

# THE JEWISH CHRONICLE



5/5/2020

Sixth annual statement

*An overview of editorial policies and procedures and the company's approach to press regulation*

# The Jewish Chronicle

## **1. EDITORIAL STANDARDS**

Who the JC is, what it does and the people behind it

## **2. THE STORY-GATHERING PROCESS**

How reporters work, the guidelines used to verify the accuracy of stories and the editorial decision-making process

## **3. COMPLIANCE**

The steps taken to ensure readers' views are heard and the actions taken as a result

## **4. ADVERSE ADJUDICATIONS**

There were three in the year covered by this report. A summary is contained below.

## **5. THE TRAINING PROCESS**

Advice given to editorial staff and how the company has an ongoing commitment to ensure they are fully in step with their ethical and legal responsibilities

## **6. APPENDIX**

Samples of in-paper corrections

The online route to complain

News-flow process and the legal safeguards

## **1. Editorial standards explained**

The JC is a London-based weekly newspaper and the oldest continually published Jewish newspaper in the world, having been established in 1841. It is also a leading authority on matters relevant to the Jewish community in Britain, the diaspora and Israel's role in the Middle East. Its coverage of all matters that effect Jews abroad is extensive, thanks to its international network of correspondents. At home, it attracts some of Fleet Street's leading voices and enjoys access to key players in politics, entertainment, sport and the Arts.

The editorial philosophy is to make sense of - and help readers to navigate - an often confusing world, particularly as many of the issues important to them are widely covered elsewhere by media with varied social and political agendas. Trust is, therefore, key. To underpin that philosophy, there is an assumption that a reader may follow an issue close to the Community's heart elsewhere but rely on the JC to put it into context.

This year, subjects such as Labour's continuing internal issues with antisemitism have proved controversial and, at times, challenging as the paper campaigned to ensure the issue had the prominence it deserved. As a result, it faced attacks on its content, particularly from the far right and was forced to defend itself on numerous occasions.

The news cycle adopts a web-first philosophy. Its website, *www.thejc.com*, updates six days a week with breaking news, allowing the newspaper to present a more reflective and analytical tone. There are also regular emails sent out under the name JCDaily which provides subscribers with bulletin-style news updates.

## **2. The story-gathering and approval process**

The editor holds an open editorial conference on Monday mornings at which reporters pitch stories via their section editors. The editor may question the provenance of a story or give guidance about how the team should approach certain subjects.

This is followed by a planning meeting of senior staff where further guidelines may be issued (ie: the editor may stipulate where he thinks the boundaries should be placed in terms of privacy).

Progress meetings take place at various points leading to the Wednesday evening deadline. The editor leads these and all senior staff present throughout. All may raise legal or ethical questions. Some of these may be answered by asking a writer in to discuss directly. On other occasions, they may involve a conversation with the in-house lawyer or the Reader's Editor.

On a general level, JC staff are immersed in the community they serve and have knowledge and experience of many of the issues they encounter. Senior staff, in particular, have a wealth of contacts in all areas and there is a substantial knowledge base on which to call when needed.

This often proves useful when testing the veracity of information supplied. The JC's expertise in this area is widely recognised throughout the media as a whole and it is often called upon to add its expertise to other media outlets. The editor, for example, is a widely respected commentator on matters concerning the UK Jewish community and the Middle East.

In general terms, there is a rule of thumb expectation that information is only regarded as 'safe' when supplied by authorised spokesmen from recognised organisations or those regarded as official for the purposes of attracting qualified privilege in the legal sense.

Otherwise, the JC follows some basic rules which, broadly, encompass traditional journalistic best practice. They can be summarised thus:

- Multiple sources are better than one.
- Always attribute, never assume.
- Anything that cannot be verified as fact must not be presented as such.
- When in doubt, leave out.

The team are also conversant with the general level of reader expectation regarding running stories published online by reputable news outlets and have been quick to add qualifiers highlighting changes/challenges to them.

