

IPSO Annual Statement 2019

Newsquest Media Group

This is the annual statement of Newsquest Media Group to the Independent Press Standards Organisation for the year 2019. It is made pursuant to clause 3.3.7 and Annex A of the Scheme Membership Agreement and the numbered references below are references to the numbered paragraphs of Annex A.



1. Factual information about the Regulated Entity

1.1 List of titles

Appendix 1 to this statement contains a list of Newsquest Media Group titles across the UK.

1.2 Responsible Person

The Responsible Person (as defined in clause 3.3.9 of the Scheme Membership Agreement) is Simon Westrop, the Group Head of Legal and Company Secretary for Newsquest Media Group Limited.

1.3 The nature of the Regulated Entity

Who we are

Newsquest Media Group is one of the UK's leading news publishers, with more than 200 local news and magazine brands in print and online, among them 21 daily newspapers. Our job is to report and record the lives of the people who make up the communities we serve - the everyday triumphs and tragedies of the human story in cities, towns and villages across the geographical length and breadth of the country.

You will find us in the great cities of the North, with *The Herald* in Glasgow and *The Press* in York, and again in the quieter rural byways of the Welsh Marches, with the *Ludlow & Tenbury Wells Advertiser* and the *County Times in Powys*. We are with you at the seaside too along the south coast of England, with *The Argus* in Brighton, the *Daily Echo* in Bournemouth and the *Dorset Echo* in Weymouth, then reaching out to Lands' End with *The Packet* in Falmouth.

Whether in print or online, a Newsquest Media Group title is always at hand: six million readers a week are still keen to grab a paper copy and around 34 million readers log into our digital products every month. Our titles include the oldest newspaper in the world, *Berrow's Worcester Journal* (now part of the *Worcester News*), as well as some of the newest, such as the *Salford City News* in the North West; *The Vale Journal*, an edition of the *Salisbury Journal*, dedicated to the Blackmore Vale; and a fresh Teesside edition for *The Northern Echo*. Those additions follow the acquisition in recent years of the *Isle of Wight County Press*, a dozen weekly titles on the North Wales borders, and also the seven titles of CN Group in Cumbria, including two dailies, the *News & Star* in Carlisle and *The Mail* in Barrow.

Although we distribute local *Wedding* magazines to help brides on their big day, our magazines are more than just a glossy bridesmaid to the main news titles. They are successful publications in their own right. Our stable of county lifestyle magazines under the *Living* masthead is thriving, having expanded from just six titles in 2017 to 26 now – and still growing. And farmers and businessmen appreciate the specialist sector-focused reporting of long-established industry authorities like *The Scottish Farmer* and *Insurance Times*. Newsquest Specialist Media have cultivated an international conference business and many of our newspapers and magazines also organise exhibitions, fairs, competitions and other events in their local communities.



What we do

What we do above all else is deliver the news that matters to our readers. The power and relevance of the local press was well demonstrated in 2019 by the work of *The Impartial Reporter*, the weekly newspaper based in Enniskillen in Northern Ireland. By gritty determination and dedication to his craft, reporter Rodney Edwards uncovered and investigated more than 50 allegations of historical sexual abuse in institutions across the county of Fermanagh, triggering rallies demanding police action and a bout of anguished introspection throughout the entire province.

So the regional press is kicking back against the commercial and technological challenges of our times and it is needed as much as ever.

Newsquest Media Group publications are distributed in print and electronically online, via websites and social media and in versions adapted for mobile telephones and other portable devices, as well as in digital facsimile and feeds to third party electronic databases. We also operate a number of purely digital services, such as *S1* for homes and jobs, and the *Exchange & Mart* brand for motors.

We are at the forefront in being able to offer our customers comprehensive digital marketing strategies through our *LocalIQ* services, combining sophisticated analytical tools and the advertising power of our news brands across the UK with our customers' websites and communication campaigns. It's a one-stop shop for businesses that want to prosper online.

It's true that digital subscriptions are a growing source of revenue for news publishers, although in many cases free access online is likely to remain prevalent for the foreseeable future. However, print continues to defy the doomsayers and there remains a lively demand for traditional ink-on-paper products. The Group currently operates four presses, located in Glasgow, Oxford, Weymouth and

Deeside. As well as printing Newsquest titles, the presses provide contract printing services to business and the public sector. Newsquest Direct offers specialist marketing services and delivery of marketing materials door-to-door.

