

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Press Distribution Review Panel held on Thursday 23rd
July 2015 at 2.00pm by Conference Call**

Present:	Neil Robinson Linda Gardner Andy Smith Mark Pardon Jason Ingold Steve Archer Graham Read	Chairman MD SN PPA NMA Independent Retailer Independent Retailer (Late attendance)
In Attendance:	Dorothy King	PDRP Administrator

1. Apologies for Absence and Welcome

- 1.1 Raj Chotai, Paresh Vyas.
- 1.2 The Chairman welcomed Andy Smith of Smiths News, who has taken over from Debbie Dalston.
- 1.3 Debbie Dalston has left Smiths News, and the Chairman thanked Debbie for her participation, support and achievements whilst working with the PDRP.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting 30th April 2015

- 2.1 The minutes of 30th April 2015 were adopted.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 PDRP Administration

THE PDF has approved one day a month extra for the Administrator on an 'as required' basis, with the proviso that the Administrator seeks approval from the Chairman in advance.

The Chairman requested that the Administrator seek approval for an extra day in order to prepare the September 2014 minutes.

3.2 PR Sub Group

The Chairman enquired as to the activity of the PR Sub-Group and was informed that the PR Sub Group has yet to formally hold a conference call and form.

A request had been given in an email dated 16/06/2015 for the PR sub-group to prepare a draft press release regarding the 'PDC – Retail Notes for Guidance'. A follow up email had been sent on 22/06/2015 without response; therefore the Chairman prepared a statement which was released on 02/07/2015.

There were also two other draft releases requested from the meeting of 30/04/2015, which are outstanding:

- Item 3.1 SA to prepare a draft a press release on how to obtain RDT's from wholesale and circulate to the PR sub-group.
- Item 3.4 SA to prepare a draft press release regarding the electronic survey on the Complaints Process and to circulate to the PR sub-group.

It was noted that the group had been slow in moving forward; partially due to Debbie Dalston leaving her position within Smiths News and not attending April's meeting. Graham Read had also been absent from the meeting in April. Andy Smith has been co-opted to join the PR sub-group and take up the position vacated by Debbie, this is Andy's first meeting and he has yet to meet everyone in person.

The Chairman requested that the PR sub-group nominate a spokesperson who will be the main co-ordinator and Chairman of the group.

3.3 SN & MDL Internal Document on Best Practises of Complaint Handling

Again, due to changes within Smiths News, LG has been unable to progress comparing the complaint response (best and worse) between SN and MDL, but this will now be organised between LG and AS, with a view of producing some standardisation of complaint responses.

3.4 Electronic Customer Survey on the Complaints Process

The Administrator has circulated a link of the electronic survey to all personnel who oversee the official Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints process requesting that, when a complaint has been formally completed, the link be circulated either within a letter or email inviting the retailer to complete the survey.

Copy of the email detailed below:

In my PDRP capacity, I wanted to update you and seek your support regarding the "PDC - Retail Notes of Guidance".

As you may be aware the PDRP have been working closely the respective PDC associations on composing a set of guidelines to aid retailers submitting complaints through the PDC complaints process. We are pleased to announce that we now published a final version.

The document is already published on the PDC website and we would appreciate your support when either sending out a complaint/ restitution forms or providing retailers with advice regarding the complaints, that these communications are accompanied with the PDC Notes of Guidance.

We would also appreciate the associations support in encouraging retailers to provide feedback regarding their experience when engaging in the complaints process, by completing the online questionnaire once the complaint has been completed and the formal written conclusion received. The link to the questionnaire can be found at: <http://www.pressdistributionforum.com/complaint-questionnaire/index.html>

I have attached for your records a PDF document of the 'PDC - Notes of Guidance' and a link below to the current edition of the PDC Charter.

http://www.pressdistributionforum.com/charter_flip.html

MD has included the link within a paragraph of the final letter to the retailer, encouraging the customer to participate and complete the survey. LG has agreed to share a copy of the letter with the panel.

3.5 NFRN Conference June 2015

SA reported that he was disappointed not to achieve an invite from the NFRN for NR to attend the conference with a five minute slot to address the delegates or to facilitate a trade stand, as he believes the delegates would have engaged and seen the benefit of the PDC.

Moving forward, he believes there will be more engagement between the NFRN and PDC, but on this occasion there was a lack of time to organise the address or trade stand.

SA is still hopeful of obtaining a page in the 'Retail Newsagent' within the next three months for the Press Distribution Review Panel.

SA advised that some of the larger districts of the NFRN hold their own trade shows, which may be good for the PDRP to attend to raise awareness of the Charter. There are 4,000 independent retailers who could attend these events. SA will consider ideas and options and report back to the panel.

