

NEWBURY NEWS LIMITED ANNUAL IPSO REPORT 2018

Covering the period 1.1.18 to 31.12.18

Introduction

Newbury News Limited is the publisher of the paid-for weekly Newbury Weekly News (established 1867), the free Newbury and Thatcham Advertiser (which mainly contains stories previously published in the Newbury Weekly News), the monthly Newbury Business Today newspaper that is inserted in the Newbury Weekly News, the quarterly Out & About magazine and newburytoday.co.uk.

It is a family-owned, independent publisher principally covering West Berkshire and North Hampshire.

The responsible person is editorial director Andy Murrill (andy.murrill@newburynews.co.uk).

Our editorial standards

Newbury News Limited is committed to upholding the highest standards of integrity, professionalism and honesty. Indeed we have a long and proud track record in this regard.

We strive to avoid mistakes and take all steps to minimise these, but when errors do occur it is equally important that we handle complaints in the right way.

We follow the Editors' Code of Practice and all reporters are aware of this.

The changes to the Code from January 1, 2018, were communicated to staff through a printed copy handed to each of them and by an accompanying email as follows:

“Hi all

As you know, the Newbury Weekly News is a member of the Independent Press Standards Organisation, the regulatory body for the press, and strictly abides by its code of conduct.

The Editors' Code of Practice has been revised, and one important change offers increased protection to children accused of crime. In a move that goes further than the law requires, the Code will now state that editors should generally avoid naming children after arrest for a criminal offence but before they appear in court.

There is also an amendment to Clause 2 (Privacy), to clarify how the public domain is taken into account when complaints are considered; and to Clause 11 (Victims of Sexual Assault), to align it more closely with the law.

And in another development, the Editors' Code of Practice Committee has recommended that the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) should consider how member publishers report on commercial transparency.

There are three changes to the Code, effective from January 1. Please take the time to read them all carefully.

A change to Clause 2 (Privacy)

The amendment echoes the existing wording of Clause 3 of the Public Interest section of the Code - ‘The regulator will consider the extent to which material is already in the public domain or will become so’ - which is often taken into consideration when the Complaints Committee rules on privacy complaints. It helps understanding of the Code – for both members of the public and journalists - by making it clear that the extent to which material is in the public domain or will become so is a factor which may be considered in Clause 2 complaints. It will also help address the challenge of regulating global digital publications that are owned and domiciled in the UK.

A change to Clause 9 (Reporting of crime)

This change increases protection for children accused of crime. The law currently allows newspapers to name children arrested for a crime before they appear in court, when anonymity comes into force. Most newspapers choose not to do so but some have in exceptional circumstances. The amended clause says editors should generally avoid naming such children. This is an example of where the Code goes further to protect vulnerable people than the law requires. The change also makes clear that the Code recognises that children are young people under the age of 18. This is sometimes misunderstood because the Code offers special protection to children under the age of 16.

A change to Clause 11 (Victims of sexual assault)

The change, which prohibits publication of material likely to lead to the identification of a victim of sexual assault, brings the wording in line with the law to clarify the responsibilities that editors have under the Code and to avoid a chilling effect on lawful court reporting. This change was made as the result of a submission by Trinity Mirror and was accepted by IPSO.

Transparency

The Code Committee has recommended that IPSO should consider and discuss with members how they might report on transparency policies concerning editorial and commercial relationships. This issue was the subject of a number of submissions, which referred to allegations – which were denied – that commercial considerations influenced the Daily Telegraph’s coverage of HBOS. The committee considered that the best way to address this issue would be for publishers to report on their policies concerning editorial and commercial relationships.

Revised edition of the Editors’ Codebook

The Code Committee approved a plan to revise the Editors’ Codebook to take into account constructive suggestions for best practice received in the Code Review and recent relevant adjudications made by IPSO. Revisions have been made to 12 of the chapters. Examples include the inclusion of a link to guidelines by Samaritans for reporting suicide and a link to the Science Media Centre’s guidelines for reporting science. There are also links to IPSO guidance on the use of social media, reporting grief and shock and the issue of due prominence of corrections.

Improved online version of Editors’ Code of Practice

The Code Committee recommended that the online version of the Editors’ Code should be improved to assist both journalists and members of the public who may be considering bringing a complaint. It features links to relevant chapters in the Editors’ Codebook and IPSO guidance notes.

