



# **IPSO Annual Statement**

**Covering the period 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2018**

## **IPSO Report**

### **Introduction: The MNA**

The MNA is Britain's largest independent regional news company, reaching more than one million people every week in print and online.

It has delivered the news since the 1880s, first through the Express & Star, and the Shropshire Star.

It has a portfolio of titles across the West Midlands, Shropshire, and Mid Wales, including a range of weekly newspapers, magazines and apps.

The MNA is part of the Claverley group, which owns the daily newspapers in the Channel Islands, the Jersey Evening Post and Guernsey Press.

The Claverley group also owns Precision Colour Printing, based in Telford, software supplier Press Computer Systems, IT company Itex, Cubiquity and Kennedy Publishing.

The Claverley businesses, including the MNA, are all owned by the Graham family, the proprietors of the Express & Star for more than a century.

#### **Daily titles:**

Express & Star  
Shropshire Star

#### **Weekly titles:**

Chronicle Week series with five editions  
Stafford and Stone Express & Star  
Shrewsbury Chronicle  
Telford Journal  
Newport Advertiser  
Market Drayton Advertiser  
Bridgnorth Journal  
South Shropshire Journals – incorporating Mid Wales Journal & South Shropshire Journal

Martin Wright is the editor-in-chief of the MNA and its associated daily and weekly newspapers and associated websites.

The 'responsible person' for the Express & Star, Shropshire Star and weekly titles who deals with IPSO matters is Martin Wright.

## **Our editorial standards**

The MNA is committed to upholding the Editors' Code of Practice. Journalists are issued with copies of the code and details are set out on the company's intranet. Regular training sessions – internally and externally – reinforce and refresh the importance of adhering to the code. All staff are reminded of the obligation to uphold the code at all times and the importance of representing the MNA – and the profession of journalism – in a positive and professional manner. Any changes to the Code we communicated to editorial staff verbally, via email and through the editors' blogs.

A guide to editorial standards has been issued to all journalists working for the MNA, emphasising the importance of upholding the Editors' Code and upholding the highest professional standards. (Appendix 1).

In addition, the Express & Star and Shropshire Star send a copy of the Editor's Code of Practice to all regular freelance and agency copy suppliers. They are asked to give written confirmation that they have received the code and that they will adhere to it when dealing with any story or submitting copy for the MNA. The letter makes clear that if they do not reply accordingly, their services will no longer be required.

With regard to the verification of stories, all staff are made aware of Clause 1 (accuracy) of the Editors' Code and the need to always keep this in mind when researching, writing, news editing and sub editing stories.

Editors demand that reporters and writers can stand up any claims made in their copy and that reports are balanced. Balanced reporting is an important part of our editorial standards and journalists are reminded of the need to give all parties an opportunity to reply.

Every story that goes in our papers is checked before publishing. All news stories are checked initially by a news editor and then by a sub editor. Any stories of particular concern will also be brought to the attention of the editor.

Those senior journalists with permission to publish content online have also received extra legal training on top of their ethical training.

In respect of potential ethical or Code of Practice matters, guidance would be sought from IPSO prior to publication if deemed necessary by the editors. Any guidance would be considered alongside any legal advice (if any) that had been sought.

Guidance would also be sought from IPSO in resolving complaints made to IPSO. This may take the form of agreeing a suitable resolution to a complaint with IPSO acting as the conduit between the complainant and the newspaper.

## **Our complaints handling process**

The following guidance setting out our complaints handling process is issued to all editorial staff. It is available on the company's intranet and has been highlighted by the editor-in-chief in regular departmental blogs.

### **Dealing with editorial complaints**

When dealing with any complaints, every effort must be made to settle the issue at the earliest stage.

If there are grounds for complaint and/or a mistake has been made, immediate efforts must be made to redress this.

If we are wrong, we have to put it right. If we have done nothing wrong, we have to be able to fight our corner which means accurate notes from the reporters and those who have dealt with the story.

Always make a note of any complaints, including the caller's name, the details of the complaint and, most importantly, any offer made to correct the mistake or make amends.

When complaints have been dealt with it is VITAL that you send a note to the Editor's Secretary. An annual report has to be compiled for IPSO. Therefore, please include all complaints detailing how they were dealt with.

