

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Press Distribution Review Panel held on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2014 at 2.00pm at the Offices Marketforce, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SU**

Present:	Neil Robinson	Chairman
	Debbie Dalston	SN
	Linda Gardner	MD
	Mark Pardon	PPA
	Mark Gilhespie	NMA (News Media Association)
	Rajiv Chotai	Independent Retailer
	Graham Read	Independent Retailer
	Paresh Vyas	Independent Retailer
	Steve Archer	Independent Retailer
In Attendance:	Dorothy King	PDRP Administrator

**1. Apologies for Absence**

1.1 No apologies received.

**2. Welcome and Introduction to New Members**

2.1 Chairman welcomed new members to the panel:

- Linda Gardner MDL
- Mark Gilhespie NMA
- Paresh Vyas Retailer
- Graham Read Retailer
- Steve Archer Retailer

2.2 The group went round the table introducing themselves, stating who they were, where they work etc., for a quick insight of who is on the panel.

2.3 The retail sector of the group is now made up of 75% currently being serviced by SN and 25% via MDL.

- 2.4 For the benefit of the new members, the Chairman summarised the work and modus operandi of the panel:
- Politics are off limits.
  - Concentration on constructive improvements and recommendations.
  - Encourage compliance with the Press Distribution Charter (PDC).
  - Encourage engagement with the PDC.
  - Identify trends and work with associations to resolve issues.
  - To ensure arbitration decisions have continuity and consistency.
  - Providing a mechanism for identifying trends.
  - Collect, audit and publish data of Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints.
  - Produce quarterly and annual reports, which demonstrate trends and actions.
- 2.5 For the next meeting scheduled for January 2015, the members were requested to give consideration to a blue sky thought process session within the group, which will identify some, tasks, challenges, and projects that can be given consideration for the next two year period.
- 2.6 Members were reminded that at times confidential information is discussed within the group, and it is important, that this is respected in order to achieve full participation from all members. When an item is discussed 'Off record', this will not be captured within the minutes and will remain off record and confidential.

### **3. Minutes of Last Meeting – 4<sup>th</sup> September 2014**

- 3.1 Minutes of the May Meeting have been published and circulated, but regrettably September's Minutes are still outstanding with apologies. It is hoped that the May minutes will be published in the near future.

### **4. Matters Arising**

- 4.1 The NMA (previously NPA) had been requested to produce a report in relation to the NMA restitution limit of £30.00, but Barry Alsopp has now retired, without completing this action.

### **5. Standardisation of Restitution Payments**

- 5.1 NR gave a summary of work carried out so far for the benefit of the new panellists-
- At Stage 1 a retailer approaches the wholesaler or publisher to try and resolve the issue, which would then either be corrected or settled with a restitution payment - no issue.
  - However there is some discrepancy between the wholesalers and publishers restitution payments at Stage 2 and it is the aim of the PDRP to develop an industry restitution standard that is transparent and manages retail expectation.
  - The PDRP is also developing more comprehensive 'Guidance Notes for Retailers' which will incorporate the standardisation of restitution.

- 5.3 It was pointed out to the Panel that the definition of 'persistence' originally only referred to retail claims for publisher lateness and not to wholesale claims for the same. However both wholesalers had adopted the similar wording to cover their own retail claims.

The current wording for publishers is:

*Persistence is the instances where the retailer has experienced late delivery of a specific newspaper title on three occurrences in a two week period Monday – Saturday.*

OR

*Three occurrences from a specific publisher in a six week period for Sunday newspapers.*

OR

*Three occurrences in six issues for a specific magazine title.*

The Chairman would like to see a form of wording for 'persistent' that can be applied to the PDC standards other than lateness and pertinent to wholesalers and publishers alike.

- 5.4 LG reported that if a retailer contacts MD more than twice regarding the same issue, then the it will automatically escalate the issue to a PDC Stage 1 at branch level in order to try and avoid further complaints;. This is regardless of how many instances; an issue has been raised within however many weeks.

If the issue remains outstanding after 24 hours, the matter is raised to the next stage, with a desire to resolve the complaint within a total of 3 days.

It is hoped that by taking this stance it is not necessary to refer the issue to regional manager level, avoiding issues becoming of greater significance than necessary.