You can read more about the changes to the code here:

<https://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2017/news/ipso-amends-code-to-give-more-protection-to-children-accused-of-crimes/>

And the updated code of practice is here: http://www.editorscode.org.uk/the_code.php

IPSO has also issued very useful guidance to the public about what to expect from journalists regarding court reporting, the reporting of deaths and inquests, and how journalists use information from social media. This will help us explain to the public what we do and why we do it, in the event of a complaint on these matters.

You can read it here: <https://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2018/news/watchdog-tells-public-what-to-expect-from-journalists/>

Regards

Andy”

Newbury News Ltd is a founding member of IPSO and fully supports its aims and principles in the regulation and promotion of the highest ethical and professional journalistic standards.

We are a member of the News Media Association and consult its legal team prior to publication if we have any legal concerns about a story. We would not publish a story unless we were confident that its facts were correct and had been soundly verified.

We are also aware that IPSO offers pre-publication advice on the Editors’ Code and the public interest, both during office hours and out of hours where necessary. We would always seek this advice if we have any concerns (as we did previously with the Press Complaints Commission) and would seek to follow it in all conceivable situations.

We would also seek guidance from IPSO if we found ourselves having difficulty resolving a complaint.

Our complaints-handling process

We accept editorial complaints in person, by phone, by letter or by email. All editorial staff can accept complaints, which they report to the group editor or group deputy editor, and they will usually be resolved with guidance from the group editor or group deputy editor.

Records of editorial complaints are kept on email in the first instance and if they are not resolved quickly a file will be kept.

We would seek to resolve complaints in the first instance between the journalist concerned and the complainant. If this is not possible the group editor or group deputy editor would attempt to find a resolution, possibly inviting the complainant for a meeting.

Details of our internal process for editorial complaints and IPSO are published on both page 2 and the first letters page of the Newbury Weekly News every week. Page 2 is also where corrections would usually be published.

On page 2 it reads: Newbury News Limited publications are regulated by IPSO – the Independent Press Standards Organisation. If you have an editorial complaint about a Newbury News Limited publication,

you should, in the first instance, contact the publication concerned. If it is not resolved to your satisfaction, you should contact IPSO by telephone: 0300 123 2220, or visit its website: www.ipso.co.uk.

On the first letters pages it reads: HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT: Newbury News Limited publications are regulated by IPSO – the Independent Press Standards Organisation. If you have a complaint about a Newbury News Limited publication, you should, in the first instance, contact the publication concerned. If it is not resolved to your satisfaction, you should contact IPSO by telephone: 0300 123 2220, or visit its website: www.ipso.co.uk. Members of the public are welcome to contact IPSO at any time if they are not sure how to proceed, or need advice on how to frame a complaint.

In the Newbury and Thatcham Advertiser the following is published each week: HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT: Newbury News Limited publications are regulated by IPSO – the Independent Press Standards Organisation. If you have a complaint about a Newbury News Limited publication, you should, in the first instance, contact the publication concerned. If it is not resolved to your satisfaction, you should contact IPSO by telephone: 0300 123 2220, or visit its website: www.ipso.co.uk. Members of the public are welcome to contact IPSO at any time if they are not sure how to proceed, or need advice on how to frame a complaint.

On newburytoday.co.uk the following is published under website terms and conditions: HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT: Newbury News Limited publications are regulated by IPSO – the Independent Press Standards Organisation. If you have a complaint about a Newbury News Limited publication, you should, in the first instance, contact the publication concerned. If it is not resolved to your satisfaction, you should contact IPSO by telephone: 0300 123 2220, or visit its website: www.ipso.co.uk. Members of the public are welcome to contact IPSO at any time if they are not sure how to proceed, or need advice on how to frame a complaint.

We have updated the new IPSO mark issued on 30.11.17.

Our training process

All reporters at Newbury News Limited have completed an NCTJ training course and are aware of all aspects of media law. In addition they are all aware of the Editors' Code of Practice and our commitment to IPSO. They have all been issued with written guidance on dealing with complaints (see appendix).

Included in journalists' job descriptions are:

Main duties and responsibilities

- To interview people and to write copy that is presented with due regard for the publications' and websites' style and standards, that is in accordance with the IPSO Code, and with due regard for all legal obligations.
- To notify the newsdesk of any complaints, or requests to suppress news, immediately and to help to resolve them as speedily as possible.
- To keep and maintain notebooks and other relevant material for the period of time required in law.

Our record on compliance

We had four complaints to IPSO during the reporting period.