Here are some guidelines for dealing with complaints:

- 1) If there are no grounds for complaint, for example the caller is unhappy that their court case has been reported, this should be explained to them calmly and clearly. If they are abusive and hostile you can end the conversation but ensure you make a note of the conversation.
- 2) If there may be a genuine complaint, take all of the details and promise to get back to the complainant as quickly as possible. The complaint must then be investigated with some urgency. If a mistake has been made, the deputy editor or editor should be informed.
- 3) In many cases, it may be possible to appease the complainant with a follow-up story containing the correct information, putting forward their stance on an issue to give a more balanced view or giving the organisation some positive press such as a feature. This is unlikely to be included in the annual report and is the preferable conclusion.
- 4) The complainant may be satisfied with this. If not, it may be necessary to carry a correction as a blob par on the end of the story.
- 5) If neither of these options are appropriate or accepted, we could run a correction in the paper either clarifying or, if necessary, apologising for an error.
- 6) Make a note of all conversations, the offers made and the agreement hopefully reached. Send a note to the Editor's Secretary.
- 7) If a complaint is made directly to IPSO, in all likelihood the matter will be referred back to us with their primary goal being for agreement to be reached without their involvement. If we have already been contacted, we have to show that efforts have been made to satisfy the complainant. We must have notes ready.

- 8) If a mistake has been made and there is a threat of legal action, our solicitors must be consulted. The editor-in-chief and/or deputy group editor must be made aware of the complaint.
- 9) If there are any concerns about a complaint, take advice, whether it be from the newsdesk, deputy editor or editor or our solicitors. And always have a note of every conversation with the complainants.
- 10) In short, deal with complaints as quickly as possible, offer to make amends where necessary, take advice if required and keep notes. Send a final note to the Editor's Secretary as appropriate.

Complaints can be made in person, via the telephone or in written form (posted or electronic). The complaints are handled by the newsdesk, in conjunction with the deputy editor and or editor. Records of complaints and outcomes are retained by the editor's secretary.

Details of our complaints handling procedures are published on page 9 of both the Express & Star and the Shropshire Star each day. A copy of a page 9 featuring the information panel is attached (Appendix 2).

We also carry full details of how to make a complaint on the Shropshire Star website here: [shropshirestar.com/making-a-complaint/](http://shropshirestar.com/making-a-complaint/)

Similar details are also included on the Express & Star website here: [expressandstar.com/complaints/](http://expressandstar.com/complaints/)

## **Our training process**

### **Making staff aware of IPSO**

Information about IPSO outlining our responsibilities and commitment is posted on our intranet for all staff to read, supported by regular updated blogs from the editors of both daily titles.

This information is accompanied by a document setting out our complaints handling procedure, as set out above, which is available to download by all staff. All staff also receive copies of the procedure by email.

In addition, the staff are updated on any changes to the regulations as they are with any changes to the law verbally, via email and through the editors' blogs. Where necessary, formal training is arranged.

All staff have also been issued with a guide to the MNA's editorial standards which outlines our commitment to upholding the Editors' Code.

### **IPSO training**

IPSO training sessions, conducted by our head of editorial training are held for all members of the editorial team. (Examples of exercises in Appendix 3).

IPSO training for any new starters is carried out by the head of editorial training or a senior editorial executive for the Express & Star and Shropshire Star using a PowerPoint demonstration and similar exercises.

Editorial staff are required to join regular refresher sessions, including formal and informal training through a combination of internal and external trainers. This covers topics such as law, improving reporting skills, management and online and social media training.

In April, 2018 IPSO visited the MNA to provide training workshops to journalists, including senior editorial executives. The IPSO complaints process and changes to the Code were discussed, and guidance offered regarding good practice in resolving complaints. The presentation stimulated a lot of debate and was well-received by those attending.

### **Manuals, codes and guidance used by journalists**

**Editors' Code** – As previously outlined, all journalists including freelance staff are issued with copies of the code and details are set out on the company's intranet. We issue wallet size copies of the code to all staff. Updated copies were purchased in January and have now been issued.