4.0 'PDC – Retail Notes of Guidance'

4.1 The 'PDC - Retail Notes of Guidance' 2015 has been published on the website and released to the industry.

A copy of the notes are to be forwarded to every retailer who raises a formal Stage 2 complaint in order to assist them on how to submit their complaint and what evidence to submit.

MD, as yet, has not received a formal Stage 2 complaint, however everyone who issues the forms has been instructed to forward a copy of the 'PDC - Retail of Notes of Guidance' 2015 with the claim or restitution form.

SN has confirmed that the necessary documentation has been sent out accompanying the complaint form.

The Administrator also confirmed that every time there is a complaint handled via the helpline a copy of the notes are forwarded to the retailer via email, along with the appropriate complaint form, a copy of the Charter and a link to the PDF website.

- 4.2 DK reported that there has been email communication (07/07/2015) between Jerry Hayes (NFRN) with LG and MG, with some observation points being raised on the 'PDC - Retail Notes of Guidance'.

NR had responded to JH's email and observations, welcoming his comments and observations. He also agreed to supply Mr. Hayes with all future PDRP press releases. The observations made on behalf of the NFRN were noted and will be added to September's PDRP Agenda.

JH observations are:

1. *The definition of publisher lateness is not included within the Retail Notes for Guidance, previous definition was – Late if arrived at wholesale less than 15 minutes from cut off. Does this criteria still apply?*

The PDRP agreed that this is an up channel standard between the publisher and the wholesaler and as such this does not form part of the industry offer to a retailer.

The offer that the industry makes to the retailer is, that if the lateness by the publisher impacts on the wholesaler's ability to get the product out to the retailer on time, the retailer has got the option to claim through the normal process, and if the wholesaler deems it to be a publisher problem then the retail claim is passed to the appropriate publisher.

MG raised concern that he was unaware that publisher lateness had been agreed and defined by "arriving with less than 15 minutes from cut off at wholesale".

MP, on behalf of the Standards Group, asked what commitment there was from publishers to ensure that wholesalers can deliver to the RDT/SDT times.

NR agreed to circulate the 'Arbitrators Notes of Guidance', which had been agreed by the industry some time ago and contained the definition of publisher lateness, to see if this is something that the PDRP should revisit or refer to the PDF for review.

This will be added to the Agenda for the meeting in September.

2. *There is a disclaimer re Express/Star and Financial Times but no such disclaimer for Scottish national titles e.g. Herald, Post, Scotsman or regional titles. Which are eligible for restitution if criteria met but not publisher restitution?*

The Administrator's view was that this is a grey area as the regional titles belong to the Newspaper Society, who are affiliated to the News Media Association (NMA) – formerly Newspaper Publishers Association (NPA).

The Newspaper Society is not a direct member of the PDF, although the NMA is a fully paid member of the PDF, and it is only through association with the NMA that the NS is kept in the loop of communication. In these circumstances, it is questionable whether the PDC applies to regional titles.

However, by default the titles are handled by MD /SN, and depending on the content of complaint e.g. returns not collected, or delivery not made to a provided secure area, the retailer can raise a complaint regarding breach of standard because this is based on a wholesaler act or omission rather than the publisher's.

NR advised that the industry view has always been that, as the regional papers are not members of the forum, then the PDF does not have any authority over them and he is not aware of any amendment to this policy.

If regional titles want to be part of the forum, then engagement should be offered with an explanation of the PDC and its process.

It was noted that the trend with regional titles has changed over recent years with more titles being handled by wholesale rather than the publishers own drivers. Also a considerable number of regional titles are now delivered with the early morning national titles and many of the regional titles have become weekly publication rather than daily publications.

The reason for the disclaimer in the guidance for the Express titles and Financial Times is because they are national titles. The Express Group has never conformed to the PDF and last September the Financial Times withdrew its membership with the then NPA, therefore its title was no longer bound by the standards of the PDC.

Despite the Charter essentially dealing with national titles, the panel decided that it is happy to refer the point raised by JH to the National Circulation Executive Board at the NMA for guidance.

- 3. Publisher's restitution can only be paid on proven net loss of sale. This is not the case for HND that has to be redelivered as sale has been protected but there has been a cost to the retailer. Therefore the aforementioned statement is incorrect.*

The Panel was reminded that, within reason, where retailers are willing to share information, wholesalers are aware which retailers conduct HND. This is reflective to the definition of 'Persistence' within the 'PDC - Retail Notes of Guidance'.

Observing MD Customer Service Pledge it states:

If you believe your business has lost sales as a result of poor service from Menzies Distribution, but you want to be reimbursed rather than to register a complaint, you can follow our restitution process.

You are entitled to claim reimbursement when:

There has been extreme lateness involving a large number of copies, missing full bundles not replaced or where lateness has caused your Home News Delivery (HND) rounds to be missed, requiring a second delivery.

AND / OR

The same problem occurs more than three times in three weeks for Monday to Friday newspapers; or more than twice in six weeks for weekend newspapers and magazines.

