



IPSO Annual Statement

Covering the period 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021

IPSO Report

Introduction: The MNA

The MNA is Britain's largest independent regional news company, reaching more than one million people every week in print and online. It has delivered the news since the 1880s, first through the Express & Star, and the Shropshire Star.

It has a portfolio of titles across the West Midlands, Shropshire, and Mid Wales, including a range of weekly newspapers, magazines and apps.

The MNA is part of the Claverley group, which owns the Jersey Evening Post in the Channel Islands, a daily newspaper. The Claverley group also owns Precision Colour Printing, based in Telford, software supplier Press Computer Systems, Cubiquity and Kennedy Publishing. It recently acquired HPCi Media.

The Claverley businesses, including the MNA, are all owned by the Graham family, the proprietors of the Express & Star for more than a century.

The Covid-19 pandemic continued to pose challenges for the MNA during 2021. Remote working continued for large parts of the year, raising challenges around effective communication and training. This was again mitigated through regular video calls with staff and the sharing of information and best practice through email, Slack and internal blogs. As restrictions have eased, we have reopened our offices and the return of staff to the office environment has been a welcome boost for the news operation.

Daily titles:

Express & Star
Shropshire Star

Weekly titles:

Bridgnorth Journal
Chronicle Week series
Market Drayton Advertiser
Mid Wales Journal
Newport Advertiser
Shrewsbury Chronicle
South Shropshire Journal
Telford Journal

Monthly titles:

Shropshire Magazine
The Farmer

Martin Wright is the editor-in-chief of the MNA and its associated daily and weekly newspapers and associated websites.

The 'responsible person' for the Express & Star, Shropshire Star and weekly titles who deals with IPSO matters is Martin Wright.

Our editorial standards

The MNA is committed to upholding the Editors' Code of Practice. Journalists are issued with copies of the code and details are set out on the company's intranet. Training sessions – internally and externally – reinforce and refresh the importance of adhering to the code. The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in training sessions being held remotely through video calls, while best practice and updates on editorial matters have also been shared via email and through internal blog posts on the company intranet.

All staff are regularly reminded of the obligation to uphold the code at all times and the importance of representing the MNA – and the profession of journalism – in a positive and professional manner. Any changes to the Code are communicated to editorial staff verbally, via email and through the editor's blog.

A guide to editorial standards has been issued to all journalists working for the MNA, emphasising the importance of upholding the Editors' Code and upholding the highest professional standards. (Appendix 1).

In addition, the Express & Star and Shropshire Star send a copy of the Editor's Code of Practice to all regular freelance and agency copy suppliers. They are asked to give written confirmation that they have received the code and that they will adhere to it when dealing with any story or submitting copy for the MNA. The letter makes clear that if they do not reply accordingly, their services will no longer be required.

With regard to the verification of stories, all staff are made aware of Clause 1 (accuracy) of the Editors' Code and the need to always keep this in mind when researching, writing, news editing and sub editing stories.

The newsdesk requires that reporters and writers can stand up any claims made in their copy and that reports are balanced. Balanced reporting is an important part of our editorial standards and journalists are reminded of the need to give all parties an opportunity to reply.

All news stories appearing in our titles are checked by our team of content managers. Any stories of particular concern will be brought to the attention of the editor or deputy editor.

Those senior journalists with permission to publish content online have also received extra legal training on top of their ethical training.

In respect of potential ethical or Code of Practice matters, guidance would be sought from IPSO prior to publication if deemed necessary by the editor. Any guidance would be considered alongside any legal advice (if any) that had been sought.

Guidance would also be sought from IPSO in resolving complaints made to IPSO. This may take the form of agreeing a suitable resolution to a complaint with IPSO acting as the conduit between the complainant and the newspaper.

Our complaints handling process

The following guidance setting out our complaints handling process is issued to all editorial staff. It is available on the company's intranet and has been highlighted by the editor-in-chief in regular departmental blogs.

Dealing with editorial complaints

When dealing with complaints, every effort must be made to settle the issue at the earliest stage. If there are grounds for complaint and/or a mistake has been made, immediate efforts must be made to redress this.

If we are wrong, we have to put it right. If we have done nothing wrong, we have to be able to fight our corner which means accurate notes from the reporters and those who have dealt with the story.

Always make a note of any complaints, including the caller's name, the details of the complaint and, most importantly, any offer made to correct the mistake or make amends.

When complaints have been dealt with it is VITAL that you send a note to the Editor's Secretary. An annual report has to be compiled for IPSO. Therefore, please include all complaints detailing how they were dealt with.

Here are some guidelines for dealing with complaints:

- 1) If there are no grounds for complaint, for example the caller is unhappy that their court case has been reported, this should be explained to them calmly and clearly. If they are abusive and hostile you can end the conversation but ensure you make a note of the conversation.
- 2) If there may be a genuine complaint, take all of the details and promise to get back to the complainant as quickly as possible. The complaint must then be investigated with some urgency. If a mistake has been made, the deputy editor or editor should be informed.
- 3) In many cases, it may be possible to appease the complainant with a follow-up story containing the correct information, putting forward their stance on an issue to give a more balanced view or giving the organisation some positive press such as a feature.
- 4) The complainant may be satisfied with this. If not, it may be necessary to carry a correction as a blob par on the end of the story.
- 5) If neither of these options are appropriate or accepted, we may consider running a correction in the paper either clarifying or, if necessary, apologising for an error. This would need to be approved by the Editor-in-chief or Deputy Group Editor.
- 6) Make a note of all conversations, the offers made and the agreement hopefully reached. Send a note to the Editor's Secretary.