The Jewish Chronicle is aware that IPSO are able to offer pre-publication advice. It has taken advantage of this on specific and general levels. It has also used case officers as a sounding board when dealing with sensitive issues on several occasions as well as interpretations of the Editor's Code of Practice. These have proved extremely useful and the practice will continue.

Otherwise, stories are assigned to pages according to the editor's briefing and edited by section editors. They are then proof-read by a sub editor and handed to the editor for sign off.

### **3. Legal safeguards**

These include the provision of pre-publication advice from the libel specialists, Simon Gallant and Chris Hutchins of Hamlins LLP of Marylebone.

They have remote access to the newspaper's production system and are able to monitor in real time stories as they are produced suggesting changes and reviewing them as changes are made and pages updated..

On occasions, a particularly sensitive story may be edited by the editor himself (possibly, in conjunction with the lawyer) before being handed back to the author for comment.

### **4. The complaints process**

The JC is aware that, as a campaigning newspaper, it will attract both praise and condemnation. It protects its editorial independence rigorously but understands its credibility can be damaged when it gets something wrong. It therefore encourages readers to point out errors and acts on them swiftly.

Recent examples have included addressing simple errors such as a wrong job title or altering a headline to remove an ambiguity and updating a story when new details are forwarded that change its perspective.

*It also understands that not all complaints are legitimate and merely made in order to prevent something being published or to have something removed later. The JC reserves the right to investigate these before agreeing to act and, where appropriate, the Readers Editor will confer with the complainant to see if a solution can be found.*

The website [www.thejc.com](http://www.thejc.com) has a permanent link titled *How to Complain*. It sets out a simple step-by-step process, explaining how to do it, gives examples of the sort of issues that will and will not be considered and links to the Editor's Code of Practice and the IPSO home page. There is a link to a dedicated Complaints inbox. There is also a reference to this in the newspaper's comment page.

The Complaints inbox receives all correspondence via the weblink. That is monitored daily and responses are either given immediately or an email is sent explaining it has been forwarded elsewhere.

Complaints, either via this route or others, are copied into the Readers' Editor (for IPSO purposes, the *Responsible Person*) who has freedom to investigate fully. That may involve speaking directly - and often separately - to anyone involved in an issue, asking to see emails, shorthand notes and examining any corroborative evidence. It is also not unusual to seek corroborative 'evidence' from third parties such as freelancers or those quoted within stories.

The JC has a policy of trying to offer responses to all complaints, however minor (see examples in appendix) in keeping with its remit as a community newspaper. It prides itself on its even-handed approach to complaints and has proved willing to amend or clarify when the need arises, even when defending substantive points. Recent ipso rulings that have gone to Committee stage have noted this.

In each week's issue, the letters page template is produced at the start of the design process with a dedicated slot reserved for minor corrections and amendments. This is called *For the Record*, a title picked out in a red font in 14pt caps. Entries vary from one-sentence clarifications to more detailed explanations when appropriate.

The IPSO logo appears on this page along with a brief explanation of the JC's commitment to regulation and the IPSO phone number:

Readers with differences of opinion are regularly invited to state their case on the letters page, although we reserve the right to edit in line with good publishing practice.

A link to an article explaining the paper's philosophy is attached:

<https://www.thejc.com/a-word-about-scrutiny-of-us-you-and-them-ipso-independent-press-standards-organisation-1.479122>

The Company Handbook has been amended to include the following assertion:

### **13.6 Press Regulation**

*The JC is a member of the newspaper industry's new regulatory body, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO). All journalists who write regularly for the newspaper (staff and retained correspondents) are expected to be aware of the IPSO rules and, in particular, the Editor's Code of Practice, as stipulated in the contract between IPSO and the JC. All are required to sign a disclosure that they have read and understood the Code and agree to comply with its conditions.*

*A copy of the code can be downloaded from the IPSO website or directly via this link:*

<https://www.ipso.co.uk/IPSO/cop.html>

## **5. Adverse Adjudications**

Complaints came in three categories: direct contact with the newspaper, referrals via Ipsos and formal investigations for Committee adjudication.

