at any time if they are not sure how to proceed, or need advice on how to frame a complaint.

Our training process

All reporters at Newbury News Limited have completed an NCTJ training course and are aware of all aspects of media law. In addition they are all aware of the Editors' Code of Practice and our commitment to IPSO. They have all been issued with written guidance on dealing with complaints (see appendix).

Included in journalists' job descriptions are:

Main duties and responsibilities

- To interview people and to write copy that is presented with due regard for the publications' and websites' style and standards, that is in accordance with the IPSO Code, and with due regard for all legal obligations.
- To notify the newsdesk of any complaints, or requests to suppress news, immediately and to help to resolve them as speedily as possible.
- To keep and maintain notebooks and other relevant material for the period of time required in law.

Our record on compliance

We had one complaint to IPSO during the reporting period, regarding a [REDACTED] court case (Ref: 12501-16). IPSO considered it did not raise a possible breach of the Editors' Code of Practice and rejected the complaint without needing to contact Newbury News Limited.

We had no incidents during the reporting period where we breached the Editor's Code or which raised concerns about compliance with the Editor's Code.

Appendix

Please find attached guidance issued to all Newbury News Limited journalists about handling complaints, IPSO and upholding editorial standards.

Please also find a note to Newbury News Limited editorial staff in February 2016 explaining how Newbury News Limited will fully implement the requirement to retain original online articles that are subject of a complaint for four months.

Andy Murrill
Group editor
24.1.17

THE INDEPENDENT PRESS STANDARDS ORGANISATION (IPSO)

HOW WE UPHOLD STANDARDS AT THE NEWBURY WEEKLY NEWS

To the editorial team

As you are aware, IPSO was established to follow the recommendations of Lord Justice Leveson to be a “body, established and organised by the industry” to “provide independent regulation of its members”.

IPSO is charged with enforcing the Editors’ Code of Practice, which was framed by the Editors’ Code of Practice Committee and is enshrined in the contractual agreement between IPSO and newspaper publishers. (If you do not have a copy of the Code of Practice please ask me for one.)

Newbury News Ltd is a founding member of IPSO and fully supports its aims and principles in the regulation and promotion of the highest ethical and professional journalistic standards.

IPSO has new powers to investigate and impose sanctions following established breaches of the Code. People now complain directly to Newbury News Ltd over alleged Code breaches and IPSO will intervene and adjudicate if a settlement cannot be reached in 28 days.

If IPSO decides to investigate it has the power, among other things, to demand documents and explanations as to how decisions were reached and, if necessary, can interview and question journalists and look into our editorial system records.

IPSO has increased powers to order apologies and corrections and if it finds there has been a systemic breach of the Code, it can fine a publisher up to £1m.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO

The Newbury Weekly News is committed to upholding the highest standards of integrity, professionalism and honesty. Indeed we have a long and proud track record in this regard.

Of course we all strive to avoid mistakes – but errors will inevitably occur. While we should take all steps to minimise these, it is equally important that we handle complaints in the right way.

RECEIVING A COMPLAINT

What happens if you receive a complaints directly, by phone or email?

Do not ignore it. Newbury News Ltd has an obligation to deal with all complaints directly in the first instance.

If you receive a complaint from a member of the public about one of your articles:

1. Acknowledge the email, stating that you will look into the matter and you will respond at the earliest opportunity, or take contact details if the complaint is by telephone.
2. Inform Dan or I, and we will decide whether this is a matter that requires further advice or can be dealt with immediately. If the complaint is of a minor nature, eg a simple error of fact, this can be dealt with by the publication of a correction. You can then settle this directly with the complainant as soon as possible, but make sure you keep a note of all the correspondence and timings.

3. If the matter is more substantial, the editor should be involved to decide whether legal advice is needed.
4. We should strive to respond substantively to a complaint within seven days of receipt of a complaint and we are expected by IPSO to reach a settlement within 28 days or it may be referred to IPSO to take over and adjudicate.
5. Many people turned to the PCC in the past because they felt that their complaint was either ignored by newspapers in the first instance or that their issues were not treated seriously enough. Inevitably we will receive unjustified or vexatious complaints from members of the public. However, it is important that our responses are measured and polite – as, indeed, I know they usually are. It is only when a complainant becomes abusive should you politely decline to correspond with them, unless they can refrain from using offensive language or behaviour. If this is the case, please ensure this is recorded with Dan or I and all evidence is retained should a later complaint be made against us.

In short, I know we already behave in an ethical, professional and responsible manner and treat the public with respect. In the face of a complaint we must also be able to prove that our behaviour and journalism was impeccable, so the importance of thorough record keeping cannot be over emphasised.

I hope this guide is useful and if you would like any more guidance or information please feel free to ask me.

Andy Murrill
editor

RETAINING ORIGINAL ONLINE ARTICLES FOR IPSO

16.2.16

To all editorial staff

IPSO'S complaints committee has considered a small number of complaints about online articles where the publisher had not retained a copy of the original article which was the subject of the complaint. This has had a significant impact on the committee's ability to fully consider the complaint.

Therefore the IPSO board has issued the following requirement:

"Regulated Entities' [publishers'] internal complaints procedures must include a requirement that, before making any substantive changes to an online article or other material in response to a complaint, editorial staff archive a complete copy of the article or other material under complaint. (This does not include trivial changes, such as changes to spelling or grammar.) The archived copy must be retained for a minimum of four months from the date of the amendment to ensure that IPSO has access to a copy of the material under complaint, should it subsequently receive a complaint.

"Publishers must ensure that all editorial staff responsible for amendments to online copy are made aware of this requirement. They must take all reasonable steps – including through training and by issuing regular reminders – to ensure relevant staff comply with its terms."