- 7) If a complaint is made directly to IPSO, in all likelihood the matter will be referred back to us with their primary goal being for agreement to be reached without their involvement. If we have already been contacted, we have to show that efforts have been made to satisfy the complainant. We must have notes ready.
- 8) If a mistake has been made and there is a threat of legal action, our solicitors must be consulted. The Editor-in-chief and/or Deputy Group Editor must be made aware of the complaint.
- 9) If there are any concerns about a complaint, take advice, whether it be from the newsdesk, Deputy Group Editor, Editor-in-chief or our solicitors when advised to do so. Always have a note of every conversation with the complainants.
- 10) In short, deal with complaints as quickly as possible, offer to make amends where necessary, take advice if required and keep notes. Send a final note to the Editor's Secretary as appropriate.

Complaints can be made in person, via the telephone or in written form (posted or electronic). The complaints are handled by the newsdesk, in conjunction with the Deputy Group Editor and/or Editor-in-chief. Records of complaints and outcomes are retained by the editor's secretary.

Details of our complaints handling procedures are published on the letters pages of both the Express & Star and the Shropshire Star each day, usually page 11. A copy of a page 11 featuring the information panel is attached (Appendix 2).

We also carry full details of how to make a complaint on the Shropshire Star website here: shropshirestar.com/making-a-complaint/

Similar details are also included on the Express & Star website here: expressandstar.com/complaints/

Our training process

Making staff aware of IPSO

Information about IPSO outlining our responsibilities and commitment is posted on our intranet for all staff to read, supported by regular updated blogs from the Editor-in-chief. This information is accompanied by a document setting out our complaints handling procedure, as set out above, which is available to download by all staff. All staff also receive copies of the procedure by email.

In addition, staff are updated on any changes to the regulations as they are with any changes to the law verbally, via email and through the editor's blog. Where necessary, formal training is arranged.

All staff have also been issued with a guide to the MNA's editorial standards which outlines our commitment to upholding the Editors' Code.

IPSO rulings that are particularly interesting and/or relevant are also shared with the editorial team via email to ensure staff are kept up to date with the committee's interpretation of the Code.

IPSO training

IPSO training sessions, conducted by our head of editorial training are held for all members of the editorial team. (Examples from previous sessions in Appendix 3).

IPSO training for any new starters is carried out by the head of editorial training or a senior editorial executive at the Express & Star and Shropshire Star using a PowerPoint demonstration and similar exercises.

All journalists working for the MNA are expected to hold the relevant NCTJ qualifications. Any trainee journalists working towards their qualifications receive training on the Editor's Code and must sit exams testing their knowledge of the Code and its application.

Manuals, codes and guidance used by journalists

Editors' Code – As previously outlined, all journalists including freelance staff are issued with copies of the code and details are set out on the company's intranet. We issue wallet size copies of the code to all staff.

MNA guide to editorial standards

Regular training sessions – internally and externally – reinforce and refresh the importance of adhering to the code.

In house training – The editorial training manager continues to head up the training of all editorial staff and also directs training for any new recruits. Copies of some of the training notes and exercises are attached. (Appendix 3).

Essential Law for Journalists – Copies of the latest edition are available in offices.

NCTJ diploma – As outlined above, all trainee reporters are expected to have the NCTJ diploma, which has ethical elements to its exams, or if they do not have this qualification we train them to a level that enables them to take the exam. On top of that, all trainees are supported by the MNA in their work towards the NCTJ's senior qualification, the NQJ, which tests ethics.

Complaints

There were no upheld complaints involving MNA publications received in 2021.

Appendix 1 - MNA guide to editorial standards

Introduction

This document is intended to set out the standards expected of journalists working for the Midland News Association. It is essential that all journalists working for the organisation read the document carefully and understand the importance of applying this code to their work. Our role as journalists requires us to make difficult decisions, often under pressure of deadlines. This document is designed to support journalists in making those decisions and to articulate the responsibilities of our journalists in providing our readers with accurate and informative stories.

Above all, we have a duty to check and double-check the accuracy of information before publication. This is not always easy when deadlines are approaching, but pressure of deadlines must never be used to excuse articles that fall below our high standards.

Our editorial standards

The MNA is committed to maintaining the highest editorial standards. All of our publications are regulated by IPSO and all of our journalists are expected to adhere to the Editors' Code of Practice.

All journalists are expected to uphold these standards and at all times to ensure that information published by MNA titles is accurate, complies with the Editors' Code and is legally sound.

Journalists should at all times remember that they are representing the MNA when dealing with members of the public, their contacts or other members of staff. It is important that journalists are professional in all of their dealings, treating people courteously at all times and responding to all enquiries in a polite, professional and timely manner, whether in person, on the telephone, via email, social media or any other medium.

The MNA expects journalists to rigorously check and verify all stories before submitting for publication. Stories involving contentious issues must be passed to senior editorial colleagues prior to publication.

Journalists are expected to carry out thorough verification of sources to ensure stories are genuine and not in any way malicious.

The advent of social media has increased the likelihood of inaccurate information gaining currency and journalists are expected to treat all such information with the utmost care, checking the authenticity of the material independently for verification before it is submitted for publication. If there is any doubt, however small, about the authenticity or intent behind information, this must be flagged up immediately to a senior colleague for further discussion.

