



IPSO Annual Statement 2015

Newsquest Media Group

This is the annual statement of Newsquest Media Group to the Independent Press Standards Organisation for the year 2015. It is made pursuant to clause 3.3.7 and Annex A of the Scheme Membership Agreement and the numbered references below are references to the numbered paragraphs of Annex A. This statement relates to the first full calendar year of IPSO's operation.

1. Factual information about the Regulated Entity

1.1 List of titles

Appendix 1 to this statement contains a list of Newsquest titles across the UK.

1.2 Responsible Person

The Responsible Person (as defined in clause 3.3.9 of the Scheme Membership Agreement) is Simon Westrop, the Head of Legal and Company Secretary for Newsquest Media Group Limited.

1.3 The nature of the Regulated Entity

Newsquest Media Group Limited is a significant UK publisher of regional newspapers and magazines, employing approximately 4,000 staff. The group publishes more than 200 news titles in print and online, stretching across the geographical length of the UK, from Enniskillen in Northern Ireland, Glasgow in Scotland and Brighton and Falmouth in the South of England. These are mostly weekly titles, but they include 19 regional daily titles, among them *The Herald* in Glasgow, *The Northern Echo* in Darlington, the *Oxford Mail* and the *Daily Echo* in Southampton. The Group operates five presses, located in Glasgow, Worcester, Oxford, Weymouth and Southampton. In addition to its regional weekly and daily news titles, Newsquest publishes local magazines and supplements and specialist national and international publications covering finance, sport and music, and also operates associated online services, including jobs, motors and property websites.

In each annual statement, we will highlight one of our regional titles to give a flavour of the range and diversity of our business. This year Editor Shuiab Khan talks about North West based *Asian Image*, which celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2017:

Asian Image aims to reaches the heart of the Asian community in the North West with a range of articles, opinions and reviews. It now boasts one of the most popular, if not the most popular of Asian news websites in the country. It also has a strong following on social media with exclusive features regularly quoted in national Asian radio talk shows.

Asian Image can be found at www.asianimage.co.uk

Newsquest's registered office is at Loudwater Mill in High Wycombe. Newsquest's ultimate holding company in the UK is Gannett U.K Limited, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Gannett Co., Inc, a US company listed on the New York stock exchange. Gannett is itself a leading media and marketing company. During 2015, Newsquest acquired Romanes Media Group, which has brought 29 news brands into the Group, including the daily *Greenock Telegraph*.

Publications are delivered in print and electronically online, via websites and social media and in versions adapted for mobile telephones and other portable devices, as well as in digital facsimile and feeds to third party electronic databases. About 120 free print titles are distributed door-to-door. The ever-increasing importance of the internet as a medium is reflected in Newsquest's network of more than 160 independently audited local newspaper and portal websites. Together with exchangeandmart.co.uk and S1, which carries homes and jobs advertising in Scotland, Newsquest websites score a growing monthly digital audience of 28 million unique browsers.

Newsquest presses provide contract printing services to business and the public sector. Newsquest Direct offers specialist marketing services and delivery of marketing materials door-to-door. Many newspapers and magazines also organise exhibitions, fairs, competitions and other events in their local communities.

Newsquest titles are not only a principal source of reliable local news, they are also a vital force for community identity and cohesion in an increasingly fragmented world. Each year Newsquest's commitment to the communities it serves is expressed through a programme of charitable grants from the Gannett Foundation UK in support of local causes. Sums in excess of £3 million have been distributed over the last 10 years. Trustees are currently evaluating an application lodged with *The Press* newspaper in York for emergency relief following flood damage in the city.

2. Copies of internal manuals, codes or guidance used by journalists

Newsquest issues policies on many matters relevant to the work of its employees, including for instance a policy on commercial ethics. For the purposes of this IPSO statement to IPSO, we attach at Appendix 2 internal guidance entitled "Principles of ethical newsgathering", which is specific to the work of journalists. It is of many years standing and borrows from the experiences of our colleagues in the US. It is guidance only and has no binding effect, but we use it to help journalists to follow the Editors' Code and good practice generally. Separate guidance on legal and regulatory matters is issued by Newsquest Legal from time to time.

3. The compliance process

Newsquest titles advertise their adherence to the Editors' Code (online and on an inner news page in print) and publish a complaints procedure by which any reader may claim breach of the Code by email or post. Complaints are handled personally by Editors, Group Editors (in charge of a series of titles) or Digital Content Editors (in the case of online story complaints). Complaints handlers are not restricted in their conduct of the process or the discretion they may use, subject to any relevant internal advisory policies. If agreement cannot be achieved or has not been achieved within 28 days, complainants are reminded of their right to take the matter to IPSO. Legal claims are referred to Newsquest Legal. Published corrections and apologies, fresh stories, follow-ups, published letters, deletions or annotations to archived online stories, private letters and personal meetings are some of the various resolutions which might be offered. However, an Editor will stand firm if he or she is confident that a story is justified under the law and the Code. Three senior Editors form an Oversight Committee to consider matters relating to standards and the Code across the Newsquest Media Group.

