

Independent Press Standards Organisation: Annual Statement of CN Group Limited, for the period January 1, 2017, to December 31, 2017.

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Introduction

CN Group is a multi-media business serving local communities in Cumbria, Northumberland and south-west Scotland.

The group's titles are politically independent, and do not support any one political party.

The publishing division comprises daily titles News & Star and The (North-West Evening) Mail; weekly paid-for titles The Cumberland News, Hexham Courant, Times & Star and Whitehaven News; the free weekly Advertiser; and a magazines division that publishes Cumbria Life, Dumfries & Galloway Life, Carlisle Living, Bay Living, in-Cumbria and Taste Cumbria. All paid-for titles have associated websites.

IPSO Responsible Person

Colin Tapping, Editor, Hexham Courant, Beaumont Street, Hexham, Northumberland, NE46 3NA. Tel 01434 602352, email colin.tapping@cnmedia.co.uk

Our Editorial Standards

CN Group has adopted company-wide IPSO Standard Operating Procedures to which all journalists adhere. The procedures are available to all staff via the company's intranet site.

A requirement to comply with and understand the Editors' Code is set out in the Terms and Conditions of Employment of all journalists employed in the company. Annual IPSO and other legal refresher training is made available to all editorial staff as part of their individual annual personal development reviews. The need for legal training, including dedicated training about IPSO, is kept under review by editors. The company has adopted a Complaints Protocol which is published, along with the Editors' Code, on the company intranet site. The protocol includes details of the company's policy regarding verification of content prior to publication. This explains that content is subject to legal and ethical checks by senior editors and editorial managers who may also seek advice from lawyers and IPSO.

The protocol also requires senior editorial managers and journalists to maintain a full audit trail when it is felt an article being considered for publication in the public interest may include a potential breach of the Editors' Code. This will include a record of any meetings held to discuss the content and any meetings held to discuss the article and a copy of any authorisation signed by the editor or senior manager.

The operating procedures draw attention to the IPSO journalists' whistle blower hotline with full contact information.

The procedures note IPSO's offer of pre-publication advice to members of the public and to alert publications to any concerns about alleged harassment by journalists in breach of the Editors' Code.

Our Complaints Handling Process

ALL CN Group titles carry prominent complaints panels that include editorial and IPSO contact details, in print and online.

The company's Complaints Protocol has been agreed, is published and available to staff from all departments on the company intranet site.

The protocol includes advice about pre-publication verification and the requirement for a full audit trail if articles considered for publication may be in potential breach of the Editors' Code.

The company accepts complaints by telephone, email or letter, and all complainants receive an acknowledgement from an editor or senior editorial manager within 24 hours of a complaint being received.

The editor will be kept informed of all correspondence and progress through the complaints process.

Complainants who appear to raise potential issues under the Editors' Code are informed of the code, even if it is not cited officially as part of the complaint. They are informed that the publication is regulated by IPSO and are provided with contact details.

The company aims to have all complaints resolved within 14 days.

All complaints that allege a breach of the Editors' Code or which request remedial action are logged, and a record of follow-action taken.

CN Group journalists must keep all source documentation, including shorthand notes, for 12 months.

The protocol includes details of recommended remedial action which includes the removal of contentious online content while investigations are taking place.

Complaints directly addressed by IPSO are notified to the company's chief executive and board of directors.

IPSO regulations are recorded and published as per IPSO guidance specific to the case.

Our Training Process

The need for legal training, including dedicated training about IPSO, is kept under review by the company. Editorial staff are briefed, as and when necessary, on relevant legal updates, IPSO rulings and IPSO guidance.

Our Record of Compliance

The following provides information, by title, about IPSO compliance for the period January 1, 2017, to December 31, 2017.

The Cumberland News and News & Star

- CN Group IPSO Standard Operating Procedures have been communicated to all editorial staff.
- The latest Editors' Code has been made available to all editorial staff online and by hard copy.
- Editorial team briefings rigorously underline standards and complaints monitoring as laid down.
- All reports are thoroughly checked before publication.
- General complaints are referred to the news desk and recorded in an electronic comments book.
- IPSO complaints are dealt with by the associate editor, head of content or group editor, with records kept by the team electronically and in hard copy.
- No pre-publication verification was sought during the period.
- No complaints relating to alleged breach of the Editors' Code were received during the period.

Magazines Division (including Cumbria Life, Dumfries & Galloway Life, Carlisle Living, in-Cumbria, Bay Living, Taste Cumbria

- CN Group IPSO Standard Operating Procedures have been communicated to all members of the editorial staff.
- The latest Editors' Code has been made available to all editorial staff.
- Publishing and Content Director keep digital and print records of any complaints, and seek to resolve complaints by correction or follow up.
- Content editors' contact details are prominently displayed in magazines.
- No pre-publication verification was sought during the period.
- No complaints relating to alleged breach of the Editors' Code were received during the period.

