

Due prominence in printed media

Guidance for journalists and editors

Key Points

- The Editors' Code places a clear requirement on editors to correct issues promptly and with sufficient prominence.
- IPSO will take a number of factors into account when deciding how prominently remedies should be published, including the seriousness and prominence of the breach.
- An established clarifications and corrections column signifies a commitment to accuracy.
- Editors can contact IPSO if they would like advice on how to ensure that they publish remedies with sufficient prominence.

About this guidance

Under the rules of the Editors' Code of Practice, editors are required to correct breaches of the Code promptly and with due prominence. This guidance explains how IPSO makes decisions on the prominence with which editors must publish remedies in printed media (or in electronically-rendered print editions). It is aimed at editors and others, including the public, who want to understand IPSO's approach, focusing on points for editors to consider.

This document refers to print publication only. Later guidance will also cover online publication.

Case studies of relevant decisions by IPSO's Complaints Committee are included to illustrate how the due prominence rule is applied. The Committee makes two types of judgements relating to prominence: it decides whether corrections published or offered by publications meet the requirements of "due prominence" under Clause 1 (Accuracy), and it decides the extent and placement of any remedial action it requires when it upholds a complaint.

The case studies are summaries of the decisions of the Committee, and it is recommended that the decisions are read in full.

The Editors' Code

[The Editors' Code of Practice](#) sets the framework for the highest professional standards for journalists and the rules that newspapers and magazines, which are regulated by IPSO, must follow.

What does 'due prominence' mean?

Clause 1 (ii) of the Editors' Code states: *A significant inaccuracy, misleading statement or distortion must be corrected, promptly and with due prominence and - where appropriate - an apology published. In cases involving IPSO, due prominence should be as required by the regulator.*

Decisions about due prominence are highly specific to the individual circumstances of each case. In this guidance IPSO sets out the established principles that guide its general approach to deciding the prominence that is appropriate and proportionate to remedy any inaccuracy or breach of the Code; drawn from rulings that have required it to consider what due prominence has meant in practice in individual complaints.

Due prominence is not the same as equal prominence. In some cases, the Committee will require that a correction is positioned further forwards in a newspaper or magazine than the original article which requires correcting.

There are exceptions to this, for example, if a publication's established clarifications and corrections page is the page for reader's letters. In many publications, this can be one of the most-read pages, and therefore a correction placed here would be widely seen. Corrections to front-page articles are also an exception and are discussed later in this document.

Further reading about the prominence of corrections can be found in research commissioned by IPSO from the University of Sheffield. This third-party research represents the views and conclusions of the researchers.

To read all IPSO-commissioned research, visit: <https://www.ipso.co.uk/monitoring/research/>

How should corrections and adjudications be presented in print?

In circumstances where the Committee establishes a breach of the Editors' Code, it can require the publication of a correction and/or an adjudication, [the terms and placement of which is determined by IPSO](#).

A correction should put the correct position on record. An adjudication is a longer-form ruling which explains more about the breach of the Code, and the wording is supplied by IPSO.

What factors does IPSO consider when deciding what is due prominence?

IPSO may consider the following factors when deciding on the prominence of the correction or adjudication, either separately or in combination:

- The seriousness of the breach of the Code.
- The position of the breach of the Code within the publication.
- The prominence of the breach of the Code within the article.

- The extent of the breach of the Code within the article.
- The public interest in remedying the breach of the Code.
- The consequences of the breach of the Code.
- Any actions taken by the publisher to address the breach of the Code.

Clarifications and corrections columns

Many publications have an established corrections column which serves several important purposes: it signifies a commitment to accuracy and transparency; it provides information to readers about how to make complaints; and if it appears consistently, it contributes to the prominence of corrections by ensuring that readers know where to find them.

It also simplifies the process for deciding where a correction will be placed.

A uniform headline, e.g. "corrections and clarifications", increases the findability for readers, as does the use of different fonts (size and colour) and coloured boxes. Incorporating the IPSO mark enhances the demonstration of professionally-produced externally-regulated content.

In order to be considered established, a corrections column should appear regularly in the same place and should include information about the publication's complaints policy. In the complaint below, the publication did not have an established column at the time that it was required to publish a correction. For some publications, it may not be necessary to have a column printed each week but to have a policy on where corrections will be published when these are received.

