



IPSO Annual Statement

Covering the period 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020

IPSO Report

Introduction: The MNA

The MNA is Britain's largest independent regional news company, reaching more than one million people every week in print and online. It has delivered the news since the 1880s, first through the Express & Star, and the Shropshire Star.

It has a portfolio of titles across the West Midlands, Shropshire, and Mid Wales, including a range of weekly newspapers, magazines and apps.

The MNA is part of the Claverley group which owns the Jersey Evening Post in the Channel Islands, a daily newspaper. The Claverley group also owns Precision Colour Printing, based in Telford, software supplier Press Computer Systems, Cubiquity and Kennedy Publishing.

The Claverley businesses, including the MNA, are all owned by the Graham family, the proprietors of the Express & Star for more than a century.

The Covid-19 pandemic posed huge challenges for the MNA. Within the editorial team, the workflow was rapidly adapted to enable remote working while ensuring the standard of journalism was maintained. The deployment of IT solutions, allied to the dedication of editorial staff, meant this was achieved seamlessly. Remote working has raised particular challenges around effective communication and training. This has been mitigated through regular video calls with staff and the sharing of information and best practice through email, Slack and internal blogs.

Daily titles:

Express & Star
Shropshire Star

Weekly titles:

Bridgnorth Journal
Chronicle Week series
Market Drayton Advertiser
Mid Wales Journal
Newport Advertiser
Shrewsbury Chronicle
South Shropshire Journal
Telford Journal

Monthly titles:

Shropshire Magazine

Martin Wright is the editor-in-chief of the MNA and its associated daily and weekly newspapers and associated websites.

The 'responsible person' for the Express & Star, Shropshire Star and weekly titles who deals with IPSO matters is Martin Wright.

Our editorial standards

The MNA is committed to upholding the Editors' Code of Practice. Journalists are issued with copies of the code and details are set out on the company's intranet. Training sessions – internally and externally – reinforce and refresh the importance of adhering to the code. The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in training sessions being held remotely through video calls, while best practice and updates on editorial matters have also been shared via email and through internal blog posts on the company intranet.

All staff are regularly reminded of the obligation to uphold the code at all times and the importance of representing the MNA – and the profession of journalism – in a positive and professional manner. Any changes to the Code are communicated to editorial staff verbally, via email and through the editor's blog.

A guide to editorial standards has been issued to all journalists working for the MNA, emphasising the importance of upholding the Editors' Code and upholding the highest professional standards. (Appendix 1).

In addition, the Express & Star and Shropshire Star send a copy of the Editor's Code of Practice to all regular freelance and agency copy suppliers. They are asked to give written confirmation that they have received the code and that they will adhere to it when dealing with any story or submitting copy for the MNA. The letter makes clear that if they do not reply accordingly, their services will no longer be required.

With regard to the verification of stories, all staff are made aware of Clause 1 (accuracy) of the Editors' Code and the need to always keep this in mind when researching, writing, news editing and sub editing stories.

The newsdesk requires that reporters and writers can stand up any claims made in their copy and that reports are balanced. Balanced reporting is an important part of our editorial standards and journalists are reminded of the need to give all parties an opportunity to reply.

All news stories appearing in our titles are checked by our team of content managers. Any stories of particular concern will be brought to the attention of the editor or deputy editor.

Those senior journalists with permission to publish content online have also received extra legal training on top of their ethical training.

In respect of potential ethical or Code of Practice matters, guidance would be sought from IPSO prior to publication if deemed necessary by the editor. Any guidance would be considered alongside any legal advice (if any) that had been sought.

Guidance would also be sought from IPSO in resolving complaints made to IPSO. This may take the form of agreeing a suitable resolution to a complaint with IPSO acting as the conduit between the complainant and the newspaper.

Our complaints handling process

The following guidance setting out our complaints handling process is issued to all editorial staff. It is available on the company's intranet and has been highlighted by the editor-in-chief in regular departmental blogs.

Dealing with editorial complaints

When dealing with complaints, every effort must be made to settle the issue at the earliest stage. If there are grounds for complaint and/or a mistake has been made, immediate efforts must be made to redress this.