#### **MNA guide to editorial standards**

**Regular training sessions** – internally and externally – reinforce and refresh the importance of adhering to the code.

**In house training** – The editorial training manager continues to head up the training of all editorial staff and also directs training for any new recruits. Copies of some of the training notes and exercises are attached. (Appendix 3).

**Essential Law for Journalists** – Copies of the current edition are available in offices.

**NCTJ diploma** - All trainee reporters we take on are expected to have the NCTJ diploma, which has ethical elements to its exams, or if they do not have this qualification we train them to a level that enables them to take the exam. On top of that, all trainees work towards the NCTJ's senior qualification, the NQJ, which tests ethics.

## **Complaints received during 2018**

There were seven complaints involving MNA publications during 2018, none were upheld.

- 1. Express & Star IPSO 03039-18**  
“Murder home goes up for sale at £650,000”, published by the Express & Star, on 28 February 2018.
- 2. Shropshire Star (online only via PA feed) IPSO 06237-18**  
“Walter Mitty-like fantasist’ created fake IDs in bid to avoid speeding ticket” published by the Shropshire Star on 9 May 2018.
- 3. Express & Star (online only via PA feed) IPSO 06734-18**  
“Walter Mitty-like fantasist’ created fake IDs in bid to avoid speeding ticket”, published by the Express & Star on 9 May 2018.
- 4. Shropshire Star IPSO 03730-18**  
“Two men deny racist assault charges at court”, published by the Shropshire Star on 31 May 2018.
- 5. Shropshire Star (online only via PA feed) IPSO 07357-18**  
“British judge with EU mission in Kosovo quits amid ‘serious allegations’”, published by Shropshire Star on 16 November 2018.
- 6. South Shropshire Journal and Mid Wales Journal IPSO 07645-18**  
“Father-of-three over limit after party drinks”, published by South Shropshire and Mid Wales Journal on 30 November 2018.
- 7. Shropshire Star IPSO 07652-18**  
“Car thief ‘apprentice’ jailed for 15 months”, published by Shropshire Star on 13 November 2018.

## **Appendix 1 - MNA guide to editorial standards**

### **Introduction**

This document is intended to set out the standards expected of journalists working for the Midland News Association. It is essential that all journalists working for the organisation read the document carefully and understand the importance of applying this code to their work. Our role as journalists requires us to make difficult decisions, often under pressure of deadlines. This document is designed to support journalists in making those decisions and to articulate the responsibilities of our journalists in providing our readers with accurate and informative stories.

Above all, we have a duty to check and double-check the accuracy of information before publication. This is not always easy when deadlines are approaching, but pressure of deadlines must never be used to excuse articles that fall below our high standards.

### **Our editorial standards**

The MNA is committed to maintaining the highest editorial standards. All of our publications are regulated by IPSO and all of our journalists are expected to adhere to the Editors' Code of Practice.

All journalists are expected to uphold these standards and at all times to ensure that information published by MNA titles is accurate, complies with the Editors' Code and is legally sound.

Journalists should at all times remember that they are representing the MNA when dealing with members of the public, their contacts or other members of staff. It is important that journalists are professional in all of their dealings, treating people courteously at all times and responding to all enquiries in a polite, professional and timely manner, whether in person, on the telephone, via email, social media or any other medium.

The MNA expects journalists to rigorously check and verify all stories before submitting for publication. Stories involving contentious issues must be passed to senior editorial colleagues prior to publication.

Journalists are expected to carry out thorough verification of sources to ensure stories are genuine and not in any way malicious.

The advent of social media has increased the likelihood of inaccurate information gaining currency and journalists are expected to treat all such information with the utmost care, checking the authenticity of the material independently for verification before it is submitted for publication. If there is any doubt, however small, about the authenticity or intent behind information, this must be flagged up immediately to a senior colleague for further discussion.

The MNA is committed to providing fair and balanced reporting and it is important that all parties involved are given a fair opportunity to respond through our publications.

### **Copyright**

One of the key issues to have arisen in recent years is rights usage. This is particularly important with regard to the use of images – whether they are sourced using Google or using social media. Our policy is that we must have explicit permission to use any material before publication. For the avoidance of doubt, we should seek permission in writing (an email is acceptable) which acknowledges we have permission to publish the material.

