

Slimming World Annual Statement 1st January – 31st December 2019

Introduction

Slimming World, the UK's leading slimming organisation, was founded by Margaret Miles-Bramwell (OBE) in 1969 and has more than 19,000 weekly groups supporting 900,000 members across the UK and Republic of Ireland. Its Head Office is based in Alfreton, Derbyshire.

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 introducing new people to the organisation via the newsstand and digital editions. Published seven times a year, the magazine features the real-life success stories of Slimming World members, a food section, practical and psychological features, health and fitness ideas, and news pages.

The title's combined print and digital circulation is 494,291 (ABC Jul-Dec 2019). UK and RoI account for most of these sales (488,291 print; 4,418 digital); sales in other countries are much lower (1,351 print; 364 digital). Sales are split 60% to group members (where it has a special price of £1.95), 29% to newsstand (full cover price of £2.95) and 11% to subscriptions (from £17.70 per year).

Slimming World Magazine is the only magazine title produced by Miles-Bramwell Executive Services Ltd (trading as Slimming World). The named responsible person is Elise Wells, Director of Marketing.

Slimming World has a number of other content-producing departments. These use a mixture of new content and repurposed magazine material:

- Websites/app

Our public website, slimmingworld.co.uk, hosts around 3 million sessions each month, while our app hosts around 15.4 million monthly sessions. 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.

- Digital programme

Slimming World provides a digital 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, motivational tools, an app and an online community.

- Publications

Slimming World provides a 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.

Slimming World also publishes a range of recipe books and journals that members can purchase in groups, guides for members with specific nutritional needs, easy-read and other accessible resources, various internal publications (Head Office newsletters, Consultant magazine, etc), and promotional material (group leaflets, posters etc).

- 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 and social media channels; training videos for Consultant website/training sessions, etc. We also work with external video agencies from time to time.

- 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/recipes/menu plans to international media; producing and communicating Slimming World research; and creating template media materials for self-employed Consultants with local groups in order to promote our service
 - teams both selling advertising space in *Slimming World Magazine* and buying display advertising and advertorial space in other publications.

Slimming World Magazine editorial standards

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

The Editors' Code of Practice (July 2019 edition) is adhered to:

- All staff have a copy of the Code and understand how it applies to their work.
- The Code is on display in all departments that produce editorial content.
- Our Media Training days include training on the Code.
- 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.
- When the Code is updated, new copies are distributed to the team along with an explanation of the changes and how this applies to our work.
- We have an editorial practices document, which was created in consultation with IPSO. All content teams refer to this document.

Data protection responsibilities and matters of privacy are taken very seriously:

- Slimming World updated their Data Protection Policy Guide in May 2018 to reflect the General Data Protection Regulation. Existing contributors (writers, photographers, stylists, etc) have a copy of our 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 selected to appear in the magazine, company publications or promotional literature are sent a Member Consent Form 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. This form has recently been updated with guidance from our company lawyers (Hopkins Solicitors). The new version was rolled out to all content teams in May 2019.
- Where private information is supplied about another individual identified 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 naming or picturing children and consider whether any information supplied about them would have an adverse affect on their welfare.
- We only use data from magazine competition entries for the purpose of the administration of the competition. All entries are destroyed after the prize has been awarded.
- If we are unable to secure the approval from everyone in a member's photograph we blur faces where they are identifiable.

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

- Slimming World has in-house teams of nutritionists and dietitians and an external panel of experts in behaviour change, psychology and fitness. Company content is produced in association with these teams, and final copy is approved by these teams.
- Sub-editors check all facts and figures back to the source.
- Advertisers making claims in advertising/promotions are asked to substantiate these claims. If doubt remains, advertising is sent on to the ASA for feedback.

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

- The copy for member success stories and case studies is approved by the interviewee.
- Features are sent back to the freelance writer for accuracy checks.
- Health, fitness and psychology features are verified by our in-house food and nutrition teams and/or advisory panel. The 7-day eating plan is approved by the nutrition team.
- Promotions (advertorials and competitions, etc) are sent back to the advertiser or promoter 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 Director of Marketing, Editor and Chief Sub Editor prior to publication to ensure we abide by 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.
- 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.

All content channels work to standardise editorial procedures and share best practice via weekly meetings with all heads of departments and content leads.

Our complaints-handling process

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

- All content teams accept editorial complaints in whichever medium the complainant wishes to use – letter, email, phone call, social media, etc.
- We aim to 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 Joint Managing Director and CEO if necessary.
- Most complaints are resolved quickly and to the complainant'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 negatively affect 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. All communications teams renew their training regularly. In October 2019 the following teams received refresher training:

- PR team.
- Content-producing members of the digital team.

The following recently-appointed staff also received training in October 2019:

- Magazine art assistant.
- 2 x social media engagement officers.

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*:

1. Data Protection – a policy guide for Slimming World*
2. Contributors' data protection covering letter*
3. Member Consent form (updated April 2019) Available to review on request.
4. Author Commissioning Form and Licence Agreement (updated April 2019) Available to review on request.
5. Slimming World Whistle Blowing Policy.*
6. Slimming World Editorial Practices document (produced in consultation with IPSO). Available to review on request.
7. 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.

* These documents have previously been supplied.