

THE JEWISH CHRONICLE



4/27/2021

Seventh 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 two in the period 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.

It takes pride in its strong, independent editorial stance and its abject defiance of anything it sees as a threat to its readers, their institutions, their way of life and, in extreme levels, their right to exist. As a result, it faces a level of challenges disproportionate to its size and circulation, although not its reach and influence.

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.

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 online 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 online on a regular basis on Tuesdays and Wednesdays ahead of the weekly print deadline. The editor leads these and senior staff are present throughout. All may raise legal or ethical questions. Some of these may be answered by asking a writer to discuss directly. On other occasions, they may involve a conversation with the in-house lawyer or, occasionally, 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 levels in the past but not in the past year covered by this statement.

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.

Overall, every story published is seen by a lawyer who is presented with them to be viewed as one of three categories: a. no legal threat, b. no perceived legal threat, c. a sensitive topic carrying the possibility of a legal threat.

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.

It is also aware that it will occasionally be attacked for political purposes and has had its fair share of vexatious complaints. It is not unusual to receive campaign-style complaints involving multiple approaches masquerading as individual complaints. IpsO, for its part, has been quick to recognise these and act accordingly.

The JC does its best to comply with the requirements of the complaints process, publishing adjudications in a timely manner and making required changes.

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 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 the paper reserves 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 this year 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. Details are as follows:

Shahrar Ali complained of a Clause 1 (Accuracy) breach in relation to an article headlined "Call for Green candidates to be suspended", on 6 December 2019 and a related social media post.

The article reported on Green Party candidates criticised for allegedly breaching the IHRA's definition of antisemitism and said that one of them "was revealed to have compared one of Israel's 2009 offensives on Gaza to the Shoah on Holocaust Memorial Day". It also reported that when footage of the speech emerged, the man tweeted that the "IHRA definition and examples [are] politically engineered to restrict criticism of Israel's heinous crimes upon the Palestinian people and actually beginning to succeed in that."

It also reported that he proposed a motion at the Green Party conference calling for the party to resist adopting the IHRA definition of antisemitism. The article included a quote from the Board of Deputies President which stated that the candidates listed had "crossed a clear line in comparing Israel to Nazi Germany and blaming the victims by claiming the legitimate anxiety of the Jewish community about the rise of antisemitism is fabricated".

The complainant - the candidate referred to - said that the article was inaccurate because the speech alluded to had not been made on Holocaust Memorial Day. He also said that he had not compared the Israeli – Palestine conflict to the Holocaust.

The paper accepted that it had inaccurately reported that the speech had not been made on Holocaust Memorial Day but it had added a footnote to the online article and removed the reference to the speech being made on Holocaust Memorial Day.

The Committee ruled that, by stating as fact that the complainant had made the Gaza-Shoah comparison, without making clear that this was an interpretation of the comments, the JC had failed to distinguish between comment and fact. A quote from the Board of Deputies President was also placed without context, and it was unclear which of the candidates this was addressed to. The newspaper also accepted that it had assumed, incorrectly, that the speech had been made on Holocaust Memorial Day.

The paper had published a correction in the online version of the article only, which did not identify and correct all the inaccuracies, and was then deleted. This did not fulfil the publication's obligations under Clause 1 (ii). Therefore there was a further breach of Clause 1(ii).

Action: there was a change in ownership at around this time and many of the personnel involved were no longer with the company. The matter was merely noted for inclusion in the next newsroom training session.

Gerald Downing complained about an article published in print on March 13, 2020 headlined "Hampstead chair thanked 'Jewish Question' activist", and online on 10 March 2020, headlined "Hampstead and Kilburn Labour chair thanks ex-member who was expelled for 'sickening' comments about Jews". The article reported that Mr Downing had been expelled from the

Labour Party after making “sickening’ comments about Jews” and that these comments had been discussed in Parliament.

The complainant said that the article was inaccurate; he had been expelled from the Labour Party for publicly supporting another political party. He produced official Labour Party letters which supported this. He also said that no comments he had made about Jewish people had been discussed in the House of Commons.

IPSO found that the story was significantly inaccurate and it had failed to take care not to publish inaccurate information in breach of Clause 1.

Action: the newspaper rigorously defended this complaint. While it complied with its responsibilities as an Ipsos member, it merely noted the findings for review at the next newsroom training session (see below).