In cases where incidents are outside of Menzies Distribution's control, such as where late delivery of titles by a publisher has caused knock-on lateness of your own deliveries, you will not be entitled to restitution from us. However we can pass these types of claims to the publisher representatives if appropriate.

You are entitled to claim for the total margin value of lost sales, for example if you claim for one copy which retails at 40p and on which your margin is 8p, you are claiming 8p.

To validate your claim, we will compare your sales for the titles and issues claimed to the average sales for the three most recent, normal corresponding days (excluding bank holidays), for example this Wednesday versus average for the last three Wednesdays.

For bank holidays the sales will be compared against the three most recent bank holidays.

In addition, if you were forced to rerun your HND rounds you can claim a fixed rate of 55p per copy. However, you will receive at least £5 restitution even when your reruns involve less than 10 copies. The maximum value which will be awarded for any one claim is £75.

The Panel noted that publishers will only consider restitution when the claim conforms to the 'persistence' guidance of:

Newspapers – The same problem occurs three times in three weeks for Monday to Friday newspapers, three times in six weeks for Saturday or Sunday newspapers.

Magazines – The same problem occurs three times in six issues of a weekly, fortnightly or monthly magazine.

Whilst wholesale restitution – will normally be awarded as follows:

In circumstances where the wholesaler was at fault for non-delivery of products or under allocation of products the wholesaler will reimburse the customer for lost margin on sale of that product.

In circumstances where the wholesaler was at fault for late delivery of products and that lateness has necessitated the re-delivery of HND copy the wholesaler will reimburse the customer 55p redelivered, with a minimum award of £5.50.

The Panel considered that it would be ideal to have a uniform standardised practise which is easy for the retailer to understand.

GR raised Brian Webb and his organisation, HND Affiliates, and suggested that he acquire more information from Brian Webb re HND prior to the meeting in September and circulate to the panel.

It was pointed out that at the NFRN conference there was a motion, which was not put into action, calling for HND re runs to be automatically credited on the following invoice.

- 4. It states that wholesaler will provide publisher contact details for any such restitution claims. Can you forward the latest publisher contact list that is available to members.*

These details are published on the PDF website and not just specifically for restitution claims.

- 5. States time scale to complete form is 7 days. This is a new stipulation, as you can see from NPA guidelines. It would be reasonable to suggest to collate all data requested for publisher restitution with supporting evidence may take at least this amount of time as information is not readily available via NMD or wholesaler.*

It was agreed that this time frame is reasonable and acceptable; however it does not state a timeframe within the Charter or the 'PDC - Retail Notes for Guidance' of 7 days for a Stage 2 complaint. The 7 days in fact refers to a retailer escalating a Stage 2 complaint to Stage 3 and the parties having 7 days to complete and submit their Statement of Case at Stage 3.

- 6. If a Stage 2 PDC complaint form is sent to wholesale and found to be a publisher issue, can you confirm process that then takes place? Especially as in may well be after 7 days when response is received?*

The Panel reiterated that the complaint paperwork is passed across to the appropriate publisher. A complaint has 28 days from when it is first registered for the issue to be resolved.

If the retailer remains unhappy after the 28 days with response or lack of response, they have 7 days to escalate their concerns in writing to the PDRP Administrator.

It was agreed to consider this point at the September meeting with a view to passing it to the formal group that reviews the PDC standards, with a recommendation from the PDRP.

- 7. At initial contact with the retailer how does the wholesaler establish where the complaint should sit?*

The Panel reiterated that the initial investigation is carried out by the wholesaler and if wholesaler maintains that the issue has arisen outside of wholesale control, it will pass the paperwork onto the publisher(s) concerned.

5.0 Report on Complaints Resolved Via PDF Help Line

- 5.1 The PDRP Administrator stated that all the complaints handled by the PDRP Help Line are conducted in the nature of a Stage 2 Customer Complaint; she informed the panel that there had been:

20 complaints received and 45 breaches between 01/05/2015 – 22/07/2015.

	Stage 2	Stage 3	Total
Smith's News	15	1	16
Menzies	2	0	2
NMA	2	0	2

Breached of Standards – 45 Breaches

T&C	DT	Del Q	OSM	SBR	RM	Inv	VP	Sub R	C/S	C/C
3	7	3	11	1	2	4	0	0	14	0

- 5.2 Please see attached report for referral which indicates there has been a continued increase of complaints regarding Delivery Quality, Terms and Conditions, Order Supply Management and Supplies Based Replenishment.

However there has been a decrease of complaints in relation to, Voucher Processing and Customer Service.