Whitehaven News and Times & Star

- CN Group IPSO Standard Operating Procedures and the latest Editors' Code of Practice have been communicated to all editorial staff. Every staff member has been issued with their own copy of the Editors' Code of Practice.
- Regular team meetings highlight the importance of standards and complaints monitoring.
- Complaints are accepted and responded to in any format - telephone, in person, by letter, email, social media. Complaints can be made in the first instance to anyone on the editorial team, but all are passed on to associate editor to deal with.
- Each week a panel is published in the title with details on how to complain, and with contact details for IPSO.
- All reporters are required to check all details submitted in stories, and where applicable, contact other parties mentioned in stories if a right of reply is required.
- No pre-publication verification was sought during the period.
- No complaints relating to alleged breach of the Editors' Code were received during the period.

The (North West Evening) Mail, and the Advertiser

- CN Group IPSO Standard Operating Procedures have been communicated to all members of the editorial staff.
- The latest Editors' Code has been made available to all editorial staff.
- Editorial complaints can be made by telephone, letter, email or walk in to the reception. Initial inquiries are carried out by the reporter, who flags the issue to associate editor.
- In the first instance, efforts are made to resolve complaints swiftly and with a solution acceptable to both parties. If an inaccuracy is found to have been made it is corrected, where possible, in the next available issue. On the daily letters page there are details of our complaints procedure and how we conform to the Editors' Code of Practice. The editor's address and details are published in print and online, along with the IPSO address and phone number.
- Members of the editorial staff meet regularly with an in-house trainer to discuss progress. The associate editor offers hands on daily training on story development, verification, structure and contact building. All reporters are also sent on a three-day training refresher course ahead of sitting the NQJ.
- No pre-publication verification or advice was sought during the period.
- IPSO ref: 10140-16, complaint not upheld and no remedial action required.

Hexham Courant

- CN Group IPSO Standard Operating Procedures have been communicated to all members of the editorial staff.
- The latest Editors' Code has been made available to all editorial staff.
- Editorial team meetings underlines standards and complaints monitoring.
- A record of all complaints and resolutions is kept. There is a formal acknowledgement of a complaint with 24 hours, and a formal response with seven days.
- No pre-publication verification was sought during the period.
- No complaints relating to alleged breach of the Editors' Code were received during the period.

CN GROUP

IPSO STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

1. All CN Group titles carry prominent complaints panels including Editorial and IPSO contact details, in print and online.
2. All our editorial staff are inducted into accepting and understanding the requirements of the Editors' Code and adherence to IPSO. This is communicated via the company handbook, individual Terms and Conditions, job descriptions and inductions.
3. We draw attention to the IPSO journalists' whistle blower hotline 0800 0320243. Any journalist who feels they are being pressured to act in a way not in line with the Editor's Code, and who would like to register concern or seek advice, can call IPSO on 0300 1232220 and speak in confidence to a member of IPSO staff or contact IPSO Chief Executive Matt Tee via matt.tee@ipso.co.uk
4. We note IPSO harassment policy, whereby IPSO may offer pre-publication advice to members of the public and alert publications to any concerns about alleged harassment by journalists in breach of the Editors' Code.
5. Annual IPSO and other legal refresher training is made available to all editorial staff.
6. Our Editors supply information for an annual company statement which is then compiled by one responsible person for submission to IPSO and subsequent publication on both CN Group and News Media Association websites.
7. The company has adopted a clear and consistent Complaints Protocol which is followed across all titles, as follows:

Complaints Protocol:

- (a) Verification of content prior to publication – potentially contentious content is subject to legal and ethical checks via senior editors who may also seek advice from News Media Association or other newspaper lawyers.
- (b) Editors ensure that senior editorial executives and journalists maintain and keep a full audit trail when it is felt that a story being considered for publication in the public interest may potentially breach the code. This will include a record of any meetings that discuss the reasons for publication and a copy of authorisation signed by the editor or senior executive.
- (c) All complainants receive an acknowledgement from an editor, deputy editor or senior editorial executive appointed by the editor within 24 hours of a complaint

being received. The Editor is kept informed of all correspondence and progress throughout the complaints process.

(d) Complainants who raise concerns that appear to raise a potential issue under the Editors' Code are informed of the code even if it is not cited within the initial complaint. They are informed that our publications are regulated by IPSO and are provided with full contact details.

(e) We strive to have all complaints resolved within 14 days.

(f) All complaints that either allege a breach of the Editors' code or request other remedial action are recorded in the company's Complaints log, with a record taken of follow-up action. The log is subject to regular review by senior editorial executives across all titles.

(g) Our journalists keep all source documentation including shorthand notes for 12 months in line with IPSO requirements. Storage space for documents may be requested from a line manager.

(h) Offers of remedial action for complainants in the first instance include clarifications and apologies, balancing follow-up articles and letters to be published in the next available print edition. Contentious online content will be removed while investigations are taking place.

(i) Complaints which are directly addressed by IPSO are notified by Editors to the Managing Director, and any complaints that may require legal support are also notified to the group Finance Director. Potential libel claims are also notified as a matter of course to the Finance Director.

(j) All IPSO resolutions are recorded and published by our titles as per IPSO guidance specific to that case.

Updated 15.03.18