Remember, even when a picture is publicly available on social media, the person who took that picture could still claim copyright and be entitled to payment.

If there is any doubt about whether permission has been given, please consult a senior colleague.

### **Complaints**

A copy of our procedure for dealing with complaints is available on our intranet and also attached to this document (see appendix 2). For the avoidance of doubt, it is essential that any errors are dealt with immediately once we become aware of them.

Again, when dealing with complaints or any form of reader/user feedback, it is important that journalists remain professional and handle any such complaints in a timely manner. It is also essential that a record of any emails and/or correspondence is kept, together with an explanatory note about any discussion with the complainant, when dealing with a complaint and that this is passed on to the editor's secretary as soon as possible for our records.

### **Where will your stories appear?**

Remember that when writing copy, your stories will appear on multiple platforms within the MNA portfolio. As well as the daily titles, we have a range of weekly titles covering the West Midlands, Shropshire and Mid Wales – in addition to our magazines and periodicals. Please think about these different publications when writing your copy – if you have additional material (for example extra pictures) that would sit better within one of our locally-focused weekly titles, let the relevant weekly editor know or, if in doubt, notify newsdesk.

### **Think digital**

A key consideration for all of our journalists is ensuring that copy produced should be ready for publication on our digital channels. Please ensure that you are familiar with the requirements of the digital workflow and that your copy meets these requirements. Think also about any additional digital content available – is there any video footage that would enhance the story? Can you insert some Tweets to give the article more depth?

Remember, it is your responsibility to notify the digital news editor and/or newsdesk when you have content ready for publication online, particularly where breaking news is concerned.

If you are a senior journalist with the required privileges, it is your responsibility to publish the story online. Please ensure that your copy is checked and double-checked before publication – accuracy must be our watchword to ensure we maintain the reputation of the MNA as a trusted news organisation. If you have any doubts over your story, exercise caution and consult a senior colleague before publication.

### **Tips for journalists**

1. Read the style book and ensure your copy complies with our house style. A copy of the style book has been given to each member of the editorial team but if you misplaced yours or have not received a copy, please contact the editor's secretary.
2. Keep your intros short and to the point – aim for about 20 words or fewer.
3. Avoid editorialising in your copy. For instance, saying a planning application is “controversial” on the basis that it has one or two objections is going too far and is a cliché which we should avoid. Similarly, beware of inserting words such as “shock” or “plunge” into copy – ask yourself is anybody really shocked? And is a decline a fall rather than a “plunge”?
4. Keep your copy simple. Ensure you understand what you are writing – don't simply copy and paste passages from reports or press releases which contain inexplicable jargon. It is our job to inform readers in a way that is easy to understand.
5. If there are different points of view, it is important to reflect these in your copy. As the saying goes, there are two sides to every story so ensure you have approached all parties to provide balance in your article.
6. Among the most important tips is to read and re-read your copy. Does it make sense? Are there any obvious questions that aren't answered in your copy? Put

yourself in the shoes of a reader with no prior knowledge of the subject and then ask these questions again.

7. Make sure you add any follow-up lines, big events and so on to the office diary. Almost every story we publish can be followed up in some way. It is extremely frustrating when we break a big story, only to be beaten to the follow-up by a competitor. An efficient diary system is the most effective means of avoiding this – and remember that follow-ups provide good stories for your news list each day.
8. Beware of press releases. Ask yourself: who has sent this to me and why? Is it simply a free advert for a company? If so, they should pay for an advert. It is important to approach all press releases with caution – challenge any statements or assumptions made in the press release and verify any claims that are made in the release. If it includes references to surveys, for example, find out more about the survey and how it was conducted. Are the results genuine? What questions were asked? Do the results have the necessary context? Remember, it is our job to apply journalistic rigour to all material we encounter – we will lose the trust of readers if we simply publish press releases unchallenged and without context.
9. Finally, as a journalist it is important to remember that your stories can have a profound impact on the lives of those involved. Ask yourself if you think your story is responsible and fair to all parties.