Of the first category, several were dealt with by simple, and immediate, amendments when notified or after brief internal discussion. Of the second, several more were resolved either by negotiated amendment, retraction or the offer of right of reply.

Of those unresolved, The Committee was asked to consider a number of complaints. Only two were upheld and one was part-upheld. In two of those cases, the Committee reiterated the paper's earlier offer of amends. Details are as follows:

**Audrey White** complained of breaches to Clause 1 (Accuracy), Clause 2 (Privacy) and Clause 3 (Harassment) involving four articles published in print and online between February 25 and March 1.

The articles reported that Mrs White, an active member of the Labour Party, had “repeatedly denied allegations of antisemitism” in the Party and was part of a “hard-Left plot” to “oust” a Jewish Labour MP from office. Against that background, the articles made various claims about the complainant, her conduct, and her activities within the Party.

The Committee dismissed complaints under the privacy and harassment clauses but upheld all the accuracy complaints, expressing “significant concerns” about the newspaper’s handling of the complaint, including delays and a failure to answer all questions, and made its concerns known to the Standards Department. It was also the subject of internal review (see below)

**Jenny Lennox** complained that the paper breached Clause 1 (Accuracy), Clause 2 (Privacy) and Clause 3 (Harassment) in an article headlined “Top activist: ‘Only hate is Jews vs Jews’”.

The article reported that Ms Lennox had told a meeting of the Walthamstow Labour Party that the “only” antisemitism she had seen in the Labour party was “Jews attacking other Jews for having the wrong attitude on Israel”. The article wrongly reported that she was “on the executive of the Labour Representative Committee” and was Jewish.

The paper explained that she was listed online as holding that position and a comment she made could clearly infer she came from a Jewish family. Nevertheless, it accepted the inaccuracies, corrected them online promptly after she approached them directly and offered to publish a correction when it was referred to them by IPSO.

The Committee rejected the complaints of Harassment and Breach of Privacy but upheld the accuracy breach and ruled that the correction offered should be published with a slight amendment.

**John Davies** complained of breaches of Clause 1 (Accuracy) in an article headlined “‘Vile’ attacks by soap star condemned”, published on April 19 and online, under the headline “Coronation Street and Hollyoaks star suspended by Labour over ‘vile’ attacks on Jewish MPs”.

The article reported comments which Mr Davies, the chair of a branch of the Liverpool Riverside Labour Party, was said to have made publicly about a number of Labour MPs.

He said the article had contained a serious and false allegation that he had sought to justify the Holocaust. This had arisen from a comment made by an MP which it had accurately reported. It accepted that its meaning was ambiguous but argued that in the full context, it was clear that the MP's comment had not related to the complainant's views on the Holocaust, but to the support he had given to Ken Livingstone who had repeatedly spoken about Hitler's support for a Jewish state.

It did, however, offer to publish a clarification which he rejected, insisting on an apology and a retraction.

The Committee agreed the paper had been entitled to report comments he made in relation to the MP and publish the MP's view that his "disgusting justifications of Hitler's stance are simply unacceptable". But it considered that the way in which the MP's comment had been reported could have amounted to an allegation that he had previously sought to justify the Holocaust.

It ruled a breach of Clause 1(i) that required correction but considered that the newspaper's earlier offer was sufficient. The complaint was upheld and The Committee ordered the correction to be published.

## **6. The training process**

All editorial staff are given a copy of the current Editor's Code on joining. All recipients have to agree to sign and return a declaration that they had read and understood it - and are willing to comply with its terms.

Training updates are scheduled twice-yearly and supplemented with ad-hoc sessions when deemed necessary. Copies of the current code are circulated and significant cases examined to analyse current rulings and how they should impact on working practices.

In all seminars, actual adjudications from local, regional and national newspapers are used as the basis for practical workshops. Newsroom staff are often tested on their knowledge of the code by putting varied and anonymised complaint samples under scrutiny and testing their responses against expert advice. Significantly adverse adjudications often result in ad-hoc sessions so that failings can be examined.

