

## **PRESS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL STATEMENT TO IPSO FOR 1 JAN-31 DEC 2018**

### **Introduction**

The Press Association (PA) is the national news agency of the United Kingdom and Ireland.

It was founded in 1868 - celebrating its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary during 2018 - and sits at the heart of the UK media industry. Currently based in Vauxhall Bridge Road in London, the agency also has offices in Howden (East Yorkshire) Glasgow, Nottingham and Bristol, as well as reporters and photographers based across the UK and Ireland.

From the end of May 2019, the PA's HQ will move to The Point in Paddington, including a state-of-the-art, purpose built multi-media newsroom.

PA provides a wide range of content for use in print, online and for broadcast. Our extensive output includes words, pictures, video, social media, graphics and data.

This can be delivered to customers who then build their own output with the help of PA material, and there are other customers who will use PA content and use it without any further editing. This applies to some print customers, and we can also provide multi-media digital feeds of content direct to websites.

Content includes a commitment to extensive coverage of the House of Commons and the Lords, as well as Scottish Parliament, Wales and Northern Ireland assemblies, the High Court, Old Bailey and courts across the UK and Ireland, as well as day-to-day reporting on all the major news and sports stories. The agency also includes Finance and Entertainment teams, and Features department, providing a wide range of content including Travel, Fashion, Lifestyle and Real Life.

Although all our reporters are multi-skilled and can take pictures and shoot video on smartphones if required, we have a team of photographers around the UK and a group of video journalists.

During 2018 we continued to develop our range of services, with an increasing number of customers using our PA Now breaking news service, the PA Ready feeds of multi-media content for digital customers, as well as our tradition wire services.

The PA Ready digital feeds are ready to publish by a customer, and cover nine channels of content, which appears on hundreds of websites in the UK and internationally. The channels are News, Sport, Finance, Entertainment, Sci-Tech, Real Life, Lifestyle, Viral and Motoring.

While PA is grounded in the values we have held dear for the past 150 years, we are also very focused on innovation. In 2018 this included the launch of RADAR (Reporters and Data and Robots), a ground-breaking system that allows a new team of journalists to write very localised stories from sets of open data (on Crime, Education, Transport etc) with the help of some carefully-guided automation.

PA is largely owned by national and regional media organisations and its services are bought by almost every media outlet in the UK, including all the national newspapers, regional media groups, national and regional broadcasters and digital only publishers. PA also has a variety of international customers. Most customers have subscriptions with PA, though some content is purchased on an ad hoc basis.

The person responsible for Ipsos matters is the Editor-in-Chief Peter Clifton.

## **Our editorial standards**

PA strives to maintain high editorial standards. We declare that our service is "Fast, Fair and Accurate". Our customers expect to be able to use a PA story without making further checks, so we are always aware of the burden of responsibility that we carry when we report stories.

We believe in robust and vigorous pursuit of stories but we are also risk averse on behalf of our customers, particularly if legal risks or issues relating to the Editors' Code of Practice are involved.

The surest safeguard for PA and our customers is that our stories are sourced. PA does not declare that breaking news is a fact: it attributes it to a named source or - very rarely - an unnamed but wholly reliable source.

So, a story on the wire about a major breaking story will be attributed to a source and our customers will be able to rely on it as an accurate report of what has been announced.

The process is, of course, slightly more complex, because even if a story can be attributed we may still carry out further checks, as not all sources issuing statements are reliable.

PA uses social media to assist its newsgathering in the field. We adhere to very strict guidelines on verifying content we find on social media, and we do not use content without permission.

News is often referred to as the first draft of history and reporting it is certainly not an exact science. Sometimes, in the heat of covering breaking news, the story will change and some details may simply prove to be wrong. For example, names may be spelled incorrectly for some reason.

If we make an error in a story we take immediate steps to correct it and to draw it to our customers' attention. Whenever corrections or amendments are made to our reports, we keep the original versions in the archive of our content production system.

Like all media organisations we are subject to pressure from the people and organisations that we report on, some of whom claim we have got the story wrong. We always investigate these claims in real time as soon as they are made. If we believe that the complaint is only being made because we have exercised our right to highlight a legitimate angle on a story that does not please them we will resist their claims, even if this may involve the threat of a complaint to Ipso.

