

# Due prominence in digital media

Guidance for journalists and editors

## Key Points

- The Editors' Code of Practice places a clear requirement on editors to correct significant inaccuracies promptly and with due prominence.
- The requirement to correct significant inaccuracies with due prominence in digital or social media posts can raise complex issues.
- Considerations unique to digital journalism include how long the inaccurate content was accessible for and how long it will remain accessible without revision.
- Where a significant inaccuracy appears in a social media post under the control of a publication, a correction is generally required to be issued on the same platform.
- Editors can contact IPSO if they would like advice on due prominence, including in cases where IPSO is not already involved.

# 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 for online articles or social media posts which fall under a publication's editorial control.

This guidance is aimed at editors and others, including the public, who want to understand IPSO's approach. This document refers to online content and social media posts. Information on due prominence in print can be found here: <https://www.ipso.co.uk/media/2288/due-prominence-journalist-guidance.pdf>

Case studies of relevant decisions by IPSO's Complaints Committee are included to illustrate how the due prominence requirement of the Editors' Code is applied. The Committee makes judgments relating to prominence primarily in two situations: 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 such as corrections and adjudications it requires when it upholds a complaint.

The case studies summarise the Committee's decisions. It is recommended that the decisions are read in full. They can be found on the [IPSO website](#).

## The Editors' Code of Practice

[The Editors' Code](#) sets the framework for the highest professional standards for journalists. This guidance does not replace or supersede the Code but is designed to support editors and journalists in understanding how the terms of the Code are applied. It does not limit or restrict editorial decision-making but may inform it.

# What is “due prominence” in digital media?

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.

The requirement to correct inaccurate online articles or significant inaccuracies in social media posts can raise complex issues for editors to consider. Many publications do not have an established online “corrections page” as they might do for a print counterpart, and social media posts can often be overlooked when it comes to remedial action. Readers may click through to individual articles directly from search engines, social media, or other websites, and may not see a correction which appears on a homepage or is added later to the original article.

Decisions about due prominence are highly specific to the individual circumstances of each case. This guidance sets out established principles from these decisions drawing from rulings that have

required IPSO to consider what due prominence has meant in practice in individual complaints.

The factors that influence whether a correction is required to appear on the same page as the article which contained the inaccuracy, or be published as a standalone article, are discussed later in this guidance.

# What are the different ways corrections can appear online?

The prominence of corrections in digital media is more complex and dynamic than in traditional print formats. Corrections might appear:

- in a separate clarification and corrections page
- on the homepage or in a separate page linked from the homepage
- underneath the headline at the start of an article
- at the end of an article as a footnote
- as a social media post.

## Clarifications and corrections pages

Many publications have a corrections webpage. This signifies a commitment to accuracy and transparency and may contribute to the prominence of corrections by creating a single record where corrections can be found. It also simplifies the process for deciding where a correction will be placed. Incorporating the IPSO mark on the page demonstrates a commitment to professional standards and externally-regulated content. To make such corrections more visible to the casual reader, regulated publications should

consider having a permanent link to the page on the homepage or in a drop-down menu.

## What is IPSO's remit over digital content?

IPSO regulates everything publications have editorial control over, including social media accounts.

This covers any accounts operated by publications, but not individual journalists' social media accounts.

# What factors does IPSO consider when deciding what is duly prominent?

Regardless of the medium, IPSO may consider the following factors when deciding on the prominence of a correction or an adjudication:

- the seriousness of the breach of the Code
  - the prominence of the breach of the Code within the article (including whether it appeared in the headline)
  - the extent of the breach of the Code within the article (i.e. the extent to which the article is based on or references it)
  - the public interest in remedying the breach of the Code
  - the impact of the breach of the Code
  - any actions taken by the publisher to address the breach of the Code.
- correction is required to bring it to readers' attention
  - whether an offer to revise the article was made, which the Complaints Committee decides was acceptable
  - whether the material under complaint continues to be published online without revision at the time that the Complaints Committee reaches a decision that remedial action is required; and
  - whether the article will continue to be published in an unamended form notwithstanding the finding of a breach of the Code by the Complaints Committee.