The first concerned publication of a photograph of a car parked in a disabled parking space without a permit (Ref: 03150-18). IPSO considered it did not raise a possible breach of the Editors' Code of Practice and rejected the complaint.

Two complaints were related, concerning a report headlined 'Lies told to get planning row businessman arrested' (Ref 03186-18 and 03409-18). In both cases the Complaints Committee considered there was no breach of Clause 1 and the complaints were not upheld.

The fourth complaint concerned a father upset that we had published a picture of his daughter supplied by his estranged wife after she had performed well in her GCSEs following serious surgery (Ref 05862-18). After correspondence with the father, he considered the complaint resolved without any further action by the NWN or IPSO.

Appendix

Please find attached guidance issued to all Newbury News Limited journalists about handling complaints, IPSO and upholding editorial standards.

Andy Murrill
Editorial director

THE INDEPENDENT PRESS STANDARDS ORGANISATION (IPSO)

HOW WE UPHOLD STANDARDS AT THE NEWBURY WEEKLY NEWS

To the editorial team

As you are aware, IPSO was established to follow the recommendations of Lord Justice Leveson to be a “body, established and organised by the industry” to “provide independent regulation of its members”.

IPSO is charged with enforcing the Editors’ Code of Practice, which was framed by the Editors’ Code of Practice Committee and is enshrined in the contractual agreement between IPSO and newspaper publishers. (If you do not have a copy of the Code of Practice please ask me for one.)

Newbury News Ltd is a founding member of IPSO and fully supports its aims and principles in the regulation and promotion of the highest ethical and professional journalistic standards.

IPSO has new powers to investigate and impose sanctions following established breaches of the Code. People now complain directly to Newbury News Ltd over alleged Code breaches and IPSO will intervene and adjudicate if a settlement cannot be reached in 28 days.

If IPSO decides to investigate it has the power, among other things, to demand documents and explanations as to how decisions were reached and, if necessary, can interview and question journalists and look into our editorial system records.

IPSO has increased powers to order apologies and corrections and if it finds there has been a systemic breach of the Code, it can fine a publisher up to £1m.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO

The Newbury Weekly News is committed to upholding the highest standards of integrity, professionalism and honesty. Indeed we have a long and proud track record in this regard.

Of course we all strive to avoid mistakes – but errors will inevitably occur. While we should take all steps to minimise these, it is equally important that we handle complaints in the right way.

RECEIVING A COMPLAINT

What happens if you receive a complaints directly, by phone or email?

Do not ignore it. Newbury News Ltd has an obligation to deal with all complaints directly in the first instance.

If you receive a complaint from a member of the public about one of your articles:

1. Acknowledge the email, stating that you will look into the matter and you will respond at the earliest opportunity, or take contact details if the complaint is by telephone.
2. Inform Martin or I, and we will decide whether this is a matter that requires further advice or can be dealt with immediately. If the complaint is of a minor nature, eg a simple error of fact, this can be dealt with by the publication of a correction. You can then settle this directly

with the complainant as soon as possible, but make sure you keep a note of all the correspondence and timings.

3. If the matter is more substantial, the editor should be involved to decide whether legal advice is needed.
4. We should strive to respond substantively to a complaint within seven days of receipt of a complaint and we are expected by IPSO to reach a settlement within 28 days or it may be referred to IPSO to take over and adjudicate.
5. Many people turned to the PCC in the past because they felt that their complaint was either ignored by newspapers in the first instance or that their issues were not treated seriously enough. Inevitably we will receive unjustified or vexatious complaints from members of the public. However, it is important that our responses are measured and polite – as, indeed, I know they usually are. It is only when a complainant becomes abusive should you politely decline to correspond with them, unless they can refrain from using offensive language or behaviour. If this is the case, please ensure this is recorded with Martin or I and all evidence is retained should a later complaint be made against us.
6. When we receive a complaint about an online article, before making any substantive changes to the online article or other material, archive a complete copy of the article or other material under complaint. (This does not include trivial changes, such as changes to spelling or grammar.) The archived copy must be retained for a minimum of four months from the date of the amendment to ensure that IPSO has access to a copy of the material under complaint, should it subsequently receive a complaint.

In short, I know we already behave in an ethical, professional and responsible manner and treat the public with respect. In the face of a complaint we must also be able to prove that our behaviour and journalism was impeccable, so the importance of thorough record keeping cannot be over emphasised.

I hope this guide is useful and if you would like any more guidance or information please feel free to ask me.

Andy Murrill
Editorial director