The Failure of IPSO

After a year in operation, the ‘Independent Press Standards Organisation’ has let everyone down – except the newspapers

A Hacked Off report
Three years ago the Leveson Inquiry found the country’s biggest newspaper groups guilty of ‘wreaking havoc in the lives of innocent people’.

In response to shocking revelations of press fabrication, distortion, bullying, intrusion and lawlessness, the Inquiry recommended a new model of independent regulation capable of effectively enforcing a press code of conduct. Vitally, the Inquiry ensured this would not restrict freedom of expression. Its recommendations received overwhelming public support and – in the form of a Royal Charter – were endorsed by every party in Parliament.

The owners of the Express, the Mail, the Mirror, the Sun, the Telegraph and the Times refused to do what Leveson suggested. Instead they revamped their discredited self-regulator, the Press Complaints Commission, giving it a new name: the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO).

The papers made bold promises:

‘IPSO will be the toughest regulator in the western world. It will provide real protection for ordinary people affected by media coverage. It will have tough powers to crack down on wrong-doing to ensure some of the things you heard about at the Leveson Inquiry can never happen again.’

‘IPSO will have the power to impose fines of up to £1 million for systematic wrongdoing; ensure that editors produce upfront corrections where they have got something wrong; have investigative powers, deployed by expert investigators, to call editors to account; be genuinely independent – with an independent Chair and Board, and no serving editors anywhere in the regulatory system; cost the taxpayer or complainants nothing as newspaper publishers will foot the bill.’

IPSO is now a year old. Has it lived up to those promises? Has IPSO raised press standards from their pre-Leveson levels?

In these pages you can read the stories of those who know best – people who have found themselves written about in the press and people who took their cases to IPSO.

The Failure of IPSO

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FALSELY ACCUSED OF MURDER

POLICE QUIZ VICTIM’S PAL & BROTHER

MURDER IN PARADISE: THE HUNT FOR KILLER

The three of them left the bar together at 1am... we need to find David’s friend. Police fear murderer escaped on ferry.
IPSO, we were told, would ‘ensure some of the things you heard about at the Leveson Inquiry can never happen again’. Some of the most shocking evidence at that Inquiry concerned false accusations of murder against the parents of Madeleine McCann and against Bristol schoolteacher Christopher Jefferies. It has happened again, very soon, and on IPSO’s watch. IPSO did nothing.

FACT

• The ‘Brit’ in these stories could be identified only as Christopher Ware, a carpenter from Jersey

• Christopher Ware killed no one, and Thai authorities never even regarded him as a suspect

• He cooperated fully with police from the moment they informed him of the murders

• He did not ‘flee’ the island by ferry or attempt to do so; when he eventually left, the police gave him a lift to the ferry

• At the time these vile accusations against him were published he was in deep shock at the violent death of his closest friend

His Story

In 2014 Christopher Ware was beginning the holiday of a lifetime with schoolfriend David Miller on the Thai island of Koh Tao, when tragedy struck. David and another British backpacker, Hannah Witheridge, were found murdered on a beach. Thai police quickly traced Christopher and sought his help in contacting the victims’ families and friends. He naturally agreed. He was distraught and alone, thousands of miles from home. He was never named or treated as a suspect – on the contrary, Thai police brought him food and cigarettes and did their best to help him cope with the shock. Later, they drove him to the ferry so he could get a flight home.

Upon reading the British press reports online, Christopher realised that many people who knew him must have believed he was genuinely suspected of murder and really had tried to escape arrest. Meanwhile, journalists in the UK harassed his friends and family in an apparent effort to find ‘dirt’ on him. When – still in shock – Christopher reached Heathrow, so many reporters were waiting there that police had to smuggle him out of the airport. At home in Jersey he felt under siege, with reporters posting letters through his family’s front door every day seeking interviews.

Christopher Ware is an innocent man. You might think that – especially after the McCann and Jefferies cases – national newspapers would check their facts carefully and ensure their sources of information were sound before making an accusation of murder. That is not what happened here.

IPSO made no comment on the case and mounted no investigation. It was left to the victim to sue the Sun for libel: he won modest damages and a tiny correction. This is not the kind of ‘upfront correction’ we were told IPSO would deliver, and it is nothing like enough to deter papers from doing the same again.

“What’s scary is that it can happen to anyone and there’s nothing to stop them. It’s taken me and my family almost a year to get our lives back on track.”

