

the guardian

Readers' editor terms of reference

The Guardian, Thursday 14 May 2009

To collect, consider, investigate, respond to, and where appropriate come to a conclusion about readers' comments, concerns, and complaints in a prompt and timely manner, from a position of independence within the paper.

To seek to ensure the maintenance of high standards of accuracy, fairness, and balance in our reporting and writing.

To create new channels of communication with and greater responsiveness to readers, whether by phone, email, the internet, surface mail, or through the columns of the paper.

To seek the views and where appropriate, the written comments, of journalists whose work is the focus of readers' concerns: to take these views into account when responding to readers, and to make critical appraisals, if judged necessary, on an objective and fully-informed basis.

To look for ways of improving the paper's work and performance, in the broadest sense, by collating and analysing readers' concerns, ideas, and suggestions and identifying possible new or alternative courses of action and/or ways to develop the paper for the benefit of its readers and the paper itself

To write a regular - and, where possible - weekly column addressing one or several aspects of readers' concerns/suggestions/complaints, the content to be determined independently and not subject to prior approval by the editor or others on the staff, other than in respect of matters of fact, style, spelling and grammar.

To use this column as a platform and forum for readers' views.

To require of the editor that he take steps to ensure that his staff co-operate fully and promptly with the readers' editor should they be requested to provide assistance in responding to readers' concerns and complaints. Similarly, the management and commercial departments of GNL, insofar as their activities relate to readers' concerns about editorial content.

In consultation with the editor and/or managing editor, to decide whether and when a correction should be published and/or apologies tendered, when deemed necessary, insofar as any correction/apology is not the subject of, or may be prejudicial to, a current complaint to the press complaints commission, our defence of an actual or possible legal action against the paper, or actual or possible legal or other action by the affected journalist(s).

In order to keep fully in touch with the workings of the paper, the readers' editor should have an established right of access to the editor, to heads of department meetings, budget meetings, to daily news conferences, and to other relevant forums. The readers' editor should be available to report, on an ad hoc, basis, to the editor and to these other groupings. The existence of the readers' editor, and how to contact him or her, should be advertised fairly prominently on a daily basis in the paper.

The readers' editor can refer to the external ombudsman any substantial grievances, or matters whereby the Guardian's journalistic integrity has been called into question.

The readers' editor will initially be appointed for two years. He/she can be reappointed. He/she can only be removed from the post within two years by a vote of the Scott Trust.

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