3.1 Pre-publication guidance (Regulation 4.5)

Newsquest editors have usually been receptive to non-binding pre-publication discussions with IPSO where a person affected by a proposed story has raised concerns. And IPSO rulings are frequently consulted as helpful precedents. On the other hand, except for points of Code interpretation, a strong attachment to editorial independence would make local newspapers less likely to make a pre-publication approach to IPSO themselves, especially as IPSO might ultimately be judge in the same cause at a later date. We are not aware of any instance of guidance given or sought in the relevant period.

3.2 Verification of stories

Newsquest's approach to verification is discussed variously in the Newsquest guidance entitled "Principles of ethical newsgathering" at Appendix 2.

If journalism is the first draft of history, then it is necessarily a rough draft, written very often against obstructions (deliberate or otherwise) and the pressure of deadlines. We welcome interaction with our readers because it is in co-operation with them that the full story may be revealed.

3.3 Compliance with the Editors' Code

The number of complaints finally submitted to adjudication by IPSO belies the efforts beforehand both by IPSO and the publishers to achieve a speedy and fair resolution where a breach of the Code is alleged. For instance, there was just one adjudication recorded by IPSO in respect of the 15 weekly titles and one daily title published by Newsquest Midlands. However, there were five other complaints to IPSO in the Midlands in 2015: four of them were eliminated by IPSO during the initial sifting process as not disclosing any breach of the Code and one of them was referred back to the Editor, who negotiated a resolution with the complainant directly. And the publisher's own internal procedures dealt with four more Code complaints without any involvement by IPSO at all, resulting in one published apology and one statement of clarification. Of course, publishers also receive from time to time legal complaints which do not depend on the Code. Such matters fall outside the scope of this annual statement, but it may be interesting to note that Newsquest Midlands received four solicitors' letters in 2015, none of which merited settlement or led to legal proceedings.

Editors do not confine themselves to the Code. They will often think beyond it and apply their own standards of good practice. Relatives of people who have died or suffered injury commonly object to newspaper coverage of accident or inquests, which they find distressing. While the press cannot shirk its professional duty to report the facts in the interests of readers generally, and relatives can simply avoid reading the media if they choose, nevertheless the record in 2015 shows that editors will frequently engage sympathetically with these complainants and on occasion voluntarily adjust stories or newsroom practices, even where there is no Code breach, for instance in relation to the amount of sensitive detail that is used. The Editor of *The Northern Echo*, Peter Barron, wrote an article in August 2015, describing to readers how preconceptions about the editorial process are often wide of the mark; it is attached at Appendix 3.

Because of the number of titles published by Newsquest, and therefore the number of different stories, the potential number of complainants (at least from among the subjects of those stories) is far greater than would be the case, for instance, for a publisher producing a single national newspaper. Based on dates when complaints were adjudicated by IPSO, there were 33 adjudicated complaints in the relevant period. Twenty-nine were not upheld. Two were upheld, and two partly upheld.

London & Essex

Seven adjudicated complaints, none of them upheld (*Watford Observer* x3, *Surrey Comet*, *Wanstead & Woodford Guardian*, *Hendon & Finchley Times*, *Braintree & Witham Times*).

Midlands

One adjudicated complaint, not upheld (*Worcester News*).

Newsquest Specialist Media

No adjudications.

North East

One adjudicated complaint, not upheld (*Telegraph & Argus*, Bradford).

North West

Two adjudicated complaints, neither upheld (*Lancashire Telegraph*, *Warrington Guardian*).

Northern Ireland

One adjudicated complaint, not upheld (*The Impartial Reporter*).

Oxfordshire & Wiltshire

Five adjudicated complaints, none of them upheld. Two complaints from the same person on the same matter were made against the *Oxford Times* and *Witney Gazette*. On another occasion, two complaints from the same person on the same matter were made against the *Oxford Mail* and *Witney Gazette*. The fifth complaint was against the *Swindon Advertiser*.

Scotland

Seven adjudicated complaints. Five were not upheld in any part (*The Herald* x3, *Sunday Herald*, *Dunfermline Press*). One claim of inaccuracy under clause 1 of the Editors' Code was upheld (*The Herald*). Another claim of clause 1 inaccuracy was partly upheld (*The Herald*).

Southern

Five adjudicated complaints, none of them upheld (*Southern Daily Echo* x2, *The Argus*, Brighton x2, *Romsey Advertiser*).

South West & Dorset

Two adjudicated complaints. One of them was not upheld (*Dorset Echo*), but one of various claims of clause 1 inaccuracy was upheld (*Bournemouth Echo*).

Wales & Gloucestershire

One adjudicated complaint. A breach of clauses 7 and 11 (risk of identifying a child as the victim of an allegation of sexual assault) was upheld.

3.5 Editorial training

All trainee journalists are entered for the National Journalism Qualification from the National Council for the Training of Journalists. An external trainer prepares trainees for the qualification, tutoring approximately 60 young journalists during the year. Each course contains an introduction to IPSO, including case studies. In addition, the trainees undertake three practical tests in which they are asked to consider scenarios that might involve breaches of the Editors' Code. Each clause of the Code is explained and discussed, using real-life examples. Trainees are also issued with pocket-sized versions of the Code for them to carry at all times. The Code was updated in January 2016 and all trainees attending the courses in February this year were introduced to the changes and given copies of the new edition.

