



# Editors' Code of Practice consultation

27<sup>th</sup> March 2020

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*If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.*

*George Orwell*

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## About the Gloucestershire Sisters

1. Gloucestershire Sisters (GS) is a not for profit organisation that has been created to bridge the gap between the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women of Gloucestershire and existing services in the county. This demographic is often labelled “hard to reach”, Gloucestershire Sisters aims to create a safe space between this group and existing services.
2. Gloucestershire Sisters raises awareness of harmful traditional practices and aims to create a secular safe space, which does not reduce BME women to only one of their characteristics, such as their race, sex or faith. Gloucestershire Sisters challenges racial, sexist and religious stereotypes.

## Recommendations on the Editors Code

3. GS would like to thank the Independent Press Standards Organisation allowing Gloucestershire Sisters (GS) the opportunity to write a submission to the Editors' Code of Practice consultation.

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under company number 10926017.

4. In reference to section 12 of the Editors' Code of Practice, the guidelines state two main points:
  - 12.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.
  - 12.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.
5. GS agrees with part 1 of section 12, in that the press must never use 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. GS would be happy for this to remain as it is.
6. However, GS disagrees with part 2 of section 12, as it contravenes section 1.i of the Editors' Code of Practice, which states:
  - 1.i) The press must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information or images, including headlines not supported by the text.
7. In using broader descriptive terms when describing the characteristics of perpetrators of crimes, the Editors' Code of Practice prevents organisations from being able to gather accurate information about trends within certain communities.
8. Furthermore, generic terms like Asian instead of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Hindu etc has resulted in members of other South Asian communities being wrongly targeted.
9. The press has a duty to accurately relay factual information, it is precisely the vague nature of current reporting practices that has further harmed members of communities unrelated to harmful incidents.
10. Accurate and factual reporting also enables groups like GS to gather such information and fundraise in order to go into communities where harmful practices or ideas exist and to do the vital prevention and early detection work that is desperately required.
11. The very thing that the Editors' Code of Practice is setting out to do in section 12i is being facilitating by vague reporting and the use of generic terms to describe perpetrators from certain communities.
12. GS urges the Editors' Code of Practice to consider the harm of vague reporting on the wider community.
13. Vague reporting also allows less informed individuals to be radicalised by sinister groups.
14. One such example of this was the tragic case of Tracy Blackwell's son who was mowed down by a drunk driver. News reports of the incident described him as Asian rather than Hindu, resulting in extremist groups using the awful incident to spread further lies and misinformation, stating that this was an Islamic terrorist attack.

15. The Sun newspaper covered the story of how the tragic story and the vague reporting has led to it being used to further radicalise - The full story can be found using the following link <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/8190147/how-britains-far-right-is-using-fake-news-about-the-death-of-three-teens-to-fuel-anti-muslim-hatred/>
  16. Lastly, accurate descriptive information about criminal operating within the community are vital for innocent people to be able to identify and mitigate potential risk.
  17. If an individual was roaming the streets with a gun, whilst still posing a potential risk to the general public, it would be vital to report accurately all of their description in detail, so that members of the general public could keep themselves safe from harm.
  18. In the same manner, detailed reporting about perpetrators of crime, including their identity is vital. Firstly, so that the general public can keep themselves safe and secondly, so that trends in offending can be mapped and dealt with accordingly.
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*Be scrupulously truthful, even when truth is inconvenient, for it is more inconvenient when you try to conceal it.*

*Bertrand Russell*

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