Otherwise, on a day-to-day basis, the editorial team relies exclusively on the Editor's Code of Practice as the basis for policing the JC's ethical approach. Emails may occasionally be sent to newsroom staff to reinforce points when it is felt necessary and individual staff are encouraged to seek the advice of the Readers Editor when in doubt about how to approach a story.

They also follow basic problem-reporting guidelines when faced with complaints. These are outlined in dotted lines on the graphic below which details the news-flow process.

As indicated, there are several points along the publishing route where issues can be dealt with and the expected responses are clearly defined.

Provision is also made for stories to be suspended or even expunged from the editorial database in extreme circumstances.

Regarding adverse adjudications, the Audrey White complaint led us to consider an offer from Ipso staff to visit the offices to deliver an advisory session. As the paper was in the process of moving premises this became logistically problematic. A separate meeting was scheduled at Ipso offices to discuss Committee recommendations but cancelled ahead of Lockdown.

Separately, a two-hour training session was held at the JC offices on January 23 in which the in-house lawyer did a comparison exercise looking at best and worst practice using recent cases – including this one - as examples.

## 7. Appendix

For the record section - how it appears in print

**Corrections are an established part of the JC's publishing process. Readers are invited to state their case in the letters pages (right), they are recorded in a set position and online updates are always recorded on the relevant stories.**

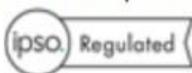
### FOR THE RECORD

**The JC seeks to correct errors quickly.**

● The writer of the obituary of Peter Kalms (JC May 17), was Dovid Efune not David Effune, as printed.

Please note: we normally only accept letters by email. Individual letters cannot be acknowledged. Letters may be edited. Email address for correspondence is: letters@thejc.com. Please supply postal address.

● The JC is regulated by the Independent Press Standards Organisation and, as such, we take all complaints seriously. If you have an



issue you'd like to raise, ipso can be contacted on 0300 1232220.

### Getting it right

► I was grateful that you wrote about my cousin Jerzyk (*Diary of suicide boy handed to Yad Vashem, January 18*), but I should point out a few errors.

You omit the fact that Jerzyk's diary and his mother's diary were written in Polish.

Jerzyk is not only "believed" to be the only child suicide recorded in their archives. He is the only such child.

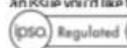
The diary could be translated without my presenting the original to Yad Vashem. The two things are separate, although I am pleased that they coincide.

You say the Gestapo "had not raided the house" when you should have written they "did not raid the house"—it was someone else and does not derogate from his heroism, as explained in my book. The original of Jerzyk's diary was not found among his mother's papers after she died. She gave it to me in Israel.

**Anthony Rudolf**  
North Finchley

Please note: we normally only accept letters by email. Individual letters cannot be acknowledged. Letters may be edited. Email address for correspondence is: letters@thejc.com. Please supply postal address.

● The JC is regulated by the Independent Press Standards Organisation and, as such, we take all complaints seriously. If you have an issue you'd like to raise, ipso can be contacted on 0300 1232220.



An associate of Mr Halfon told the *JC* that the Board called the MP on Friday night at 7pm, as he and his wife were preparing their Shabbat meal and that Mr Halfon was surprised that the Board would call as Shabbat was approaching. The Board then called him again late on Saturday night and he did not see the call until this morning.

*This story was originally posted without a response from the Board but has been updated to include their comment and the response from Mr Halfon's associate*

## The How to Complain link (how it appears online)

9.

### How do I make an editorial complaint?

If we have reported something you disagree with, have made a factual error or you simply wish to rectify something you have seen in print or online, please feel free to let us know. We will do our best to rectify matters if at all possible.

This page describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about our service standards and what you can expect from us.