Newsquest Legal provides in-house editorial training for Newsquest regions and subbing centres as time allows during the year, covering primarily legal matters, but also briefing on the work of IPSO and compliance with the Editor's Code. Journalists are encouraged to read the editorial section of the Group legal report, which covers IPSO adjudications as well as news of legal matters. External trainers are commissioned as each region determines appropriate to deliver media law refresher

seminars to senior journalists. Newsquest Legal is shortly on a round of training for editorial staff in Hampshire, Berkshire, the Midlands and across Scotland.

4. Steps taken in response to adverse adjudications

The adjudication against the *Wiltshire & Gloucestershire Standard* caused its editor particular concern. It found in a court report a risk of identifying the alleged child victim of a sexual assault, which constituted a breach of Code clauses 7 and 11. The breach arose from one line of a quotation from the trial judge in the course of four articles of detailed coverage. IPSO found that it pointed readers indirectly towards the child's identity. The finding is being used as an example in training to show journalists how much care they must take with each and every reference they put in their copy.

As one of Scotland's best-known titles, the range of *The Herald's* coverage exposes it to greater risk under the Code than many other Newsquest publications. There were two adverse adjudications in 2015 under clause 1 of the Code on accuracy. Firstly, an article about troubled former Glasgow City Council leader, Steven Purcell, had too readily assumed as fact the suggestion that Mr Purcell had attempted suicide in the midst of an emotional breakdown, whereas he had always publicly maintained that he had only ever contemplated suicide. A correction was offered as soon as the complaint was made. A later editorial debriefing recognised that Mr Purcell's notoriety had on this occasion distracted the newsroom from the vulnerability of the person behind the headline.

The second finding against *The Herald* arose from freelance copy wrongly reporting the outcome of a civil court case. Although the newspaper issued a correction before IPSO became involved, it did not contain the apology IPSO said was necessary and the newspaper had appeared to try to distance itself from the freelancer's error. As a result of this complaint from Andrew McIntosh, the newsdesk was reminded that its responsibility for Code compliance extended to the work of freelancers as much as employed journalists. And the correction of an error, once acknowledged, ought to be both prompt and sufficient.

The Bournemouth Echo earned more credit for its handling of a complaint from former Dorset County Council leader Spencer Flower. There was one point of significant inaccuracy: a report about Cllr Flower's conviction (and conditional discharge) for an offence under the Localism Act 2011 had mistaken an order for court costs for the imposition of a fine. The error was corrected unilaterally before IPSO became involved. The regulator noted that the newspaper's statement had also addressed other points among multiple issues raised by Cllr Flower, even though they were not breaches of the Code. The lesson drawn by the Editor was that a prompt and generous response to a genuine error serves the interests of readers generally even if a complainant refuses to accept it as a final resolution.

APPENDIX 1

NEWSQUEST MEDIA GROUP TITLES

PRINTED TITLES	
LONDON	NORTH WEST contd
Barnet & Potters Bar Times	Knutsford Guardian
Bexley News Shopper	Lancashire Telegraph
Borehamwood & Elstree Times	Leigh Journal
Bucks Free Press	Northwich, Winsford and Middlewich Guardian
Bromley Limited Edition	Prestwich & Whitefield Guide
Bromley News Shopper	Radcliffe Times
Chingford Guardian	Runcorn and Widnes World
Croydon Guardian	Sale & Altrincham Messenger
Dartford & Swanley News Shopper	South Lakes Citizen
Edgware & Mill Hill Times	St Helens Star
Elite	Stretford Urmston Messenger
Elmbridge Guardian	The Bolton News
Enfield Independent	Warrington Guardian
Epping Forest Guardian	Warrington Midweek
Epping Forest Independent	Westmoreland Gazette
Epsom Guardian	Wimslow Guardian
Gravesend News Shopper	Wirral Globe
Greenwich Borough News Shopper	Knutsford Guardian
Haringey Independent	Lancashire Telegraph
Harrow Times	Leigh Journal
Hendon & Finchley Times	Northwich, Winsford and Middlewich Guardian
Kingston Guardian	Prestwich & Whitefield Guide
Lewisham & Catford News Shopper	Radcliffe Times
Locate	Runcorn and Widnes World
Marlow Free Press	Sale & Altrincham Messenger
Richmond & Twickenham Times	South Lakes Citizen
South Bucks Star	St Helens Star
St Albans & Harpenden Review	Stretford Urmston Messenger
Surrey Comet	The Bolton News
Sutton Guardian	Warrington Guardian
Waltham Forest Guardian	Warrington Midweek
Waltham Forest Independent	Westmoreland Gazette
Wandsworth Guardian	Wimslow Guardian
Wanstead & Woodford Guardian	Wirral Globe
Watford Free	
Watford Observer	NORTH EAST
Wimbledon Guardian	Chester-le-Street Advertiser
	Consett & Stanley Advertiser
NORTH WEST	Craven Herald & Pioneer
Asian Image	Darlington, Aycliffe & Sedfield Advertiser
Bury Times	Darlington & Stockton Times
Bolton Journal	Durham Advertiser
Chorley Citizen	Durham Times
Crewe & Nantwich Guardian	Gazette & Herald