6. The training process

Training updates are normally scheduled twice-yearly and supplemented with ad-hoc sessions when deemed necessary. This has not been possible in the past 12 months, partly because of a change in ownership which led to staff changes and partly due to the physical problems of convening such a session.

But 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.

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 Efuno 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.

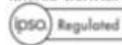
The diary could be translated without my presenting the original to Yad Vashem. The two things are separate, although I am pleased that they coincide.

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

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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.

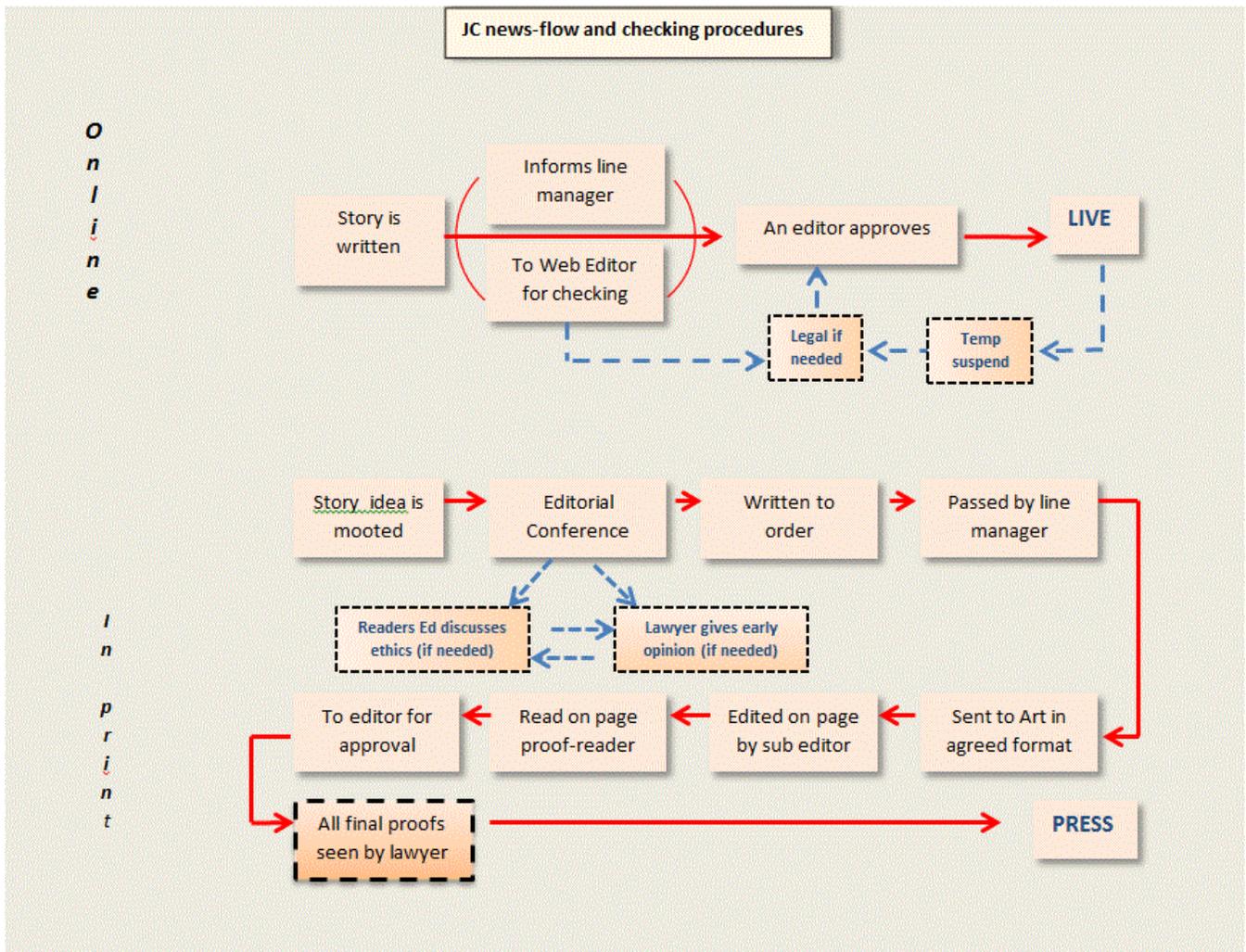
How do we view complaints?

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
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