# Appendix 2 - Copy of page 9 of the Shropshire Star giving details of our complaints procedures procedure to readers

## YOUR VIEWS AND COMMENTS



### Falling standard of living will go on unless PM gets Brexit right

Is Theresa May out of her depth or is she just the worst communicator ever to be Prime Minister? Recently the PM met a deputation of Japanese business leaders worried about Brexit. Starting the meeting she fumbled with her notes several times and told the deputation not to be concerned about Brexit because the UK and Japan would negotiate a wonderful trade agreement. It was an embarrassingly weak, poorly delivered and uninformative statement. She didn't seem to understand that Japanese companies have invested heavily in the UK to sell into the EU. Toyota will not be manufacturing cars in Derby to ship back to the Far East!

Japanese companies manufacture in the Far East to sell to the Far East, manufacture in the UK to sell to the EU. The Japanese like the UK, want to be here. But as the Japanese ambassador said at the end of the meeting - Japanese companies have to make a profit to stay in the UK. If we make the wrong decision, come out of the Customs Union then the tariffs on Japanese products will make them more expensive in the EU - not good for business. I have had experience of working with Japanese companies, they are always very dignified and never embarrass their hosts, but don't be fooled by that. These businessmen will be unconvinced by Theresa May and will be making their contingency plans - to invest in the EU

instead of the UK in future. Already, with our stance on Brexit, foreign direct investments into the UK have fallen off the cliff - down 90 per cent in the first full year since the Brexit vote. Margaret Thatcher told Japanese companies that it was safe for them to invest in the UK as it is inconceivable that the UK would ever leave the EU - the Japanese feel let down and will not forget. If Theresa May and her cabinet don't start making the correct decisions then our falling standard of living will never recover. The PM must make the correct decisions now in the best interests of the UK people instead of placating the divided Tory party. **Bill McClements** Apley

### Animal rights crucial at polls

Martin Eddies and others perpetuate a myth that it was Labour, who created the NHS, but in their 1945 manifesto the Tory party pledged that: "The health services of the country will be available to all citizens. Everyone will contribute to the cost, and no one will be denied the attention, the treatment or the appliances he requires because he cannot afford them. We propose to create a comprehensive health service covering the whole range of medical treatment from the general practitioner to the specialist, and from the hospital to convalescence and rehabilitation."

Hardly matches Mr Eddies' claim that they hated the idea of a national health service, and, in fact, it was a Tory lord who first suggested such an idea, in the late 1800s.

The NHS was not Labour's greatest achievement, it was an inescapable conclusion. The wartime coalition of 1940-5 "fostered a remarkable degree of consensus" arising from the needs of war, the basic healthcare required for conscription and the "subsequent rise in expectations".

The NHS scheme was apparently deeply controversial amongst members of the Labour Party and only brought into being by more enlightened ministers, because of the party's landslide victory after the war, which enabled the government to put in stone what had been a cross-party consensus. Labour did not invent the NHS; they implemented what had been a growing movement since the late 1800s.

What Labour can always genuinely take credit for is their concerns, not only for the under-privileged (in principle, if not in practice) but also for animal welfare, of which the Tories seem, in the main, to be pretty clueless. The ridiculous barones who said that hunt saboteurs are driven solely by the love of their classes epitomises the fact the Conservatives simply do not "get it" as far as animals go.

They have still not got round to banning animals in circuses, which Scotland and Northern Ireland have already done, and Wales is on the point of doing. In this respect, they are so last-century it almost beggars belief, but they should be aware this antediluvian attitude is going to cost them votes.

People in the UK are pretty passionate about animal welfare, which is one of the reasons they vote Labour and, since Labour have just released 50 pledges on behalf of animal welfare - which may well be a ploy, since nothing else they have been doing lately has given them the lead they were wanting - they may well finally catch up with the Tories.

Animal rights is always a vote winner as Tony Blair recognised when he got a proposed ban on fox hunting into their manifesto. Mark Andrews' excellent piece on fox hunting and the Labour Party should be a red alert to people like Andrea Leadsom and Owen Paterson.

Please wise up, you complacent MPs, or you will open the door of number 10 to Jeremy Corbyn and co, and the Labour Party in its present state is definitely not fit for government.