Christopher Ware
IPS0 initially ignored our complaint that The Sun further victimised me and Trans Media Watch. The final adjudication was buried and was printed without a headline. We asked IPS0 to enforce its own decision but it did nothing.

Emily Brothers

FACT

“...The press must avoid prejudicial or pejorative reference to an individual’s race, colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or disability.”

Editors’ Code of Practice, clause 12 (i)

HER STORY

The willingness and ability of IPSO to protect people from discrimination was tested in the case of Emily Brothers, a Labour parliamentary candidate at the last election who is blind and transgender. In December 2014, Rod Liddle used his Sun column to mock her, asking, under a photograph and headline: “Being blind, how did she know she was the wrong sex?” She replied to Liddle the next day in the Independent: “When he turns the lights out, does he not realise he is a man?”

With Emily’s endorsement, Trans Media Watch (TMW), which acts for transgender people, complained to IPSO that Liddle’s comment was a clear breach of Clause 12(i) of the Code. Of course, even IPSO upheld the complaint (weirdly claiming that this “no-brainer” was a landmark decision). But then IPSO, supposedly “the toughest regulator in the western world”, feebly allowed the Sun to make a mockery of the process.

First, it IGNORED complaints by TMW that, while the complaint was pending, Liddle and the Sun mocked and attacked them and Emily Brothers, publicly and privately. This was victimisation – pure and simple; punishing a complainant in a blatant attempt to intimidate them and to deter others from making complaints.

And then, when it came to fulfilling its obligation to publish the adjudication against it, the Sun then showed exactly what it thinks of IPSO. It buried the article at the bottom of the page, without any headline – even though IPSO had explicitly said there should be one. In other words, far from being “upfront”, the paper did all it could to ensure no one would notice it or read it. IPSO claimed that it considered the first sentence of the article to be its headline.

The Editors’ Code says adjudications must be published “with due prominence”. It also says that the Code “must be honoured not only to the letter but in the full spirit”. Though the Sun had defied its authority and mocked the Code, IPSO did nothing, refusing to act even when TMW complained again.

Knowing you could be attacked again, and get no effective redress even when you “succeed”, would YOU be tempted to bring a complaint to IPSO?
A grandmother from Yorkshire, Linda Pearson, underwent weight-loss surgery that transformed her life. She lost 16 stone and was able to climb Snowden to raise money for charity. She told her inspiring story on the website of the hospital that treated her, showing others how they too could lead healthier lives.

The Daily Star chose to twist this into a humiliating attack on Linda Pearson herself. Where she had written that she felt unable to take a bath for 20 years – meaning not that she didn’t wash but that she could not get in and out of her bath – the Star called her a ‘Grubby Gran’ in its headline and claimed, contrary to the facts, that she “hadn’t washed for 20 years.”

She tried to take a case to IPSO but, unlike any other regulator, IPSO refused to help her and insisted that she cite the relevant part of the Editors’ Code before they would consider it. Fortunately she was able to compose a formal complaint arguing that the paper had breached the Code, not only by its distortion of the facts but by “discriminating against [her] physical disability with an insulting, derogatory and defamatory headline.” IPSO, characteristically, took the paper’s side. First it said that using the word “fat” was not discriminatory, even though that had not been the basis of the complaint. Then it asserted that morbid obesity was not a medical condition. The world of medicine would disagree with IPSO and in Linda Pearson’s case the NHS had considered it a serious enough medical condition to justify an operation.

IPSO also refused to acknowledge the gravity of what had happened. What the Star published in this case was not mere ‘inaccuracy’. It was a deliberate, hurtful distortion – and not remotely the first of its kind by that paper. But thanks to IPSO the Star paid no price. It simply amended its story and published a correction and apology where no one would notice it. No doubt it will soon do something similar to somebody else.

Linda Pearson had inquired about possible compensation for her experience, but IPSO simply ignored her. She says:

“It’s disgusting that the papers can just make things up, humiliate someone, and that IPSO lets them get away with it. This can’t be allowed to continue. Something needs to change.”
TRAVELLER WRONGLY BLAMED FOR TWO DEATHS

In August last year, in Herefordshire, John Knott, 71, killed his wife, aged 70, before taking his own life.