Ilkley Gazette	Basingstoke Extra
Keighley News	Basingstoke Gazette
Living Magazine	Bournemouth Advertiser
North Yorkshire Advertiser	Bournemouth Echo
Northern Farmer	Bridport News
Telegraph & Argus	Brighton and Hove Leader
The Northern Echo	Breeze Magazine
The Press	Business South Magazine
Wear Valley Magazine	Christchurch Advertiser
Wharfedale & Aireborough Observer	Dorchester Advertiser
	Dorset Echo
MIDLANDS	Dorset Society
Berrows Worcester Journal	Dorset Brides
Bromsgrove Advertiser	Dorset Business
Cotswold Journal	Eastleigh News Extra
Droitwich Spa Advertiser	Hampshire Brides
Dudley News	Hampshire Chronicle
Evesham Journal	Hampshire Society
Halesowen News	Lyme Regis News
Hereford Society	Mid Sussex Leader
Hereford Times	New Forest Post
I Will Wedding Magazine	New Forest Society
Kidderminster Shuttle	North Hampshire Society
Ledbury Reporter	Poole Advertiser
Ludlow Advertiser	Romsey Advertiser
Malvern Gazette	Simply Chichester
Redditch & Alcester Advertiser	Simply Worthing
Stourbridge News	South Coast Leader
Tenbury Wells Advertiser	Southampton News Extra
Three Counties Farmer	Southern Daily Echo
Worcester News	Swanage & Wareham
	The Argus (Brighton)
ESSEX	Weymouth and Portland Advertiser
Basildon, Billericay & Wickford Recorder	Wimborne and Ferndown Advertiser
Braintree & Witham Times	Winchester News Extra
Brentwood Weekly News	
Chelmsford Weekly News	WALES & GLOUCESTERSHIRE
Clacton, Frinton & Walton Gazette	Auto Exchange Wales
Daily Gazette Standard (Colchester)	Barry & District News
Echo (Southend, Basildon & Castle Point)	Cardigan & Tivy-Side Advertiser
Halstead Gazette	Cotswold Essence
Harwich & Manningtree Standard	Free Press Series
Maldon & Burnham Standard	Gazette Series (Gloucestershire)
Southend, Rayleigh, Rochford & Castle Point Standard	Independent Series
Thurrock Gazette	Milford & West Wales Mercury
	Monmouthshire County Life
	Pembrokeshire County Living
SOUTHERN	Pembrokeshire Farmer
Andover Advertiser	Penarth Times

South Wales Argus	Reading Midweek
South Wales Golfer	Royal Borough Observer
South Wales Guardian	Slough Midweek
Stroud News & Journal	Slough Observer
The Campaign	The Villager
Voice	Wokingham News
Wales Farmer	Woodley and Earley Chronicle
Western Telegraph	
Wilts & Gloucestershire Standard	SCOTLAND
	Alloa Advertiser
OXFORDSHIRE & WILTSHIRE	Alloa Weekender
Abingdon Herald	Ardrossan & Saltcoats Herald
Banbury Cake	Ayr Advertiser
Bicester Advertiser	Barrhead News
Didcot Herald	Border Telegraph
Gazette & Herald	Carrick Herald
Oxford Mail	Central Fife Times
Salisbury Advertiser	Clydebank Post
Salisbury Journal	Country Lifestyle Scotland
Swindon Advertiser	Cumnock Chronicle
Swindon Star	Dumbarton Reporter
The Oxford Times	Dunfermline Press
Wallingford Herald	East Lothian Courier
Wantage & Grove Herald	Evening Times
Wiltshire Star	Fife and Kinross Extra
Wiltshire Times	Greenock Telegraph
Witney Gazette	Helensburgh Advertiser
	Irvine Times
SOUTH WEST	Largs and Millport Weekly News
Admart Freeads	Paisley Gazette
Bridgwater Mercury	Paisley People
Burnham and Highbridge Weekly News	Peebleshire News
Chard & Ilminster News	Scottish Cycling
Falmouth Packet	Scottish Farmer
Helston Packet	Scottish Walks
Smallholder	Stirling News
Society Magazine	Strathallan Times
Somerset County Gazette	Sunday Herald
Somerset County Gazette West Somerset	The Herald
South West Farmer	The National
The Packet	Troon Times
The Star	
West Cornwall Packet	NORTHERN IRELAND
	Impartial Reporter
BERKSHIRE	
Ascot News	SPECIALIST MEDIA
Bracknell Midweek	Boxing News
Bracknell News	Engaged Investor
Newbury Chronicle	Global Reinsurance
Reading Chronicle	Insurance Times