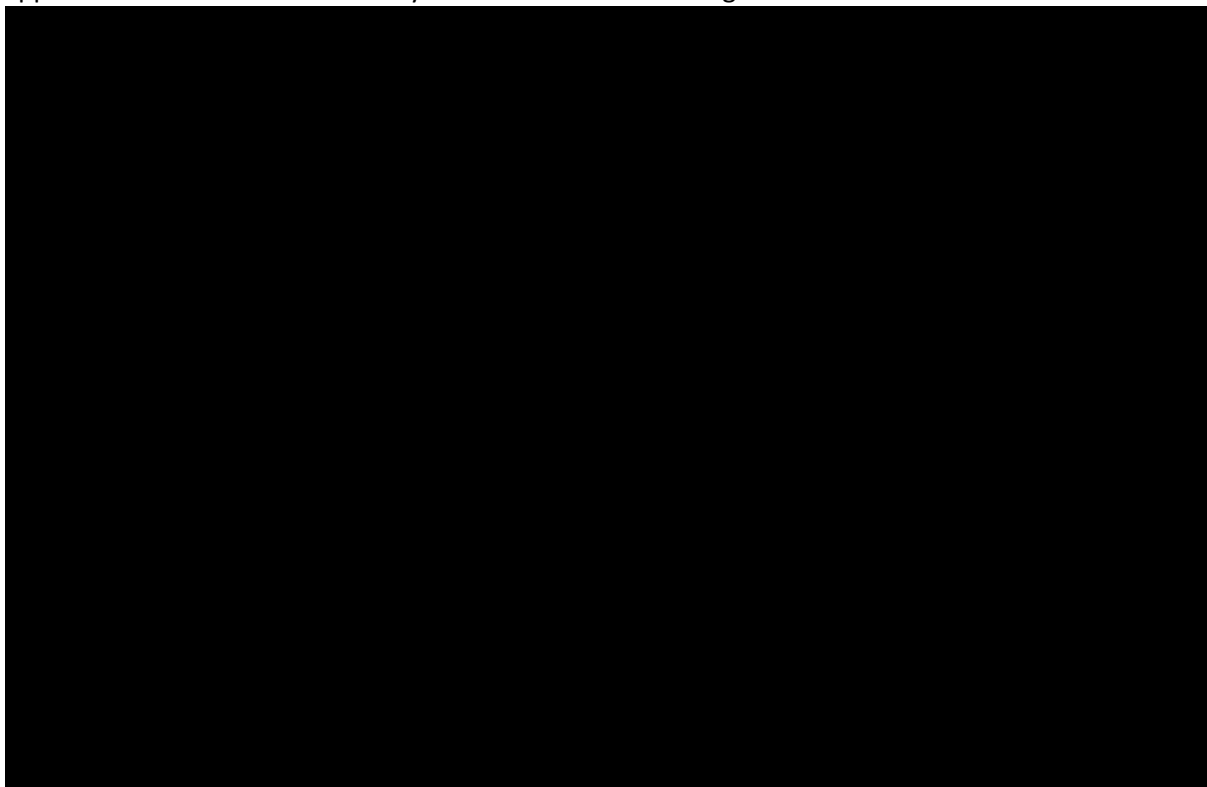
Where we came from

Newsquest first emerged as an entity in 1995 when Reed Regional Newspapers were bought by its own management. It has grown solidly by accretion ever since, acquiring a series of major regional publishers on the way, including Westminster Press, News and Communication Media on the South coast, and the newspaper business of Scottish Media Group. Until recently we operated through a series of local publishing companies, but a reorganisation has simplified the group structure so that Newsquest Media Group Ltd is now the principal publisher. Its registered office is at Loudwater Mill in High Wycombe. The CEO's office is in Lincoln's Inn Fields in central London. Newsquest's ultimate holding company in the UK is Gannett U.K Limited, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Gannett Co., Inc, a US company listed on the New York stock exchange.

Gannett is itself a leading media and marketing company in the US. It publishes *USA Today* and titles across 34 states. In 2019 it merged with New Media Investment, owner of Gatehouse Media, to create the largest US media company by print circulation, including 250 daily titles, and reinventing Gannett as a digital media powerhouse.

How we are coping in lock-down

At the time of writing this annual statement, the coronavirus pandemic is still raging and newspapers, like other businesses, are working out how best to serve their customers. What has been remarkable is the extent to which readers have responded to us and how much they value their local newspaper in times of crisis. The Editor of *The Leader* in Mold in North Wales appreciated this letter from elderly resident of a local nursing home:



In each annual statement, we invite a local editor to give us a glimpse of the newspaper and the life of the community it represents. This year we have asked Nigel Burton, Group Editor in Yorkshire, to tell us how he has been coping professionally in coronavirus lock-down.

As we left the office on Friday March 20 none of us realised we wouldn't see the newsroom again until the summer.

Some of us had discussed the challenges working from home would pose as the pandemic continued to spread, but no one could have predicted the lockdown, the furlough scheme and the way the economy would come to a juddering halt almost at the flick of a switch.

I have been an editor for almost 40 years. I have covered wars, the swine flu pandemic and the financial crash but I have never experienced anything like the past couple of months.

As someone with a healthy interest in the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic and the threat of infectious disease in a connected global economy I watched with increasing unease as stories of a new respiratory illness emerged from China in January. Within weeks it was obvious that the world was facing a once-in-a-generation threat from a fast-spreading deadly pathogen with no cure and no treatment.

But none of us could foresee what would happen and the challenges it would pose to our ability to serve our communities.

Overnight our offices closed down and journalists switched to working from home.

Prior to the pandemic the idea of entire newsrooms working from home - reporting, sourcing images, producing print products, holding meetings and running busy websites - seemed the stuff of fantasy. Not all staff are technology-minded and the thought of everyone using cloud-based solutions for everything seemed faintly ridiculous.

But faced with a national crisis our news teams made the transition seamlessly. There were no network problems, no difficulties logging on, no cries of "I can't do this"; people just got on with their jobs.

And they did it magnificently. Everyone put their shoulder to the wheel. They uncomplainingly worked long hours in a new environment; going the extra mile for readers to ensure our websites and print publications were always the definitive source of trusted local news about this pandemic.

Microsoft Teams, Skype and Zoom became the new way of doing face-to-face interviews and conducting group chats. WeTransfer helped move large video files and picture packages.

The result was a huge increase in web traffic as hundreds of thousands of users bookmarked our pages and became regular readers. For some this was their first taste of our news sites.

It's early days yet, but as the first wave of this pandemic slowly unwinds, and people's thoughts turn to other types of news, I'm pleased to say it looks as if many of our new visitors are sticking with us. Clearly they liked what they saw.

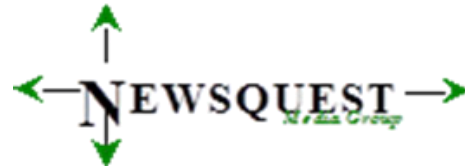
As well as bringing local communities back together, the pandemic helped people reconnect - and appreciate - their local news brands once more.

Sales of our print products have held up remarkably well, too, despite the lockdown.

As for Covid-19, we may be over the first peak but we aren't out of the woods yet. There are real fears of a second wave this winter following the pattern the world saw with Spanish flu. The could mean another spell in lockdown and a return to reporting from home.

Whatever the future holds – and the last few months have shown that anything is possible in the new paradigm - I am sure our journalists are ready to meet the challenges ahead.

How we help



The Gannett Foundation UK is a charitable venture of Newsquest Media Group which has delivered millions of pounds of support to worthwhile local causes over the last 20 years. In 2019, £140,000 was donated to 40 different community organisations up and down the UK.

The trustees take on an annual task of working through stacks of deserving applications submitted locally through Newsquest Media Group editors. Decisions are made entirely on merit and the extent to which the trustees think an award will deliver a real and lasting practical benefit to the communities served by our newspapers.