THE PRESS ACCUSATIONS

Man who feared travellers were surrounding his home shoots dead wife and himself

Despite many previous problems over reporting suicides, papers ignored advice by the Samaritans not to speculate on the cause.

Man shoots ill wife then turns gun on himself over traveller site plans

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

After a complaint to IPSO – operating at that time under the rules of its predecessor body, the PCC, which in this case were no different to their own – none of the newspapers were censured. They were allowed to get away with printing a tiny “clarification” for one of the falsehoods in their stories, with no apology and no correction.

AND AFTER THAT?

In April this year, in reporting the inquest into the deaths, five national newspapers repeated the claim that the deaths were caused by Travellers. Yet the coroner’s verdict made no reference to Travellers as the cause of Mr Knott’s actions. None of the witnesses had disputed that - as the coroner concluded - the reason for Mr Knott’s actions related to his concerns about his wife’s health. But these newspapers reported the “Gipsy-link” as if it were a fact.

There is an ongoing complaint to IPSO about this, and – in order to protect the newspapers it serves – IPSO bans complainants from disclosing the detail of the newspapers’ response to complainants.

If the word ‘Gypsy’ were substituted with the name of any other ethnic minority - e.g. ‘Jew’ or ‘Sikh’ - one has to wonder whether IPSO would have treated them with so little regard?

“These pejorative made-up headlines can destroy lives.”

Mike Doherty, Traveller Movement

CORRECTION

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

FACTS

• Mr Knott did NOT blame Travellers for his actions; he left no note and gave no other explanation.

• The couple’s stepdaughter told reporters she thought the tragedy happened because of Mr Knott’s “love for his wife and his distress over her degenerative illness” – Alzheimer’s.

• Though Mr Knott had been involved in opposing the modest and lawful planning application by the young Traveller, the application was proceeding through the normal processes, and was later granted by the Council with support from several local residents.

• The traveller site was not “next door” but 300 yards away, out of site, across a sloping field.

IPSO // 12
**FACT**

There were four facts in this headline, only one of which was true.

- A passenger did die
- No one died at Gatwick. She died at hospital later
- No one had Ebola. A passenger suffered a pulmonary embolism, a fairly common cause of death in this country
- There was no ‘terror’ of any kind – very few people were aware of the incident

The sister of the dead woman, likely traumatised by this fabricated reporting at the time of her bereavement, complained.

**THE MIRROR**

In respect of a front page headline that was wrong in almost every respect, the Mirror published a tiny apology on an inside page. This was another case of reckless journalism printed on a front page. Worse, it was clearly designed to promote public alarm where none was justified. Not only was the public grossly misled, but an entirely innocent woman was subjected to misery.

**SPOT THE DIFFERENCE**

The Mirror printed a tiny apology but the Mail refused to admit any error, claiming that it was allowed to print false headlines because the story itself contradicted the headline in paragraph 19.

Unbelievably, you may think, IPSO agreed with the Mail.

Again, with IPSO’s assistance, the outcome suited the newspapers perfectly. There is nothing here to make a big national newspaper even hesitate before doing exactly the same irresponsible things again.
THE MAIL
ALLOWED TO FLOUT THE CODE

“It’s clear to me that IPSO is run by the press for the press, and is set up to work in their interests.”

Andy Miller

THE STORY

Businessman Andy Miller brought an action for defamation against the Daily Mail in 2009 after it made a very serious false accusation against him in its front page lead story – and he won. The Mail reported the outcome of the case at the bottom of page two, but without acknowledging clearly that the paper that had lost the case was the Mail. It exploited the opportunity to repeat the false allegation.

The Mail took the case to the Court of Appeal, where it lost again. This time the report in its pages ran to just three paragraphs, again obscured the name of the losing paper, and appeared at the bottom of page 41.

Next, the Mail sought to challenge the defamation verdict in the Supreme Court, which refused to hear the case. This time there was no report at all in the Mail.

Mr Miller complained to IPSO of a breach of Clause 1(iv). The Mail had not, he said, reported the outcome of the case ‘fairly’ or ‘accurately’, as the Code demanded. (And it is worth remembering that, on its own terms, the Code ‘must be honoured not only to the letter but in the full spirit’.)

IPSO, remarkably, chose the side of the newspaper and rejected the complaint. It accepted, as fair and accurate, a low prominence biased report of the original libel judgement in which the paper did its best to conceal that it was the losing party. It even ruled that the first report alone was sufficient, even though the Mail had appealed to two higher courts, forcing Mr Miller to endure a total of six years of litigation before his name was cleared.

