[GB] A new change is introduced to the Code of Practice for British newspapers, magazines and news websites

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The Editors' Code of Practice, under which the majority of Britain's newspaper, magazine and news website journalists operate, was reviewed in 2020 and changes to it became effective from 1 January 2021.

The Code is described by the Editors' Code of Practice Committee (which draws up the Code's provisions) as the 'cornerstone' of the UK press self-regulatory system. Its rules set standards that the industry members who voluntarily subscribe to it have agreed to maintain. Editors and publishers can be held to account via the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), which became the new regulatory body for the industry on 8 September 2014. IPSO has not yet sought formal approval from the Press Recognition Panel, which was established following the Leveson Report recommendations in the aftermath of the phone-hacking scandal to ensure that any future press regulator meets certain standards.

The Code covers various aspects of journalistic activity, such as accuracy, harassment, crime reporting, confidential sources and financial journalism. Since its first publication in 1991, it has been amended several times to adapt to developments in the industry, technology and public attitudes. Changes were introduced in late 2020 following a public consultation that attracted over 1 000 submissions on that occasion. The Code had last been revised in 2018.

Following consideration of representations made by charities campaigning on the issue of mental health, Clause 2 of the Code on privacy (which is subject to public interest exceptions) was amended to make specific reference to mental health. The text of Clause 2(i) now reads: "Everyone is entitled to respect for their private and family life, home, *physical and mental health*, and correspondence, including digital communications."

Mental health was already covered implicitly by Clause 2, but the Code expressly recognises now that mental health is one of the issues that raise ethical considerations around privacy. The amendment also reflects changing societal attitudes. As the Editors' Code of Practice Review Report noted, "mental health is now openly acknowledged, and the press can take some credit for driving that welcome transformation."

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Finally, it is hoped that the change will improve understanding of the protection that Clause 2 provides for individuals. For more details on the contents of its remaining sub-clauses, see the earlier report in IRIS 2018-3/19.

The Editors' Code of Practice (incorporating changes taking effect from 1 Jan. 2021)

https://www.editorscode.org.uk/the_code_2021_no_links.php

Editors' Code of Practice Review Report 2020

https://www.editorscode.org.uk/downloads/reports/Editors-Code-of-Practice-Review-2020-Report.pdf

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