- 5.5 It was unanimously agreed to retain the phrase '**serious or persistent**':

- Serious will be determined by the circumstances of each individual case.
- Persistence in respect to wholesalers as: 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.
- The process is not designed to deal with small issues, but to cater for serious or persistent problems examples of which could be:
  - terms and conditions are not clear and do not meet the minimum standards of the Charter.
  - newspapers or magazines arriving after the RDT/STD or don't arrive in a saleable condition.
  - the documentation about delivery is not clear.

- wholesaler does not give access to information to help manage supply.
- unsolds are not collected and credited promptly and accurately.
- vouchers are not received, processed and credited efficiently.
- invoices are not detailed and accurate clearly showing all charges and credits.
- wholesaler fails to answer questions about invoices or the service received.
- wholesaler fails to give you support on sub-retailing.

5.6 In cases of complaints about newspapers, the wholesaler will initially investigate the complaint and if it is unable to be resolved the relevant paperwork and contact details is passed to the appropriate publisher or alternatively the wholesaler will supply the retailer with the contact details for the appropriate person within the relevant publisher.

If the retailer has not completed a complaint form and has made initial telephone contact only, wholesale will usually pass on the publishers contact details to the retailer to progress their complaint independently. However, where the retailer has submitted a completed complaint form to the wholesaler, in order to avoid the retailer having to submit a second complaint form, the wholesaler usually forwards all the documentation to the publisher or distributor

5.7 It was noted that the PDF website publishes the contact numbers for publishers, but this requires updating. MG to speak with Richard Johnson of NMA for correct details.

5.8 It was noted that the Express Group newspapers and Financial Times are not members of the PDF and therefore are not involved within the complaint and restitution process.

5.9 DD and LG confirmed that SN and MDL do confirm RDTs in writing for new retailers and when a retailer's RDT/SDT is reviewed.

At the point of change of ownership, the new incoming retailer will be asked for hours of operation and if there are any changes in opening times. If this is not submitted by the retailer during setting up the account, it is assumed they are keeping to the existing open and closing times and they will inherit the current RDT/SDT.

LG informed the panel that all MDL customers have their RDT/SDT on their daily delivery notes, so all MDL retailers are aware of their RDT/SDT. SN customers do not have the same visibility to their RDT/SDT.

DD will go back to SN to discuss and will report back if SN are able and willing to print the RDT on supply alteration notes delivery notes or somewhere where the retailer has clear prominence to the information.

MG will also take back and discuss with NIDL the consideration to accommodate printing RDT/SDT on daily sheets.

- 5.10 The Chairman requested that all members review the Guidance Notes for Retailers and report back anything that may require changing within the next week.

## **6.0 Stage 2 Complaints Audit**

- 6.1 The PDRP Complaints Audit Questionnaire has now been approved.

DK advised that the form has not been circulated to the retailers yet because it has not been agreed how to process the forms i.e. if they are to be emailed, posted or telephone canvassed.

DK does not hold email addresses or postal addresses for retailers, therefore has no way of posting electronically or otherwise. She does have sight of a contact telephone number.

The panel was of the opinion that by forwarding the forms direct to retailers a relatively small percentage of retailers will:

- Read the forms contents.
- Complete and return the form.

There was also concern about keeping returned questionnaire forms anonymous, as this may encourage retailer feedback.

It was agreed that the Administrator should try calling the retailers and carry out a tick box exercise.

DK to carry out the October's audit and gauge the response and participation.

## **7.0 PDC Training at Wholesale Level**

- 7.1 DD reported that generally the training within the SN call centres is acceptable; however she felt that some further improvement internally is required when managers are responding in writing formally to a Stage 2 or 3 complaints.

At times the quality of information content and/or the time in replying to the retailer could be improved upon.

DD advise that SN is looking to develop and improve on these skill sets. SN produces a weekly report that is generated to the business on a Friday, and the regional directors will challenge the locations on speed of response, but there is no tracking, other than DD, on the quality of response content.

- 7.2 LG stated that the MDL management team progress the complaints through and chase up responses and if the response to the retailer is not as should be it will either go back for the response to be challenged, or picked up with the retailer direct.

At a Stage 3 level the branch response is returned to LG, who will forward onto the PDRP Administrator.

She reported that generally, the house managers are keen to resolve issues pragmatically, without the board's intervention.