ONLINE TITLES	
LONDON	Knutsford Guardian
Barnet & Potters Bar Times	Lancashire Telegraph
Bexley News Shopper	Leigh Journal
Borehamwood & Elstree Times	Northwich Guardian
Bucks Free Press	Northwich, Winsford and Middlewich Guardian
Bromley Limited Edition	Prestwich & Whitefield Guide
Bromley News Shopper	Radcliffe Times
Chingford Guardian	Runcorn and Widnes World
Croydon Guardian	Sale & Altrincham Messenger
Dartford & Swanley News Shopper	South Lakes Citizen
Ealing Times	St Helens Star
Edgware & Mill Hill Times	Stretford Urmston Messenger
Elite	The Bolton News
Elmbridge Guardian	Warrington Guardian
Enfield Independent	Warrington Midweek
Epping Forest Guardian	Westmoreland Gazette
Epping Forest Independent	Wimslow Guardian
Epsom Guardian	Wirral Globe
Gravesend News Shopper	Knutsford Guardian
Greenwich Borough News Shopper	Lancashire Telegraph
Haringey Independent	Leigh Journal
Harrow Times	Northwich, Winsford and Middlewich Guardian
Hendon & Finchley Times	Prestwich & Whitefield Guide
Hillingdon Times	Radcliffe Times
Kingston Guardian	Runcorn and Widnes World
Lewisham & Catford News Shopper	Sale & Altrincham Messenger
Locate	South Lakes Citizen
Marlow Free Press	St Helens Star
Richmond & Twickenham Times	Stretford Urmston Messenger
South Bucks Star	The Bolton News
St Albans & Harpenden Review	Warrington Guardian
Streatham Guardian	Warrington Midweek
Surrey Comet	Westmoreland Gazette
Sutton Guardian	Wimslow Guardian
This is Local London	Winsford Guardian
Waltham Forest Guardian	Wirral Globe
Waltham Forest Independent	
Wandsworth Guardian	NORTH EAST
Wanstead & Woodford Guardian	Chester-le-Street Advertiser
Watford Free	Consett & Stanley Advertiser
Watford Observer	Craven Herald & Pioneer
Wimbledon Guardian	Darlington, Aycliffe & Sedfield Advertiser
Your Local Guardian	Darlington & Stockton Times
NORTH WEST	Durham Advertiser
Asian Image	Durham Times
Bury Times	Gazette & Herald
Bolton Journal	Ilkley Gazette
Chorley Citizen	Keighley News
Crewe & Nantwich Guardian	Living Magazine

North Yorkshire Advertiser	Christchurch Advertiser
Northern Farmer	Dorchester Advertiser
Telegraph & Argus	Dorset Echo
The Northern Echo	Dorset Society
The Press	Dorset Brides
Wear Valley Magazine	Dorset Business
Wharfedale & Aireborough Observer	Eastleigh News Extra
	Hampshire Chronicle
MIDLANDS	Hampshire Society
Berrows Worcester Journal	Lyme Regis News
Bromsgrove Advertiser	Mid Sussex Leader
Cotswold Journal	New Forest Post
Droitwich Spa Advertiser	New Forest Society
Dudley News	North Hampshire Society
Evesham Journal	Poole Advertiser
Halesowen News	Romsey Advertiser
Hereford Society	Simply Chichester
Hereford Times	Simply Worthing
I Will Wedding Magazine	South Coast Leader
Kidderminster Shuttle	Southampton News Extra
Ledbury Reporter	Southern Daily Echo
Ludlow Advertiser	Swanage & Wareham
Malvern Gazette	The Argus (Brighton)
Redditch & Alcester Advertiser	Weymouth and Portland Advertiser
Stourbridge News	Wimborne and Ferndown Advertiser
Tenbury Wells Advertiser	Winchester News Extra
Worcester News	
	WALES & GLOUCESTERSHIRE
ESSEX	Auto Exchange Wales
Basildon, Billericay & Wickford Recorder	Barry & District News
Braintree & Witham Times	Cardigan & Tivy-Side Advertiser
Brentwood Weekly News	Cotswold Essence
Chelmsford Weekly News	Free Press Series
Clacton, Frinton & Walton Gazette	Gazette Series (Gloucestershire)
Daily Gazette (Colchester)	Independent Series
Echo (Southend, Basildon & Castle Point)	Milford & West Wales Mercury
Essex County Standard	Monmouthshire County Life
Halstead Gazette	Pembrokeshire County Living
Harwich & Manningtree Standard	Pembrokeshire Farmer
Maldon & Burnham Standard	Penarth Times
Southend, Rayleigh, Rochford & Castle Point Standard	South Wales Argus
Thurrock Gazette	South Wales Golfer
	South Wales Guardian
SOUTHERN	Stroud News & Journal
Andover Advertiser	The Campaign
Basingstoke Extra	Voice
Basingstoke Gazette	Wales Farmer
Bournemouth Advertiser	Western Telegraph
Bournemouth Echo	Wilts & Gloucestershire Standard

OXFORDSHIRE & WILTSHIRE	Alloa Weekender
Abingdon Herald	Ardrossan & Saltcoats Herald
Banbury Cake	Ayr Advertiser
Bicester Advertiser	Barrhead News
Didcot Herald	Border Telegraph
Gazette & Herald	Carrick Herald
Oxford Mail	Central Fife Times
Salisbury Advertiser	Clydebank Post
Salisbury Journal	Country Lifestyle Scotland
Swindon Advertiser	Cumnock Chronicle
The Oxford Times	Dumbarton Reporter
Wallingford Herald	Dunfermline Press
Wantage & Grove Herald	East Lothian Courier
Wiltshire Times	Evening Times
Witney Gazette	Fife and Kinross Extra
	Greenock Telegraph
SOUTH WEST	Helensburgh Advertiser
Admart Freeads	Irvine Times
Boating Cornwall	Largs and Millport Weekly News
Bridgwater Mercury	Paisley Gazette
Burnham and Highbridge Weekly News	Paisley People
Chard & Ilminster News	Peebleshire News
Falmouth Packet	Scottish Cycling
Helston Packet	Scottish Farmer
Smallholder	Scottish Walks
Society Magazine	Stirling News
Somerset County Gazette	Strathallan Times
Somerset County Gazette West Somerset	Sunday Herald
South West Farmer	The Herald
The Packet	The National
The Star	Troon Times
This is The West Country	
West Cornwall Packet	NORTHERN IRELAND
Yeovil Express	Impartial Reporter
BERKSHIRE	SPECIALIST MEDIA
Ascot News	Boxing News
Bracknell Midweek	Engaged Investor
Bracknell News	Global Reinsurance
Newbury Chronicle	Insurance Times
Reading Midweek	Pensions Insight
Royal Borough Observer	Reward
Slough Midweek	Strategic Risk
Slough Observer	Strategic Risk (Asia)
The Villager	The Great Outdoors
Wokingham News	The Strad
Woodley and Earley Chronicle	
SCOTLAND	
Alloa Advertiser	