## Digital-specific factors

There are other factors that are particularly relevant in relation to digital publication, including:

- the duration over which the inaccurate information has been published, including when the publication was made aware that the information was inaccurate
- whether the publication of a standalone or homepage

# Social media publication

Where a significant inaccuracy appears in a social media post published on a feed under the control of a regulated title, the Committee will generally require any correction to be issued on the same platform to meet the due prominence requirement of Clause 1(ii). For example, a correction in respect of an Instagram Story should be posted as an Instagram Story.

The social media corrections should make clear the original inaccuracy and set out the correct position. They should generally be posted on the same accounts as the original posts and remain on the social media feeds in keeping with the publication's standard practices for editorial content.

In the complaint of **Hackett v Hull Daily Mail**, the paper accepted after publication its articles were inaccurate. While print and digital articles were corrected promptly and with due prominence, the newspaper was required to publish corrections on both its Facebook and Twitter accounts. It had not done so, and there was a breach of Clause 1 (ii) in relation to the Facebook and Twitter posts.

## Hackett v Hull Daily Mail

A man complained about an article which incorrectly reported that a primary school would not be reopening after the Christmas break. The article was published in print and digital media, and links to the article were posted on Facebook and Twitter.

After the headteacher contacted the publication, it amended the digital version of the article and deleted the social media posts linking to the article. It added a footnote to the amended version of the article and published a clarification in the print edition. The publication said it did not consider it would be proportionate to publish a correction on its social media channels, where the social media posts linking to the article had been removed.

The Committee upheld the complaint over the publication's failure to publish the correction on social media where the inaccurate claim had appeared. It concluded that the appropriate remedy was the publication of corrections on the publication's Facebook and Twitter feeds.

# Inaccuracies in headlines

The Committee regards inaccuracies in headlines to be of greater significance than those which appear only in the text of an article. This is because headlines by their nature are more prominent. In the case of digital publication, the headline (or a version of the headline) is likely to appear on home or section pages or shared as a social media post. In such cases, the Committee may consider whether a standalone correction is required to fulfill the requirement of due prominence.

The Committee may require a standalone correction linked from the website's homepage, whether or not the original article has since been deleted (and whether or not it is established to have appeared on the homepage). The Committee may specify the placement, e.g. top half of the page.

A footnote to the article may also be required (if the article has been amended) or a note at the top of the article (if the article has not been amended) which explains the inaccuracy and the correct position or makes clear that it is unknown.

## Phillips v The Sun

An article reported a man was under police investigation for filming Ukrainian prisoners of war. He said it was inaccurate to claim he was being investigated.

The Committee considered that the publication had not taken the necessary care when reporting that the complainant was being investigated by the police. It required publication of a correction in the dedicated Corrections and Clarification column in print and as a standalone correction online, given that the claim appeared in the digital headline.

The Complaints Committee also required a link to the online correction to be published on the homepage for 24 hours before being archived in the usual way. As the publication continued to publish the online article without amendment, the Committee required the correction to be added to the article beneath the headline.

# Inaccuracies within the main text of the article

Where a significant inaccuracy appears only in the text of an article (and not in the headline) and the whole article has since been deleted, the Committee will ordinarily require a standalone correction to be published. Depending upon the circumstances, IPSO may require that the correction is published in the publication's online corrections and clarifications page, if it has one, as a standalone article, or in some cases can require the correction be flagged on the homepage.

In the example of the **Centre for Media Monitoring v dailystar.co.uk**, the Committee found a breach of Clause 1(i) because the publication had failed to take care by publishing unverified information. The publication had since deleted the article and published a standalone correction. The Committee ruled that the standalone correction was duly prominent.