The MNA is committed to providing fair and balanced reporting and it is important that all parties involved are given a fair opportunity to respond through our publications.

Copyright

One of the key issues to have arisen in recent years is rights usage. This is particularly important with regard to the use of images – whether they are sourced using Google or using social media. Our policy is that we must have explicit permission to use any material before publication. For the avoidance of doubt, we should seek permission in writing (an email is acceptable) which acknowledges we have permission to publish the material.

Remember, even when a picture is publicly available on social media, the person who took that picture could still claim copyright and be entitled to payment.

If there is any doubt about whether permission has been given, please consult a senior colleague.

Complaints

A copy of our procedure for dealing with complaints is available on our intranet and also attached to this document (see appendix 2). For the avoidance of doubt, it is essential that any errors are dealt with immediately once we become aware of them.

Again, when dealing with complaints or any form of reader/user feedback, it is important that journalists remain professional and handle any such complaints in a timely manner. It is also essential that a record of any emails and/or correspondence is kept, together with an explanatory note about any discussion with the complainant, when dealing with a complaint and that this is passed on to the editor's secretary as soon as possible for our records.

Where will your stories appear?

Remember that when writing copy, your stories will appear on multiple platforms within the MNA portfolio. As well as the daily titles, we have a range of weekly titles covering the West Midlands, Shropshire and Mid Wales – in addition to our magazines and periodicals. Please think about these different publications when writing your copy – if you have additional material (for example extra pictures) that would sit better within one of our locally-focused weekly titles, let the relevant weekly editor know or, if in doubt, notify newsdesk.

Think digital

A key consideration for all of our journalists is ensuring that copy produced should be ready for publication on our digital channels. Please ensure that you are familiar with the requirements of the digital workflow and that your copy meets these requirements. Think also about any additional digital content available – is there any video footage that would enhance the story? Can you insert some Tweets to give the article more depth?

Remember, it is your responsibility to notify the digital news editor and/or newsdesk when you have content ready for publication online, particularly where breaking news is concerned.

If you are a senior journalist with the required privileges, it is your responsibility to publish the story online. Please ensure that your copy is checked and double-checked before publication – accuracy must be our watchword to ensure we maintain the reputation of the MNA as a trusted news organisation. If you have any doubts over your story, exercise caution and consult a senior colleague before publication.

Tips for journalists

1. Read the style book and ensure your copy complies with our house style. A copy of the style book has been given to each member of the editorial team but if you misplaced yours or have not received a copy, please contact the editor's secretary.
2. Keep your intros short and to the point – aim for about 20 words or fewer.
3. Avoid editorialising in your copy. For instance, saying a planning application is “controversial” on the basis that it has one or two objections is going too far and is a cliché which we should avoid. Similarly, beware of inserting words such as “shock” or “plunge” into copy – ask yourself is anybody really shocked? And is a decline a fall rather than a “plunge”?

4. Keep your copy simple. Ensure you understand what you are writing – don't simply copy and paste passages from reports or press releases which contain inexplicable jargon. It is our job to inform readers in a way that is easy to understand.
5. If there are different points of view, it is important to reflect these in your copy. As the saying goes, there are two sides to every story so ensure you have approached all parties to provide balance in your article.
6. Among the most important tips is to read and re-read your copy. Does it make sense? Are there any obvious questions that aren't answered in your copy? Put yourself in the shoes of a reader with no prior knowledge of the subject and then ask these questions again.
7. Make sure you add any follow-up lines, big events and so on to the office diary. Almost every story we publish can be followed up in some way. It is extremely frustrating when we break a big story, only to be beaten to the follow-up by a competitor. An efficient diary system is the most effective means of avoiding this – and remember that follow-ups provide good stories for your news list each day.
8. Beware of press releases. Ask yourself: who has sent this to me and why? Is it simply a free advert for a company? If so, they should pay for an advert. It is important to approach all press releases with caution – challenge any statements or assumptions made in the press release and verify any claims that are made in the release. If it includes references to surveys, for example, find out more about the survey and how it was conducted. Are the results genuine? What questions were asked? Do the results have the necessary context? Remember, it is our job to apply journalistic rigour to all material we encounter – we will lose the trust of readers if we simply publish press releases unchallenged and without context.
9. Finally, as a journalist it is important to remember that your stories can have a profound impact on the lives of those involved. Ask yourself if you think your story is responsible and fair to all parties.

Appendix 2 - Copy of page 11 of the Express & Star giving details of our complaints procedures procedure to readers

Noisy disruption to our peaceful daily routines

We cannot be the only parents who, have been suddenly shaken out of our comfortable and quiet retirement, by having an almost middle-aged offspring suddenly rock up on the doorstep, returning home after years away, begging room and board? Read on.

After more than 50 years down the salt mines, herself and I have been enjoying a well-earned rest from the daily grind, and as now it's only us two, the silent rooms bare witness to past family moments now consigned to history, or so we thought. Bringing up a large, vocal, and on occasions problem producing tribe was stressful.

Don't get me wrong, we love them all to bits, and they have between them given us eight grandchildren, and for that alone, all past misdemeanors and transgressions are forgiven, and it's a treat and a huge joy to see them all when the clan gather here for high days and holidays.