PA is proud of its reputation for speed, impartiality and accuracy. With mounting concern around the increase in fake news online, the role of a news agency with our clear principles is more important than ever.

We also continue to campaign for media freedom. This may be on public platforms, and during 2018 PA also made a detailed submission to the Cairncross Review on the future of the UK media.

Our commitment to having journalists in the field is unchanged, and increasingly important when other organisations may be reducing their teams. This includes extensive coverage on the courts, and regular interventions by our reporters to challenge orders that may have been wrongly implemented. Briefed by our Legal Editor Mike Dodd, there are examples every month of our journalists successfully challenging these orders to allow PA, and other media organisations, to report events in court more freely.

The nature of our journalism means we do not have to routinely seek guidance from Ipso, but there will be occasions when we do so.

We have a good relationship with Ipso, and share all desist notices with our customers on the main newswire.

We meet up with Ipso representatives at least once a year, we take careful note of all Ipso rulings, and also highlight many of them on our Media Lawyer service. We look forward to inviting Ipso representatives to our new HQ later in 2019.

### **Our complaints handling process**

The Press Association has always prided itself on its willingness to deal with complaints quickly and reasonably, whether received directly or via the regulator.

If we believe that we have broken the Editors' Code we will always seek to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant. If we do not believe that the Code has been broken we will present reasoned arguments to that effect to the complainant or to Ipso.

The Editor-in-Chief or a senior colleague – for example Newswire Editor Teilo Colley - are responsible for handling complaints.

We have a permanent central register held on our editorial system of serious complaints and their outcomes.

If a customer receives a complaint about a story that contains PA content we will always assist them as they deal with it.

### **Our training process**

We have always insisted that our editorial staff are aware of the many responsibilities that they have with regard to media law and the Editors' Code.

The launch of Ipso prompted our associated company PA Training to develop an online training course on the Editors' Code. We ensure that all new starters undertake the course, and that all staff have regular refreshers. Wesley Johnson is the editor responsible for training.

In addition, the hard copies of the Code of Practice, provided by the Society of Editors, have been made available to all our editorial staff.

Legal editor Mike Dodd, who is also the editor of Media Lawyer - an associated PA enterprise - circulates regular updates for the benefit of staff and offers training sessions for new staff. Ipso advisories are available on our editorial system and the Editor-in-Chief uses staff notices to highlight issues of concern as they arise.

### **Our record on compliance**

I am pleased to report that there were no complaints against PA which were upheld by Ipso's Complaints Committee during 2018.

We were contacted by some customers about an Ipso complaint linked to a PA report in December 2018 on a criminal trial involving a relative of the pop singer Jamelia. In our response we set out our reasons for including reference to the relationship. The gist was:

:: An application lodged with the court at the start of his three trials referenced what [REDACTED] lawyers described as a close family relationship with Jamelia. This was relied on in court in seeking a pseudonym for [REDACTED]. The application was granted and as a result [REDACTED] became only the second ever defendant in England and Wales to stand trial under a pseudonym. This made that highly unusual aspect of the case - and the reasons behind it - a matter of legitimate public interest. Previous Ipso rulings on similar complaints have upheld the right of the media to report relationships when they are mentioned in court even if, unlike in Jamelia's case, the complainant was not actually named.

:: The editors' codebook also states that the media has a public interest in including relationships in reports of court proceedings, particularly if the relationship is already well known.

:: The family link between Jamelia and [REDACTED] (and her younger half-brother who is serving life for murder) is indeed well known and has been in the public domain for several years following a previous murder trial at which he was acquitted.

Jamelia has also spoken publicly and repeatedly over several years about her half-brother's conviction for murder in 2003, mentioning it on a chat show as recently as November 2018. And there are numerous other examples of Jamelia talking openly about her criminal relatives, over a period of many years.

We did also approach her agent of the day of the case but he did not respond.

Ipsos did not uphold the complaints made about coverage in the Sun and the Sun's website, saying that the reporting was based on publicly available comments the complainant had made on social media in which she had identified herself in connection with [REDACTED]

We are awaiting a decision on a similar complaint to another news group.