**Will Knott** Shrewsbury

### A thought on the Olympics

While full of admiration for the athletes at the Winter Olympics for their bravery and dedication, one has to wonder about training for 11 years on a tea tray while hurtling round sheets of ice at speeds of 80mph plus. If they do not win any medals they should at least be in line for a Sir Arthur Street-Groebbling award. Sir Arthur, via Peter Cook, was well known for trying to catch ravens to fly underwater.

**Peter Steggle** Longnor

### PICTURE FROM THE PAST



### Gentlemen, fire up your ovens

These Hadley gentlemen were discovering the joys of cooking 50 years ago. This picture taken in February 1968 shows members of Hadley Old Folk's Association preparing a meal for the women members at a Men's Day party at the Hadley Rest Room.

members of Hadley Old Folk's Association preparing a meal for the women members at a Men's Day party at the Hadley Rest Room.

### Lib Dems are letting themselves down

Why bother with satire when we have 'Marches Focus', the newsletter of the Liberal Democrats - the open, tolerant and united group posing as a political party. The latest (January/February 2018) edition was delivered last week - it's always good for a laugh.

What the Lib Dems really display is their inescapable hypocrisy. The things they complain about, be they threats to the NHS, council financial mismanagement and cuts or education are ALL results of the country and, for us, the county having Conservative governance. In 2010, the Lib Dems allied themselves with this most divisive, unfair and downright nasty party, opening the door to all the problems they are now moaning about.

Of special note are the disastrous problems in the NHS, which are direct results of the Health and Social Care Act of 2012, loudly championed by the Lib Dems.

Nigel Hartin is quoted in the document as saying 'the only good news (about the local 'Future Fit' plans) is that the A&E unit should be in Shrewsbury!' I'm not sure what people who use the current Telford A&E would think of that. Once again the Lib Dems fail to understand the concept of an OPPOSITION party.

**John Higson** Craven Arms

### New houses would ruin historical Tong

Is a 1,000-home development around Tong necessary to meet our growing population needs?

I have always thought these aristocrats would go too far. Not satisfied with clogging the local road network several times each year, they are now exploiting inherited estates consisting of fine agricultural land - their ancestors must be turning in their graves. Highly paid consultants are making out the new development within the M54 corridor should be located near to existing junctions. Well all, what we have at Tong is historical England!

I cannot pretend to understand town planners but there must be ample land off the next M54 junction four. Although I live near to this land it appears to meet all the requirements for new development. It is near to junction four of the M54, near the Birmingham to Shrewsbury railway line, and near to commerce and industry. This land, to the east and west of the M54 motorway, is extensive comprising The Woodhouse, Knowle Wood, Blythbury and Shaw Farms. It is sufficiently separated to Shifnal.

It includes 41 acres of strategic development land at Castle-farm, Priorsole. In my opinion there is no need to build on land at Tong when suitable land is available near to Telford with all its infrastructure in place.

**Peter Hassall** Shifnal

### GET IN TOUCH WITH US



How to contact the Shropshire Star:

- By phone:
    - \* Newsdesk: (01952) 241423.
    - \* Sportsdesk: (01952) 242424.
    - \* Internet desk: (01952) 241485.
    - \* Advertising: (01952) 244244.
  - Online:
    - \* News: [newsroom@shropshirestar.co.uk](mailto:newsroom@shropshirestar.co.uk)
    - \* Sportsdesk: [kelly.sports@shropshirestar.co.uk](mailto:kelly.sports@shropshirestar.co.uk)
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    - \* Advertising: [shropshirestar.com/bookand](mailto:shropshirestar.com/bookand)
- By post: Shropshire Star, Ketley, Telford, TF1 5HU

### OUR CODE OF PRACTICE

The Shropshire Star's policy is to correct errors as soon as we can. Please contact us if you are unhappy with the accuracy of any story. The Star adheres to the Editors' Code of Practice, which can be seen at [www.ipso.co.uk](http://www.ipso.co.uk). We are regulated by the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO). Complaints about stories should be referred firstly to us at [editorial.support@shropshirestar.co.uk](mailto:editorial.support@shropshirestar.co.uk) or by post to The Editor, Shropshire Star, Ketley, Telford, TF1 5HU. If we cannot reach a resolution, contact IPSo at [complaints@ipso.co.uk](mailto:complaints@ipso.co.uk) or by post at IPso, c/o Gate House, 1 Farringdon Street, London, EC4M 7LG.



