

# Slimming World Annual Statement

## 1<sup>st</sup> January – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023

### **Introduction**

Slimming World was founded by Margaret Miles-Bramwell (OBE) in 1969 and has become the UK and Ireland's leading weight loss organisation with more people choosing to attend a Slimming World group each week than any other weight loss programme. It supports hundreds of thousands of people, both in community groups and online, to lose weight and adopt new habits to stay slim for life. Slimming World's Head Office is based in Alfreton, Derbyshire.

*Slimming World Magazine*, the UK's best-selling health/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 potential members to the programme via the newsstand and digital editions. Published seven times a year, 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 250,192 (ABC Jul-Dec 2023). UK and RoI account for most of these sales (247,274 print; 2,232 digital); we also sell a small number of copies in other countries. Sales are split 70% to group members (where it has a special price of £1.95), 22% to newsstand (full cover price of £3.45) and 8% to subscriptions (from £20.70 per year).

*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 and Brand Strategy.

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

- Digital programme

Slimming World's digital service, Slimming World Online, offers a super-flexible weight loss service to slimmers who are unable to, or prefer not to, attend a face-to-face group. Here they have access to menus, recipes, success stories, health, fitness and psychology of weight loss features, videos and audio content, motivational tools and a strong online community. Members of the digital programme are also invited to a range of live Zoom events.

- Websites/app

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, menus, a blog, and so on. An exclusive website for group members, Lifeline Online, is offered as part of the membership package, as is the Slimming World app, which is available to group and online members. A Consultants' website, Our World, supports Consultants to provide the best possible service to members. We also have a website with information for health professionals.

- Publications

Slimming World provides a Member Pack to all new/re-joining group and online members. This includes our Food Optimising eating plan and a book detailing

our unique activity support 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 that group members can buy in group and online members via our online bookshop; guides for members with specific dietary needs; easy-read and other accessible resources; various internal publications (Head Office and Consultant 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 and social media channels; step-by-step cookery videos for public/member websites and social media channels; training videos for the Consultant website and in-house training sessions, and so on. We also work with external video agencies from time to time.

- Podcast

Slimming World has a sponsored public and members-only Podcast. Every 'podisode' gives listeners a boost of information and inspiration covering topics like boredom eating to body image. The Podcasts are hosted by two friends: Anna, a Slimming World Consultant, and Clare, a Slimming World member.

- In addition to the above we have:

- a social media team posting success stories and inspiration on our social media channels, and providing template social media content for Consultants
- a PR team: offering success stories/recipes/menu plans to regional and national media; producing and communicating Slimming World research; managing an online newsroom ([www.slimmingworld.co.uk/press](http://www.slimmingworld.co.uk/press)); and creating briefs to support managers working across the UK and Ireland and self-employed Consultants with local groups to approach their local media with stories 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 team members 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:

- Existing contributors (writers, photographers, stylists, etc) have a copy of our Data Protection Policy Guide (March 2023) and are aware of their individual responsibilities. New contributors are sent the Data Protection Policy Guide before their first commission. Their attention is drawn to key parts of the guide in a covering letter.
- Members selected to appear in the magazine, 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 created in consultation with 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 effect 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 consider blurring faces where they are identifiable.

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

- Slimming World has in-house teams of registered 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 checked 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 Brand Strategy 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 'scope' meetings with 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.
- The IPSO logo and following text appears on our Editor's letter page with a list of contact options: 'As members of the Independent Press Standards Organisation, we are committed to the highest of editorial standards and abide by the Editors' Code of Practice. We take concerns and complaints very seriously and welcome feedback via the channels listed above.'
- The IPSO logo and following text appear at the bottom of our 'Contact Us' page on the Slimming World website: 'As members of the Independent Press Standards Organisation, we are committed to the highest editorial standards and abide by the Editors' Code of Practice. We take concerns and complaints very seriously and welcome feedback via the contact methods listed above.'
- 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 it 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 and Brand Strategy, Director of Communications and/or Head of Corporate Responsibility, and finally to the Whittaker Board Directors.
- 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 or via Consultant newsletters.
- 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, enabling staff to 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 every two years. The next training session will take place in spring 2024.

Training needs are regularly reassessed and further training takes place as needed.

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**

Manuals/guidance used by *Slimming World Magazine*:

1. Your Essential Guide to Data Protection (a guide for Slimming World staff and freelance contributors)\*.
2. All staff have mandatory training on data protection annually via our online learning portal.
3. Contributors' data protection covering letter\*.
4. Member Consent form\*.
5. Author Commissioning Form and Licence Agreement\*.
6. Slimming World Whistle Blowing Policy\*.
7. Slimming World Editorial Practices document (produced in consultation with IPSO)\*.
8. 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 contributors to ensure their conduct in researching and presenting copy for print or digital publication is in full compliance with the Editors' Code.

\* These documents are available on request.