After an exhausting day feeding and entertaining the little ones, it's an even better moment to wave them off on their way, when once again the house falls magically silent, until the next time.

It was inevitable that one of the kids would have cause to return, and that the old homestead would once again see me locked out of the bathroom.

As any retired bloke will attest, staying up to watch the late film is now almost obligatory, which means that turning in at midnight is the norm, which in turn means rolling out at about 08:00 hours for a leisurely breakfast, and a slow peruse of the paper. Unfortunately, now with our returnee offspring in the manor, the noise at 06:00 hours as she crashes through the house, slams the front door, and revs up her motor, means being awoken well before time, and as any bloke will tell you, this kicks in the mega grumpy mode. Now I know what some of you will say "let her sort her own life out, you've done your bit". Yes, well, but as a parent it's our job to support and pro-

PICTURE FROM THE ARCHIVE



A picture of Mr S S Bayley's Springfield Post Office in Rowley Regis from 1969. The building, on the corner of Springfield Lane and Dudley Road, has now been demolished. To see hundreds of pictures from the past visit our photographic collection at photo-archive.expressandstar.co.uk

tect. So for the foreseeable future we will suffer the turmoil, and noise of having one of the kids back in the house, but as I so diplomatically mentioned to her, that her mother and I are not getting any younger and I would like to sleep the full eight hours without being woken up. It's only a matter of time I suppose. Oh, and on your way home, nip into the shops, and get some eggs and bacon, there's a good girl...sorted!

Tony Levy, Wednesday

Idea for solving parking problem

The new rules (not law) in the Highway Code favour the pedestrian yet, the rules on parking cars on pavements don't.

May I make a suggestion, take all the footpaths and pavements up and let everyone take

their chance in the road as much of the pavements are taken up by parked cars, some of them totally blocking the pavement. This is a police problem yet they are not interested in taking action.

In some roads the safest place to walk is in the middle of the road, even main busy highways.

Norman Caddick, Colesey

Why are nurses missing breaks?

I read with disbelief and horror that Russell Hall Hospital, Dudley, is urging a charity that they "need their support again to help look after the physical and emotional wellbeing of staff". Surely, this would be the responsibility of the Chief Executive to ensure staff wellbeing, who does acknowledge that staff face immense pressures,

and not left to charity to make complete and comprehensive?

Thinking that I had somehow begun reading an 1822 edition and not 2022, it is surely unbelievable that 21st Century "frontline" staff, meaning I think qualified nurses, cannot leave the hospital ward for a rest break, during a 12-hour shift and thus acquire food.

And yet "Suggestions include £5 to cover a hot meal for a frontline staff member who is unable to leave the ward on a 12-hour shift".

Can it be safe for anyone, let alone a nurse, to work 12 hours without a break or food? Surely tired and hungry nurses are more susceptible to Covid infection. Also, tired and hungry nurses are also more likely to make errors in what is a demanding and complex job; thus affecting patient safety, and making nurses professionally accountable for poor staffing levels.

Richard Lloyd, Stourbridge

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The Express & Star home delivery team is available freephone on 0800 146 540 or via email at operations@mnamea.co.uk

JOIN THE DEBATE

Email: letters@expressandstar.co.uk

Write to: Letters, Express & Star, 51-53 Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

Letters must include the writer's name, address and telephone number. Letters will only be published anonymously in exceptional circumstances. The editor reserves the right to condense or amend letters.



The Express & Star's policy is to correct errors as soon as we can. Please contact us if you are unhappy with the accuracy of any story. The Express & Star adheres to the Editors' Code of Practice, which can be seen at www.ipso.co.uk. We are regulated by the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO). Complaints about stories should be referred firstly to us at newsdesk@expressandstar.co.uk or by post to The Editor, Express & Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES. If we cannot reach a resolution, contact IPSO at complaints@ipso.co.uk or by post at IPSO, c/o Gate House, 1 Farringdon Street, London, EC4M 7LG.

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COUNCILS HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO PUBLISH LEGAL NOTICES ON ISSUES WITH A PUBLIC INTEREST. THEY INCLUDE PLANNING AND LICENCE APPLICATIONS AND ROADWORKS. THEY APPEAR EACH DAY IN OUR CLASSIFIED SECTION.

Appendix 3 – Examples of exercises set by the training manager and used in staff training sessions



Tackling ethics questions

Start by pointing out that the code should be kept in the spirit of it and not just the letter. That does not mean that as journalist we should be cowed by it but nor should we be cavalier when pursuing or publishing a story.

Relate that to the question you have to answer. If a complaint is made ask yourself: does the person have a point? If he/she does, what should you have done, what should not have done and what should you do now?

Questions to ask yourself:

Accuracy (Clause 1)

- Was the alleged error significant?
- Was the story inaccurate, misleading or distorted?
- Was sufficient care taken to establish accuracy ahead of publication?
- Did the story confuse comment or conjecture or fact?
- Was there an opportunity to reply?
- Was there a significant inaccuracy?
- Was the headline supported by the text?
- Was an adequate remedy offered? (Fair opportunity to inaccuracies must be given when reasonably called for)

Privacy (Clause 2)

- Was consent given?
- Has entitlement been compromised?
- Is individual a public figure or role model?
- Was information already in public domain?
- Did individuals photographed without consent have a reasonable expectation of privacy?
- Was publication in the public interest?
- Was the breach proportionate to the public interest served?

