

Rochdale Online Ltd Annual IPSO Report March 2021

For the period 1 January 2020 – 31 December 2020

Introduction

Rochdale Online Ltd operates a 'hyperlocal' website at www.rochdaleonline.co.uk
The independent family-owned online news publication started in June 1998.

The website covers the borough of Rochdale and is visited by over 190,000 unique users each month (average monthly users in 2020).

From inception, Rochdale Online, based in Rochdale town centre, has strived to serve the community by providing an authoritative source of local news and by promoting local businesses, groups and organisations.

Our responsible person

Editor Claire Flett can be contacted on 01706 523583, by email news@rochdaleonline.co.uk, via the general contact form on our web site or via the complaints form on our web site.

Our editorial standards

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.

All reporters have access to copies of the Editor's Code, Editor's Codebook, McNae's Essential Law (24th edition) and Knowles on Local Authority Meetings (8th edition).

Some of these publications are physical books which are stored at our offices and although most staff have been working from home through the majority of 2020, at least one member of staff has always been present at the office and able to refer to these publications on colleagues' behalf, and scan or photograph any relevant sections if required.

We have provided the latest version of the Editors' Code (issued on 1st July 2019) to staff and the full Editor's Codebook is available to staff.

We have also distributed to staff a number of blogs from the IPSO web site, including the blog and guidance on reporting of Muslims and Islam in November 2020 and in December 2020, the blog on the upcoming changes to the Editor's Code.

In August 2020, we also distributed to staff the resources on the Samaritans web site relating to guidance on reporting suicide which came to our attention from an IPSO blog.

We do our best to ensure our stories are trustworthy and balanced.

Stories are verified as much as possible and our reporters are expected to contact all parties prior to publication.

If people choose not to speak to us or provide a comment, then we always include that information in the story for our readers.

Our complaints-handling process

We accept complaints by phone, email or letter. If someone contacts us via social media with a complaint, then they are directed by our social media manager to use one of these options.

When editorial staff receive complaints, they are reported to the editor.

Complaints are acted on immediately where it is appropriate to do so, such as the addition of a comment or statement to a published piece or the correction of factual errors.

If a complaint requires further investigation there is the option of removing an article from publication pending completion of that process.

The complainant's details, nature of the complaint and our response are recorded by the editor along with copies of any source documents or reporter's notes.

We will always attempt to respond to a complaint within 24 hours.

The wording on our complaints page is as follows:

Making a Complaint

We can look into complaints about items we have published which are in our control. We are members of IPSO (Independent Press Standards Organisation) and we adhere to the Editors' Code of Practice. We can only deal with complaints which relate to an alleged breach of the standards set out in this Code: <https://www.ipso.co.uk/editors-code-of-practice/>

We can only deal with your complaint if you are:

- Personally and directly affected by an alleged breach of the Code.
- A representative group affected by an alleged breach of the Code, where there is public interest in your complaint.
- A third party seeking to ensure accuracy of published information.

You can submit your complaint to us using the [submission form below](#).

Alternatively you can submit your complaint in writing to us at the following address:

Address: 122 Yorkshire Street, Rochdale OL16 1LA

A complaints form can be downloaded in [PDF](#) or [MS Word](#) format.

We will acknowledge your complaint by email or in writing within seven calendar days and will normally respond to your complaint with a final decision letter within 21 calendar days. If we uphold your complaint, we will tell you the remedial actions we have taken.

Our training processes

In the period relevant to this report we have not organised any formal training on the IPSO code but our compliance with it is often discussed in relation to stories that reporters are working on.

Reporters are required to have or obtain NCTJ qualifications.

We have two full time reporters working at Rochdale Online.

Our senior reporter completed the NCTJ Level 3 Diploma in Journalism in 2020; she already has a Masters in Multimedia Journalism from Manchester Metropolitan University with distinctions awarded in Online, Law, Broadcast and Ethics. This was achieved with support from Rochdale Online and all course content and exams were paid for by Rochdale Online.

Our junior reporter is currently studying for the NCTJ Level 3 Certificate in Foundation Journalism. Course content and assessments have been paid for by Rochdale Online.

During 2020, our senior reporter undertook four training sessions offered by the BBC Shared Data Unit.

- Introduction to Spreadsheets
- Statistics and journalism
- Freedom of Information masterclass
- Spreadsheets - the next steps

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

Pre-publication guidance

In the period relevant to this report we have not had cause to seek guidance from IPSO. If we were unsure or needed legal guidance ahead of publication, we would contact IPSO for advice in the first instance, as we have in the past.

Our record on compliance

In the period relevant to this report we have not had any complaints referred to IPSO.