Knowing that this is IPSO’s idea of what is fair, would you trust it to deal with your complaint?
WHAT IPSO IS NOT

IPSO IS NOT WHAT LEVESON PROPOSED

- An IPSO advert claiming it delivers ‘all the key elements Leveson called for’ was branded ‘misleading’ by the Advertising Standards Authority.
- In fact IPSO satisfies only 12 of the 38 criteria for an independent and effective press regulator as set out by the Leveson Inquiry.
- Sir Alan Moses, IPSO’s chair, now accepts that it does not meet the Leveson standard.

IPSO IS NOT INDEPENDENT

Leveson said real independence was essential. All previous attempts at press regulation failed because the regulators were controlled by the vested interests of big newspaper groups. Despite this:
- The Media Standards Trust found that IPSO was totally dependent on the newspaper industry, which has influence - and often veto - over almost every aspect of the system.
- That veto extends to the appointment of board members of IPSO, and of the chair.
- The IPSO structure, dominated by a shadowy funding body, the Regulatory Funding Company (RFC), institutionalises the power of the biggest national press companies.
- The Code is still written and controlled by editors sitting in a committee chaired by Paul Dacre of the Daily Mail - editor of the newspaper known to breach the Code more than any other paper.
- No other regulator allows the regulated to write the rulebook and appoint the referee.

IPSO IS NOT AN EFFECTIVE REGULATOR

As Leveson made clear a real regulator does not wait for the public to point out problems and then address the complaints in isolation. Instead it seeks to uphold the Code in any way that will bolster standards and give protection to the public. It acts on its own initiative; it draws attention to patterns of bad behaviour; it bears down on repeat offenders; it protects complainants from being victimized by the newspapers. IPSO, like the PCC before it, does none of these things: it is an industry-owned and industry-run complaints-handling body – because that is all the big national newspapers will allow.

IPSO IS NOT TRANSPARENT

If IPSO really represented the interests of the public it would be transparent about its activities, but it is not.
- IPSO does not collect data on the total number and type of complaints made to it - rendering its annual summary meaningless.
- IPSO does not have an independent appeals process. It does have an internal review process but refuses to say how many complaints have been dealt with, and how many, if any, were upheld.
- IPSO’s chair and board were appointed only after its publicly-announced rules were secretly amended, allowing the appointment process to be secret, unfair and lack independence.

IPSO IS NOT AN IMPROVEMENT ON THE PCC

- The way IPSO handles its complaints system is virtually unchanged from the universally-condemned PCC.
- This is perhaps unsurprising given IPSO was set up in the same offices as the PCC, with the same staff, the same rules - and even the same company number.
- Among IPSO’s senior appointments are the man tasked with defending The Sun’s shameful Hillsborough coverage and the man accused by the Guardian of covering up the phone hacking scandal, and currently in charge of ethics at the Daily Mail.
- IPSO will not assist a complainant in formulating a complaint even when IPSO knows very well what the problem is.
- IPSO requires the explicit authorisation of the subject of a story before any complaint about accuracy or discrimination can be made – even the PCC didn’t insist on this.
- Complainants are required to seek to ‘resolve’ complaints with the newspaper before IPSO will investigate; this can delay getting a ruling from IPSO without any clear benefit.
- Despite having the power to fine newspapers IPSO has never done so.

IPSO IS BAD FOR FREE SPEECH

Leveson’s recommendations offered safety for journalists from rich litigants intent on killing important stories. IPSO offers no such protections. The proprietors and editors of some of the big national newspapers have a poor record on free speech.
- Several papers called for the editor of the Guardian to be prosecuted for publishing the Snowden revelations about government surveillance.
- Most national papers refuse to publish articles critical of their record on press regulation - even though polls prove the majority of their readers support Leveson’s recommendations.
- The chief political commentator of the Telegraph resigned this year, accusing his paper of editorial censorship due to advertiser pressure.