If we are wrong, we have to put it right. If we have done nothing wrong, we have to be able to fight our corner which means accurate notes from the reporters and those who have dealt with the story.

Always make a note of any complaints, including the caller's name, the details of the complaint and, most importantly, any offer made to correct the mistake or make amends.

When complaints have been dealt with it is VITAL that you send a note to the Editor's Secretary. An annual report has to be compiled for IPSO. Therefore, please include all complaints detailing how they were dealt with.

Here are some guidelines for dealing with complaints:

- 1) If there are no grounds for complaint, for example the caller is unhappy that their court case has been reported, this should be explained to them calmly and clearly. If they are abusive and hostile you can end the conversation but ensure you make a note of the conversation.
- 2) If there may be a genuine complaint, take all of the details and promise to get back to the complainant as quickly as possible. The complaint must then be investigated with some urgency. If a mistake has been made, the deputy editor or editor should be informed.
- 3) In many cases, it may be possible to appease the complainant with a follow-up story containing the correct information, putting forward their stance on an issue to give a more balanced view or giving the organisation some positive press such as a feature. This is unlikely to be included in the annual report and is the preferable conclusion.
- 4) The complainant may be satisfied with this. If not, it may be necessary to carry a correction as a blob par on the end of the story.
- 5) If neither of these options are appropriate or accepted, we could run a correction in the paper either clarifying or, if necessary, apologising for an error.
- 6) Make a note of all conversations, the offers made and the agreement hopefully reached. Send a note to the Editor's Secretary.
- 7) If a complaint is made directly to IPSO, in all likelihood the matter will be referred back to us with their primary goal being for agreement to be reached without their

involvement. If we have already been contacted, we have to show that efforts have been made to satisfy the complainant. We must have notes ready.

- 8) If a mistake has been made and there is a threat of legal action, our solicitors must be consulted. The editor-in-chief and/or deputy group editor must be made aware of the complaint.
- 9) If there are any concerns about a complaint, take advice, whether it be from the newsdesk, deputy editor or editor or our solicitors. And always have a note of every conversation with the complainants.
- 10) In short, deal with complaints as quickly as possible, offer to make amends where necessary, take advice if required and keep notes. Send a final note to the Editor's Secretary as appropriate.

Complaints can be made in person, via the telephone or in written form (posted or electronic). The complaints are handled by the newsdesk, in conjunction with the deputy editor and or editor. Records of complaints and outcomes are retained by the editor's secretary.

Details of our complaints handling procedures are published on the letters pages of both the Express & Star and the Shropshire Star each day, usually page 11. A copy of a page 11 featuring the information panel is attached (Appendix 2).

We also carry full details of how to make a complaint on the Shropshire Star website here: shropshirestar.com/making-a-complaint/

Similar details are also included on the Express & Star website here: expressandstar.com/complaints/

Our training process

Making staff aware of IPSO

Information about IPSO outlining our responsibilities and commitment is posted on our intranet for all staff to read, supported by regular updated blogs from the editor-in-chief. This information is accompanied by a document setting out our complaints handling procedure, as set out above, which is available to download by all staff. All staff also receive copies of the procedure by email.

In addition, the staff are updated on any changes to the regulations as they are with any changes to the law verbally, via email and through the editor's blog. Where necessary, formal training is arranged.

All staff have also been issued with a guide to the MNA's editorial standards which outlines our commitment to upholding the Editors' Code.

IPSO rulings that are particularly interesting and/or relevant are also shared with the editorial team via email to ensure staff are kept up to date with the committee's interpretation of the Code.

IPSO training

IPSO training sessions, conducted by our head of editorial training are held for all members of the editorial team. (Examples from previous sessions in Appendix 3).

IPSO training for any new starters is carried out by the head of editorial training or a senior editorial executive at the Express & Star and Shropshire Star using a PowerPoint demonstration and similar exercises.

All journalists working for the MNA are expected to hold the relevant NCTJ qualifications. Any trainee journalists working towards their qualifications receive training on the Editor's Code and must sit exams testing their knowledge of the Code and its application.

Manuals, codes and guidance used by journalists

Editors' Code – As previously outlined, all journalists including freelance staff are issued with copies of the code and details are set out on the company's intranet. We issue wallet size copies of the code to all staff.

