

## **Slimming World Annual Statement 1<sup>st</sup> January – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020**

### **Introduction**

Slimming World, the UK's leading slimming organisation, was founded by Margaret Miles-Bramwell (OBE) in 1969. Its Head Office is based in Alfreton, Derbyshire. Slimming World supports members to lose weight in local community groups across the UK and Republic of Ireland. However, with the onset of Covid-19, real-life groups had to be temporarily suspended with virtual groups taking their place for much of 2020 to comply with lockdown restrictions. Real-life groups will resume as soon as restrictions are eased, and it is safe to do so. Slimming World also offers an online membership option.

*Slimming World Magazine*, the UK's best-selling weight loss title, launched in 1998 as a customer publication and hit the newsstands in 1999. It offers additional support and inspiration to members, as well as introducing new people to the programme via the newsstand and digital editions. Published seven times a year (six in 2020, due to Covid-19), the magazine features the real-life success stories of Slimming World members, a food section, practical and psychological features, health and fitness ideas, and news pages.

The title's combined print and digital circulation is 316,631 (ABC Jul-Dec 2020). UK and RoI account for most of these sales (282,003 print; 33,408 digital); we also sell a small number of copies in other countries. Until 2020, sales were approx split 60% to group members (where it has a special discounted price), 30% to newsstand and 10% to subscriptions. This balance changed with the temporary suspension of groups during the pandemic, but is expected to return when restrictions are lifted. The pandemic brought huge challenges to the way we distribute because we weren't able to use our normal channel of printed issues via group – we sent our May/Jun 20 issue out free of charge as a gift to members at the start of lockdown. We continued to support our members with free digital editions of the magazine during lockdown periods.

*Slimming World Magazine* is the only magazine title produced by Miles-Bramwell Executive Services Ltd (trading as Slimming World). The named responsible person is Elise Wells, Director of Marketing.

Slimming World has a number of other content-producing departments. These use a mixture of new content and repurposed magazine material:

- Websites/app/blog

Slimming World's public website, [slimmingworld.co.uk](http://slimmingworld.co.uk), hosts an introduction to Slimming World's programme, a group search facility, success stories, recipes and sample menus, and so on. An exclusive website for group members, Lifeline Online, is offered free of charge, as is the Slimming World app. We also host a public-facing blog and a Consultants' website, Our World, which supports Consultants to provide the best-possible service to members.

- Digital programme

Slimming World provides a digital programme, Slimming World Online, offering a weight loss service to slimmers who are unable, or prefer not to attend a group. Here they have access to menus, recipes, success stories, health, fitness and psychology of weight loss features, motivational tools and an online community. Members of the digital programme are also invited to a range of live events.

- Publications

Slimming World provides a Member Pack to all new/rejoining group members. This includes our Food Optimising eating plan and a book detailing our Body Magic activity programme. These publications include real-life success stories, recipe/menu ideas, and practical advice on losing weight and increasing activity.

Slimming World also publishes a range of recipe books and journals that members can purchase in groups, guides for members with specific nutritional needs, easy-read and other accessible resources, various internal publications (Head Office and Consultant digital newsletters, etc), and promotional material (group leaflets, posters etc).

In addition, the company produces a quarterly email newsletter, 'Weight and Health Now', sent to health professional subscribers.

- Videos

Slimming World has an in-house video team that creates videos for many areas of the business: member success videos for websites/awards ceremonies; step-by-step cookery videos for public/member websites and social media channels; training videos for Consultant website/training sessions, and so on. We also work with external video agencies from time to time.

- In addition to the above we have:

- a social media team posting success stories and inspiration on our social media channels
- a PR team: offering success stories/recipes/menu plans to regional, national and international media; producing and communicating Slimming World research; managing an online newsroom ([www.slimmingworld.co.uk/press](http://www.slimmingworld.co.uk/press)); and creating template media materials for self-employed Consultants with local groups in order to promote our service
- an advertising manager selling advertising space in *Slimming World Magazine*. We also buy print and digital media through a third party.

### **Slimming World Magazine editorial standards**

The *Slimming World Magazine* team is committed to upholding the highest of professional, editorial and ethical standards:

The Editors' Code of Practice (Jan 2021 edition) is adhered to:

- All staff have a copy of the Code and understand how it applies to their work.
- The Code is on display in all departments that produce editorial content.
- Our Media Law Training days include training on the Code.

- All team members are committed to observing the Editors' Code of Practice not just to the letter, but in spirit, too.
- Commissioning forms refer to our adherence to the Code, and we make all reasonable checks to ensure that content from freelancers has been sourced in accordance with the Code.
- When the Code is updated, new copies are distributed to the team along with an explanation of the changes and how this applies to our work.
- We have an editorial practices document, which was created in consultation with IPSO. All content teams refer to this document.

