

Regional Media Ltd – Annual Report 2021

1) Introduction

Regional Media Ltd was formed in April 2015 after the purchase of all the shares from Garnett Dickinson.

Our products mainly cover Rotherham, South & East Barnsley and parts of the borough of Doncaster.

We have 12 editorial staff, including an editor (myself), two sports reporters, two photographers, two Newsdesk, three reporters, one sub/reporter and one sub.

Products: Rotherham Advertiser (16,000 circulation)

Dearne Valley Weekender (30,000)

Chase Magazine (16,000 copies inside the Advertiser and 4,000 distributed separately. This has been reduced through the coronavirus period)

www.rotherhamadvertiser.co.uk

Publication of the Rotherham Record was suspended in 2020 and we are due to launch a lifestyle magazine, Life & Style, In May 2021. Our logo will change accordingly.

Editor and Regulated Entity's responsible person: Andrew Mosley

3) Our editorial standards

Our approach to editorial standards is the same as most media organisations.

We always verify our sources and authenticate documents and, if we cannot, we do not go ahead with the story. The reporters, newsdesk, sub-editors and myself, the editor, all adhere to this policy.

All our stories are published in line with guidance and law set out in the Editor's Code of Practice and McNae's Essential Law for Journalists, of which all reporters have copies and refer to. Staff are sent all legal updates and can attend refresher courses.



Regional Media Ltd.
Brookfields Way, Manvers, Wath-upon-Dearne, Rotherham, S63 5DL
T: 01709 768000 | F: 01709 768010

Registered in England, No 9512870 | VAT REG No. GB 210 3937 42
Registered Address: Brookfields Way, Manvers, Wath-upon-Dearne, Rotherham, S63 5DL

The IPSO logo is displayed on p2 of our publications and on the contacts page of our website.

Fact Checking:

Our approach is always to verify sources and authenticate documents.

We would never print a story involving evidence contained within a document having not seen and carried out checks on the article ourselves.

We have regularly fought in court against attempts to restrict the use of names and addresses of victims in child sexual exploitation – and other - trials.

We have editorial meetings to discuss stories which we think may pose problems and to update on legal changes, any problems we have etc.

Details of any cases involving IPSO are circulated among staff and any complaints discussed.

All notebooks/materials are stored in the office and journalists always explain the purpose of a call/visit and advise the interviewee how to contact them if they need any guidance etc.

Pre-publication guidance

If we were unsure or needed legal guidance ahead of publication we would contact IPSO for advice.

Other resources are also available to us for guidance such as the Society of Editors, McNae's Essential Law for Journalists and the Editors Code of Practise, of which all journalists have copies. Advisory notices and updates from the NMA are also distributed and staff encouraged to read them.

Our complaints-handling process

We will accept complaints by phone, email, letter, in person or via social media and the complaint will at first be handled by a reporter and, if a conclusion is not reached, escalated to newsdesk and then the editor, who records and keeps details of all complaints even if a conclusion has been agreed.



We will always attempt to deal with the complaint on the day it is made or, if that is not possible due to, for example, a reporter's absence, as soon as possible afterwards – always within seven days.

We will always attempt to come to a conclusion that is satisfactory to both parties, which may result in a correction published in a position in the paper agreed with the complainant, an apology, or sometimes it may simply be that a discussion/meeting clears the air.

If an agreement cannot be reached we will refer the complainant to IPSO and its complaints procedure, which we will then follow.

All complaints are logged with and by myself/the editor. I/the editor recently dealt with a complaint surrounding an inquest of a person who had committed suicide. The person's wife and father-in-law contacted us threatening suicide on publication, upon which we immediately contacted the Crisis team and referred the case to them.

All complainants are made aware of the code of practise by phone, email or letter depending on how the complaint was originated or how they have requested communication to be carried out.

The contacts of all editorial staff are on page two of our publications and staff do make complainants aware of IPSO and the complaints procedure. IPSO details are available on our website.

Our training process

All reporters are fully qualified and have undertaken law courses.

All staff have copies of the Editor's Code of Practice and McNae's Essential Law for Journalists and refer to these on a daily basis.

There are no current plans for further training, though refresher courses are always a considered option.



4) Our record on compliance

In 2020 a complaint against Regional Media Ltd made by a Mr Joe Brian was upheld by the Complaints Committee and also on appeal. It was a decision we did not agree with, hence our appeal, but we published the apology to Mr Brian after negotiation with IPSO surrounding the wording, which we believe reflected the problems surrounding the story.

I/we were happy with IPSO's flexibility surrounding the wording.

Previous to the complaint reaching IPSO, a member of Newsdesk and myself attempted to negotiate verbally and by email with Mr Brian, the latter action which I would not repeat with a future complaint.

A small number of other complainants have said they were taking their grievance to IPSO over the past year, but nothing has materialised.

An example of a story in which we encountered legal difficulties surrounded our reporting of the crown court case of the then Lord of Rotherham Nazir Ahmed, who appeared/is appearing on child sex charges. The case was halted due to comments made by readers on our Facebook page and we had to agree to no further publication of the case on Facebook, despite the nationals continuing to report on the same platform. This is an increasing problem and one I/we believe needs to be tackled by the legal system or through media law.

We have had numerous complaints from people who believed we had breached GDPR through printing names and addresses given in court or provided on court lists. We have explained the law regarding this to each person and reached conclusions where no further action has been taken.

We have accepted one breach of reporting accuracy over the past year, which has previously been referred to in this statement.

Training process

All staff are fully qualified journalists and are offered law refresher courses, plus digital courses. We have sent staff to Facebook/google conferences and the NCTJ skills conference.

Resources

Editor's Code of Practice and McNae's Essential Guide to Journalists.



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Covid-19

The main problems surrounding Covid-19 reporting have involved verification of stories and obtaining comments/clarification from local authority/police press offices. I have dealt with this by holding regular Zoom meetings with press offices and chief executives outlining difficulties and come to solutions by agreeing out of hours contacts etc.

Courts and inquests have proved difficult, but we have largely followed these through court cameras, with council meetings covered through the local authority broadcasts.

Staff-wise we have had a number furloughed, a few working from home and a number office-based as we believed it was vital, as a community newspaper, that we make ourselves available to sections of the public who could not contact us otherwise.

All social distancing measures were adhered to, masks worn and screens put in place in our reception.

We also had to make sure all photographs taken were done so with regulations surrounding social distancing and masks in place.

With sport off the agenda for a period, particularly amateur sport, and no entertainment as such, we introduced regular local history features on our news and sport pages which have been particularly well received. Some of our learnings will continue post-Covid.

Andrew Mosley

(Editorial director Regional Media Ltd)



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