MNA guide to editorial standards

Regular training sessions – internally and externally – reinforce and refresh the importance of adhering to the code.

In house training – The editorial training manager continues to head up the training of all editorial staff and also directs training for any new recruits. Copies of some of the training notes and exercises are attached. (Appendix 3).

Essential Law for Journalists – Copies of the latest edition are available in offices.

NCTJ diploma – As outlined above, all trainee reporters are expected to have the NCTJ diploma, which has ethical elements to its exams, or if they do not have this qualification we train them to a level that enables them to take the exam. On top of that, all trainees are supported by the MNA in their work towards the NCTJ's senior qualification, the NQJ, which tests ethics.

Complaints

IPSO ref 05972-19 Bradley v South Shropshire Journal

Date complaint received: 09/08/2019

Date decision issued: 09/01/2020

Relevant code provisions

2 Privacy (2018)

6 Children (2018)

Conclusion

Breach - sanction: publication of adjudication

Ruling details can be found [here](#)

Comment:

In response to the above staff involved have been given further training regarding the importance of ensuring parental consent is given at all times when dealing with stories about children, this has also been communicated to all staff via email, through the editor's blog, and incorporated into subsequent training sessions and team meetings.

There were no further upheld complaints involving MNA publications received in 2020.

Appendix 1 - MNA guide to editorial standards

Introduction

This document is intended to set out the standards expected of journalists working for the Midland News Association. It is essential that all journalists working for the organisation read the document carefully and understand the importance of applying this code to their work. Our role as journalists requires us to make difficult decisions, often under pressure of deadlines. This document is designed to support journalists in making those decisions and to articulate the responsibilities of our journalists in providing our readers with accurate and informative stories.

Above all, we have a duty to check and double-check the accuracy of information before publication. This is not always easy when deadlines are approaching, but pressure of deadlines must never be used to excuse articles that fall below our high standards.

Our editorial standards

The MNA is committed to maintaining the highest editorial standards. All of our publications are regulated by IPSO and all of our journalists are expected to adhere to the Editors' Code of Practice.

All journalists are expected to uphold these standards and at all times to ensure that information published by MNA titles is accurate, complies with the Editors' Code and is legally sound.

Journalists should at all times remember that they are representing the MNA when dealing with members of the public, their contacts or other members of staff. It is important that journalists are professional in all of their dealings, treating people courteously at all times and responding to all enquiries in a polite, professional and timely manner, whether in person, on the telephone, via email, social media or any other medium.

The MNA expects journalists to rigorously check and verify all stories before submitting for publication. Stories involving contentious issues must be passed to senior editorial colleagues prior to publication.

Journalists are expected to carry out thorough verification of sources to ensure stories are genuine and not in any way malicious.

The advent of social media has increased the likelihood of inaccurate information gaining currency and journalists are expected to treat all such information with the utmost care, checking the authenticity of the material independently for verification before it is submitted for publication. If there is any doubt, however small, about the authenticity or intent behind information, this must be flagged up immediately to a senior colleague for further discussion.

The MNA is committed to providing fair and balanced reporting and it is important that all parties involved are given a fair opportunity to respond through our publications.

Copyright

One of the key issues to have arisen in recent years is rights usage. This is particularly important with regard to the use of images – whether they are sourced using Google or using social media. Our policy is that we must have explicit permission to use any material before publication. For the avoidance of doubt, we should seek permission in writing (an email is acceptable) which acknowledges we have permission to publish the material.

Remember, even when a picture is publicly available on social media, the person who took that picture could still claim copyright and be entitled to payment.

If there is any doubt about whether permission has been given, please consult a senior colleague.

Complaints

A copy of our procedure for dealing with complaints is available on our intranet and also attached to this document (see appendix 2). For the avoidance of doubt, it is essential that any errors are dealt with immediately once we become aware of them.

Again, when dealing with complaints or any form of reader/user feedback, it is important that journalists remain professional and handle any such complaints in a timely manner. It is also essential that a record of any emails and/or correspondence is kept, together with an explanatory note about any discussion with the complainant, when dealing with a complaint and that this is passed on to the editor's secretary as soon as possible for our records.