Data protection responsibilities and matters of privacy are taken very seriously:

- Slimming World updated their Data Protection Policy Guide in May 2018 to reflect the General Data Protection Regulation. Existing contributors (writers, photographers, stylists, etc) have a copy of our guide and are aware of their individual responsibilities.
- New contributors are sent the Data Protection Policy Guide prior to their first commission. Their attention is drawn to key parts of the guide in a covering letter.
- Members selected to appear in the magazine, company publications or promotional literature are sent a Member Consent Form explaining what will happen to the personal information they supply. They are asked to sign and return a copy giving approval for their details to be used as described. This form was updated in May 2019 with guidance from our company lawyers (Hopkins Solicitors).
- Where private information is supplied about another individual identified in a member success story, we make checks to ensure they consent to this.
- We seek the permission of an adult with parental responsibility before naming or picturing children and consider whether any information supplied about them would have an adverse affect on their welfare.
- We only use data from magazine competition entries for the purpose of the administration of the competition. All entries are destroyed after the prize has been awarded.
- If we are unable to secure the approval from everyone in a member's photograph we blur faces where they are identifiable.

Great care and attention is taken to ensure accuracy of copy:

- Slimming World has in-house teams of nutritionists and dietitians and an external panel of experts in behaviour change, psychology and fitness. Company content is produced in association with these teams, and final copy is approved by these teams where appropriate.
- Sub-editors check all facts and figures back to the source.
- Advertisers making claims in advertising/promotions are asked to substantiate these claims. If doubt remains, advertising is sent on to the ASA for feedback.

Approvals for all features are secured and logged prior to publication:

- The copy for member success stories and case studies is approved by the interviewee.
- Features are sent back to the freelance writer for accuracy checks.

- Health, fitness and psychology features are verified by our in-house food and nutrition teams and/or advisory panel. The 7-day eating plan is approved by the nutrition team.
- Promotions (advertorials and competitions, etc) are sent back to the advertiser or promoter for approval.
- Recipes are fully tested and rechecked by our home economists, external food editor and internal food team.
- All magazine copy is assessed by the Editor, Deputy Editor and Chief Sub-Editor prior to publication to ensure we abide by the Editors' Code. If there are concerns, a feature can be referred to our Director of Marketing and our lawyers (Schillings Partners) who provide a pre-publication review service to *Slimming World Magazine*.
- The magazine front cover, advertorials and competitions are routinely checked by our lawyers.
- Editorial staff are aware that they can contact IPSO should any doubts about compliance with the Editors' Code remain after referring copy to our lawyers.
- Guidance received from our lawyers/IPSO is always taken on board to ensure we uphold the highest professional standards of journalism.

All content channels work to standardise editorial procedures and share best practice via weekly meetings with all heads of departments and content leads.

### **Our complaints-handling process**

We endeavour to make it clear and easy for members of the public to contact us:

- All content teams accept editorial complaints in whichever medium the complainant wishes to use – letter, email, phone call, social media, etc.
- We aim to respond to complaints within five working days. Where a resolution is not possible within this timeframe, we contact the complainant with an update of the situation and work to resolve the problem as soon as possible.
- For each Slimming World media channel, a named person is responsible for complaints handling, ensuring complaints are forwarded, handled and resolved. Team members know they can refer complaints to a manager if needed and escalate to the Director of Marketing, Director of External Affairs and/or Director of Communications and finally to the Joint Managing Directors and CEO if necessary.
- Most complaints are resolved quickly and to the complainant's satisfaction via a short phone conversation or email.
- Slimming World endeavours to put right significant inaccuracies, as well as any inaccuracy that could negatively affect members' weight losses. Corrections may be published in the magazine, on the website, on social media channels, via Consultant newsletters or via text messaging service.
- Slimming World's content streams have, to date, never received any serious complaints in relation to the Editors' Code of Practice. If this were to happen we would seek guidance from our lawyers and IPSO on how best to deal with the situation.

- In addition to the above, Slimming World has a Whistle Blowing Policy, where staff can raise any complaint in confidence.

### **Our training process**

Slimming World's law training is provided by David Banks Media Law. All communications teams renew their training regularly. In July 2020 the following staff received refresher training via Zoom:

- Magazine editor, sub-editors and features team
- Recipe book editor
- Writers on the communications team
- Director of marketing, marketing manager and campaigns manager
- Editor of our digital service
- PR manager

Training needs are regularly reassessed and further training will take place in the future.

All employees are required to sign HR policies to confirm they have received and understood the documents, are aware of the organisation's rules and standards, and understand the consequences of not complying with these policies.

### **Our record on compliance**

There have been no complaints against any Slimming World content that have been ruled on by IPSO's Complaints Committee over the period.

There have been no incidents where Slimming World content has breached the Editors' Code over the period.

### **Appendix**

Copies of manuals/guidance used by *Slimming World Magazine*:

1. Data Protection – a policy guide for Slimming World\*
2. Contributors' data protection covering letter\*
3. Member Consent form (updated April 2019). Available to review on request.
4. Author Commissioning Form and Licence Agreement (updated April 2019). Available to review on request.
5. Slimming World Whistle Blowing Policy.\*
6. Slimming World Editorial Practices document (produced in consultation with IPSO). Available to review on request.
7. Copies of the Editors' Code are supplied to all Slimming World editorial staff and it is the responsibility of each member of staff and all non-staff contributors to ensure their conduct in researching and presenting copy for print is in full compliance with the Editors' Code.

\* These documents have previously been supplied.