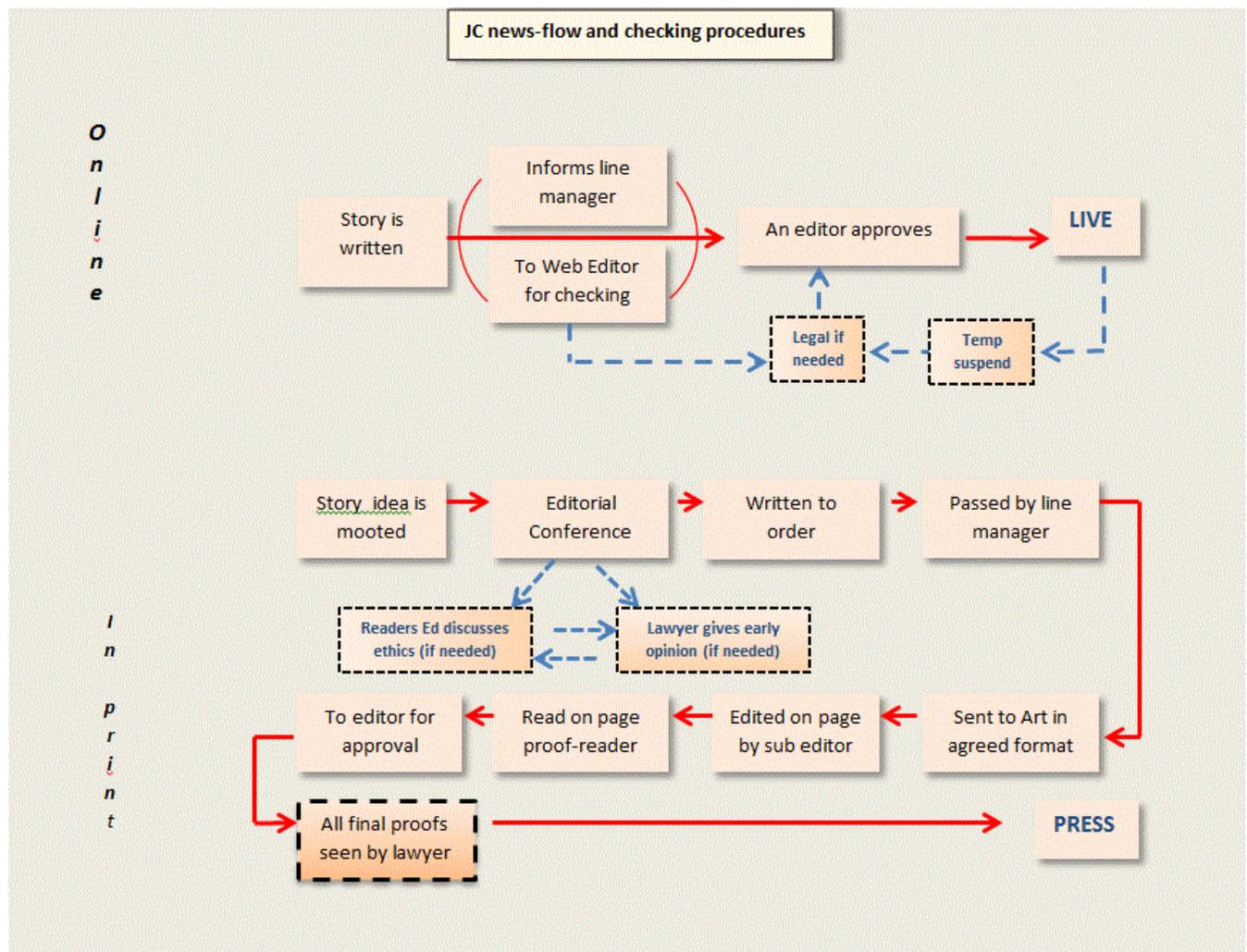
#### **How do we view complaints?**

We are here to serve the community. This does not mean pleasing everyone all the time. But it does mean we try to conduct our business honestly, openly and in good faith. While we have a public duty to report matters that are in the public interest, we try to do so in accordance with the Editor's code of Conduct, as stipulated by the Press Standards Board of Finance. That means we take them extremely seriously.

#### **What can I complain about?**

The full text can be seen by following this link:

<https://www.thejc.com/faqs#11>



R Burton  
Editorial Consultant and Readers Editor  
May 2020