

# **Slimming World Annual Statement 1<sup>st</sup> January – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017**

## **Introduction**

Slimming World, the UK's leading slimming organisation, was founded by Margaret Miles-Bramwell (OBE, FRSA) in 1969 and has more than 18,000 weekly groups supporting 900,000 members across the UK and Republic of Ireland. Its Head Office is based in Alfreton, Derbyshire, and houses a number of content-producing departments.

*Slimming World* magazine, the UK's best-selling 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 introduces new people to the organisation via the newsstand and digital editions. Published seven times a year, the magazine features success stories sourced from group members, a food section, practical and psychological features, health and fitness ideas, and news pages.

The title's combined print and digital circulation is 636,706 (ABC Jul-Dec 2017). UK and RoI account for most of these sales (627,132 print; 7,090 digital); sales in other countries are much lower (1,938 print; 546 digital). Sales are split 57% to group members (where it has a reduced price of £1.95), 31% to newsstand (full cover price of £2.95) and 12% to subscriptions (from £17.70 per year).

Slimming World's other content channels use a mixture of new and repurposed magazine content:

- **Websites/app**

Our public website, [slimmingworld.co.uk](http://slimmingworld.co.uk), receives around 3.4 million visits each month, while our app gets around 4.6 million monthly visits. Group members have free 24/7 access to LifelineOnline, a between-group resource, as part of their membership. We also have a Consultants' website, Our World, which supports our Consultants to provide the best-possible service to our members.

- **Publications**

Slimming World provides a New Member Pack to all new/rejoining group members. This includes our Food Optimising eating plan and a book detailing our Body Magic activity programme. These publications include real-life success stories, recipe/menu ideas, and practical advice on losing weight and increasing activity.

In addition, Slimming World publishes a range of books that members can purchase, such as recipe books and food shopping directories. We also produce various guides for members with specific nutritional needs, internal publications (Head Office newsletters, Consultant magazine, and so on), and promotional material.

- 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; step-by-step cookery videos for public/member websites; training videos for Consultant website/training sessions, etc.

- Online programme

Slimming World provides an online weight loss programme, Slimming World Online, offering a service to slimmers who are unable, or prefer not to attend a group. Here they have access to menus, recipes, success stories and motivational tools.

- In addition to the above we have: a social media team posting success stories and inspiration on our social media channels; a PR team offering success stories/menu plans etc, to national publications in order to promote our organisation; teams both selling space in *Slimming World* magazine and buying space in other national publications.

### **Our editorial standards**

The *Slimming World* magazine team is committed to upholding the highest of professional, editorial and ethical standards:

The Editors' Code of Practice is adhered to:

- All staff are familiar with the Code and how it applies to their work.
- The Code is on display in all departments that produce editorial content.
- 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.
- We recently created an editorial practices document in consultation with IPSO. This has been rolled out to the magazine team and will shortly be shared with our other content teams.

Data protection responsibilities are taken very seriously:

- Existing contributors (writers, photographers, stylists, etc) have a copy of Slimming World's Data Protection Policy Guide and are aware of their individual responsibilities.
- New contributors are sent the Data Protection Policy Guide prior to their first commission. Their attention is drawn to key parts of the guide in a covering letter.
- Members chosen to appear in the magazine are sent a letter 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.
- Where private information is supplied about another individual named 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 picturing children.

- We only use data from competition entries for the purpose of the administration of the competition.
- If we are unable to secure the approval from everyone in a member's photograph we pixelate faces to prevent identification.

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

- Subs check all facts and figures back to the source.
- Clients making claims in advertising/promotions are asked to substantiate these claims. If doubt remains, advertising is sent on to the ASA for feedback.
- Where appropriate copy is passed by our food and nutrition teams, fitness experts and advisory panel to double check accuracy.

Approvals for all features are secured and logged prior to publication:

- The copy for member success stories and case studies is approved by the members.
- Features are sent back to the writer for final copy approval.
- Health, fitness and psychology features are verified by our in-house food and nutrition teams and/or advisory panel. The eating plan is approved by the nutrition team.
- Promotions (advertorials and competitions, etc) are sent back to the client for approval.
- Recipes are fully tested and rechecked by our home economists, external food editor and internal food team.
- All magazine copy is assessed by the Editor-in-Chief, Editor and Chief Sub Editor prior to publication to ensure compliance with the Editors' Code. If in doubt a feature is referred to 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.
- Senior 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.

Over 2018-2019 we are looking to standardise editorial procedures across all content channels.

### **Our complaints-handling process**

We endeavour to make it clear and easy for members of the public to complain:

- All content teams accept editorial complaints in whichever medium the complainant wishes to use – letter, email, phone call, social media, etc.
- We respond to all 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 the problem 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. Serious complaints are sent to a manager for discussion before responding and can be escalated to the Managing Director and CEO if necessary.
- Most complaints are resolved quickly and to the customer's satisfaction via a short phone conversation or email. If complaints are more challenging to resolve, email/paper trails are kept.
- Slimming World endeavours to put right significant inaccuracies, as well as any inaccuracy that could endanger members' weight losses. Corrections may be published in the magazine, on the website, on social media channels, via Consultant newsletters or via text messaging service.
- Slimming World's content streams have, to date, never received any serious complaints. 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, where staff can raise any complaint in confidence.

### **Our training process**

Slimming World's law training is provided by David Banks Media Law:

- The magazine editorial team received refresher training late 2016.
- The editorial members of the digital team received training Sept 2017.
- The editorial members of the communications and design team received training Nov 2017.
- The PR team received training Nov 2017.
- The magazine's Editorial Assistant received training Nov 2017 (as he joined us after the last round of training).

Four members of the magazine editorial team hold the Introduction to Information Governance certificate, which they renew as necessary.

Training needs are regularly reassessed and further training will take place in the future.

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**

Copies of manuals/guidance used by *Slimming World* magazine:

- Data Protection – a policy guide for Slimming World.\*
- Contributors' data protection covering letter.\*
- Members' data protection email/letter.\*
- Slimming World Whistle Blowing Policy.\*
- 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 non-staff contributors to ensure their conduct in researching and presenting copy for print is in full compliance with the Editors' Code.
- *Slimming World* magazine has created an editorial practices document in consultation with IPSO. This document is being rolled out to all content teams and is available to review on request.

\* These documents have previously been supplied.