Harassment (Clause 3)

- Was there a request to desist?
- Was a request for identification complied with?
- Was there a public interest?

Intrusion into grief or shock (Clause 4)

Did journalists break the news of the death?
Were insensitive and unnecessary details published?
Were photographs taken at private funerals?

Reporting suicides (Clause 5)

Were details of suicide excessive?

Children (Clause 6)

Is the child under 16 or still at school?
Could the interview or photograph involve or affect a child's welfare?
Has consent been given by the appropriate responsible adult or school?
Is there exceptional public interest?

Children in sex cases (Clause 7)

Could the report lead to the identification of a child in a sex case?

Hospital (Clause 8)

Were editorial staff in non-public areas?
Did they identify themselves to a responsible executive?
Did that person give permission for you to be there?
Was there a public interest in publication?

Reporting crime (Clause 9)

Was identifying relatives or friends necessary?
Did they give their consent to be identified?
Was there a public interest in publication?

Clandestine devices and subterfuge (Clause 10)

Did publication seek to obtain or publish material?
If undercover methods used was there reason to believe it was in the public interest?
Was clandestine activity related to public interest?
Could material have been obtained by other method?

Victims of sexual assault (Clause 11)

Is the material likely to lead to identification?
Is the adequate public interest?
Is it legal to do so and is that enough under the code?

Discrimination (Clause 12)

Is reference to individual, or distinct class of individuals?

This should be someone named or readily identifiable, or distinct group of individuals who can similarly be identified.

Is reference prejudicial or pejorative in a discriminatory way?

Is reference to characteristics covered genuinely relevant?

Confidential sources (Clause 14)

Is the source confidential?

Could an unnamed source be identified?

Public interest

Difficult to define

Not same as interesting to public

Covers some but all clauses

If editor defends complain by citing public interest IPSO would be the final arbiter of the issue.

Decisions to break Code should never be taken lightly

It is not an easy way to dodge censure.

Editors must demonstrate they deliberately took decision to breach provisions of Code after due consideration in justifiable circumstances

1. The public interest includes, but is not confined to:
 - i. Detecting or exposing crime, or threat of crime, or serious impropriety.
 - ii. Protecting public health or safety.
 - iii. Protecting public from being misled by an action or statement of an individual or organisation.
 - iv. Disclosing a person or organisation's failure or likely failure to comply with any obligation to which they are subject.
 - v. Disclosing a miscarriage of justice.
 - vi. Raising or contributing to a matter of public debate, including serious cases of impropriety, unethical conduct or incompetence concerning public.
 - vii. Disclosing concealment, or likely concealment, of any of above.
2. There is a public interest in freedom of expression itself.
3. Regulator will consider the extent to which material is already in the public domain or will become so.
4. Editors invoking the public interest will need to demonstrate they reasonably believed publication – or journalistic activity taken with view to publication – would both serve, and be proportionate to, the public interest and explain how they reached decision at the time.
5. An exceptional public interest would need to be demonstrated to over-ride the normally paramount interests of children under 16.

The following is included in a PowerPoint presentation given to senior reporters by the training manager. There are no handouts as the presentations are designed to stimulate discussion.

Editors' Code of Practice

Should be foremost in your mind when pursuing and writing stories

Ask yourself: have I abiding by the spirit as well as the letter of the it?

If I'm claiming public interest, can I justify it?

Clause 1 Accuracy

- i. Must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information or images, including headline not supported by text.
- ii. Significant inaccuracy, misleading statement or distortion must be corrected, promptly and with due prominence, and – where appropriate an apology published.
- iii. Fair opportunity to reply to significant inaccuracies should be given, when reasonably called for.
- iv. Press, while free to editorialise and campaign, must distinguish between comment, conjecture and fact.
- v. A publication must report fairly and accurately the outcome of an action for defamation to which it has been a party, unless agreed settlement states otherwise, or an agreed statement is published.

Clause 2 Privacy*

- i. Everyone is entitled to respect for his or her private life, home, health and correspondence, including digital communications.
- ii. Editors will be expected to justify intrusions into any individual's private life without consent. Account will be taken of the complainant's own disclosures of information.
- iii. It is unacceptable to photograph individuals, without their consent, in public or private places where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy.

Clause 3 Harassment*

- i. Journalists must not engage in intimidation, harassment or persistent pursuit.
- ii. They must not persist in questioning, telephoning, pursuing or photographing individuals once asked to desist; nor remain on property when asked to leave and must not following them. If requested, they must identify themselves and whom they represent.
- iii. Editors must ensure these principles are observed by those working for them and take care not to use non-compliant material from other sources.

Clause 4 Intrusion into grief and shock

In case involving personal grief and shock, enquiries and approaches must be made with sympathy and discretion and publication handled sensitively.

These provisions should not restrict the right to report legal proceedings.

Clause 5 Reporting suicide*

When reporting suicide, to prevent simulative acts care should be taken to avoid excessive details of the method used, while taking into account the media's right to report legal proceedings.

Clause 6 Children*

- i. All pupils should be free to complete their time at school without unnecessary intrusion.
- ii. They must not be approached or photographed at school without permission of the school authorities.
- iii. Children under 16 must not be interviewed or photographed on issues involving their own or another child's welfare unless a custodial parent or similarly responsible adult consents.
- iv. Children under 16 must not be paid for material involving their welfare, nor parents or guardians for material about their children or wards, unless it is clearly in the child's interest.
- v. Editors must not use the fame, notoriety or position of a parent or guardian as sole justification for publishing details of a child's private life.