The challenging social problems affecting many of our towns and cities were reflected in some of the successful applications in 2019. The trustees were particularly impressed by a project in Bournemouth, intended to fill the hole left by the decimation of town centre retailing with opportunities for disadvantaged local youth. “Creative Kids” was already running arts activities in one empty unit in a shopping centre and was moving into another where they are now creating a community cinema. The trustees are paying for the projector, screen and theatre curtains they need to get started.

The trustees said: *“It really is a pleasure for us to find and help people who are giving up their own free time to help others in inventive ways that answer very specific local needs in the community, because this is where our newspapers are too and we want to support what is good about the places we live in and make them even better if we can.”*

In Newport, South Wales, a charity called “Amazing Grace Spaces” offers accommodation for homeless women, and the trustees awarded them funds to buy bedroom furniture. Over in Wiltshire, the town of Salisbury is noted for the grandeur of its cathedral rather than the blight of poverty, but look more closely and a slightly different picture emerges. In 2019, a part of our available fund went to furnish a house run by Salisbury Trust for the Homeless.

The hospice movement rarely misses out in the annual round of awards and money was granted in 2019 to hospices in Workington, Cumbria and Renfrewshire in Scotland.

Another theme that tends to repeat itself in applications to our editors focuses on community construction projects, typically involving gardens or historical structures which are being revived and brought back into recreational use. Grants were made in 2019 to a project restoring the Montgomery Canal in North Wales and a similar canal project based in Stroud in the Cotswolds. And then there was an application from the Erlas Victorian Gardens in Wrexham, North Wales, which brings activities for disabled volunteers, fruit and vegetables for sale and a delightful place to visit for

the general public. In Glasgow and the Isle of Wight grants from the trustees in 2019 are helping to turn unused spaces into flourishing gardens for the pleasure of local residents.

And children too are being encouraged into more challenging outdoor adventures. Thanks to money from Newsquest Media Group, youngsters are now better equipped to go sailing on the River Stour in Essex, and girl guides in Surrey will find their campsite lodge in the woods a lot more comfortable with its new boiler and heating.

Many more grants were given across the UK for a wide variety of good causes, including support for the disabled, the elderly and those just down on their luck. Most of the successful applications are not necessarily big projects or headline-grabbers, but rather smaller ones that meet a particular need and instantly improve daily life. For instance, that new fridge or kettle the community centre has been wanting but never seems to have the ready cash.

Special awards went to a number of charities connected with the news industry. The trustees gave £10,000 each to the Journalists Charity (for journalists or former journalists in need), the National Council for the Training of Journalists (for education and training), and the Newstraid Benevolent Fund (for people from retailing and distribution businesses who have fallen on hard times).

We retain a modest reserve to cater for urgent applications in cases of real need until the next round of awards are made. Such ad hoc applications can be made through any local Newsquest Media Group editor.

2. Copies of internal manuals, codes or guidance used by journalists

Newsquest issues policies on many matters relevant to the work of its employees and the interests of its readers. Some of them are required by statute and published on our corporate website, such as our policy to guard against 'modern slavery' and people trafficking. Others are for guidance internally to sales teams and managers, including for instance guidance and policies on competition issues and commercial practices. A large part of our training is now delivered electronically, particularly by means of online courses in areas such as ethical conduct (towards our customers and our employees), IT security and data protection. For the purposes of this statement to IPSO, we attach at Appendix 2 internal guidance entitled "Principles of Ethical Newsgathering", which is specific to the work of journalists. It is of many years standing and borrows from the experiences of our colleagues in the US. It is guidance only and has no binding effect, but we use it to help journalists to follow the Editors' Code and good practice generally.

Newsquest Media Group Legal is available for legal and regulatory advice to journalists on demand, supported by external solicitors to cover absences or as otherwise required. In 2019, our retained external solicitors for editorial matters in England and Wales were Exeter-based Foot Anstey, while Levy & McRae covered Scotland and Northern Ireland from their offices in Glasgow. Written guidance on legal and regulatory matters is issued by the in-house legal department from time to time and distributed directly or by means of an intranet.

Since the General Data Protection Regulation came into force in 2018, more emphasis has been placed on the need for journalists to consider carefully how they use personal data in their stories, especially sensitive personal data. Although an exemption for journalism applies, it depends on journalists being disciplined in their thought processes and their respect for the data privacy of individuals.

3. The compliance process

3.1 Pre-publication guidance

Newsquest editors are generally receptive to non-binding pre-publication discussions with IPSO where a person affected by a proposed story has raised concerns. However, in practice the public use of this facility is low, at least as far as regional newspapers are concerned. We have experienced very few approaches of this kind and we are not aware of any in 2018. However, whenever a story arises that might lead to controversy or confrontation, the regulator's voice is in our minds: IPSO rulings are frequently consulted before publication as helpful precedents to guide the writing of a story. The "Editors' Codebook" is a useful digest of IPSO decisions, produced by the Editors' Code of Practice Committee. On the other hand, except for points of Code interpretation, a strong attachment to editorial independence makes local newspapers less likely to make a pre-publication approach to IPSO themselves, especially as IPSO might ultimately be judge in the same cause at a later date.

Nevertheless, we recognise that IPSO can serve as peacemaker, even where no issue arises under the Editors' Code. Readers have in the past contacted IPSO with concerns about the effect of publicity, typically in relation to a child or other vulnerable person. In these circumstances, IPSO will engage with editors to find a practical and balanced solution wherever possible. These 'off-book' transactions go mostly unrecorded and unnoticed by the public, and yet they are in many ways central to the idea of voluntary self-regulation.



3.2 Verification of stories

We want to be trusted by our readers and we realise that trust has to be earned. Newsquest's approach to verification is discussed variously in the Newsquest guidance entitled "Principles of Ethical Newsgathering" at Appendix 2.

If journalism is the first draft of history, then it is necessarily a rough draft, written very often against obstructions (deliberate or otherwise) and the pressure of deadlines. Where there are errors we will correct them, before or after publication. We welcome interaction with our readers because it is in co-operation with them that the full story may be revealed.

Many stories are generated from third party sources and there is no direct obligation in the Editors' Code requiring journalists to contact the person who is actually the subject of a story. That must always be a question of editorial judgment. Sometimes it would be inappropriate; for instance, we would not feel a need to approach a defendant convicted after trial in a serious criminal case. But often it will be good journalistic practice and common sense, because the subject may know something that casts the story in a different light.