Wilson v The Press and Journal

At the point that IPSO considered the complaint, The Press and Journal ran its corrections on either page five or page six of the newspaper. The Press and Journal also provided information on the letters page in each edition about the location of the corrections. IPSO ruled that the Press and Journal had to publish a correction to address a significant inaccuracy. The newspaper offered to publish the correction on page five or six, which was where the newspaper usually published corrections, when the original article had appeared on page three. IPSO ruled that the regular placement of corrections on page five or six as standalone items did not amount to an established corrections column.

The location of corrections varied across two pages, and the statement recording the publication's complaints policy was published on a different page. Without an established column, IPSO did not consider that the publication of a correction two or three pages further back in the publication than the original error constituted due prominence. The newspaper was required to publish the correction on page three or further forward and also on the newspaper's homepage. Following this complaint, The Press and Journal established a signposted corrections column.

What if an inaccuracy is featured on a front page or front cover?

If a correction or an adjudication is required by IPSO's Complaints Committee, this is usually published on the same page or further forwards than the original article. In the case of a significant inaccuracy being published on the front page or front cover of a newspaper or magazine, it would not always be appropriate for an entire correction or adjudication to be published here. However, reference to this can be made on the front page.

Front pages and front covers are of particular importance to newspapers and magazines as they inform readers using limited space, of the main stories contained within that particular issue. Further, front pages and covers generally provide a publication with an opportunity to communicate with potential new readers. They are therefore valuable both commercially and editorially, as a means of expression.

IPSO must act proportionately in deciding whether or not to require a front-page or front-cover correction or adjudication.

Portes v Metro

A man complained about an article on the front page of Metro which inaccurately reported that the number of people dying from illnesses at home had increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. The publication did not consider the headline to be significantly misleading or that an inaccuracy was significant. Nevertheless, it offered to publish a correction in its regular corrections and clarifications column on page 2, as the location was familiar to its readership and as such was suitably prominent.

The article was misleading on a matter of great significance during a global public health emergency. After finding a breach of Clause 1 (Accuracy), the Committee concluded that an adjudication was the appropriate remedy. Given the prominence of the original article, and the nature of the breach, a reference to the upheld ruling should be published on the front page of newspaper. This should direct readers to page two, where the adjudication should be published in full, and be clearly distinguished from other editorial content.

Front page references to corrections and adjudications are specified by the Complaints Committee who will consider the original article or cover headline under complaint.

Welch v Woman's Own

Denise Welch complained about an article trailed on the front page of Woman's Own magazine under the headline "Denise's DIVA demands!". The publication accepted that it had failed to take care over the accuracy of the article and offered to publish a correction and apology on page 3 of the magazine. Although IPSO considered that the wording of the correction offered was sufficient, and that it had been offered promptly, its placement on page 3 was not sufficiently prominent.

The claims to be corrected had taken up a considerable portion of the front cover. The appropriate remedy was the publication of the correction and apology offered, with a front cover reference to this apology. IPSO ruled that the cover reference to the correction and apology should appear in the same font size as the cover sub-headline on the article under complaint.

Front page requirements when there was no published story

Front page and front cover corrections are generally reserved for the most serious cases, wherever the breach of the Code appeared in the publication. There are times when IPSO requires a significant breach of the Code to be remedied on a front page, even when an original article did not appear here, or in circumstances where the Code has been breached but there was no published article. This was the case when a woman complained that the conduct of a reporter from the Halifax Courier breached Clause 14 (Confidential Sources) of the Editors' Code.

A woman v The Halifax Courier

A woman had posted on social media about her day at work, with the name of her employer being evident. A journalist commented and asked her to get in touch with the publication. She then sent two e-mails to the news desk and stressed that she needed to remain anonymous for fear of losing her job. After the reporter contacted the employer's press office to ask for a statement, the complainant was suspended from her job. She complained under Clause 14 (Confidential Sources), and the Committee found a breach of Clause 14, as the publication had been unable to establish that it had protected the complainant as a confidential source. In these circumstances, the publication of an adjudication was appropriate.

The complaint did not relate to any published material, and so the Committee considered carefully where the adjudication should appear. The breach of the Code was very serious. It had partly led to the complainant being dismissed by her employer. The adjudication should therefore appear on page 3 of the newspaper, or further forward, and the headline of the adjudication must also be published on the newspaper's front page, directing readers to the page on which it would appear.