APPENDIX 2



PRINCIPLES OF ETHICAL NEWSGATHERING Newsquest Media Group Guidance

For legal advice and further guidance on the application of these Principles, contact Newsquest Media Group's in-house lawyer, Simon Westrop, at:



These guidelines are based on the guidelines on ethical newsgathering conduct issued by the Newspaper Division of Newsquest's US parent company Gannett Co., Inc. They consist of five ethical principles and their supporting objectives accompanied by recommended practices to protect the principles.

The five principles are:

- Seeking and reporting the truth in a truthful way
- Serving the public interest
- Exercising fair play
- Maintaining independence
- Acting with integrity

I. PRINCIPLES OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR NEWSROOMS

NEWSQUEST MEDIA GROUP PUBLICATIONS ARE COMMITTED TO:

Seeking and reporting the truth in a truthful way

We will dedicate ourselves to reporting the news accurately, thoroughly and in context.

We will be honest in the way we gather, report and present news.

We will be persistent in the pursuit of the whole story.

We will keep our word.

We will hold factual information in opinion columns and editorials to the same standards of accuracy as news stories.

We will seek to gain sufficient understanding of the communities, individuals and stories we cover to provide an informed account of activities.

Serving the public interest

We will uphold the freedom of the press the better to serve the democratic process.

We will be vigilant watchdogs of government and institutions that affect the public.

We will provide the news and information that people need to function as effective citizens.

We will seek solutions as well as expose problems and wrongdoing.

We will provide a public forum for diverse people and views.

We will reflect and encourage understanding of the diverse segments of our community.

We will provide editorial and community leadership.

We will seek to promote understanding of complex issues.

Exercising fair play

We will treat people with dignity, respect and compassion.

We will correct errors promptly.

We will strive to include all sides relevant to a story.

We will explain to readers our journalistic processes.

We will give particular attention to fairness in relations with people unaccustomed to dealing with the press.

We will use unnamed sources as the sole basis for published information only as a last resort and under specific procedures that best serve the public's right to know.

We will be accessible to readers.

Maintaining independence

We will remain free of outside interests, investments or business relationships that may compromise the credibility of our news report.

We will maintain an impartial, arm's length relationship with anyone seeking to influence the news.

We will avoid potential conflicts of interest and eliminate inappropriate influence on content.

We will be free of improper obligations to news sources, newsmakers and advertisers.

We will differentiate advertising from news.

Acting with integrity

We will act honourably and ethically in dealing with news sources, the public and our colleagues.

We will obey the law.

We will observe common standards of decency.

We will take responsibility for our decisions and consider the possible consequences of our actions.

We will be conscientious in observing these principles.

We will always try to do the right thing.

II. PROTECTING THE PRINCIPLES

No statement of principles and procedures can anticipate every circumstance that may arise. Fundamental principles sometimes conflict. Therefore these recommended practices cannot establish standards of performance for journalists in every situation.

Careful judgment and common sense should be applied to make the decisions that best serve the public interest. The best decisions are obtained after open-minded consultations with appropriate colleagues and superiors – augmented, when necessary, by the advice from Newsquest’s In-house legal adviser or appointed external legal advisers, and if appropriate from independent outside experts or others whose views in confidence may provide clarity in sorting out issues.

Here are some recommended practices to follow to protect the Principles. This list is not exhaustive. There may be additional practices – implicit in the Principles or determined within individual newsrooms – that will further ensure credible and responsible journalism.

Ensuring the Truth Principle

Newsgathering by subterfuge can be justified in certain circumstances, where it is necessary in order to expose the truth, but only where it serves the public interest and otherwise complies with the Editors’ Code of Practice. (Always consult Newsquest Media Group Legal and the guidance on covert activities before embarking on such action).

In our general dealings however:

We will not lie.

We will not misstate our identities or intentions.

We will not fabricate.

We will not plagiarize.

We will not alter photographs to mislead readers.

We will not intentionally slant the news.

Using unnamed sources

The use of unnamed sources in published stories should be rare and only for important news. Whenever possible, reporters should seek to confirm news on the record. If the use of unnamed sources is required:

Use as sources only people who are in a position to know.

Corroborate information from an unnamed source through another source or sources and/or by documentary information.

Inform sources that reporters will disclose sources to at least one editor. Editors will be bound by the same promise of confidentiality to sources as are reporters.

Hold editors as well as reporters accountable when unnamed sources are used. When a significant story to be published relies on a source who will not be named, it is the responsibility of the senior news executive to confirm the identity of the source and to review the information provided. This may require the editor to meet the source.