While readers deserve clarity of course, journalists must resist the temptation to over-simplify a story just to make it more compelling. Reliance on cliché is not only lazy but also legally dangerous. Not every landlord is a wicked landlord and not every bad outcome is the product of someone's dishonesty. In the wider world, incompetence is a more likely explanation than conspiracy. We

advise our journalists against imposing their own interpretation on uncertain facts or the use of too many colourful adjectives. Let the known and verified facts tell their own story.

So we encourage journalists in a healthy scepticism. They should stand back, assess their evidence, and question the premise and tone of their story before it goes to press. Better still, they should discuss it with an independent person who has not been involved in collecting the information. Or refer it to Newsquest Media Group Legal.

Accuracy is the first duty of the journalist. It serves our commercial interests and it is also the surest legal protection, so we have every interest in getting it right. Newsquest Media Group CEO Henry Faure Walker has said:

“Our content is produced by highly skilled local journalists, it is regulated, it relies on human judgement and discretion as opposed to blind algorithms, and it reaches and engages millions of people in communities throughout the UK. As a result, our advertising environment is trusted, safe and highly responsive.

“What’s more, advertising in local news brands continues to fund much needed high quality journalism across the UK. We hope that ad agencies and national advertisers will better recognise the value we provide and will agree that local news brands are worth standing up for”.

3.3 Compliance with the Editors’ Code

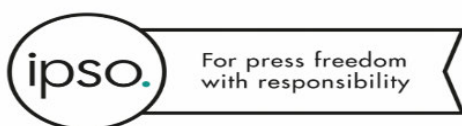
Advertising the Code

Editors understand that IPSO’s own complaints process emphasises the requirement that complainants should first try to resolve the issue with the newspaper before going to the regulator. Therefore all our local titles advertise the existence of IPSO and the Editors’ Code, as enforced by IPSO, as well as our complaints process, in both the print and online editions of all titles. Readers will find a templated piece about press complaints in our printed newspapers and on our websites. For example:

Press complaints: The Whitehaven News abides by the Independent Press Standards Organisation Editors’ Code of Practice. Readers who wish to make representations should write in the first instance to The Editor, The Whitehaven News 1 Dalston Road, Carlisle, Cumbria CA2 5AU or vanessa.sims@newsquest.co.uk. If not satisfied, complainants can then contact the IPSO at Gate House, 1 Farringdon Street, London, EC4M 7LG. Email inquiries@ipso.co.uk Tel 03001232220 Website: www.ipso.co.uk

And on the footers of all our Group websites

IPSO regulated: This website and associated newspapers adhere to the Independent Press Standards Organisation's Editors' Code of Practice. If you have a complaint about the editorial content which relates to inaccuracy or intrusion, then please contact the editor [here](#). If you are dissatisfied with the response provided you can contact IPSO [here](#).



Handing a complaint

Complaints under the Editors' Code are handled personally by Editors, Group Editors (in charge of a series of titles) or Digital Content Editors (in the case of online story complaints). Subject to any relevant internal advisory policies, our complaints handlers are not restricted in their conduct of the process or the discretion they may use. Flexibility is encouraged in order to achieve a resolution. If agreement cannot be achieved or has not been achieved within 28 days, complainants are reminded of their right to take the matter to IPSO. Legal claims are referred to Newsquest Media Group Legal. Published corrections and apologies, fresh stories, follow-ups, published letters, deletions or annotations to archived online stories, private letters and personal meetings are some of the various resolutions which might be offered. However, an Editor will stand firm if he or she is confident that a story is justified under the law and the Code. An Oversight Committee of senior editors will consider from time to time matters relating to standards and the Code across the Newsquest Media Group.

Whatever the complaint, we always respect the opinions and collective wisdom of our readers and we try to learn from them. After all, news is essentially about people. We listen and, where we reasonably can, we act, because a satisfied customer is a customer we keep.

Recording resolutions

Editors are also encouraged to maintain a spot in the newspaper for corrections or clarifications and not to be shy of using it. We take the view that dealing with complaints and acknowledging errors swiftly and effectively promotes trust in our relationship with our readers. In the Whitehaven News there is a separate box on the letters spreads when needed, headed 'Errors and Explanations'. It reads: *We strive to get things right, but when mistakes do happen it is our policy to correct them as soon as possible. If you spot a mistake please email letters.wn@cnmedia.co.uk or call our newsdesk on 01900 608600.*

Editors keep logs of complaints and outcomes. The overwhelming majority of these are of a minor nature, not involving breaches or potential breaches of the Editors' Code. Often they are from people who, for one reason or another, have become involved in a legitimate news story but simply resent the unwanted exposure. Many others are from people who accept a story is accurate but they have a different view as to how it should have been handled. Here is one, not untypical, example, again from Cumbria:

- *Contact: By phone. Complaint: Mrs B left a voicemail on Friday, March 22 asking for someone to call her back about the story on p3 of the Times & Star about Dearham Primary School being Makaton friendly, linked to International Down Syndrome Day. She was very pleased with the story and the fact that it had been covered but said she and a lot of other people had been upset that it referred to "Down's children" etc. rather than "children with Down syndrome" - something campaigners had spent a long time trying to change.*
- *Action taken: Story amended online and agreed that [REDACTED], at her request, would submit a draft clarification for consideration to use in print. This was used in the following week's edition."*



What if local resolution fails?

Complainants are first expected to seek resolution with the newspaper and only if that fails should they go to IPSO. If the regulator is approached first, then the complainant will be directed to the newspaper and 28 days allowed for resolutions outside the regulatory process. If resolution is not achieved the complainant may ask IPSO to intervene.

Most complaints we receive are minor or not well-founded. But some are more significant. Whatever kind the complaint is, they are nearly all sorted out locally by newspaper staff who take time to listen. But it is the Editors' Code and the regulatory framework overseen by IPSO that defines the proper purposes of journalism and imposes discipline on the newspaper to respond constructively to complaints, while giving readers the confidence that they have both a right and an effective means of redress. Trust between publishers and their readers depends on this regulatory guarantee. And the success of the regulatory system is measured by the relatively small number of complaints that actually have to be referred to the Complaints Committee of IPSO.