6.0 Standards Sub Group

- 6.1 The Chairman reminded the Sub Group it must be mindful and aware that the changes to the PDC standards have historically been developed by a PDF group under an Independent Chairman. However the PDF may be happy to accept any recommendations on the standards without necessitating the cost and expense of an independent review board.
- 6.2 MP reported that an action from the April meeting was to arrange a conference call with Debbie Dalston to inform and update Smiths News of the sub group's findings and request that Debbie refer the same up channel within SN. For the benefit of AS, MP explained that this was to discuss and compare the SN perspective on the PDC and the MD Customer Service Pledge v3.

He informed the Panel that, until SN had joined the discussion, the sub group would prefer to hold back of its findings.

The final paper will be circulated by end of August following the conference call.

7. Any Other Business

- 7.1 The Administrator informed the Panel that at the September meeting David Lambert will be attending the PDRP meeting as an observer from Mail Group Newspapers.
- 7.2 The Chairman congratulated everyone concerned for getting the Stage 2 statistics through on time for June and for the quarterly report.

The preliminary report for period 01/04/2015 – 30/06/2015 is showing that 26 complaint forms were completed made up of:

- 2 MD
- 21 SN
- 2 NMA
- 1 News UK Distributors

The report will be out by the beginning of August.

Meeting closed at 15:05pm with thanks to the Chairman.

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 3rd September 2015 at 13:00.

MEETING 23rd July 2015 SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Item	Action	By Whom
3.2	PR Sub Group to nominate co-ordinator/Chairman	AS/ MG/ SA/ GR
3.2	Draft a press release on how to obtain RDTs from wholesale and circulate to PR Group and Panel	PR Sub Group
3.2	Draft a press release regarding the Electronic Survey on the Complaints Process and circulate it to the PR Group and panel	PR Sub Group
3.3	LG to contact AS regarding the SN & MDL comparing complaint responses (best and worse) in order to compile an internal document on best practises of complaint handling	LG/AS
3.4	LG to circulate a copy of standardised letter which MD forward to retailers on concluding a formal complaint, and inviting the retailer to complete the electronic survey	LG
3.5	Try and arrange a page in Retail Newsagent on PDRP and consider attending a trade event later this year/ early next year.	PR Sub Group
4.2 1	NR to circulate the Arbitrators Notes of Guidance to the Panel	NR
4.2 2	To refer to the National Circulation Executives Board of the NMA JH's observations regarding regional titles.	NR
4.2 3	GR to circulate details relating to HNDA – Brian Webb to the panel for consideration with HND	GR
6.2	MP and the Standard Group to arrange a conference call with AS to inform AS of the sub groups findings and for AS to refer up channel to SN, after the conference call to circulate a paper to the panel ahead of September's	PR Sub Group

	meeting	
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Dates for Meetings 2015

- 03/09/2015 1pm Blue Fin Building
- 10/12/2015 1pm Blue Fin Building

Please note that the last meeting date has been amended to 10/12/2015.

Report of Complaints Handled Via the PDRP Helpline – 01/05/2015 – 22/07/2015

Association	Stage 2	Stage 3	Total
Smiths News	15	1	16
Menzies Distribution	2	0	2
NMA	2	0	2

Total Number of Complaints 20

Association	Stage 2	Stage 3	Total
Smiths News	12	2	14
Menzies Distribution	4	0	4
NUK	2	0	2

Total Number of complaint 31/01/2015 – 30/04/2015 20

Breaches for Period 01/05/2015 – 22/07/2015 – 45 Breaches

T&C	DT	DEL Q	OSM	SBR	RM	INV	VP	Sub Ret	C/S	C/C
3	7	3	11	1	2	4	0	0	14	0

Breaches for Period 31/01/2015 – 30/04/2015 – 39 Breaches

T&C	DT	DEL Q	OSM	SBR	RM	INV	VP	Sub Ret	C/S	C/C
0	7	0	9	0	2	4	1	0	16	0

Claims comparison since previous meeting 30/04/2015

Since the last meeting of 30/4/2015 there has been 20 complaints handles by the PDRP Helpline which is a flat line, not showing an increase or decrease.

SN has increased by 2 complaints inclusive of the Stage 3 complaint.

MD has seen a decline by 2 complaints

NMA Increased by 2 complaints.

Breaches comparison

T&C	DT	DEL Q	OSM	SBR	RM	INV	VP	Sub Ret	C/S	C/C
+ 3	0	+ 3	+2	+ 1	0	0	- 1	0	- 2	0

Although there has been no additional claims received the breaches of standards have increased by 6, from 39 breaches to 45 breaches as detailed below , which is an overall increase of 15:38%

There has been an increase of standards breached for:

- T&C
- Del Quality
- Order Supply Management
- Supplies Based Replenishment

There has been a decrease of standard breached for :

- Voucher Processing
- Customer Service

There has been for change of the following standards breached:

- Delivery Timeliness
- Returns Management
- Invoicing

No breaches received to date regarding:

- Sub Retailing
- Carriage Charge.