### HOW TO JOIN THE DEBATE



Write to: Readers' Letters, Shropshire Star, Ketley, Telford, TF1 5HU. Letters MUST include the writer's name, address and telephone number. Letters will only be published anonymously in exceptional circumstances. The editor reserves the right to condense or amend letters.

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## Appendix 3 – Examples of exercises set by the training manager and used in staff training sessions



# Tackling ethics questions

Start by pointing out that the code should be kept in the spirit of it and not just the letter. That does not mean that as journalist we should be cowed by it but nor should we be cavalier when pursuing or publishing a story.

Relate that to the question you have to answer. If a complaint is made ask yourself: does the person have a point? If he/she does, what should you have done, what should not have done and what should you do now?

Questions to ask yourself:

### Accuracy (Clause 1)

- Was the alleged error significant?
- Was the story inaccurate, misleading or distorted?
- Was sufficient care taken to establish accuracy ahead of publication?
- Did the story confuse comment or conjecture or fact?
- Was there an opportunity to reply?
- Was there a significant inaccuracy?
- Was the headline supported by the text?
- Was an adequate remedy offered? (Fair opportunity to inaccuracies must be given when reasonably called for)

### Privacy (Clause 2)

- Was consent given?
- Has entitlement been compromised?
- Is individual a public figure or role model?
- Was information already in public domain?
- Did individuals photographed without consent have a reasonable expectation of privacy?
- Was publication in the public interest?
- Was the breach proportionate to the public interest served?

### Harassment (Clause 3)

- Was there a request to desist?
- Was a request for identification complied with?
- Was there a public interest?

### Intrusion into grief or shock (Clause 4)

- Did journalists break the news of the death?
- Were insensitive and unnecessary details published?
- Were photographs taken at private funerals?

### **Reporting suicides (Clause 5)**

Were details of suicide excessive?

### **Children (Clause 6)**

Is the child under 16 or still at school?

Could the interview or photograph involve or affect a child's welfare?

Has consent been given by the appropriate responsible adult or school?

Is there exceptional public interest?

### **Children in sex cases (Clause 7)**

Could the report lead to the identification of a child in a sex case?

### **Hospital (Clause 8)**

Were editorial staff in non-public areas?

Did they identify themselves to a responsible executive?

Did that person give permission for you to be there?

Was there a public interest in publication?

### **Reporting crime (Clause 9)**

Was identifying relatives or friends necessary?

Did they give their consent to be identified?

Was there a public interest in publication?

### **Clandestine devices and subterfuge (Clause 10)**

Did publication seek to obtain or publish material?

If undercover methods used was there reason to believe it was in the public interest?

Was clandestine activity related to public interest?

Could material have been obtained by other methods?

### **Victims of sexual assault (Clause 11)**

Is the material likely to lead to identification?

Is the adequate public interest?

Is it legal to do so and is that enough under the code?

### **Discrimination (Clause 12)**

Is reference to individual, or distinct class of individuals?

This should be someone named or readily identifiable, or distinct group of individuals who can similarly be identified.

Is reference prejudicial or pejorative in a discriminatory way?

Is reference to characteristics covered genuinely relevant?

### **Confidential sources (Clause 14)**

Is the source confidential?

Could an unnamed source be identified?

### **Public interest**

Difficult to define

Not same as interesting to public

Covers some but all clauses

If editor defends complain by citing public interest IPSO would be the final arbiter of the issue.

Decisions to break Code should never be taken lightly

It is not an easy way to dodge censure.