Where will your stories appear?

Remember that when writing copy, your stories will appear on multiple platforms within the MNA portfolio. As well as the daily titles, we have a range of weekly titles covering the West Midlands, Shropshire and Mid Wales – in addition to our magazines and periodicals. Please think about these different publications when writing your copy – if you have additional material (for example extra pictures) that would sit better within one of our locally-focused weekly titles, let the relevant weekly editor know or, if in doubt, notify newsdesk.

Think digital

A key consideration for all of our journalists is ensuring that copy produced should be ready for publication on our digital channels. Please ensure that you are familiar with the requirements of the digital workflow and that your copy meets these requirements. Think also about any additional digital content available – is there any video footage that would enhance the story? Can you insert some Tweets to give the article more depth?

Remember, it is your responsibility to notify the digital news editor and/or newsdesk when you have content ready for publication online, particularly where breaking news is concerned.

If you are a senior journalist with the required privileges, it is your responsibility to publish the story online. Please ensure that your copy is checked and double-checked before publication – accuracy must be our watchword to ensure we maintain the reputation of the MNA as a trusted news organisation. If you have any doubts over your story, exercise caution and consult a senior colleague before publication.

Tips for journalists

1. Read the style book and ensure your copy complies with our house style. A copy of the style book has been given to each member of the editorial team but if you misplaced yours or have not received a copy, please contact the editor's secretary.
2. Keep your intros short and to the point – aim for about 20 words or fewer.
3. Avoid editorialising in your copy. For instance, saying a planning application is “controversial” on the basis that it has one or two objections is going too far and is a cliché which we should avoid. Similarly, beware of inserting words such as “shock” or “plunge” into copy – ask yourself is anybody really shocked? And is a decline a fall rather than a “plunge”?

4. Keep your copy simple. Ensure you understand what you are writing – don't simply copy and paste passages from reports or press releases which contain inexplicable jargon. It is our job to inform readers in a way that is easy to understand.
5. If there are different points of view, it is important to reflect these in your copy. As the saying goes, there are two sides to every story so ensure you have approached all parties to provide balance in your article.
6. Among the most important tips is to read and re-read your copy. Does it make sense? Are there any obvious questions that aren't answered in your copy? Put yourself in the shoes of a reader with no prior knowledge of the subject and then ask these questions again.
7. Make sure you add any follow-up lines, big events and so on to the office diary. Almost every story we publish can be followed up in some way. It is extremely frustrating when we break a big story, only to be beaten to the follow-up by a competitor. An efficient diary system is the most effective means of avoiding this – and remember that follow-ups provide good stories for your news list each day.
8. Beware of press releases. Ask yourself: who has sent this to me and why? Is it simply a free advert for a company? If so, they should pay for an advert. It is important to approach all press releases with caution – challenge any statements or assumptions made in the press release and verify any claims that are made in the release. If it includes references to surveys, for example, find out more about the survey and how it was conducted. Are the results genuine? What questions were asked? Do the results have the necessary context? Remember, it is our job to apply journalistic rigour to all material we encounter – we will lose the trust of readers if we simply publish press releases unchallenged and without context.
9. Finally, as a journalist it is important to remember that your stories can have a profound impact on the lives of those involved. Ask yourself if you think your story is responsible and fair to all parties.

Government too slow to tackle this crisis effectively

The government missed three opportunities to join the EU scheme to bulk buy PPE, in order to protect against Covid-19 despite knowing that there was a shortage in the NHS.

Due to this delay and their incompetence, 30,000+ people have to date lost their lives including front line staff in the NHS, some of whom have whistle-blown to the press that their lives were being put at risk because they did not have the required PPE to protect themselves.

The figures for the elderly people who have died in nursing homes from the virus has only recently been published. Why were they not prioritised like the NHS staff?

When the crisis became crucial, the government was forced to purchase this equipment from abroad. British companies did approach the government in regards to producing this equipment, but they were ignored and were only approached after it became public knowledge.

This in my opinion would have allowed British companies to continue to trade and the cost of the equipment would have been far cheaper.

Boris Johnson skipped five emergency Cobra meetings in the early stages of the coronavirus outbreak at the start of the year, before world health organisations declared Covid-19 a pandemic. This was a meeting attended by intelligence chiefs and other experts, which has been branded a "scandal" by Piers Morgan.

