

THE PRESS STANDARDS BOARD OF FINANCE LIMITED
Editors' Code of Practice Committee

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PRESS INFORMATION

Now, a handbook to the Editors' Code of Practice

AN official handbook to enhance and reinforce Britain's system of self-regulation of the Press is published today by the newspaper and magazine industry.

The Editors' Codebook*, a 104-page paperback aimed at journalists, students and the public, is believed to be the most comprehensive guidance of its kind available to any major press self-regulation system, worldwide.

It brings together the Editors' Code of Practice – which sets out the ethical rules followed by the British press – and the case-law of the independent Press Complaints Commission, which since 1991 has adjudicated upon alleged breaches of the Code.

The handbook is the industry's response to a proposal from PCC chairman Sir Christopher Meyer in an eight-point plan announced in 2003 for "permanent evolution" of press self-regulation.

The Codebook was commissioned by the Editors' Code of Practice Committee – the standing body of national and regional newspaper and magazine editors which reviews and revises the Code – and published jointly by the industry's trade associations: the Newspaper Publishers Association, representing the national press, The Newspaper Society, representing the regional press, the Periodical Publishers Association, The Scottish Daily Newspaper Society and Scottish Newspaper Publishers Association.

Les Hinton, chairman of the Editors' Code of Practice Committee, and Executive Chairman of News International, said: "It is not always understood how much decisions of the PCC, with its clear majority of lay members, have helped shape British journalism over the years.

"Together, the Code's rules and the PCC's adjudications form the basis for self-regulation in Britain. The purpose of the book is to set them in context. It is a users' guide to show how the Code works in practice. It also demonstrates that, in practice, the Code works."

Philip Graf, chairman of the Press Standards Board of Finance Ltd, representing the publishers who co-ordinate and fund the newspaper and magazine industry's actions on self-regulation, said: "The publishers are totally committed to the self-regulatory system and felt strongly that we should respond positively to Sir Christopher Meyer's proposal. The Editors' Codebook is the clearest proof of that commitment.

"I believe it is genuinely a 'first' for the UK industry – I don't know of anything as advanced anywhere

else in the world - and expect it will become a hugely useful tool in newsrooms all over Britain, and also help make the self-regulatory system better understood both inside the industry and out. We are deliberately keeping the price down to make it as widely accessible as possible." *

Sir Christopher Meyer, PCC chairman, welcomed the publication: "The Editors' Codebook brings together the Code and the case-law developed through years of PCC adjudications upon it – matching the cases to the rules so that journalists can draw on what is a unique bank of experience. It will be of great benefit in making a good system even better.

"That is why I hope the handbook will attract a wider readership beyond working journalists. It will be indispensable for anyone interested in self-regulation, journalism and the great debates that swirl around issues of press freedom and responsibility – and not just in Britain. It should also help and inform those who use our services to seek redress from a newspaper, by explaining how the Code has been interpreted over the years."

The Editors' Codebook is written by Ian Beales, a former regional newspaper editor and founder-member of the Editors' Code Committee, who is now its Secretary. He said: "The Code of Practice remains as the definitive rulebook for the industry – a sort of ethical compass for journalists. The Codebook's role is as a supporting map, which warns where the hidden rocks are and how to avoid them."

*Copies of The Editors' Codebook are available in the UK at £5, including postage and packing (£4 for bulk orders of more than 25 copies). Overseas orders: £7.50 per copy, including postage and packing. Please send orders to: PressBoF, 48 Palmerston Place, Edinburgh, EH12 5DE. Cheques should be made payable to PressBoF.

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Note for Editors:

- The Editors' Code committee members are: Leslie Hinton, chairman; Perry Austin-Clarke, Bradford Telegraph and Argus; Neil Benson, Editorial Director of Trinity Mirror's regional newspapers; Mike Gilson, The News, Portsmouth; Douglas Melloy, Rotherham and South Yorkshire Advertiser; Ian Murray, Southern Evening Echo; Lindsay Nicholson, Good Housekeeping magazine; Paul Potts, Press Association; Alan Rusbridger, The Guardian; Derek Tucker, Press and Journal, Aberdeen; Neil Wallis, News of the World; Harriet Wilson, Conde Nast magazines; John Witherow, Sunday Times; and Peter Wright, The Mail On Sunday.

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