- 7.3 It was agreed that SN & MDL share best and worse responses to retailer's complaints, and look at compiling a guide of good practise for internal purposes explaining how to handle complaints and managing expectations.

## **8. Reports from Retail Representatives**

- 8.1 GR reported that he has issues with damaged copies, he operates 100% HND and it is difficult to deliver copies that:

- Have stickers on the front.
- Are wet although these are not too much of an issue and this has been greatly resolved.
- Are top and bottom copies of bundles that have been damaged.
- Folded in between turns in the middle of a bundle.
- Damaged odd's bundles.

- 8.2 PV raised the concern that recently a delivery van was stolen, and as a consequence papers arrived late. Some retailers were charged for supplies that they had not received. Whilst this is an irregular occurrence, the issue is that although papers were charged on the expected day of delivery, credit is still outstanding nearly three weeks later.

DD offered to take details off line with PV at the end of the meeting.

- 8.3 RC identified issues which affect his business as:

- Magazines not arriving on time for on sale date.
- Wet tote boxes and sodden merchandise.
- Bottom of bundle - last one or two magazines damaged.
- 'What's on TV'/ 'TV Choice' bundles with stickers on the top – but still able to achieve the sale.
- Mail newspapers - 4 to 5 bundles delivered on daily basis, terrible quality, turn quantities variable.
- No lateness issue with newspapers.
- Getting required supply figures – so no problems.

- 8.4 SA acknowledged that there were no current issues which required discussion.

## **9. Report on Complaints Resolved Via PDF Help Line**

- 9.1 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:

22 complaints received

	Stage 2	Stage 3	Total
Smith's News	7	0	7
Menzies	13	2	15
NIDL	2	0	2

Breached of Standards – 44 Breaches

T&C	DT	Del Q	OSM	RM	Inv	Sub R	C/S	C/C	VP
2	12	6	5	0	4	0	12	0	3

## 10. Any Other Business

- 10.1 NR advised the panel that he had received a request from the PDF board, to consider running the PDRP year end in sync with the PDF year end.

PDRP presently report an Annual report from 1<sup>st</sup> November through to the 31<sup>st</sup> October, and it has been requested to extend this by a further 2 months ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014. Subsequently to run the year from 1<sup>st</sup> January until 31<sup>st</sup> December.

The Chairman advised that the only issue would be the year on year comparison for last year to this year which would be rather difficult.

There were no objections to the request from the panel, and it was agreed that NR and DK submit a 14 month report with a note of explanation.

It was agreed that the PDRP should issue a press release introducing new members to the panel with individual photos and small biographies of approximately 100 words. Members were invited to either supply their preferred photos or have their photo taken before they left the meeting. Biography wording to be forwarded by end of next week (05/12/15) to the administrator.

This will be published on the PDF website and released to the trade press before Christmas.

## 11. Dates for Meetings 2014

- 29/01/2015 1pm Blue Fin Building
- 07/05/2015 1pm Blue Fin Building
- 03/09/2015 1pm Blue Fin Building
- 12/11/2015 1pm Blue Fin Building

Meeting closed at 16.10pm with thanks to the Chairman.

## Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 29/1/2015 at 13:00 at the Marketforce Offices – Blue Fin Building.

**MEETING –27<sup>th</sup> November 2014  
SUMMARY OF ACTIONS**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>By Whom</b>
<b>5.7</b>	Publisher contact numbers to be updated on PDF website, MG to speak to Richard Johnson(NMA)	<b>MG</b>
<b>5.9</b>	DD & MG to discuss with their respective companies the possibility of publishing RDT's on daily paperwork for retailer's and report back to the panel at the next meeting.	<b>DD/MG</b>
<b>5.10</b>	Chairman has requested any comments /amendments to The Guidance Notes for Retailers to be forwarded to the PDRP Administrator by W/E 05/12/2014	<b>ALL</b>
<b>6.1</b>	PRDP Complaints Audit Questionnaire telephone survey to be implemented	<b>DK</b>
<b>7.1</b>	SN looking to improve the quality of response for Stage 2 & 3 complaints, both with content and time management.	<b>SN</b>
<b>7.3</b>	SN & MDL to compare complaint responses (best and worse) to compile an internal document on best practises of complaint handling	<b>DD/LG</b>
<b>10.2</b>	Bio's to be forwarded onto administrator for press release.	<b>ALL</b>