The Prime Minister informed the country that we needed to carry out social distancing in order to protect ourselves from this virus, so it was a shock to hear that he had tested positive with the virus himself and had to go into hospital for treatment.

The Conservative government was slow to introduce the lockdown, slow to send out PPE, slow to start testing procedures, slow to start trialling a vaccine, and also slow to clarify now on their exit strategy to the lockdown.

Mr G Walker, Wednesfield

All in desperate need of a haircut!

I need a haircut. Her Indoors says I look like Cousin IT from the Adams family. The chorus of moaning and wailing that is erupting from the male population of these islands, is reaching maximum on the decibel scale. In the last month or so of forced isolation has spawned a new strain of male Homo sapiens, Hackedoffus hairus cranium.

That's not the end of it, I could do with a new pair of shoes, and a jacket needs to be dry cleaned. In the great scheme of things it's not world shattering, but it is the little things that nig-

PICTURE FROM THE ARCHIVE



Residents of Wrights Avenue, Hednesford, were celebrating the end of the Second World War in Europe with a street party in May, 1945. To see hundreds of pictures from the past visit our online photographic collection at photo-archive.expressandstar.co.uk

gle, the big eruptions to life can only be shrugged off, and accepted as beyond human control, and the great British pragmatic approach kicks in, but the every day-to-day inconsequential stuff seems to be building up. Yes I know, first world problems, some poor folk in the third world think that water on tap is magic.

As the traffic slowly increases on the roads, and more and more people are out on the highways and byways, other countries are easing restrictions. Here on our isolated little island, it is people power that seems to have risen to the surface. Joe Public is doing what he does best, his own thing, quite right too, enough is enough.

Her indoors is a bit narked, no, that's wrong, mightily peed off with it all, as talking on the phone is no substitute for hugs and kisses off our grandchildren.

We will get through it, we will prevail, and we will all say "Never, in the field of human medicine have so few, toiled for so long, to help so many, we can all look back proudly, and say to the NHS, THIS was your finest hour".

Tony Levy, Wednesfield

PM proved to be indecisive leader

To those who say I criticise Boris Johnson too much, let me quote from an

American report (and that's saying something) that I received some time ago.

'The British Government has so far fallen short of its target to test 100,000 people a day'.

'Leading scientific experts including Sir Jeremy Farrar have warned that the UK is on track to become the worst-hit country in Europe'.

'Johnson was slow to order business to close and people to stay at home and only ordered a lockdown on March 23 when it was projected that a partial lockdown would result in hundreds of thousands of deaths'.

'The delay was exacerbated by a shortfall in testing and a lack of PPE for front line staff'.

Boris Johnson was firmly in charge when coronavirus hit us.

He could have acted as swiftly as Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, but he dithered like Italy and Spain.

The first coronavirus cases in Taiwan and Italy were only 10 days apart.

The last time I compared figures, Italy was the third worst hit country with 200,000 cases and 27,000 deaths.

The USA was first and Spain second. The UK was in sixth place with 160,000 cases and 21,000 deaths (not including those affected outside hospitals).

Taiwan was in 115th place with 429 cases and six deaths.

Please don't tell me that Boris Johnson is a decisive and a far-seeing leader.

Roger Watts, Walsall

Donate online to help Christian Aid

The people of Stourbridge have always supported Christian Aid generously, giving over £13,000 a year during Christian Aid Week in recent years.

This year Christian Aid Week is May 10 to 16. Funds have usually been raised by house-to-house collections, quizzes and book sales. None of this is possible this year, however Christian Aid Week is still going ahead but in a virtual form and they are asking people to donate online to ensure that Christian Aids' work can continue.

Poor communities are hit hardest by coronavirus, it's affecting families living in overcrowded refugee camps, and many vulnerable people who have no water to clean their hands. With your support, Christian Aid's partners can limit the impact of the virus, with life-saving soap and water in Nigeria and Bangladesh.

