

Press Information from

THE EDITORS' CODE OF PRACTICE COMMITTEE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, TUESDAY DECEMBER 8, 2020

EDITORS' CODE OF PRACTICE TO BE REVISED

The Editors' Code of Practice, under which the vast majority of Britain's newspaper, magazine and news website journalists work, is to be revised to underline the protection it offers to people with mental health issues.

Clause 2 (Privacy) is to have mental health added to the categories it protects. The revised clause – with changes in red – will read:

2. *Privacy

i) Everyone is entitled to respect for ~~his or her~~ their private and family life, home, physical and mental health, and correspondence, including digital communications.

ii) Editors will be expected to justify intrusions into any individual's private life without consent. In considering an individual's reasonable expectation of privacy, account will be taken of the complainant's own public disclosures of information and the extent to which the material complained about is already in the public domain or will become so.

iii) It is unacceptable to photograph individuals, without their consent, in public or private places where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy.

The change comes into effect on January 1, 2021 and is the result of a public consultation on the Editors' Code of Practice.

Editors' Code of Practice Committee chairman Neil Benson said: "The committee believes that this revision will improve understanding of the protection that the privacy clause provides for individuals.

"Mental health was already covered implicitly in the clause, but the amendment makes this explicit and is a timely reminder of the changing attitudes in society. Mental health is now openly acknowledged and the press can take some credit for driving that welcome transformation."

The change also aligns the wording of Clause 2 (Privacy) with Clause 12 (Discrimination), which already refers to physical and mental health.

The Editors' Code of Practice Committee, which writes and revises the code of standards policed by the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), is made up of editors and lay people.

In a report on the Code review the committee welcomed the wide range of issues covered by submissions, which enabled important subjects to be considered. Some of the suggestions received would be reflected in the advice provided in the next edition of the Editors' Codebook, the handbook to the Code and how it is interpreted by IPSO.

Submissions to the Code review have been published on the Editors' Code of Practice Committee website: www.editorscode.org.uk

The Editors' Code of Practice, which is the foundation stone of the UK press self-regulatory system, came into force on January 1, 1991. It sets out the rules that the voluntarily subscribing newspaper, magazine and news website members have made a legally binding commitment to accept.

It has been revised more than 30 times to reflect changes in society and to respond to events. Writing in the Codebook, Neil Benson said the committee worked to ensure that the Code is always relevant, balances freedom of expression with the rights of the individual, and is easy to understand for journalists and the public alike.

Code Committee members: *Chair:* Neil Benson. *National newspapers:* Chris Evans (Daily Telegraph); Gary Jones (Daily Express); Emma Tucker (Sunday Times); Ted Young (Metro). *Regional newspapers:* Ian Carter (The KM Group); Anna Jeys (Reach, Birmingham); Gary Shipton (JPIMedia). *Scottish Press:* Donald Martin (Newsquest Scotland). *Magazines:* Harriet Wilson (Condé Nast Publications). *Lay members (ex officio):* Lord Faulks (Chairman, IPSO); Charlotte Dewar (Chief Executive, IPSO). *Independent lay members appointed by IPSO's appointments panel:* Sarah de Gay; Christine Elliott; Kate Stone.

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He said: "In the current febrile environment, it is a beacon that helps journalists stay on the straight and narrow professionally. And at a time when accountability is perhaps slipping out of fashion, by signing up to the Code and the self-regulatory regime, the press sends a clear signal that it is prepared to be held fully accountable for its actions and to offer redress to people it has wronged."

In a contribution to the Editors' Codebook, IPSO chairman Lord Faulks said: "All regulated publishers – whether national or local newspaper, magazine, in print or online – have binding, contractual agreements with IPSO to follow the rules as set by the Code. If these are breached, they must provide appropriate redress as directed by the regulator.

"In an era of fake news and disinformation, this commitment to regulated, accountable journalism is more important than ever."

Ian Murray, executive director of the Society of Editors, says in the Codebook: "Knowing the standards expected of your work and conduct supports journalists and editors as they negotiate the turbulent waters of newsgathering, interpreting and editing."

:: For further information please contact:

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About the Editors' Code of Practice Committee

:: The Editors' Code of Practice Committee is composed of editors and lay members and the independent chair is Neil Benson. Other members are:

National newspapers: Chris Evans (Daily Telegraph); Gary Jones (Daily Express); Emma Tucker (Sunday Times); Ted Young (Metro).

Regional newspapers: Ian Carter (The KM Group); Anna Jeys (Reach, Birmingham); Gary Shipton (JPIMedia).

Scottish press: Donald Martin (Newsquest Scotland).

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Lay members (ex officio): Lord Faulks (Chairman, IPSO); Charlotte Dewar (CEO, IPSO).

Independent lay members appointed by IPSO's appointments panel: Sarah de Gay; Christine Elliott; Kate Stone.

The committee's secretary is Jonathan Grun.

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