

# The Spectator annual statement 2020

# I.

1. Title: *The Spectator* magazine; [www.spectator.co.uk](http://www.spectator.co.uk).
2. Responsible person: Fraser Nelson.

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3. In July 1828, R.S. Rintoul, the founding editor of *The Spectator*, announced a new weekly:–

*‘Our Plan is entirely new, comprising – 1. The whole News of the Week: selected, sifted, condensed and arranged as to be readable throughout. 2. A full and impartial exhibition of all the leading Politics of the Day. 3. A separate Discussion of Interesting Topics of a general nature, with a view to instruction and entertainment at the same time. 4. A Department devoted to Literatures... 5. Dramatic and Musical Criticism. 6. Scientific and Miscellaneous information.’*

Our magazine, website and podcasts continue to follow his formula.

# 2.

We do not have internal manuals; we use the Editors’ Code of Practice.

# 3.

1. **Complaints handling:** Our contact details are available online and our membership of Ipso is noted at the top of the ‘About *The Spectator*’ page on our website.

We try to respond to all reasonable complaints. One member of the editorial team – usually the editor who handled the piece or a fact-checker – takes responsibility for each complaint. We review the complaint to see if it is reasonable and we correct factual errors as soon as they are brought to our attention. We correspond with complainants letting them know if we have acted on their complaint or not.

**Fact-checking of stories:** Articles in the print magazine are approved by a lawyer, sub-editor and editor before being sent to press. Our online editors decide whether articles to be published on the website require legal checking and all of our online articles are fact-checked by at least one editor prior to publication. Editors frequently check details with authors and our fact-checkers try to verify information against primary, authoritative sources.

We have not had to seek pre-publication guidance from Ipso, and do not envisage having to do so.

2. **Our record on compliance:** Where we have not been able to resolve complaints through mediation and receive an adverse finding from the Complaints Committee, we have been happy to carry out the remedial action and will do so as long as it is reasonable.

In 2020, Ipso partly upheld one complaint against *The Spectator*.

#### **Coleman v *The Spectator***

The complaint said a columnist's opinion piece published on 25 July 2020 was inaccurate in saying that Covid-19 was 'killing millions worldwide'. The author meant that the virus was in the process of killing millions, but at the time of publication the number of recorded deaths was around half a million. Another columnist took issue with the 'killing millions' statement in the magazine two weeks later, and we amended the article online after receiving a complaint. This did not satisfy the complainant. The Complaints Committee partly upheld the complaint and we published a correction in the magazine, with wording and placement agreed with Ipso, on 16 January 2021.

In response, all of our editorial staff were made aware of this adverse decision, which we discussed at an editorial conference. We believe that our added scrutiny as a result of this will prevent a similar issue arising.

3. **Our training process:** The small size of our editorial team means that we are all aware of complaints and adjudications, which we discuss in twice-weekly editorial conferences, and senior staff are always on hand to offer advice on issues as they arise. We usually hold an annual legal training seminar for all editorial staff to attend, which includes discussion of previous complaints and our responsibilities under the Editors' Code. And of course, as with every member of Britain's free press, our standards are set and upheld by our readers, who expect us to maintain the highest possible standards of argument and accuracy.

# 4.

**Journalism and Covid-19:** During an event like the coronavirus pandemic there is a great deal that is not known. In such times, it is more important than ever that publications give voice to a wide range of expert opinion – including, perhaps especially, those whose opinions go against the grain. No newspaper or magazine should act as a megaphone for government announcements: when the stakes are high, scrutiny matters more than ever.