Please ask your families, friends, club members and others to make a donation online to Christian Aid this year to save lives in developing countries. The Stourbridge Christian Aid Committee (part of Churches Together in Stourbridge, CTIS) have set up their own fundraising page at justgiving.com/fundraising/ctis or visit Christian Aid's website christianaid.org.uk

Hugh Williams, co-ordinator for Christian Aid Week, Stourbridge

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Letters must include the writer's name, address and telephone number. Letters will only be published anonymously in exceptional circumstances. The editor reserves the right to condense or amend letters.



The Express & Star's policy is to correct errors as soon as we can. Please contact us if you are unhappy with the accuracy of any story. The Express & Star adheres to the Editors' Code of Practice, which can be seen at www.ipso.co.uk. We are regulated by the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO). Complaints about stories should be referred firstly to us at newsdesk@expressandstar.co.uk or by post to The Editor, Express & Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES. If we cannot reach a resolution, contact IPSO at complaints@ipso.co.uk or by post at IPSO, c/o Gate House, 1 Farringdon Street, London, EC4M 7LG.

Appendix 3 – Examples of exercises set by the training manager and used in staff training sessions



Tackling ethics questions

Start by pointing out that the code should be kept in the spirit of it and not just the letter. That does not mean that as journalist we should be cowed by it but nor should we be cavalier when pursuing or publishing a story.

Relate that to the question you have to answer. If a complaint is made ask yourself: does the person have a point? If he/she does, what should you have done, what should not have done and what should you do now?

Questions to ask yourself:

Accuracy (Clause 1)

- Was the alleged error significant?
- Was the story inaccurate, misleading or distorted?
- Was sufficient care taken to establish accuracy ahead of publication?
- Did the story confuse comment or conjecture or fact?
- Was there an opportunity to reply?
- Was there a significant inaccuracy?
- Was the headline supported by the text?
- Was an adequate remedy offered? (Fair opportunity to inaccuracies must be given when reasonably called for)

Privacy (Clause 2)

- Was consent given?
- Has entitlement been compromised?
- Is individual a public figure or role model?
- Was information already in public domain?
- Did individuals photographed without consent have a reasonable expectation of privacy?
- Was publication in the public interest?
- Was the breach proportionate to the public interest served?

Harassment (Clause 3)

- Was there a request to desist?
- Was a request for identification complied with?
- Was there a public interest?

Intrusion into grief or shock (Clause 4)

Did journalists break the news of the death?
Were insensitive and unnecessary details published?
Were photographs taken at private funerals?

Reporting suicides (Clause 5)

Were details of suicide excessive?

Children (Clause 6)

Is the child under 16 or still at school?
Could the interview or photograph involve or affect a child's welfare?
Has consent been given by the appropriate responsible adult or school?
Is there exceptional public interest?

Children in sex cases (Clause 7)

Could the report lead to the identification of a child in a sex case?

Hospital (Clause 8)

Were editorial staff in non-public areas?
Did they identify themselves to a responsible executive?
Did that person give permission for you to be there?
Was there a public interest in publication?

Reporting crime (Clause 9)

Was identifying relatives or friends necessary?
Did they give their consent to be identify?
Was there a public interest in publication?

Clandestine devices and subterfuge (Clause 10)

Did publication seek to obtain or publish material?
If undercover methods used was there reason to believe it was in the public interest?
Was clandestine activity related to public interest?
Could material have been obtained by other method?

Victims of sexual assault (Clause 11)

Is the material likely to lead to identification?
Is the adequate public interest?
Is it legal to do so and is that enough under the code?

Discrimination (Clause 12)

Is reference to individual, or distinct class of individuals?
This should be someone named or readily identifiable, or distinct group of individuals who can similarly be identified.
Is reference prejudicial or pejorative in a discriminatory way?
Is reference to characteristics covered genuinely relevant?

Confidential sources (Clause 14)

Is the source confidential?

Could an unnamed source be identified?

Public interest

Difficult to define

Not same as interesting to public

Covers some but all clauses

If editor defends complain by citing public interest IPSO would be the final arbiter of the issue.

Decisions to break Code should never be taken lightly

It is not an easy way to dodge censure.