Clause 7 Children in sex cases*

1. The press must not, even if legally free to do so, identify children under 16 who are victims or witnesses in cases involving sex offences.
2. In any press report of a case involving a sexual offence against a child
 - i. The child must not be identified.
 - ii. The adult may be identified.
 - iii. The word "incest" must not be used where a child victim might be identified.
 - iv. Care must be taken that nothing in the report implies the relationship between the accused and the child.

Clause 8 Hospital*

- i. Journalists must identify themselves and obtain permission from a responsible executive before entering non-public areas of hospitals or similar institutions to pursue enquiries.
- ii. The restrictions on intruding into privacy are particularly relevant to enquiries about individuals in hospitals or similar institutions.

Clause 9 Reporting crime*

- i. Relatives or friends of persons convicted or accused of crime should not generally be identified without their consent, unless they are genuinely relevant to the story.
- ii. Particular regard should be paid to the potentially vulnerable position of children who witness, or are victims of, crime. This should not restrict the right to report legal proceedings.

Clause 10 Clandestine devices and subterfuge*

- i. The press must not seek to obtain or publish material acquired by using hidden cameras or clandestine listening devices; or by intercepting private or mobile telephone calls, messages or emails; or by the unauthorised removal of documents or photographs; or by accessing digitally-held information without consent.
- ii. Engaging in misrepresentation or subterfuge, including by agents or intermediaries, can generally be justified only in the public interest and then only when the material cannot be obtained by other means.

Clause 11 Victims of sex crimes

The press must not identify victims of sexual assault or publish material likely to contribute to such identification unless there is adequate justification and they are legally free to do so.

Clause 12 Discrimination

- i. The press must avoid prejudicial or pejorative reference to an individual's, race, colour, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or disability.
- ii. Details of an individual's race, colour, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical or mental illness or disability must be avoided unless genuinely relevant to the story.

Clause 13 Financial journalist

- i. Even where the law does not prohibit it, journalists must not use for their own profit financial information they receive in advance of its general publication, nor should they pass such information to others.
- ii. They must not write about shares or securities in whose performance they know that they or their close families have a significant financial interest without disclosing the interest to the editor or financial editor.
- iii. They must not buy or sell, either directly or through nominees or agents, shares or securities about which they have written recently or about which they intend to write in the near future.

Clause 14 Confidential sources

Journalists have a moral obligation to protect confidential sources of information.

Clause 15 Witness payments in criminal trials

- i. No payment or offer of payment to a witness – or any person who may reasonably be expected to be called as a witness – should be made in any case once proceedings are active as defined by the Contempt of Court Act 1981. This prohibition lasts until the suspect has been freed unconditionally by police without charge or bail or the proceedings are otherwise discontinued; or has entered a guilty plea to the court; or, in the event of a not guilty plea, the court has announced its verdict.
- *ii. Where proceedings are not yet active but are likely and foreseeable, editors must not make or offer payment to any person who may reasonably be expected to be called as a witness, unless the information concerned ought demonstrably to be published in the public interest and there is an over-riding need to make or promise payment for this to be done; and all reasonable steps have been taken to ensure no financial dealings influence the evidence those witnesses give. In no circumstances should such payment be conditional on the outcome of a trial.
- *iii. Any payment or offer of payment made to a person later cited to give evidence in proceedings must be disclosed to the prosecution and defence. The witness must be advised of this requirement.

Clause 16 Payment to criminals*

- i. Payment or offers of payment for stories, pictures or information, which seek to exploit a particular crime or to glorify or glamorise crime in general, must not be made directly or via agents to convicted or confessed criminals or to their associates – who may include family, friends and colleagues.
- ii. Editors invoking the public interest to justify payment or offers would need to demonstrate that there was good reason to believe the public interest would be served. If, despite payment, no public interest emerged, then the material should not be published.

Public interest – exception to *clauses

1. The public interest includes, but is not confined to:
 - i. Detecting or exposing crime, or the threat of crime, or serious impropriety.
 - ii. Protecting public health or safety.
 - iii. Protecting the public from being misled by an action or statement of an individual or organisation.
 - iv. Disclosing a person or organisation's failure or likely failure to comply with any obligation to which they are subject.
 - v. Disclosing a miscarriage of justice.
 - vi. Raising or contributing to a matter of public debate, including serious cases of impropriety, unethical conduct or incompetence concerning the public.
 - vii. Disclosing concealment, or likely concealment, of any of the above.

2. There is a public interest in freedom of expression itself.
3. The regulator will consider the extent to which material is already in the public domain or will become so.
4. Editors invoking the public interest will need to demonstrate that they reasonably believed publication – or journalistic activity taken with a view to publication – would both serve, and be proportionate to, the public interest and explain how they reached that decision at the time.
5. An exceptional public interest would need to be demonstrated to over-ride the normally paramount interests of children under 16.

Ethics questions test paper

- 1) You are covering an inquest into the death of a man who committed suicide by taking a cocktail of drink and drugs. Which of the following would be an acceptable sentence to include in your report?
 - a) The man took a combination of sleeping tablets and anti-depressants washed down by half a bottle of brandy.
 - b) The man had drunk half a bottle of brandy after swallowing his wife's sleeping tablets and anti-depressants.
 - c) The man had swallowed drugs and drunk brandy.
 - d) The man had taken drugs, including his wife's anti-depressants, swallowed down by a large amount of brandy.