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MOST NEWSPAPERS ARE LYING TO THEIR READERS

- Contrary to the claims of editors and proprietors, the Royal Charter/Leveson system does not give politicians or governments any power over press regulation.
- An entirely independent body, the Press Recognition Panel, has been established whose only role is to assess whether press regulators meet Charter standards.
- A regulator under the Charter would have no power to prevent the publication of any material by anyone at any time. Its remit would be exclusively to deal with matters after publication.
- Freedom of expression is formally and structurally protected from political meddling – unlike IPSO, whose next chair is likely to be a working party-political peer.
On the day news broke of Robin Williams’s suicide, Mind and the Samaritans sent prompt media briefings ‘strongly advising’ news desks to follow their guidelines on responsible reporting.

Their advice was ignored by the Daily Express, the Daily Mail, the Metro, the Mirror, the Daily Star, and the Sun.

Hacked Off called on Sir Alan Moses – then IPSO Chair elect - to join the condemnation of the Editors’ Code breaches.

In doing and saying nothing, IPSO missed an early opportunity to pick up something the PCC dropped.

“Evidence that has amassed over the last twenty years shows that irresponsible media portrayals of suicide can promote copycat suicide attempts.”

Dr Alexandra Pitman, clinical research fellow at University College London.

When reporting suicide, care should be taken to avoid excessive detail about the method used.

The Editors’ Code of Practice, Clause 5:ii

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**There is a long history of newspaper recklessness in reporting suicides, and IPSO has made no difference**

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**Suicide Reporting**

Mind

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“We’re disappointed by reporting and headlines in many of today’s newspapers which contravene good practice set out by Samaritans guidance and Mind’s own advice”
You might think that, given what is involved, this was an area where editors would put aside their thirst for sensation. But no.

"Remember that there is a risk of copycat behaviour due to over-identification... combining references to life circumstances, say a debt problem or job loss, and descriptions of an easy-to-copy suicide method in the same report, could put at greater risk people who are vulnerable.”

Samaritans Media Guidelines for Reporting Suicide

The Editors’ Code is inadequate, but it’s ignored anyway and IPSO is doing nothing about it.

Evidence clearly shows that this type of explicit reporting can lead to copycat behaviour but despite issuing repeated warnings to the press we still routinely see this insensitive content in some parts of the national media.”

MIND

The Express wrote that the girl took her own life after “being told she was not bright enough in maths at school” – even though the cause of death had not been determined. It also implicitly compared the death with that of another girl from the school a year earlier. In both cases the Samaritans’ guidelines were ignored.

A 29-year-old woman who took her life was, according to the coroner, “severely troubled by a number of aspects of her life”. Yet the Sun, the Daily Mail and the Daily Express all ran headlines suggesting that the reason for her suicide was that she couldn’t face turning 30 without having a husband or children. They acknowledged in the body of the articles that other factors were involved, but the headlines were clearly, to use the Samaritans’ word, ‘over-simplified’.

The Mail and Express at least provided the Samaritans’ contact details, (something papers frequently promise), but the Sun did not. The Sun’s article also included evidence of insensitivity: it gave six anonymous quotes about her life and medical condition, reportedly from ‘family sources’, ‘relatives’, a ‘hospital worker’ and a ‘source’. All this, even though the article also quoted the bereaved father saying: “Privacy is requested in this matter.”
IPSO IS A SHAM
VICTIMS OF PRESS ABUSE NEED #LevesonNow
Sign up at LevesonNow.org
Despite concern that other parents might be tempted with money to sell stories about their children that were contrary to those children's best interests, the complaint was allowed to be 'resolved' privately between the Sun and a single complainant from among many.

Under that 'resolution' – reached at a time when IPSO had opened for business, and published on IPSO's website – the Sun never had to apologise, nor did it ever admit to breaching the Code, nor did it offer any assurance that this would not be repeated.

The Sun published a statement of four sentences tucked away on page two (the original having appeared all over page one) in which it boasted of its supposed record of 'standing up for children' and said that in future "payments involving children would be signed off by the legal and managing editors' office."

IPSO, for all its vaunted 'tough powers to crack down on wrongdoing', failed this important early test. The Code had obviously been breached by the country's top-selling daily in a manner that was clearly harmful to one child and potentially harmful to others over time, and the so-called regulator did not lift a finger.

