

THE BARNSELY CHRONICLE LTD.  
CHURCH STREET  
BARNSELY  
SOUTH YORKSHIRE  
S70 2AS  
(REG. OFFICE)  
REG NO. 29043 ENGLAND  
TEL (01226) 734734

RECEIVED

09 SEP 2015

NCJH/EAE

7 September 2015

The Rt Hon Alan Moses  
Chairman  
Ips0  
Gate House  
1 Farringdon Street  
London  
EC4M 7LG

Dear Sir Alan

**IPSO Annual Report**

Further to your letter of 23 June, please find enclosed the Barnsley Chronicle return as requested.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Sir Nicholas Hewitt Bt  
Chairman & Managing Director

Enc

## **Barnsley Chronicle Ltd Annual IPSO Report**

### **Introduction**

The Barnsley Chronicle is a weekly newspaper covering the geographical and municipal borough of Barnsley. It was launched in 1858, with the Hewitt family first getting involved in 1888 and eventually taking up all the shares in 1923.

It is the largest circulating weekly newspaper in Yorkshire and has one of the highest circulations in the country.

The paper covers local news for the Barnsley audience. The company also publishes the Barnsley Independent and Holme Valley Review which are free titles.

### **Our editorial standards**

The Barnsley Chronicle sets out to be an authoritative, trustworthy journal, taking an independent, responsible position on the material it carries. Stories are verified as much as possible before publication.

As with most media outlets, we use our extensive social media connections on Facebook and Twitter as sources for stories but would never publish a story garnered from these sources without first checking its accuracy and authenticity.

This, where possible, would be done by contacting the original source. If that was not possible, we would make alternative enquiries to check its accuracy. I can confirm that we have, in the recent past, refused to carry stories emanating from social media because we have not been able to confirm their accuracy.

Our policy is certainly not to treat social media leads as reliable, publish a story based on them and then wait for the complaints to follow.

We continue to cover things such as council meetings, public meetings in the traditional way – ie a reporter in attendance. If the issue being discussed is a contentious one, it would be expected the reporter would make contact with people representing both sides of the argument to ensure a story is balanced.

If one party refuses to make comment or does not make themselves available for comment, we would ensure the published story made this clear.

## **Our complaints-handling process**

Any minor complaints will generally be dealt with, initially, by the reporter involved in preparing the original story. Staff are instructed not to shy away from making a correction where it is warranted.

Occasionally, a complainant may make contact via phone or in person and ask to speak to someone 'in charge'. These calls are initially dealt with by the newsdesk and the deputy editor who works on newsdesk will often assess the seriousness of the complaint.

If it can be resolved promptly and amicably then she is empowered to draft and arrange publication of the suitable correction. It is our aim to keep the complaints process as speedy and simple as possible.

Occasionally, a complainant may insist on speaking direct to the editor – bypassing the reporter and newsdesk – and staff are not instructed to try to put any one off contacting me.

If a reader calls our switchboard number and asks to speak to the editor, they are readily put through to me.

A copy of the complaints procedure is on our website (illustration below) and this is published regularly in the newspaper on the letters page.

We accept complaints in most formats – phone, letter, email or in person. By virtue of its public nature, if a complaint is posted on one of our social media channels, we would normally request direct contact details so we can investigate the matter further.

## **Our training process**

All staff have been briefed in our policy regarding complaints handling. A copy of the Code of Editors has been included in the handbook of all new members of the editorial team. A copy is posted on the office notice board and, as it is amended or updated, a fresh copy is distributed to every member of the team.

## **Our record on compliance**

In the last year, the Barnsley Chronicle has only been referred to IPSO on one occasion. I am pleased to say that on that occasion, the complaint regarding privacy was not upheld.

I have attached the summary of the IPSO finding into the matter below:

*Decision of the Complaints Committee 0661-14 Holling v Barnsley Chronicle*

*1. Duncan Holling complained to the Independent Press Standards Organisation that the Barnsley Chronicle had breached Clause 3 (Privacy) of the Editors' Code of Practice in an article headlined "Mum fuming after tot 'escapes' nursery", published in print and online on 26 September 2014.*

*2. The article reported that a three-year-old child had "escaped" from nursery and returned home alone. It included a photograph of the child and his mother. 3. The complainant was the child's father. He said that, while the child's mother had agreed for the story and photograph to be published, he had not given his consent. He considered that this was an intrusion into his child's privacy, and into his own private family life, which was separate from the child's life with his mother. He also said that the article was a breach of his parental rights, as he shared responsibility with his former partner.*

*4. The newspaper apologised for any upset caused to the complainant, but did not accept a breach of the Code. The child's mother had contacted the newspaper, offering to speak about the incident, and to pose for the picture. The complainant had contacted the news desk prior to publication, but it had appeared that his primary concern was that his ex-wife may have been paid for the story. He had been assured that this was not the case and that, while he may have objected to the publication of his son's name, this would not be withheld as the newspaper had obtained the consent of the child's mother. The newspaper was satisfied that, as the primary carer for the child, the mother was in a position to offer this consent. Nonetheless, it had removed the story from its website as a gesture of goodwill.*

*Relevant Code Provisions*

*5. Clause 3 (Privacy) (i) Everyone is entitled to respect for his or her private and family life, home, health and correspondence, including digital communications.*

*(ii) Editors will be expected to justify intrusions into any individual's private life without consent. Account will be taken of the complainant's own public disclosures of information.*

*Clause 6 (Children) (i) Young people should be free to complete their time at school without unnecessary intrusion.*

*(ii) A child under 16 must not be interviewed or photographed on issues involving their own or another child's welfare unless a custodial parent or similarly responsible adult consents.*

#### *Findings of the Committee*

*6. The complainant had not framed his complaint under Clause 6 (Children). Nonetheless, the terms of Clause 6 were relevant to the Committee's consideration of his complaint under Clause 3, because they set out the special protections afforded by the Code to children, in recognition of their vulnerable position in society. Clause 6 also sets out the Code's requirements regarding when and from whom consent must be sought for journalistic activity that relates to children. The Committee considered the complaint against this background. 7. The Committee noted first the nature of the material that had been published about the complainant's son: that he had been involved in an incident, and his mother had been angry, but he had not been harmed and his mother was happy about the way the nursery had handled the incident. No material had been published that directly related to the complainant or other members of the family. 8. The Committee also noted that the story had been placed in the public domain prior to publication, due to a number of social media postings, and that the newspaper had been contacted by a number of other parents who wished to express concern about the incident. 9. Further, in accordance with her right to freedom of expression, the child's mother was entitled to speak to the press about her experience, and to offer comment on a matter that might cause concern among other parents for the safety of their children. 11. In relation to the publication of the photograph of the complainant's son, relevant provisions of the Code were contained within Clause 6 (ii); there was no dispute that the newspaper had obtained the consent of a custodial parent for the publication of the photograph. 11. In all the circumstances, there was no breach of Clause 3.*

#### *Conclusions*

*12. The complaint was not upheld.*

N/A Date of complaint: 26/09/2014 Date decision issued:  
16/01/2015