Make clear to the reporters and to sources that agreements of confidentiality are between the newspaper and the sources, not just between the reporter and the sources. The newspaper will honour its agreements with sources. Reporters should make every effort to clear such confidentiality agreements with the editors first. Promises of confidentiality made by reporters to sources will not be overridden by the editors; however, editors may choose not to use the material obtained in this fashion.

Expect reporters and editors to seek to understand the motivations of a source and take those into account in evaluating the fairness and truthfulness of the information provided.

Make clear to sources the level of confidentiality agreed to. This does not mean each option must be discussed with the source, but each party should understand the agreement. Among the options are:

- a) The newspaper will not name them in the article;
- b) The newspaper will not name them unless a court compels the newspaper to do so;
- c) The newspaper will not name them under any circumstances.

All sources should be informed that the newspaper will not honour confidentiality if the sources have lied or misled the newspaper.

Make sure both sides understand what is being agreed to. For example:

- a) Statements may be quoted directly or indirectly and will be attributed to the source. This is sometimes referred to as "on the record."
- b) The information may be used in the story but not attributed to the source. This is sometimes referred to as "not for attribution" or "for background."
- c) The information will not be used in the story unless obtained elsewhere and attributed to someone else. This is sometimes referred to as "off the record."

Describe an unnamed source's identity as fully as possible (without revealing that identity) to help readers evaluate the credibility of what the source has said or provided.

Do not make promises you do not intend to fulfil or may not be able to fulfil.

Do not threaten sources.

Handling the agencies

These Principles are intended to provide front-line guidance for locally generated material. Wire-service material already has been edited professionally. Major news agencies set their own policies and standards for the use of unnamed sources. Smaller agencies may be less reliable. Additional scrutiny often may be required.

Being fair

Because of timeliness or unavailability, it is not always possible to include a response from the subject of a story. Nevertheless:

We should make a good-faith effort to seek appropriate comment from the person (or organization) before publication, especially where an allegation is being made against them. Remember, they may have vital information that could verify or contradict your story. And seeking a response may be essential in certain circumstances to support a legal defence (consult NMG Legal).

When it has not been feasible to obtain a response, we should be receptive to requests for a response or try to seek a response for a follow-up story.

Letters to the editor also may provide an appropriate means for reply.

Some public records or occasions (in the courts and tribunals) will identify persons accused of wrongdoing. Publication of denials is not necessary in such circumstances.

Being independent

"Maintaining independence" helps establish the impartiality of news coverage. However, news staff are not discouraged from involvement in community activities, so long as this does not compromise the credibility of news coverage. When unavoidable personal or business interests could compromise the newspaper's credibility, such potential conflicts must be disclosed to the relevant line manager and, if relevant, to readers.

Investigative reporting

Aggressive and hard-hitting reporting is an honourable and often courageous way of fulfilling the media's moral duty as a public watchdog. It is encouraged. But investigative reporting by its nature raises issues not ordinarily faced in routine reporting. Here are some suggested procedures to follow when undertaking investigative reporting:

Involve more than one editor at the early stages and in the editing of the stories.

Question continually the premise of the story and revise accordingly.

Follow the practices outlined in the use of sources.

Document the information in stories to the satisfaction of the senior editor.

Have a "fresh read" by an editor who has not seen the material as you near publication. Encourage the editor to read it sceptically, then listen carefully to and heed questions raised about clarity, accuracy and relevance.

Make certain that care, accuracy and fairness are exercised in headlines, photographs, presentation and overall tone.

Evaluate legal and ethical issues fully, involving appropriate colleagues, managers, lawyers or dispassionate outside parties in the editorial process. (For example, it may be helpful to have a technical story reviewed by a scientist for accuracy, or have financial descriptions assessed by an accountant).

Be careful about trading information with sources or authorities, particularly if it could lead to an impression that you are working in concert against an individual or entity.

Editing sceptically

Editors are the gatekeepers who determine what will be published and what will not be. Their responsibility is to question and scrutinize, even when it is uncomfortable to do so. Here are some suggested practices that editors can follow:

Take special care to understand the facts and context of the story.

Guard against assumptions and preconceived notions – including their own.

Ensure time and resources for sound editing. Nothing should be printed that has not been reviewed by someone else. When feasible, at least two editors should see stories before publication. Complex or controversial stories may require even more careful scrutiny.

Consider involving an in-house sceptic on major stories – a contrarian who can play the role of devil's advocate.

Challenge conventional wisdom.

Heed the "gut instinct." Don't publish a story if it doesn't feel right. Check it further.

Consider what may be missing from the story.

Consider how others – especially antagonists or sceptical readers – may view the story. What questions would they ask? What parts would they think are unfair? Will they believe it?

Be especially careful of stories that portray individuals purely as villains or heroes.

Beware of stories that reach conclusions based on speculation or a pattern of facts.

Protect against being manipulated by advocates and special interests.

Consider these questions: "How do you know? How can you be sure? Where is the evidence? Who is the source? How does he or she know? What is the supporting documentation?"

Watch carefully for red flags that give reason to be sceptical of news-gathering or editing conduct.

Don't be stampeded by deadlines, unrealistic competitive concerns or peer pressure.

Ensuring accuracy

Dedication to the truth means accuracy itself is an ethical issue. Each news person has the responsibility to strive for accuracy at each step of the process.

Be aware that information attributed to a source may not be factually correct.