IPSO subjects the complaints it receives to an initial review and may reject a complaint at this stage if it does not disclose a potential breach of the Code. If IPSO considers that a complaint may involve a breach of Code, it is referred for investigation by a case officer. Crucially at this point, the case officer can suggest a mediated resolution (the value of which is discussed further below). If it is not then resolved by mediation, it will be passed to the Complaints Committee for adjudication. On an adverse finding, the newspaper is likely to be required to publish the detailed adjudication both in print and online. In serious cases of systemic failure, the regulator can impose a fine of up to £1 million and order the publisher to pay the costs of the investigation.

GDPR

Some overlap of jurisdiction has arisen since the General Data Protection Regulation ("GDPR") recast the legal framework of data protection in the UK in 2018. Across the Group we receive daily requests for erasure of published articles from our publicly accessible online editorial archives, invoking what is often described as "the right to be forgotten". These requests frequently relate to published reports of criminal convictions, and currently they far outweigh the complaints we receive under the Editors' Code. They may be presented or will be understood as applications under Article 17 GDPR and Section 47 of the Data Protection Act 2018, which confer certain rights of erasure on data subjects. All these communications are passed to Newsquest Media Group's Data Protection Office ("DPO") at its dedicated email address: privacy@newsquest.co.uk. However, applicants sometimes make a claim that an archived article is inaccurate as well, using that objection as a basis for demanding erasure from the archive. An article is likely to have been in archive for years when the request is made; although it includes a claim of inaccuracy, it will therefore fall outside IPSO's remit because the regulator generally will not consider complaints received later than four months after publication in print or up to 12 months from publication on a website. Nevertheless, the DPO will entertain such complaints under the principle of accuracy of processed personal data which is set out in Article 5 GDPR.

The DPO will consider with the relevant editor whether the exemption from data law rights of erasure for journalistic purposes applies in any particular case. The exemption may apply to material which was published in the reasonable belief that its publication served the public interest. The ambit of the public interest is interpreted broadly. As the Information Commissioner's own guidance says:

“We recognise that there is an inherent public interest in freedom of expression itself, regardless of the specific content of the story. It is in the public interest to have a free and independent media informing the public about current events and providing information of general interest to the audience. We therefore accept that there will be a public interest in the full range of media output, from day-to-day stories about local events to celebrity gossip to major public interest investigations.”

The exemption will apply to the entire journalistic purpose end-to-end, including archiving. However, a publisher must still implement the provisions of data law, including the right of erasure, unless it reasonably believes that the application of data law is incompatible with the journalistic purpose in any particular case.

A local newspaper’s job is to record and archive the life of the community it covers. The resulting archive is a valuable historical record – often the only local record in existence - and it serves as the collective memory of the community, a rich resource for research and democratic debate. These newspaper archives have been kept for some 300 years, first in print, now mostly in digital media. They are fundamental to the journalistic purpose and their importance is recognised in Recital 153 of the GDPR. Therefore, in practice, we find that most requests for erasure from the archives are declined by the DPO because erasure would be incompatible with the journalistic purpose.

However, that will not be the case in relation to a justified complaint of inaccuracy in relation to archived material. Our privacy notice, which appears by link from the footers of each group website, explains that we will correct (usually by annotation to the archives) any significant inaccuracy once it has been demonstrated to us. We do this because accuracy is not only compatible with our journalistic purpose, it is essential to it. This means that our readers have a commitment to accuracy from us which continues indefinitely throughout publication and archiving, regardless of the expiry of IPSO’s remit. Not only that, we assure our readers in our privacy notice that we will also publish any significant update to an archived story, where the story is accurate as a report of what happened at the time but some new development has since cast the facts in a different light. The obvious example would be a criminal conviction that is later quashed on appeal.



User generated content

IPSO potentially has jurisdiction over the user comments posted on the comments pages we host for news stories on our websites, but IPSO’s jurisdiction is triggered only where we have control and we have effectively adopted the post by omitting to remove it promptly after it has been brought to our attention. This is consistent with the ‘notify and take-down’ approach that is now globally accepted as excusing hosts of unmoderated comment facilities on the web.

Public comment forums of the kind we host facilitate democratic debate and are an invaluable resource in a free society. Most of the time, most of our users conduct themselves reasonably,

however, we recognise that the forums can be abused and where we do have control we seek to apply it responsibly. Our website user terms advise users that we do not moderate, monitor or edit contributions, but we post-moderate by intervening when issues come to our attention and we take such action as we think necessary. This may include deletions, warnings, exclusions, or disclosures to the police, courts or other relevant authorities. In particular, we provide a 'report this post' tool alongside each comment to enable anyone to raise objections for our consideration, and we act promptly in response. We will also take pre-emptive steps to limit discussion where we consider it appropriate; it is our general policy not to allow comments on reports of sensitive live court proceedings, which may attract prejudicial or unlawfully disclosed information posted by careless contributors.

Our website user terms specifically advise contributors that they are themselves directly liable in law for the content of their own posts, and we highlight the dangers of material that is abusive, offensive, defamatory, or which may prejudice a court case. Once an objectionable comment is brought to our attention we will consider whether action is appropriate. Although we do not routinely monitor the comments pages (and it would be commercially impracticable to do so anyway), we may take proactive measures if otherwise we happen to come across something we think is a problem. This model of post-moderation is the standard model for responsible site operators on the web, not just in the UK but across the world.

We continued to receive in 2019 demands from complainants for the disclosure of personal details of those anonymous posters on our comment pages who had offended or possibly libelled them. Though our user terms give us a discretion to disclose details in certain circumstances, generally we are bound by legal obligations of confidentiality and data protection and we will not disclose personal data to a complainant without a court order. If we receive any such application we will be likely to take a neutral stance and depend on the court to apply the correct principles of law. The defence for site operators under Section 5 of the Defamation Act 2013 reinforces our position in this regard as host of comments facilities.

However, there were no complaints adjudicated by IPSO in 2019 which related to user-generated comment on website pages hosted by Newsquest Media Group titles.