**FACT**

- The Sun, which found this story by trawling Facebook, claimed when first challenged that it was 'light-hearted'.
- Not only did the paper associate an innocent four-year-old child with the devil, but it identified him by name, gave the name of his school and disclosed details of a serious medical condition.
- Many readers pointed out that the mark was almost certainly a burn from a hair dryer grill.
- Later the paper admitted paying the child’s parents for the story. Since this was obviously not in the child’s interests it was a flagrant breach of the Editors’ Code (Clause 6 iv: ‘Minors must not be paid for material involving children’s welfare, nor parents or guardians for material about their children or wards, unless it is clearly in the child’s interest’).

**OUTCOME**

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**IPSO’S FAILURE**

IPSO, for all its vaunted ‘tough powers to crack down on wrongdoing', failed this important early test. The Code had obviously been breached by the country’s top-selling daily in a manner that was clearly harmful to one child and potentially harmful to others over time, and the so-called regulator did not lift a finger.
IDENTIFYING VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE & RAPE

EXAMPLE 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.’

The Editors’ Code of Practice, Clause 7:i

In March 2015 the Sun published a picture of the alleged victim in a case where a footballer had been arrested on suspicion of having had sex with an under-age girl. Though the girl’s face is pixelated to a degree, she is clearly identifiable. (In the above image, Hacked Off has further obscured her features.)

EXAMPLE 2

The Sun published the alleged details of a rape victim’s private relationship, as reported by a “pal”. It seems unlikely that this would have interested the paper if she had not been the victim in a high-profile rape case; her identity and whereabouts had earlier been revealed online and she had had to relocate several times. Gratuitously publishing private details, which may or may not be accurate, is a clear breach of the woman’s privacy and the reckless disregard for the safety and wellbeing of a vulnerable woman raises serious questions about journalistic standards.

EXAMPLE 3

Video footage of a teenage girl apparently very drunk and performing sex acts in a nightclub, to win a “free holiday”, which was actually a cocktail of the same name were first posted on Facebook, but then used on the front page of The Sun. The paper blocked out the young woman’s eyes but she was quickly identified, named all over the internet and subjected to a torrent of online abuse. (Hacked Off has further obscured her image). Friends of the young woman said she was distraught when the picture was published; she was even said to be on ‘suicide watch’. Rape Crisis said:

“There are obvious issues of consent here; it is not clear whether this video was made with the young woman’s consent and it is not clear whether those who have posted and shared the video widely did so with her consent.”

IPSO TOOK NO ACTION

In these case – and in others like it that Hacked Off knows of – IPSO took no action. It didn’t reprimand the papers, nor did it even investigate. And if IPSO was waiting for the victims to complain, there are very good reasons why they did not.

Under IPSO’s rules, if these women complained they would:

• be forced to first try to ‘resolve’ their complaint with the lawyers and editors of the newspapers responsible

• would have their names and contact details passed to the newspaper about whom they were complaining about intrusion. There is no choice on this

• be denied anonymity in the published judgement unless IPSO decided there were ‘exceptional circumstances’. IPSO has published no guidance on this

• have no protection against further victimisation by the newspaper
IPSO’S FAILURE TO DELIVER PROMINENT CORRECTIONS

The Press must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information, including pictures.

A significant inaccuracy, misleading statement or distortion once recognised must be corrected, promptly and with due prominence, and - where appropriate - an apology published. In cases involving the Regulator, prominence should be agreed with the Regulator in advance.

Editors’ Code of Practice, Clause 1 (i) and (ii)

Accuracy is “the foundation stone on which journalism depends.”

Leveson Inquiry

The correction was tucked away at the bottom of page two and was at pains to hide the gravity of the error: that only ‘1 in 5’, not ‘4 in 5’ NHS nurses were foreign. This is nothing like ‘due prominence’ or an ‘up-front correction’ like IPSO promised.

FACT

Only ‘1 in 5’ new nurses on NHS wards were foreign

CORRECTION

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The Independent European Court of Auditors has signed off the European Commission accounts every year since 2007.

IPSO action: none.

The poll put UKIP in third place with 15%, behind Labour (34%) and the Conservatives (33%). The statement was only true for the category: “Sun readers”.

The Express buried this fact in the print paper so IPSO said the misleading super-size headline was fine. The small print was omitted online so the Express published the IPSO adjudication, but only three months later, online.
FACT

The BBC was not recruiting a new weather presenter but had set up a temporary scheme offering training in presenting to disabled people.

IPSO action: none.

FACT

Entitlement to IVF was restricted not denied, and the focus was on helping older women. There were no gay or disabled targets.