Be sure the person quoted is in a position to know.

Always do your best to put an allegation to the person or organisation you are accusing. They may have a simple explanation which casts the story in a different light.

Be especially careful with technical terms, statistics, mathematical computations, crowd estimates and poll results.

Consider going over all or portions of an especially complicated story with primary sources or with outside experts. However, do not surrender editorial control.

Don't make assumptions. Don't guess at facts. Asking the person next to you is not "verification" – he or she could be wrong too.

Improve note taking. Consider backing up your notes with a recording device when ethically and legally appropriate.

Be wary of newspaper library clippings or the Internet, which may contain uncorrected errors.

Develop checklists of troublesome or frequently used names, streets, titles, etc.

Understand the community and subject matter. Develop expertise in areas of specialized reporting.

Re-read stories carefully after writing, watching especially for errors of context and balance as well as for spelling and other basic mistakes.

Use care in writing headlines. Do not stretch beyond the facts of the story.

Follow a simple rule on the copy desk to double-check the accuracy of headlines: "Find the headline in the story." (For example, if the headline says, "Three die in crash," go to the story and count the dead and be certain they died in the crash.)

Correcting errors

When errors occur, the newspaper has an ethical obligation to correct the record and minimize harm.

Errors should be corrected promptly. But first, a determination must be made that the fact indeed was in error and that the correction itself is fully accurate. There is sometimes a risk of replacing an error about one person with a libel about someone else. (Consult NMG Legal if necessary).

Errors should be corrected with sufficient prominence that readers who saw the original error are likely to see the correction. This is a matter of the editor's judgment. But a regular errors spot is recommended.

Although it is wise to avoid repeating the error in the correction, the correction should have sufficient context that readers will understand exactly what is being corrected.

Errors of nuance, context or tone may require clarifications, editor's notes, editor's columns or letters to the editor.

When the newspaper disagrees with a news subject about whether a story contained an error, editors should consider offering the aggrieved party an opportunity to express his or her view in a letter to the editor.

Corrections should be reviewed before publication by a senior editor who was not directly involved in the error. The editor should determine if special handling or legal advice is required.

Errors should be corrected whether or not they are called to the attention of the newspaper by someone outside the newsroom.

Factual errors should be corrected in most cases even if the subject of the error does not want it to be corrected. It is the newspaper's duty to provide accurate information to readers. An exception may be made for trivial errors or when the correction of a relatively minor mistake would result in public ridicule or greater harm than the original error.

Newsroom staffers should be receptive to complaints about inaccuracies and follow up on them.

Newsroom staffers have a responsibility to alert the appropriate editor if they become aware of a possible error in the newspaper.

Communication

It is the responsibility of the local Managing Director and the Editor to communicate these Principles to staff.

NMG Legal

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APPENDIX 3

Limiting the damage

By Peter Barron, Editor, Northern Echo

The media is frequently condemned for going too far - not caring enough about the impact of what's published - and sometimes those criticisms are justified.

But readers might be surprised at how much isn't published because of ethical considerations and requests for understanding and sensitivity.

Last week's tragic case of a boy - identified only as Child H in a damning report on the failings of care experts - is a case in point.

The boy had been so badly neglected at his home on Teesside that he ended up half blind and scrawled a desperate "Help me" message on his bedroom wall. It was an utterly heartbreaking state of affairs as child care professionals missed a number of basic opportunities to stop the neglect.

One manager of a team of social workers, who decided no further action was necessary despite doctors flagging up concerns, was dismissed and Jane Humphries, Stockton council's corporate director of children, education and social care, visited the boy in person to apologise for her department's failings.

The case had first come to light last year when the boy's mother and step-father, Gillian Hendry and Craig Dick, were jailed for child cruelty. The judge decided that, due to the seriousness of their offences, they should be named and prosecutors released pictures to the media, showing the squalor in which the family had lived. Those pictures were used prominently across the national media.

At the end of July, I received a letter from Colin Morris, chair of Stockton's Local Safeguarding Children Board, expressing concern that the media would use those images again in the context of the "serious case review" report being made public. Mr Morris explained that the original publication of the pictures had a "significantly detrimental impact" on the child's emotional wellbeing and had led to highly distressing remarks from fellow school pupils. The fear was that the pictures would be re-published again and the boy would suffer again.

It should be made clear that there was no criticism of the media for using the pictures after the court case. They were released to underline the seriousness of the crimes committed by Hendry and Dick. Perhaps, with hindsight, that was the wrong call by prosecutors but, nevertheless, there was a clear acknowledgement of a public interest in showing the extent of the neglect.

There was no demand from Mr Morris not to use the pictures again, just a polite request to editors to make the child the priority - to appreciate that he had already been through more than enough in his short life.

The conclusions of the report were published in detail on The Northern Echo's front page under the headline "We failed you". The public interest was about holding the child care experts to account for letting down a little boy so badly. However, I complied with the request not to re-publish the pictures of the unbearable squalor in which he had been forced to live.

The media does get it wrong sometimes - but the ethical arguments are weighed a lot more responsibly than people may appreciate.

There was a lot of bad news in that serious case review report but the paragraph which jumped out most stated: "The boy has regained some of his sight following an operation on his eye and is now doing well in a loving environment. His much younger sister is also thriving."

That's very good news indeed.