IPSO adjudications in 2019

There were 24 cases investigated by IPSO in respect of Newsquest Media Group titles in 2019. (We have counted as one complaint any case involving exactly the same story published in multiple group outlets). This is a noticeable reduction of the tally of 28 cases in the preceding year, though still within the usual range. Five of these complaints were resolved by mediation without finding of fault. Of the 19 cases referred for adjudication, 17 were not upheld. So just two complaints were upheld in 2019 as against six in 2018 and three in 2017. This record was achieved in spite of falling staff numbers and increasing pressure on time and resources.

As noted above, resolutions were mediated by IPSO in five cases. The titles where resolutions were achieved in 2019 were *The Argus* in Brighton (two cases), the *Evesham Journal*, the *Croydon Guardian* and *The National* in Scotland.

Examples of rejected complaints

- The Complaints Committee found there was no breach of the Code in a complaint brought by the mother of a teenage girl who had been videoed making threats of a violence on a

train. Identification by *The Argus* in Brighton was justified in the public interest in order to identify the perpetrator of a crime.

- *The National* in Scotland published an article under the headline *Could divine intervention help break the Brexit impasse?* which Stephen Kerr MP thought ridiculed his religious beliefs. The Complaints Committee did not uphold his complaint of discrimination. The newspaper maintained it was a satirical piece and the columnist was entitled to explore and question the personal views of politicians, and to highlight potential conflicts between their religious views and their responsibilities in office.
- And there was no breach of the Editors' Code by *The Bolton News* when it revealed an ex-husband's anguish over the fact that his children were in the custody of his former wife who was now marrying a convicted paedophile. The Committee did not uphold any of the complaints of inaccuracy, intrusion into privacy or harassment.

Hereford Times

The Shuttle

The IMPARTIAL
REPORTER

IPSO mediation

It is important to bear in mind that acceptance of resolution is not an admission of fault by the newspaper – often a resolution is sought through the auspices of IPSO where we are confident there is no breach of the Code but where we have sympathy for the complainant's position. The very first case of 2019 was an example. It involved *The Argus* in Brighton and related to a report of a coroner's inquest into a suicide. This is one of the more sensitive areas for a local newspaper to venture into. What looks to the reporter like an obvious matter of public interest looks to a grieving family like an unacceptable intrusion into a private agony. The Editors' Code and the associated guidance on reporting inquests IPSO produces helps us navigate a safe route between those legitimate concerns.

The complainant in *The Argus* case was the boyfriend of the deceased. He had been a witness at the inquest and disputed the newspaper's record of what was said in the proceedings. For its part, the newspaper maintained that its report stood as an accurate contemporaneous record. The facts given in court indicated that the relationship between the couple had been volatile, but the editor was able to accommodate the complainant's concerns by agreeing to remove from the archived copy a disputed reference which suggested that the complainant himself had described the relationship in this way in his testimony to the coroner, it not being relevant to the coroner's conclusions.

Mediation is an often overlooked facility offered by the regulator, but it allows a wide degree of flexibility for the sensible resolution of reader concerns beyond the bounds of the Code, and in many ways it epitomises the purpose of the media industry's system of voluntary regulation. Editors will always be anxious to protect the freedom of the press to report the world as they see it without being held to account for trivial errors or omissions. In the process it is sometimes the case that toes are trodden on and sensitivities offended, though without breach of the Code. Mediation is a very valuable way in which editors can reach beyond the confines of the Code and accommodate those concerns without a finding of fault or any compromise of principle.

We summarise and review the adverse findings below and explain any steps taken in response.

Because of the number of titles published by Newsquest, and therefore the number of different stories, the potential number of complainants (at least from among the subjects of those stories) is far greater than would be the case, for instance, for a publisher producing a single national newspaper. In addition to complaints taken to IPSO, Newsquest Media Group titles receive many more comments, questions (and occasionally words of thanks or support too) and sometimes legal claims. These are dealt with by Editors using their general discretion and, with regard to legal claims, advice from Newsquest Media Group Legal and external solicitors.



3.5 Editorial training

All trainee journalists are entered for the National Journalism Qualification from the National Council for the Training of Journalists. An external trainer prepares trainees for the qualification. Each course contains an introduction to IPSO, including case studies. In addition, the trainees undertake three practical tests in which they are asked to consider scenarios that might involve breaches of the Editors' Code. Each clause of the Code is explained and discussed, using real-life examples. Trainees are also issued with pocket-sized versions of the up-to-date version of the Code for them to carry at all times. Trainees are reminded they have access to advice from Newsquest Legal, and they are also encouraged to use guidance such as "Reporting Restrictions in the Criminal Courts" from the Judicial College and of course McNae's "Essential Law for Journalists", as well as the "Principles of Ethical Newsgathering", mentioned above.

Newsquest Legal provides in-house editorial training for Newsquest regions as time allows during the year, covering primarily legal matters, but also briefing on the work of IPSO and compliance with the Editor's Code. Editors are encouraged to read the editorial section of the Group legal report, which covers IPSO adjudications as well as news of legal matters. External trainers are commissioned, as each region may determine necessary, to deliver media law refresher seminars to senior journalists. Both staff and freelance journalists are contractually committed to the standards set down in the Editors' Code.

4. Steps taken in response to adverse adjudications

A review of the Editors' Code complaint upheld in 2019

Complaint of Jade Ashford against the Basingstoke Gazette

Three online articles in the *Basingstoke Gazette* by a freelance reporter covered a court case involving the chair of players at Basingstoke Rugby Club. He had been initially charged with three counts of sexual assault; one count of indecent exposure against a woman; and one count of indecent exposure against a second woman. The newspaper accepted there were some minor inaccuracies, for instance as regards the defendant's exact age and the length of his marriage, but said they could not amount to significant inaccuracies under the Editors' Code. However, a significant error did occur when the newspaper referred to a charge of indecent exposure even though it had been dropped by the time of publication, and the newspaper did not report that two

other charges had also been dropped. The *Gazette* had not checked that its information was still accurate at the time of publication and the Complaints Committee determined that this amounted to a failure to take care and therefore was a breach of Clause 1(i) of the Editors' Code. The newspaper had offered rectification in response to the complaint, so there was no breach of the requirement in Clause 1(ii). The article would be corrected in archive and an addendum added to say: *This article was updated on <date> to reflect the fact Mr Ashford had been acquitted of three counts - two of indecent exposures and one sexual assault - on August 22 and omit a description of one of these incidents.*

The complaint had been brought by the defendant's wife. The Complaints Committee rejected an additional allegation under Clause 3 that she and her husband had been subject to harassment by the reporter who, she claimed, had followed them around during the criminal proceedings. The Committee also decided that the fact that the reporter knew one of the victims did not engage Clause 3 or the Code provisions on privacy under Clause 2, and the newspaper observed that it was not an unlikely circumstance in any community.