IPSO action: none.
**FACT**

The Mail on Sunday reported that someone had been accused of rape when they hadn’t, resulting in the named man receiving death threats. A tiny correction was printed but the damage from this careless error had already been done.

**CORRECTION**

The Sunday Mirror published a clearly identifiable picture of the new home of a convicted rapist who had moved house because of receiving death threats, putting him and others who might be mistaken for him at risk of vigilante attacks. IPSO action: none.
FACT

Bank chief Mark Carney said NOTHING about wages; his only comment on migration was that “strong population growth [was] partly driven by net migration.”

The so-called “correction” only clarified the meaning of the statistics and did not correct the impression given of what the bank chief had – or had not – said.

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What Kent Chief Constable Alan Pughsley actually said was that “70 per cent of migrants they [French colleagues] process in the area of Calais leave the vicinity within a four-month period. They cannot ascertain whether these migrants leave to go elsewhere in France, or whether they enter the UK.”

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FACT

Analysis of official data on prescription costs showed that most of the 'cream' was a treatment for skin lesions or skin cancer. The Daily Mail did not print a correction. IPSO action: none.

FACT

The Daily Mail correction said:

“We accept this is completely untrue”

You’d need eye surgery to read it.
“Clause 1 of the Editors’ Code explicitly, and in my view rightly, recognises the right of a free press to be partisan; strong, even very strong, opinions can legitimately influence the choice of story, placement of story and angle from which a story is reported. But that must not lead to fabrication, or deliberate or careless misrepresentation of facts. Particularly in the context of reporting on issues of political interest, the press have a responsibility to ensure that the public are accurately informed so that they can engage in the democratic process. The evidence of inaccurate and misleading reporting on political issues is therefore of concern.”

Leveson Inquiry Report, Lord Justice Leveson, 2012
Ed Miliband did not use the words ‘Milly Dowler moment’ or make any reference to the murdered schoolgirl. The phrase was spoken on air by BBC political editor Nick Robinson, who was quick to point out that he ‘did not quote anyone’. Although newspapers repeated the false claims prominently and many times over, IPSO let the papers off.
IPSO ISN’T RAISING PRESS STANDARDS.
IT IS GIVING EDITORS A CONTINUING LICENCE TO DO WHAT THEY WANT.

SO, WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

These stories are the tip of the iceberg – there are many more. But they are cases where, if IPSO wanted to make a difference, it could have. IPSO could have defended innocent victims and made editors accountable, but instead it turned a blind eye, administered only a slap on the wrist or found a pedantic justification for letting the offender off altogether.

One year of unchecked press abuse has provided ample confirmation that IPSO is the sham that history told us it would be – and the price is being paid by ordinary people who are put through hell and by the newspaper-reading public, who are presented with far too much that is sloppy, cruel and downright dishonest.

IPSO isn’t raising press standards. It is giving editors a continuing license to do what they want. Many victims have come to Hacked Off to tell their stories. Many are traumatised. Many are angry. Some don’t want their cases talked about because they don’t want to risk further attack, further humiliation. But like us, they all want something better than IPSO.

WHAT CAN WE DO?
HERE ARE THREE THINGS:

1. Spread the word. You will not read about this scandal in the big-circulation press because those papers rarely report each other’s wrongdoings and are happy to lie about the performance of IPSO. So please alert everyone you can to this dossier by social media or other means. Ask your friends to sign up here www.LevesonNow.org

2. Raise the issue wherever possible – especially with politicians and journalists. From housing and education to justice and health, there is no important national issue that is not affected by inaccurate or dishonest journalism. It matters, and those who can make the biggest difference must be told to do something.

3. A new regulator which intends to meet Royal Charter standards is on its way, and we can apply pressure on newspapers and online news publishers (large and small) to join it instead of IPSO. It is called IMPRESS, and in the next few months it will open for business.

So please, don’t let IPSO have the last word. Help us to crank up the pressure on the press and the politicians to do the right thing about press self-regulation – the thing that was recommended by a painstaking public inquiry after a series of shocking scandals and the thing to which all parties in Parliament gave their backing.
With thanks to the brave victims of press abuse and persistent IPSO complainants who have given us permission to tell their stories, and to the general public and our supporters who continue to generously support our campaign.

The Failure of IPSO
September 2015

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Design by. Mr Gresty (Studio)