

## IPSO's response to the consultation on the Editors' Code of Practice

### Introduction

The Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) is the independent regulator for the newspaper and magazine industry in the UK. IPSO is the organisation which uses and applies the Editors' Code of Practice. Our Chair, Chief Executive, and an independent member of our Complaints Committee all sit on the Editors' Code of Practice Committee. In addition, the Code cannot be changed without IPSO's agreement. As a result, IPSO is crucial to any discussion of changes to the Code.

We have been in operation since September 2014. IPSO's response to the consultation has been shaped by our experience of using the Code, as well as by comments from our advisory panels, Complaints Committee and Board. This response has also been shaped by comments on social media and engagement with stakeholders.

### Specific comments

IPSO does not have any specific proposals to make for changes to the Code at this stage. However, it is keen to work with the Editors' Code Committee to analyse the feedback from the consultation and may review its position on the Code in the light of that feedback.

IPSO has received feedback on certain areas of the Code from external organisations and individuals. IPSO would like to draw this feedback to the attention of the Code Committee and believes that it will be of particular importance to scrutinise any submissions relating to the following areas carefully.

#### **Discrimination**

IPSO regularly meets with individuals and representative groups who are interested in media reporting on particular topics (such as the coverage of women, science in the media or reporting on Islam). Conversations in these meetings often turn to discussion of potential changes to the Code. The suggestions to change the Code are varied, but often focus on the issue of Clause 12 of the Code (Discrimination) and whether it should apply to groups, rather than just individuals. Currently, Clause 12 offers protection against prejudicial or pejorative reference to certain individual characteristics and also requires editors to avoid those details unless genuinely relevant to the story. The aim of Clause 12 is to protect individuals from discriminatory coverage, and no public interest defence is available. However, the Code does not cover generalised remarks about groups or categories of people. It has been argued that extending this Clause to cover groups would inhibit debate on important matters and would be difficult to adjudicate upon without infringing the freedom of expression of others.

It is expected that the current consultation will receive similar feedback about extending Clause 12. IPSO will support the Editors' Code Committee to engage constructively with these suggestions.

## Children in the Justice System

In September 2015 Charlie Taylor, formerly chief executive of the National College for Teaching and Leadership, was asked to lead a Ministry of Justice review of the youth justice system. Currently, there is an automatic restriction on reporting information that identifies or is likely to identify any person under the age of 18 who is involved in Youth Court proceedings as a victim, witness or defendant. The Taylor Review recommends that these reporting restrictions should also apply automatically in the Crown Court. It also recommends that reporting restrictions should be in place for the lifetime of young defendants, meaning that their identity cannot be reported after they turn 18.

The Government intends to meet with interested parties, including IPSO, to discuss how to take forward the recommendations. IPSO will share the outcome of any discussion with the Editors' Code Committee, to consider whether any changes need to be made to the Code on this point.

Separately, IPSO has also been contacted by organisations concerned about the naming of children pre-charge. Both this issue, and the wider recommendations of the Taylor review, are worthy of careful consideration by the Committee.