

## **IPSO Strategic Plan 2016–2020 and Annual Business Plan 2016**

### **Introduction**

This document sets out IPSO's over-arching strategic priorities and objectives for the next four years, up to the end of 2019. This period matches both the contracts that publishers have signed to be regulated by IPSO and the period of funding that IPSO has agreed with the industry. It also sets out IPSO's objectives, plans and budgets for 2016.

IPSO is unique in history. For the first time ever, the UK press – 90% of nationals by circulation; almost all local and regional newspapers; and all the major magazine groups – have voluntarily agreed to join an independent regulator and to be bound by legally enforceable contracts. These contracts give IPSO powers far beyond those of its predecessor organisations.

IPSO was born out of a time of crisis. Phone hacking had cast a cloud over the whole industry, affecting the guilty and the innocent. The outcome of the Leveson inquiry and Parliament's subsequent attempts to find a way of implementing it that would please all parties led to a solution – the Royal Charter – that was unacceptable to the press. Not just those that had transgressed, but almost universally all newspapers and magazines. The industry's solution was to found a regulator, IPSO, that would not seek recognition under the charter and to give it unprecedented powers.

The appointment of the Chairman and Board was undertaken by an independent appointments panel, with a lay majority. The appointment of Sir Alan Moses gave IPSO a Chairman of unimpeachable independence from the press, government and other interest groups.

### **Vision**

IPSO's vision is for a trusted, thriving, free and responsible press, reinforced by independent, effective regulation. The vision deliberately emphasises the importance of the existence of the press and its importance to our democracy. The vision also alludes to two important things:

Firstly, IPSO's regulatory role must be weighed against the importance of freedom of expression. IPSO's powers do not include sanctions that other regulators have, such as the ability to remove or restrict the right to practise, specifically because this would be an unacceptable restraint on the freedom of expression.

IPSO also recognises that the part it plays in press standards is only one part of the systems that work to achieve high standards, important though that part is. The quality of publications is rooted in editors and their teams working proudly to the highest professional standards. Regulation also has a cost, whether that is in the fees IPSO members pay or the burden regulation places upon them. It is important that that cost is kept to the minimum required to regulate in a way that is commensurate with the risk the regulator perceives in the sector.

## **Our priorities for 2016-2020**

Each year IPSO will set out its business plan and objectives, but they will sit under five priorities that will guide the organisation over the next few years.

Priority 1. Have the interests of the public at the heart of the organisation.

IPSO exists to enforce the Editors' Code, protecting the public and giving them a route to resolution where they feel that the press has transgressed. We recognise the imbalance in power between citizens and publishing groups and we will give support to those seeking redress.

Priority 2: Grow IPSO's influence and reach.

IPSO will seek to raise its profile with the public and important stakeholders, both so that they know what we do should they need our services, but also to reassure them that in IPSO there is a body that holds the press to agreed standards, and which offers a forum for discussions about wider standards issues in the press.

Through its standards and external affairs work, IPSO aspires to a position where IPSO membership is seen, by publishers and others, as a mark of quality and commitment to professional standards.

IPSO will attempt to extend its membership further amongst print and online publishers and will consider whether membership might be offered to other organisations.

Through the quality of its work and the comprehensiveness of its membership, IPSO will aim to be seen as the credible regulator of the press.

Priority 3. Uphold and demonstrate IPSO's independence from the press, government and other interest groups.

IPSO will always act in a way which is consciously independent of the press, government and vested interests and where appropriate will demonstrate this in public.

Having agreed a budget for the period, IPSO will hold the RFC to account for making regular payments, recognising that financial security is important to IPSO's independence.

IPSO will commission periodic arms-length reviews of its effectiveness and independence, which will be published in the name of the reviewer, not IPSO.

Priority 4. Fully develop IPSO's remit across all its functions.

In the first year, IPSO was principally known for its complaints work. Over time IPSO's other functions such as its wider work on standards and its work on alternative dispute resolution will contribute to ensure that IPSO is seen as a rounded organisation making a valuable contribution to maintaining and raising standards in the press.

Priority 5. Create a climate in which members renew their contracts.

IPSO will carry out its role in close engagement with its members, but always without fear or favour. If the organisation is respected by its members and well regarded by those that use it and observe it, there will be the highest chance of members renewing their contracts in five years' time.

### **The strategies that will support the achievement of our priorities**

#### 1. Be true to our values

IPSO has five values. It will be:

**Independent:** IPSO will carry out its work free from control or interference by the press, parliament, interest groups or individuals

**Bold:** IPSO will act without fear or favour

**Fair:** IPSO will reach judgements according to its rules based on the evidence it has gathered and its actions and sanctions will be proportionate

**Accessible:** IPSO will make it as easy as possible to access its services and to engage with it.

Transparent: IPSO's work will be in the public domain, ensuring its actions and processes are clear and visible, and fulfils any duty of confidentiality.

It is important that IPSO is prepared to be held to account by others for behaving in accordance with these values. It is also important that anyone within IPSO feels able to hold anyone else, no matter how senior, to account for upholding the values.

## 2. Run an exemplary complaints function

For many people their contact with PSO will come through making a complaint, and complaints will always make up the bulk of IPSO's operational activity and staff responsibilities. IPSO will benchmark its complaints function with other regulators, where appropriate, and will seek to be upper quartile.

## 3. Carry out standards work that is valuable to both civil society and the press

Standards is a function that marks IPSO out as a regulator, rather than a simple complaints handler.

IPSO's compliance work will only be as burdensome as necessary and will be analysed and published to be as valuable as possible and, where warranted, to provide reassurance to the public.

If IPSO has cause to launch a Standards Investigation it will do so based on evidence and in a way that is clear and fair to the publisher concerned.

IPSO's standards work will provide a space to consider standards issues, and it will issue advice and guidance, where appropriate. It is important that industry feels this work is helpful and valuable and that civil society feels that IPSO is willing and able to provide a forum to discuss difficult or contentious issues.

## 4. Communication and engagement as a core function

IPSO will raise its public profile by communicating its work pro-actively, without leaping at every opportunity to comment, especially where no regulatory intervention is appropriate.

IPSO will continue its high level of engagement with its members, visiting them where they are, being held to account and developing further its understanding of the industry.

IPSO will offer opportunities to interact in both face-to-face forums and through digital means.

IPSO will ensure that interested parties and commentators in politics, academe, the law and industry are aware of what it is doing and why. It will also counter incorrect and misleading assertions. Representative groups will have opportunities that they did not have previously to engage with IPSO to raise press standards in specific areas. IPSO will engage closely with them to ensure that they are aware of their rights and that IPSO is aware of their concerns and issues.

#### 5. Be well run

IPSO will have good governance, will take decisions according to its regulations and will record them properly.

IPSO will stay within its agreed budget and abide by its financial procedures.

IPSO will recruit and retain the best people and will be committed to their development.