## [Centre for Media Monitoring v dailystar.co.uk](#)

An article based on a local radio interview prompted a complaint from the Centre for Media Monitoring. The interviewee claimed he was a paramedic and openly gay. He said he was prevented from treating a patient at a mosque in Oldham because of his sexual orientation.

The complainant said the article was inaccurate, in breach of Clause 1, as it had investigated the claims by speaking to the North West Ambulance Service (NWAS), and could find no evidence of the incident.

Before IPSO's investigation, the publication deleted the article and published a standalone correction which made clear that, following an investigation, NWAS concluded the alleged incident had not taken place. This put the correct position on record. The Committee considered that as the correction had been published on the publication's corrections page, linked from the homepage, this was duly prominent. As such, there was no breach of Clause 1(ii).



# Articles which have been amended to correct an inaccuracy

In cases where the original significant inaccuracy appeared in the text of the article only and the article has since been amended, the Committee may require a footnote correction (at the end of the article) to be published. This should set out the original inaccuracy and explain how the article has been amended.

In the complaint of **Khoram-Scotts and Scotts v Mail Online**, an article had been amended to remove significantly inaccurate information. However, the publication did not offer to publish a correction. The Committee found a breach of Clause 1(ii) and required the publication of a correction as a footnote to the article which met the requirements set out above.

## **Khoram-Scotts and Scotts v Mail Online**

Two people complained about the accuracy of a published court report. The publication had relied on a police press release that was amended after the complaint.

The publication then amended the article to report accurately the offences for which the complainants had pleaded guilty. However, this did not constitute a sufficiently prominent correction, where a footnote had not been added to the article which acknowledged the original inaccuracy for readers, and the publication had therefore breached Clause 1(ii).

The Committee therefore required the addition of a footnote to the article which recorded that the offences to which the complainants had pleaded guilty were initially reported significantly inaccurately.

# Articles which have not been amended

If an inaccuracy is identified in the text of an article, but the publication has not amended the article, the Committee may require a correction to be positioned immediately under the headline to achieve due prominence.

In the complaint of **Albany House Surgery v Worcester News**, inaccurate information was found to have been presented as fact, and to resolve the complaint the publication offered to publish the complainant's position beneath the headline. The Committee found this was duly prominent and there was no breach of Clause 1(ii).

## **Albany House Surgery v Worcester News**

A local GP surgery complained that an article which reported a patient's claims about visiting the surgery included inaccurate statements about its accessibility.

The newspaper published a clarification that made clear that the surgery disputed the patient's account of its accessibility policy and gave details of the surgery's policy. The online version of the clarification was published under the headline and therefore represented due prominence.

# Options for publications

If an article is not amended to address any significant inaccuracy in the text, it may not be clear to someone who only reads part way through that it contains an inaccuracy if a correction is not added until the end of the article.

Publications are free to decide whether or not to amend an article which remains online.

However, the decision of the publication will be taken into account by IPSO when determining the placement of a correction to be published to ensure that it receives due prominence. This was the case in the complaint of **Gomersall v mirror.co.uk**.

## [Gomersall v mirror.co.uk](#)

A woman complained that an article headlined “Couple ‘have to feed their 5 kids nothing but ready meals’ due to ‘nightmare’ crisis” was inaccurate. An audio recording of an interview did not support the assertion that the couple had been forced to feed their children “nothing but” ready meals. The article also misleadingly reported that the children played games consoles

throughout the day “as they’re off school”. The children were not out of school and playing on these consoles as the article suggested.

The Committee found that the publication had not taken the necessary care when reporting the complainant’s comments, and this had led to the publication of significantly inaccurate and misleading information, which required a correction.

The Committee indicated that if the text was not amended, then the published correction should appear immediately beneath the headline. However, as the publication had amended the text of the article to address the breach, the Committee accepted that the correction could appear as a footnote to the article, to record the alterations which had been made.