- **Action taken**

NMG Legal spoke to the editor, and the editor raised the relevant issues with the contributing freelance. The trial had opened with all the charges intact when the first article was published. But some of the charges were dropped during the trial, an important point that the freelance forgot, missed or failed to check before filing a report saying the jury had retired to consider its verdict. Subsequent articles correctly represented the charges and the findings of guilt.

It is not unusual for charges to be dropped just before and sometimes during a trial, and generally this will be clear from the proceedings in open court, but it can also take place as a largely administrative action and no steps will be taken necessarily to alert the press to it. The only safeguard is professional vigilance and perhaps a good relationship with the court office and the judge's clerk. The newspaper would have relied on the freelance in this regard. That was not unreasonable but it does not remove the newspaper's ultimate responsibility for the erroneous publication. NMG Legal asked the editor to advise its staff and freelance reporters to develop or maintain a habit of double checking the charges with clerk and counsel in crown court, especially when back-room discussions over the charges are thought to be taking place.

Complaint of Shieldhill Youth Defenders Flute Band against the Glasgow Evening Times

The flute band has taken part in "Orange Walks" in Glasgow, parades held annually in July to celebrate Prince William of Orange's victory over King James II at the Battle of the Boyne on 12 July 1690. The parades are criticised by Catholics and nationalists in both Ireland and Scotland as sectarian and divisive.

In July 2018, the Glasgow Times used identifiable pictures of the flute band marching in the Orange Walk that year. The newspaper said the images were used as general illustrations of the nature of the event. However, that particular year was marked by controversy after a Catholic priest was attacked at the event. Moreover, the flute band were elsewhere that year and in fact had not taken part at all. The pictures had been taken at the same event in the previous year.

IPSO accepted that there was no suggestion in the newspaper's coverage that the flute band was in any way associated with the attack on the priest, but upheld the complaint because the picture captions had failed to explain to readers that the images were from 2017, not 2018, and therefore misleadingly associated the band with an event that had been widely criticised.

- **Action taken**

On receipt of the complaint, the newspaper recognised the error and offered to publish a statement of clarification. IPSO accepted that the offer had been timely and sufficient and no further remedial action was required.

It was reassuring that the Glasgow Times recognised its error and promptly took steps to correct it, showing that the Code works in practice as it is meant to do. However, the Editor recognised that it was also an avoidable error. He has therefore reminded staff of the need to take more care when considering the further inferences that may arise when photographs are attached to a story by way of generic illustration and to use captions more effectively to pre-empt these additional meanings.



Legal claims in 2019

From 6 April 2019, success fees ceased to be recoverable in media cases, ending a practice that newspapers have long condemned as oppressive. It allowed claimant's solicitors to double their fees and, if successful in the claim, seek recovery in full from the defendant. But the threat of disproportionate litigation costs remains a serious inhibition on the freedom of publishers and reform has not eliminated the recoverability of after-the-event insurance premiums from defendants in libel and other media actions, which can have just as devastating an effect on the budgets of local titles. This threat can force settlements on publishers even when there is a viable defence. Nevertheless, when we are confident that we have a good defence to a claim, we will defend it. And in 2019 we stood by our reporting on a number of occasions against determined claimants and their solicitors. As a result, no settlements were made in relation to claims of defamation arising in 2019 and no proceedings in defamation were issued against Newsquest Media Group.

Newsquest Media Group
June 2020

APPENDIX 1**NEWSQUEST MEDIA GROUP TITLES 2019**

Title
Advertiser (Barrow-in-Furness)
Alloa & Hillfoots Advertiser
Andover Advertiser
Ardrossan & Saltcoats Herald
Ascot News
Ashton Extra
Asian Image
Ayr Advertiser
Banbury Cake
Barnet & Potters Bar Times
Barrhead News
Barry & District News
Basildon Echo
Basingstoke Extra
Basingstoke Gazette
Bay Living
Berrow's Worcester Journal
Bexley News Shopper
Bicester Advertiser
Blackpool Lytham & St Anne's Citizen
Bolton Post
Border Counties Advertiser
Border Telegraph
Borehamwood & Elstree Times
Bournemouth Advertiser
Bracknell & Wokingham Midweek
Bracknell News
Braintree & Witham Times
Bridgwater Mercury
Bridgwater Star
Bridport and Lyme Regis News
Bromley News Shopper

Bromsgrove Advertiser
Bucks Free Press
Burnham Standard
Burnham & Highbridge Weekly News
Burnley Citizen
Bury Times
Bury Times (Friday)
Business HQ
Camborne Packet
Campaign Blackwood, Newbridge & Cross Keys
Campaign Caerphilly, Bargoed & Ystrad Mynach
Carlisle Living
Carrick Herald
Castlepoint Echo
Central Fife Times & Advertiser
Chard and Ilminster News
Chelmsford Weekly News
Cheltenham Independent
Chester-le-Street Advertiser
Chingford Guardian
Chorley & Leyland Citizen
Christchurch Advertiser
Clacton Gazette
Clydebank Post
Consett & Stanley Advertiser
Cotswold Living
Cotswold Journal
County Independent
County Times
Craven Herald & Pioneer
Crewe & Nantwich Guardian
Croydon Guardian (North)
Croydon Guardian (South)
Cumbria Life
Cumnock Chronicle
Daily Echo (Bournemouth)
Daily Gazette (Colchester)
Darlington & Stockton Times (Cleveland)
Darlington & Stockton Times (County Durham)
Darlington & Stockton Times (Richmond and Dales)
Darlington, Aycliffe & Sedgefield Advertiser
Denbighshire Free Press
Dorchester Life
Dorset Business
Dorset Echo