- 2) You are sent to interview a family whose daughter was killed in a skiing accident while on holiday in the Alps. The father tells you they have nothing to say and asks you to go away. Do you:
 - a) Point out that his daughter's death is national news and there is public interest in hearing from the family?
 - b) Give the family some time to think things over and return the next time to try again?
 - c) Go back to your office and tell your editor the family will not speak to you?
 - d) Do what the father asks but leave your contact details with him so that he can talk to you if he changes his mind?

- 3) You are trying to interview a rogue landlord whom a number of female tenants have told you is a sexual predator who threatens them with violence. Requests for an interview have been repeatedly turned down. If you pretended to be a would-be tenant without telling the landlord you were a journalist, would IPSO consider your actions to be:
 - a) A fishing exercise designed to entrap the landlord?
 - b) A breach of the Editors' Code on misrepresentation or subterfuge?
 - c) It would be in the public interest and it's unlikely that the material could not be obtained by any other means?
 - d) A criminal action that was not within its remit?

- 4) The 15-year-old daughter of an MP is among five girls expelled from their boarding school after being caught smoking cannabis. Would it be justifiable to:
 - a) Name her and her MP father as better standards of behaviour should be expected?
 - b) Not name her but name her father because he has long campaigned against the use of cannabis?
 - c) Name all five as the occupations of their parents has no bearing?
 - d) Try to speak to the girl when her parents are not around?

- 5) At what age does the code say children who are witnesses in sex case can be named if legally allowed to?
- a) Never
 - b) 14
 - c) 16
 - d) 18
- 6) Private emails between a married vicar and a female lay preacher that reveal they are having an affair come into your possession. If you exposed the affair and the pair complained to IPSO about a breach of privacy, which of the following defences would you put forward?
- a) It's a great story and who cares about their privacy?
 - b) There is public interest in exposing serious impropriety and/or disclosing a person's failure to comply with the obligations to which they are subject.
 - c) They are public figures so their rights to privacy are considerably lower than other people.
 - d) They are such odious people they need to be humiliated.
- 7) In the clause on accuracy, which statement is correct?
- a) As long as the text is accurate it does not matter if the headline is wrong.
 - b) The headline is only there to draw in the readers so there is no necessity for it to be an accurate reflection of the story.
 - c) Misleading headlines not supported by the text should not be published.
 - d) Because of the constraints on headline, it's acceptable to distort the truth.
- 8) A Premiership footballer complains to IPSO that his privacy has been breached after a newspaper publishes a picture of him smoking as he walks to his car parked in the centre of town. Is IPSO likely to conclude?
- a) The photographer should have sought the consent before taking the picture.
 - b) The player was not participating in a private activity so did not have a reasonable expectation of privacy.
 - c) Just because a player is seen smoking there is no justification in taking his picture.
 - d) The newspaper's action warrants an apology for breaching his privacy.
- 9) The wife of a notorious criminal jailed for his latest conviction for armed robbery says she is willing to sell her story about their champagne lifestyle paid for by his criminal activities. What should an editor do?
- a) Demonstrate there is a good reason to believe the public interest would be served in making the payment.
 - b) Make the payment before she sells her story to a rival paper.
 - c) Pay her and publish even when no public interest is established.
 - d) Tell her to get lost.

- 10) A controversial columnist makes disparaging comments about a councillor in which he taunts him for his speech impediment and use of a wheelchair after the councillor talks openly about the problems caused by his disabilities. Would IPSO consider this to be?
- a) A comment piece in which anything goes.
 - b) A breach of the Editors' Code on discrimination for poking fun at people with disabilities.
 - c) A breach of the Editors' Code on discrimination for making pejorative references to an individual's disabilities.
 - d) Not a breach of the Editors' Code on discrimination as it was genuinely relevant to the story.

- 11) A county council education portfolio chair complained to IPSO after her local paper ran a story in which she was criticised for sending her child to a school outside the county. The councillor complained the paper had intruded into her child's time at school unnecessarily. She said the publication of the story, and the scrutiny it generated, had intruded into her child's time at school and breached Clause 6 (Children). The paper said the story was justified and IPSO backed it because:

- a) It was about the councillor and not her child and was in the public interest because of the criticism her decision had generated among opposition councillors.
- b) A councillor with responsibilities for education must expect her decision about her child's schooling to be scrutinised, especially when it had generated such criticism, and was therefore in the public interest.
- c) It was about the councillor, not her child, and no reference was made to the name of the child nor the school they attended. The criticism her decision had generated among opposition councillors made it a matter of public interest.
- d) Before making the decision to publish, the editor had discussed it with the local democracy reporter, who explained the background and the reason opposition councillors felt it was important as important issue. It was agreed there was a strong public interest, but neither the child nor the school should be named.