Editors must demonstrate they deliberately took decision to breach provisions of Code after due consideration in justifiable circumstances

1. The public interest includes, but is not confined to:
 - i. Detecting or exposing crime, or threat of crime, or serious impropriety.
 - ii. Protecting public health or safety.
 - iii. Protecting public from being misled by an action or statement of an individual or organisation.
 - iv. Disclosing a person or organisation's failure or likely failure to comply with any obligation to which they are subject.
 - v. Disclosing a miscarriage of justice.
 - vi. Raising or contributing to a matter of public debate, including serious cases of impropriety, unethical conduct or incompetence concerning public.
 - vii. Disclosing concealment, or likely concealment, of any of above.
2. There is a public interest in freedom of expression itself.
3. Regulator will consider the extent to which material is already in the public domain or will become so.
4. Editors invoking the public interest will need to demonstrate they reasonably believed publication – or journalistic activity taken with view to publication – would both serve, and be proportionate to, the public interest and explain how they reached decision at the time.
5. An exceptional public interest would need to be demonstrated to over-ride the normally paramount interests of children under 16.

Editorial Training Manager

The following is included in a PowerPoint presentation given to senior reporters by the training manager. There are no handouts as the presentations are designed to stimulate discussion.

Editors' Code of Practice

Should be foremost in your mind when pursuing and writing stories

Ask yourself: have I abiding by the spirit as well as the letter of the it?

If I'm claiming public interest, can I justify it?

Clause 1 Accuracy

- i. Must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information or images, including headline not supported by text.
- ii. Significant inaccuracy, misleading statement or distortion must be corrected, promptly and with due prominence, and – where appropriate an apology published.
- iii. Fair opportunity to reply to significant inaccuracies should be given, when reasonably called for.
- iv. Press, while free to editorialise and campaign, must distinguish between comment, conjecture and fact.
- v. A publication must report fairly and accurately the outcome of an action for defamation to which it has been a party, unless agreed settlement states otherwise, or an agreed statement is published.

Clause 2 Privacy*

- i. Everyone is entitled to respect for his or her private life, home, health and correspondence, including digital communications.
- ii. Editors will be expected to justify intrusions into any individual's private life without consent. Account will be taken of the complainant's own disclosures of information.
- iii. It is unacceptable to photograph individuals, without their consent, in public or private places where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy.

Clause 3 Harassment*

- i. Journalists must not engage in intimidation, harassment or persistent pursuit.
- ii. They must not persist in questioning, telephoning, pursuing or photographing individuals once asked to desist; nor remain on property when asked to leave and must not following them. If requested, they must identify themselves and whom they represent.
- iii. Editors must ensure these principles are observed by those working for them and take care not to use non-compliant material from other sources.

Clause 4 Intrusion into grief and shock

In case involving personal grief and shock, enquiries and approaches must be made with sympathy and discretion and publication handled sensitively.

These provisions should not restrict the right to report legal proceedings.

Clause 5 Reporting suicide*

When reporting suicide, to prevent simulative acts care should be taken to avoid excessive details of the method used, while taking into account the media's right to report legal proceedings.

Clause 6 Children*

- i. All pupils should be free to complete their time at school without unnecessary intrusion.
- ii. They must not be approached or photographed at school without permission of the school authorities.
- iii. Children under 16 must not be interviewed or photographed on issues involving their own or another child's welfare unless a custodial parent or similarly responsible adult consents.
- iv. Children under 16 must not be paid for material involving their welfare, nor parents or guardians for material about their children or wards, unless it is clearly in the child's interest.
- v. Editors must not use the fame, notoriety or position of a parent or guardian as sole justification for publishing details of a child's private life.

Clause 7 Children in sex cases*

1. The press must not, even if legally free to do so, identify children under 16 who are victims or witnesses in cases involving sex offences.
2. In any press report of a case involving a sexual offence against a child
 - i. The child must not be identified.
 - ii. The adult may be identified.
 - iii. The word "incest" must not be used where a child victim might be identified.
 - iv. Care must be taken that nothing in the report implies the relationship between the accused and the child.

Clause 8 Hospital*

- i. Journalists must identify themselves and obtain permission from a responsible executive before entering non-public areas of hospitals or similar institutions to pursue enquiries.
- ii. The restrictions on intruding into privacy are particularly relevant to enquiries about individuals in hospitals or similar institutions.