Editors must demonstrate they deliberately took decision to breach provisions of Code after due consideration in justifiable circumstances

1. The public interest includes, but is not confined to:
  - i. Detecting or exposing crime, or threat of crime, or serious impropriety.
  - ii. Protecting public health or safety.
  - iii. Protecting public from being misled by an action or statement of an individual or organisation.
  - iv. Disclosing a person or organisation's failure or likely failure to comply with any obligation to which they are subject.
  - v. Disclosing a miscarriage of justice.
  - vi. Raising or contributing to a matter of public debate, including serious cases of impropriety, unethical conduct or incompetence concerning public.
  - vii. Disclosing concealment, or likely concealment, of any of above.
2. There is a public interest in freedom of expression itself.
3. Regulator will consider the extent to which material is already in the public domain or will become so.
4. Editors invoking the public interest will need to demonstrate they reasonably believed publication – or journalistic activity taken with view to publication – would both serve, and be proportionate to, the public interest and explain how they reached decision at the time.
5. An exceptional public interest would need to be demonstrated to over-ride the normally paramount interests of children under 16.

## **Editorial Training Manager**



The following is included in a PowerPoint presentation given to senior reporters by the training manager. There are no handouts as the presentations are designed to stimulate discussion.

### **Editors' Code of Practice**

Should be foremost in your mind when pursuing and writing stories

Ask yourself: have I abiding by the spirit as well as the letter of the it?

If I'm claiming public interest, can I justify it?

#### **Clause 1 Accuracy**

- i. Must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information or images, including headline not supported by text
- ii. Significant inaccuracy, misleading statement or distortion must be corrected, promptly and with due prominence, and – where appropriate an apology published
- iii. Fair opportunity to reply to significant inaccuracies should be given, when reasonably called for
- iv. Press, while free to editorialise and campaign, must distinguish between comment, conjecture and fact
- v. A publication must report fairly and accurately the outcome of an action for defamation to which it has been a party, unless agreed settlement states otherwise, or an agreed statement is published

#### **Clause 2 Privacy\***

- i. Everyone is entitle to respect for his or her private 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 disclosures of information
- iii. It is unacceptable to photograph individuals, without their consent, in public or private places where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy

#### **Clause 3 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 property when asked to leave and must not following 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

#### **Clause 4 Intrusion into grief and shock**

In case involving personal grief and shock, enquiries and approaches must be made with sympathy and discretion and publication handled sensitively.

These provisions should not restrict the right to report legal proceedings.

### **Clause 5 Reporting suicide\***

When reporting suicide, to prevent simulative acts care should be taken to avoid excessive details of the method used, while taking into account the media's right to report legal proceedings

### **Clause 6 Children\***

- i. All pupils should be free to complete their time at school without unnecessary intrusion.
- ii. They must not be approached or photographed at school without permission of the school authorities.
- iii. Children 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.
- iv. Children under 16 must not be paid for material involving their 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.

### **Clause 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.

### **Clause 8 Hospital\***

- 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.

### **Clause 9 Reporting 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.

### **Clause 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 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.

### **Clause 11 Victims of sex crimes**

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.

### **Clause 12 Discrimination**

- i. The press must avoid prejudicial or pejorative reference to an individual's, race, colour, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or disability.
- ii. Details of an individual's race, colour, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical or mental illness or disability must be avoided unless genuinely relevant to the story.

### **Clause 13 Financial journalist**

- 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.

### **Clause 14 Confidential sources**

Journalists have a moral obligation to protect confidential sources of information

### **Clause 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.

#### **Clause 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.

#### **Public interest – exception to \*clauses**

- 1. The public interest includes, but is not confined to:
  - i. Detecting or exposing crime, or the threat of crime, or serious impropriety.
  - ii. Protecting public health or safety.
  - iii. Protecting the public from being misled by an action or statement of an individual or organisation.
  - iv. Disclosing a person or organisation's failure or likely failure to comply with any obligation to which they are subject.
  - v. Disclosing a miscarriage of justice.
  - vi. Raising or contributing to a matter of public debate, including serious cases of impropriety, unethical conduct or incompetence concerning the public.
  - vii. Disclosing concealment, or likely concealment, of any of the above.
- 2. There is a public interest in freedom of expression itself.
- 3. The regulator will consider the extent to which material is already in the public domain or will become so.
- 4. Editors invoking the public interest will need to demonstrate that they reasonably believed publication – or journalistic activity taken with a view to publication – would both serve, and be proportionate to, the public interest and explain how they reached that decision at the time.
- 5. An exceptional public interest would need to be demonstrated to over-ride the normally paramount interests of children under 16.