Dorset Society
Droitwich Spa Advertiser
Dudley News
Dumbarton & Vale of Leven Reporter
Dumfries & Galloway Life
Dunfermline Extra
Dunfermline Press
Durham Advertiser
Durham Times
Dursley Gazette
East Lothian Courier
Education Mag
Ellesmore Port & Nelson Standard
Enfield Independent
Epping Forest Guardian
Epping Forest Independent
Epsom Guardian
EssentialARB
Essex County Standard
Evening Times
Evesham Journal
Falmouth Packet
Fife & Kinross Extra
Flora Special
Forest Journal
Forestry Journal
Frinton & Waldon Gazette
Gazette & Herald
Gazette & Herald (Chippenham)
Gazette & Herald (Devizes)
Gazette & Herald (Marlborough)
Gazette Gloucestershire
Gazette Thornbury Edition
Gazette Yate and Sodbury Edition
Gloucester Gazette
Going Out Dorset
Gravesham News Shopper
Greenock Telegraph
Halesowen News
Halstead Gazette
Hampshire Business (Monthly)
Hampshire Chronicle (Winchester)
Hampshire Society (Southampton)
Harpenden Review
Harrow Times

Harwich and Manningtree Standard
Helensburgh Advertiser
Helston Gazette
Helston Packet
Helston Penryn Packet
Hendon & Finchley Times
Herefordshire Living
Hereford Times
Hexham Courant
Ilkley Gazette
In-Cumbria
Irvine Times
Isle of Wight County Press
Keep It Local
Keighley News
Knutsford Guardian
Lancashire Telegraph (Blackburn, Darwen, Hyndburn & Ribble Valley)
Lancashire Telegraph (Burnley, Pendle & Rossendale)
Lancashire Telegraph (Burnley Free)
Largs & Millport Weekly News
Ledbury Reporter
Leigh Journal
Life & Home Magazine
Limited Edition
Limited Edition Society
Living Magazines (26 county titles, north to south)
Lizard & Meneage Guide
Locate
Ludlow Advertiser
Luxury
Maldon Standard
Malvern Gazette
Manningtree and Harwich Standard
Marlow Free Press
Mid Cheshire Guardian
Mid Sussex Argus
Midweek Observer (Slough, Windsor, Maidenhead)
Milford Mercury
Monmouthshire Free Press (Chepstow)
Monmouthshire Living
New Forest Post
New Forest Society
News Extra Eastleigh
News Extra Southampton
News Extra Winchester

News & Star
North Hants Society (Basingstoke & Andover)
North Wales Chronicle
North Wales Pioneer
North Yorkshire Advertiser
Oxford Herald (Abingdon)
Oxford Herald (Didcot)
Oxford Herald (Wallingford)
Oxford Herald (Wantage)
Oxford Mail
Oxford Times
Paisley People
Peeblesshire News
Pembrokeshire Farmer
Pembrokeshire Living
Penarth Times
Penwith Pirate
Pontypool Free Press
Poole Advertiser
Prescot Extra
Preston & Leyland Citizen
Prestwich & Whitefield Guide
Property Chronicle
Radcliffe Times
Rayleigh/Rochford Castlepoint Standard
Reading Midweek
Redditch and Alcester Advertiser
Rhyl Journal
Richmond & Twickenham Times
Romsey Advertiser
Royal Borough Observer
Royal Cornwall Show Programme
Runcorn and Widnes World
Sale & Altrincham Messenger
Salford City News
Salisbury Journal
Selby Star
Seven Days Magazine
Slough & South Bucks Observer
Slough Express
Smallholder
Somerset County Gazette (Taunton)
Somerset County Gazette (West Somerset)
South Bucks Star
South Coast Argus

South Wales Argus
South Wales Golfer
South Wales Guardian
South West Farmer
Southend Echo
Southend Standard
Southern Daily Echo
St Albans Review
St Helens Star
Stourbridge Limited Edition
Stourbridge News
Stretford & Urmston Messenger
Stroud News & Journal
Surrey Comet
Sutton Guardian
Swanage & Wareham Advertiser
Swindon Advertiser
Swindon Star
Taste Cumbria
Taunton Star
Telegraph & Argus
Tenbury Wells Advertiser
Tewkesbury Admag
The Argus
The Bolton News
The Cumberland News
The Gazette (Johnstone and Renfrewshire)
The Guide
The Herald
The Herald on Sunday
The Impartial Reporter
The Leader (Flintshire & Wrexham)
The Mail (Cumbria)
The National
The Northern Echo
The Partnership
The Post (Blackburn)
The Post (Bolton)
The Press (York)
The Reading Chronicle
The Shuttle
The South Lakes Citizen
The Standard (Chester)
The Villager
The Weekend Leader

The Whitehaven News
Thornton Cleveleys Citizen
Three Counties Farmer
Thurrock Gazette
Times & Star
Tiptree Tribune
Tivyside Advertiser
Tottenham & Wood Green Independent
Troon & Prestwick Times
Voice
Wales Farmer
Waltham Forest Guardian
Waltham Forest Independent
Wandsworth Guardian (Putney)
Wanstead & Woodford Guardian
Warrington Guardian
Warrington Midweek
Watford Free Observer
Watford Observer
Wear Valley Advertiser
West Cornwall Packet
Western Telegraph
Westmorland Gazette
Weymouth and Dorchester Advertiser
Wharfedale Observer
Whitchurch Herald
Widnes World
Wilmslow Guardian
Wilts & Glos Standard Cotswold
Wilts & Glos Standard North Wilts
Wiltshire Living
Wiltshire Star (North)
Wiltshire Star (West)
Wiltshire Times
Wimbledon Guardian
Wimborne Life
Winsford & Middlewich Guardian
Wirral Globe
Witham & Braintree Times
Witney Gazette
Wokingham News
Woodley & Earley Chronicle
Worcester News
Wotton Gazette
York Herald

York Star
www.allanwaterherald.co.uk
www.alloaadvertiser.com
www.andoveradvertiser.co.uk
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www.asianimage.co.uk
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www.barrheadnews.com
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www.chorleycitizen.co.uk
www.clactonandfrintongazette.co.uk
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www.countytimes.co.uk
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