- 12) Based on the following information, which headline would IPSO rule did not breach Clause 1 (Accuracy)? A weekly newspaper reported a councillor had "reprimanded" by the Standards Commission for Scotland for using "inappropriate language" about a fellow councillor. It stated that the commission had concluded that his actions "amounted to a personal attack" and a "breach of the code. The councillor denied he had been found him in breach of the Councillors' Code of Conduct. He said the commission had concluded that it was neither proportionate, nor in the public interest, to hold a hearing into the matter given the sincerity of his apology and the nature of the potential breach. The paper said the headline and story were based on the view of the acting commissioner for ethical standards in public life in Scotland that the councillor's conduct had "amounted to a personal attack" against the other councillor and as a result "a breach of the code".
- a) Councillor in breach of ethical code, says commission

b) Commissioner says councillor breached code of conduct'

c) Commissioner reprimands councillor over 'inappropriate language'

d) Apologetic councillor reprimanded by commission

13) A woman complained to IPSO about a number of inaccuracies in a newspaper report based on a police press release sent to it. The release said the woman had been jailed after admitting 11 charges of fraud by abuse of position, which was true. But she claimed the report contained inaccuracies about what she was alleged to have spent the money on and her home address. The paper said it had relied on the press release and that the alleged inaccuracies were included in it. It added the information had been published in good faith. The newspaper had contacted the police on numerous occasions to confirm if any of the details included in the press release were inaccurate, but the police made no comment on its accuracy. In these circumstances would IPSO rule:

a) The paper is always entitled to rely on information it receives officially from the police.

b) Having checked with the police to confirm the details of the press release, the paper was entitled to base its report on it.

c) Having checked with the police to confirm the details of the press release, the paper was entitled to base its report on it providing it corrected any inaccuracies once that had been confirmed.

d) It's never correct to rely on a police press release until all the information has been checked with other sources to assure care has been taken as to the accuracy of the information.

14) You are tipped off that a famous actress has been rushed to the hospital after smoke was seen coming from her penthouse flat. You go to the hospital and see her husband heading up to the intensive care unit. What are the two main clauses should you bear in mind when making approaches under these circumstances?

a) Clauses 4 and 8.

b) Clauses 2 and 8.

c) Clauses 2 and 4.

d) Clauses 3 and 8.

15) You spot a fundraising page on Facebook which is looking to help a little girl who is suffering from a rare form of cancer. The reporter contacts the fundraising page organiser, who is the girl's aunt. She provides further details of the girl's condition and explains that she is helping to raise funds for treatment at a specialist children's cancer centre in the United States. She offers the reporter the picture that appears on the Facebook page. She says that she is in close contact with her sister, the girl's mother, and both are keen to publicise the girl's plight as much as possible. The Facebook appeal has been picked up widely on social media and donations are already flowing in. The girl's mother has "liked" and shared some postings which encouraged donations. What should you publish at this stage?

- a) All the information and photograph as it has been put out on Facebook and you have contacted the family.
- b) Nothing that has been published on Facebook nor any of the information given by the aunt should be published.
- c) General information that has been published on Facebook but nothing from the aunt about the girl's health nor her photograph with the girl's permission.
- d) General information that has been published on Facebook but nothing from the aunt about the girl's health nor her photograph with the mother's permission.

16) You receive photographs relating to an MP in your area who has attended the wedding of her sister. The photographs of the wedding party have been taken in the secluded grounds of an hotel venue. The MP is seen smoking while the photographs of other people are being taken – in the past she has appeared in a TV campaign warning of the perils of tobacco. Although the entire hotel had been booked out for the wedding, the venue was situated within grounds that were open to the public. A colleague argues that a wedding is a public recognition of a relationship and no private information is revealed by the photographs. Would there be any justification in publishing any of the photographs?

- a) No, because all members of the wedding party have a reasonable expectation of privacy, even the MP.
- b) Yes, because the grounds are open to the public therefore there is no reasonable expectation of privacy.
- c) No, because no one in the photographs have given consent to have their pictures taken.
- d) Yes, there is public interest in showing the MP smoking as it highlights her hypocrisy.

17) Clause 10 of the Editors' Code usually bans the use of clandestine devices and subterfuge when pursuing stories, even when exposing wrongdoing. If some complained the clause had been breached, which one of the following circumstances would IPSO normally agree that such a breach use was justified?

- a) It was in the public interest.
- b) It was in the public interest to gather information of wrongdoing and there was no other means by which the material can be obtained.
- c) It was in the public interest because it involves freedom of expression.
- d) It was in the public interest because it was gathering information about wrongdoing.
- e)

18) A 15-year-old girl is a witness in a trial involving a man of sexually assaulting the girl's 17-year-old friend. The 15-year-old's identity is not subject to any reporting restrictions but under the Editors' Code she should get anonymity under which one of these clauses?

- a) Clause 2
- b) Clause 6
- c) Clause 7
- d) Clause 11

19) A hospital patient injured in a car crash contacts a reporter and asks you to visit him in his ward as he wants to be interviewed about the accident and the injuries he suffered. Before entering the ward, the reporter must do which one of the following?

- a) Check with the ward sister that it's all right to interview the patient.
- b) Check with a nurse that it's all right to interview the patient.
- c) Check with a hospital executive that it's all right to interview the patient.
- d) Check with a member of the ancillary staff that it's all right to interview the patient.

20) Several the clauses in the Editors' Code are subject to a public interest exemption. Which one of the following does it apply to all three clauses?

- a) Clauses 1, 2 and 3
- b) Clauses 2, 3 and 4
- c) Clauses 10, 11 and 12
- d) Clauses 5, 6 and 7

Further training

Details of the partnership between the NCTJ and IPSO and the launch of the interactive e-learning courses on the Journalism Skills Academy has been communicated to all editorial staff who have been encouraged to sign up to refresh their knowledge. The new updated guidance on court reporting has also been circulated.