

Regional Media Ltd – Annual Report 2020

Introduction

1.1 Products:

Rotherham Advertiser

Rotherham Record

Dearne Valley Weekender

Chase magazine

Insight magazine

www.rotherhamadvertiser.co.uk

1.2 Editor and Regulated Entity's responsible person: Andrew Mosley (01709 803569, andrew.mosley@rotherhamadvertiser.co.uk)

1.3 Regional Media Ltd was formed in April 2015 after the purchase by Mr Nicholas Alexander of all the shares from Garnett Dickinson.

Our products mainly cover Rotherham, South and East Barnsley and parts of the borough of Doncaster.

Our paid-for newspaper the Rotherham Advertiser sells more than 15,000 copies per week and is read by more than 40,000 people. We have two free papers, the Rotherham Record (circulation 28,800) and Dearne Valley Weekender (42,200). We print 18,000 copies of our monthly magazine Chase, 15,000 of which are inserted in the Advertiser, and we print 16,000 copies of our quarterly advertising magazine Insight.

Our website is visited by around 100,000 people each week and collectively (Rotherham Advertiser, sport and various reporters) we have around 25,000 followers on Twitter and 3,000 on Instagram.

Editorial staff are the editor, three photographers, two sports journalists/subs, news editor and deputy news editor, sub/reporter, sub/feature writer and two reporters.



Regional Media Ltd.
Brookfields Way, Manvers, Wath-upon-Deerne, Rotherham, S63 5DL
T: 01709 768000 | F: 01709 768010

Registered in England, No 9512870 | VAT REG No. GB 210 3937 42
Registered Address: Brookfields Way, Manvers, Wath-upon-Deerne, Rotherham, S63 5DL

3.1 Our editorial standards

Our approach to editorial standards is the same as most media organisations.

We always verify our sources and authenticate documents and, if we cannot, we do not go ahead with the story. The reporters, newsdesk, sub-editors and myself, the editor, all adhere to this policy.

All our stories are published in line with guidance and law set out in the Editor's Code – all editorial staff have a copy of this – and McNae's Essential Law for Journalists, of which all reporters have copies and refer to.

We have had complaints referred to IPSO over the past year and have an on-going issue involving a case brought by a Mr Joe Brian, which is currently in dispute. I supplied all email evidence and a document we believe proved our case to IPSO after first attempting to engage with the complainant. We have appealed IPSO's finding in favour of the complainant on this case (IPSO reference [IPSO: #05820-19#]), which has now been referred to the independent reviewer.

All staff are fully trained in all areas of law and are kept up to date with any changes through email, referrals to online guidance/information and distribution of the Editor's Code of Practice.

Our approach is always to verify sources and authenticate documents as was – and still is – the case with a large number of stories related to the Rotherham child sexual exploitation scandal in which orders were made in trials that previous trials could not be referred to, even though some of the defendants were the same people. Victims have not been named, suspects not been named and locations of alleged incidents have been left out unless we are 100 per cent sure of their accuracy. Two victims – who requested to be known as survivors – have waived anonymity and we have named them after receiving written agreement that we can do so.

This policy, referred to in previous years, has continued over the past year as more perpetrators of child sexual exploitation have been brought before the courts. This will no doubt continue for several more years.

We have regularly fought in court against attempts to restrict the use of names and addresses of suspects in the child sexual exploitation – and other – trials.



We have also recently dealt with complaints regarding the reporting of an inquest, which involved us liaising with the coroner's office and referring the complainant, who was threatening to harm herself, to the local authority Crisis team.

We have weekly staff meetings and reporters are kept fully briefed of any complaints and how we are proceeding. I will always forward any contact with IPSO to the relevant reporter/newsdesk and talk with them regarding where we are at with a complaint/case.

Staff have been encouraged to always inform an interviewee as to the purpose of a call, ie why we are calling, what we want to know, what will happen with their responses and our intention regarding publication. Notes are always kept and notebooks stored in reporter and date order in our filing cabinets.

Pre-publication guidance

If we were unsure or needed legal guidance ahead of publication we would contact IPSO for advice.

Other resources are also available to us for guidance such as the Society of Editors, McNae's Essential Law for Journalists and the Editors Code of Practice. Two years ago – I included this in last year's annual statement – we also sought advice from solicitors regarding one story involving traders being forced out of Rotherham's [REDACTED] by a developer. After much correspondence by email and telephone the complainant reduced his initial claim of £125,000 to £10,000 then simply to a 'positive article'.

Our complaints-handling process

We will accept complaints by phone, email, letter, in person or via social media and the complaint will at first be handled by a reporter and, if a conclusion is not reached, escalated to newsdesk and then the editor, who records and keeps details of all complaints even if a conclusion has been agreed.

We will always attempt to deal with the complaint on the day it is made or, if that is not possible due to, for example, a reporter's absence, as soon as possible afterwards – always within seven days.



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We will always attempt to come to a conclusion that is satisfactory to both parties, which may result in a correction published in a position in the paper agreed with the complainant, an apology, or sometimes it may simply be that a discussion/meeting clears the air.

If an agreement cannot be reached we will refer the complainant to IPSO and its complaints procedure, which we will then follow.

All complaints are logged with and by the editor.

All complainants are made aware of the Editor's Code by phone, email or letter depending on how the complaint was originated or how they have requested communication to be carried out.

The contacts of all editorial staff are on page two of our publications and staff do make complainants aware of IPSO and the complaints procedure.

Details of IPSO are available on our website and on P2 of the Rotherham Advertiser.

Our training process

All reporters are fully qualified and have undertaken law courses.

All staff have copies of the Editor's Code of Practice and McNae's Essential Law for Journalists and refer to these on a daily basis. Any notices of IPSO advisory notices are distributed, with the same process taking place regarding the NMA and Editor's Code.

We are currently discussing the implementation of a training course regarding social media and reader comments on our platforms. This is likely to take place by the end of April.

We have also attended NCTJ Skills and Facebook conferences and all advice received has been circulated to reporters.



Our record on compliance

We have had numerous complaints from people who believed we had breached GDPR through printing names and addresses given in court or provided on court lists. We have explained the law regarding this to each person and reached conclusions where no further action has been taken.

We have not, in the period of the past year, accepted a breach of the Editor's Code of Practice, but if we believed we had breached the code we would contact IPSO for advice upon a complaint being made.

However, as stated earlier, we have had a complaint referred to IPSO over the past year and have an on-going issue involving a case brought by a Mr Joe Brian, which is currently in dispute. I supplied all email evidence and a document we believe proved our case to IPSO after first attempting to engage with the complainant. We have appealed IPSO's finding on this case (IPSO reference [IPSO: #05820-19#]), which has now been referred to the independent reviewer.

Resources

Editor's Code of Practice and McNae's Essential Guide to Journalists.

Andrew Mosley

(Editorial director Regional Media Ltd)



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