Clause 9 Reporting crime*

- i. Relatives or friends of persons convicted or accused of crime should not generally be identified without their consent, unless they are genuinely relevant to the story.
- ii. Particular regard should be paid to the potentially vulnerable position of children who witness, or are victims of, crime. This should not restrict the right to report legal proceedings.

Clause 10 Clandestine devices and subterfuge*

- i. The press must not seek to obtain or publish material acquired by using hidden cameras or clandestine listening devices; or by intercepting private or mobile telephone calls, messages or emails; or by the unauthorised removal of documents or photographs; or by accessing digitally-held information without consent.
- ii. Engaging in misrepresentation or subterfuge, including by agents or intermediaries, can generally be justified only in the public interest and then only when the material cannot be obtained by other means.

Clause 11 Victims of sex crimes

The press must not identify victims of sexual assault or publish material likely to contribute to such identification unless there is adequate justification and they are legally free to do so.

Clause 12 Discrimination

- i. The press must avoid prejudicial or pejorative reference to an individual's, race, colour, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or disability.
- ii. Details of an individual's race, colour, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical or mental illness or disability must be avoided unless genuinely relevant to the story.

Clause 13 Financial journalist

- i. Even where the law does not prohibit it, journalists must not use for their own profit financial information they receive in advance of its general publication, nor should they pass such information to others.
- ii. They must not write about shares or securities in whose performance they know that they or their close families have a significant financial interest without disclosing the interest to the editor or financial editor.
- iii. They must not buy or sell, either directly or through nominees or agents, shares or securities about which they have written recently or about which they intend to write in the near future.

Clause 14 Confidential sources

Journalists have a moral obligation to protect confidential sources of information.

Clause 15 Witness payments in criminal trials

- i. No payment or offer of payment to a witness – or any person who may reasonably be expected to be called as a witness – should be made in any case once proceedings are active as defined by the Contempt of Court Act 1981. This prohibition lasts until the suspect has been freed unconditionally by police without charge or bail or the proceedings are otherwise discontinued; or has entered a guilty

plea to the court; or, in the event of a not guilty plea, the court has announced its verdict.

- *ii. Where proceedings are not yet active but are likely and foreseeable, editors must not make or offer payment to any person who may reasonably be expected to be called as a witness, unless the information concerned ought demonstrably to be published in the public interest and there is an over-riding need to make or promise payment for this to be done; and all reasonable steps have been taken to ensure no financial dealings influence the evidence those witnesses give. In no circumstances should such payment be conditional on the outcome of a trial.
- *iii. Any payment or offer of payment made to a person later cited to give evidence in proceedings must be disclosed to the prosecution and defence. The witness must be advised of this requirement.

Clause 16 Payment to criminals*

- i. Payment or offers of payment for stories, pictures or information, which seek to exploit a particular crime or to glorify or glamorise crime in general, must not be made directly or via agents to convicted or confessed criminals or to their associates – who may include family, friends and colleagues.
- ii. Editors invoking the public interest to justify payment or offers would need to demonstrate that there was good reason to believe the public interest would be served. If, despite payment, no public interest emerged, then the material should not be published.

Public interest – exception to *clauses

1. The public interest includes, but is not confined to:
 - i. Detecting or exposing crime, or the threat of crime, or serious impropriety.
 - ii. Protecting public health or safety.
 - iii. Protecting the public from being misled by an action or statement of an individual or organisation.
 - iv. Disclosing a person or organisation's failure or likely failure to comply with any obligation to which they are subject.
 - v. Disclosing a miscarriage of justice.
 - vi. Raising or contributing to a matter of public debate, including serious cases of impropriety, unethical conduct or incompetence concerning the public.
 - vii. Disclosing concealment, or likely concealment, of any of the above.
2. There is a public interest in freedom of expression itself.
3. The regulator will consider the extent to which material is already in the public domain or will become so.

4. Editors invoking the public interest will need to demonstrate that they reasonably believed publication – or journalistic activity taken with a view to publication – would both serve, and be proportionate to, the public interest and explain how they reached that decision at the time.
5. An exceptional public interest would need to be demonstrated to over-ride the normally paramount interests of children under 16.