

Minutes of a Meeting of the Press Distribution Review Panel held on Thursday 28th November 2013 at 1.30pm at the Offices Marketforce, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SU

Present:	Neil Robinson	Chairman
	Dave Shedden	MD
	Barry Allsop	NPA
	Mark Pardon	PPA
	Debbie Dalston	SN
	Richard Sage	Independent Retailer
	Rajiv Choti	Independent Retailer
In Attendance:	Dorothy King	PDRP Administrator

1. Apologies for Absence

1.1 Apologies were received from Mark Williams.

1.2 The Chairman welcomed Mark Pardon as the new representative to the Press Distribution Review Panel (PDRP), representing the PPA; and thanked Marketforce for hosting and facilitating the meeting at the Blue Fin Building.

Mark's biography was circulated to the members of the PDRP ahead of the meeting as a form of introduction.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting 26th September 2013

The minutes were adopted as a true and accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 The PDRP resolved that for ALL future Stage 3 Complaints, the Independent Arbitrator needs to be provided with the full Stage 2 documentation.

This has not been happening. It was agreed that as the PDF Administrator submits the 'Statement of Case for Wholesale' (Stage 3 Form), the wholesaler should return

the completed Stage 2 appertaining to the case attached to their completed Statement of Case Form.

This will ensure that the Independent Arbitrator adjudicates the complaint based on the correctness of the Stage 2 decision by the wholesaler and not on events or circumstances occurring after the Stage 2 decision.

4. Centralisation of Smiths News PDC Complaints Process – Report by SN

- 4.1 The Chairman reported that both wholesalers had worked well centralising their complaints processes, which has led to greater transparency in the disputes procedure.

The changes have been reflected within the monthly and quarterly reports, and the system is more balanced and fair.

- 4.2 DD informed the PDRP that SN has been operating the centralising of complaints for approximately three months, and hold weekly reviews of the PDC's which have been raised, not resolved and completed.

SN adds the response times to complaints on the Manager Score Cards, and reviews the Managers complaint replies on facts, details and comprehension.

An email account has been organised, so that the PDC's can be electronically sent and received to retailers, although this is not widely used.

Responses are also sent via post.

SN is promoting a change to the complaint culture, namely that it is not an issue to receive PDC complaints, more of a health check and review option.

The PDF Administrator forwards correspondence to SN regarding issues raised by retailers, a complaint form is automatically sent onto the retailer in case the issue converts into a PDC Complaint.

5. Timeliness and Accuracy of Stage 2 Complaints Data to Administrator

- 5.1 The Chairman state that timeliness and accuracy are still not being attained. There has been a marked improvement on timeliness, but the information received is still not totally accurate.

If the originating data is not precise the filter process for monitoring and preparing the Quarterly and Annual Reports becomes protracted and cumbersome.

It would be appreciated if the trade representatives serving on the panel could advise the personnel within their organisations of the importance in supplying complaint data to the Administrator on time and accurate in order to prevent the data from being distorted.

6. Quarterly Report

6.1 Traditionally Autumn Quarterly Reports appears to have more issues than any other quarter; but for year on year comparison of 2013/2012 period there has been approximately 20% decline.

6.2 **Complaints by Standards** - Delivery Timeliness received most complaints, which is in keeping with trend, but dropped by approximately 37% year on year.

Voucher Processing complaints received during 2013 have dropped by approximately 73% year on year.

Customer Service complaints have seen a significant increase 0 during 2012 to 8 received during 2013.

Invoicing Issues for 2013 has seen a 300% increase against 2012.

6.3 **Complaints by Company / Association** – During 2013 the balance of complaints by company / association has changed. This reflects the centralisation of handling and processing of complaints by the wholesalers.

- MD decreased complaints year on year by 30
- SN increased complaints year on year by 21
- NPA increased complaints year on year by 1
- PPA remain the same year on year 0

6.4 It is noted that most concerns regarding the PPA are on Order Supplies Management, or Quality of Delivery which the wholesalers try to resolve at source, therefore preventing formal complaints being issued against the PPA.

Seasonal allocations were discussed for Radio Times Christmas Edition.

Allocation for the Christmas Edition is determined by the distributor and fed into the wholesalers systems with the title being 99% pre allocated by the distributor. The supplies printed are never sufficient for retailers, but come within ratio of waste for the publisher.

The issue concerning retailers is having limited supplies and being frequently unable to meet demand resulting in the need to purchase additional supplies through supermarkets, which causes the figure work and allocation numbers to be spurious.

The majority of allocations are based on EPOS data, direct from points of sale. Supplies are replenished based on this accurate data. If retailers are going to supermarkets to obtain extra copies of a title it is recorded as a sale within the supermarket, but not for the retailer.

On occasions, supermarkets also receive extra supplies of a title because they are running a joint promotion either with the publisher or advertiser within the publication.

There is no preferential treatment given to supermarkets over independent retailers. It is a unique product, with a set print run allocated and there is not a lot of capacity for reallocation or double handling.

7.0 Stage 2 Complaint Audit

- 7.1** With the complaints process having been enhanced through wholesaler centralisation, the Chairman proposed that the PDRP should be obtaining feedback from retailers who have engaged within the process.

He suggested that the Administrator should send a standard letter/email/questionnaire to a random number of retailers asking for feedback on their experience e.g. If the complaint was dealt within the time frame, were they satisfied with the system.

It was agreed that this is a good idea in principle; as such a process would ensure greater transparency to the PDC, increase visibility of the PDC and increase awareness of the PDRP.

The Board started to consider what questions it should be proposing.

DK advised that the PDF was considering something similar and offered to circulate the sample questions.

Members of the PDRP were asked to consider what types of questions should be included within the questionnaire.

8. Reports from Retail Representatives

- 8.1** MW (By email): Generally things are running well, with the exception of delivery times on Saturdays.

This was raised as a complaint by him on 05.11.13, only to be informed that his RDT had been unilaterally changed by half an hour. Whichever way he looked at the issue his papers are running between 1 - 1½ hours late.

Response: The Retail Delivery Time (RDT) is the time agreed by the wholesaler and retailer as the latest time by which it is operationally feasible for the retailer to receive his newspaper delivery. This should not be changed without negotiation. MD will look into this.

A question arises here as to whether the wholesaler recorded delivery time should be when the first part of the delivery is made or when the delivery is complete?

Response: The preliminary delivery is the delivery by which the RDT is recorded against, consequential deliveries happen when there is a problem and are the exception to the rule.

MW contacted Customer Service four times regarding the same issue and gave his personal mobile number in order to receive a response call re the complaint. At no point was a follow up call received. MW questioned whether these calls are logged and detailed within the recorded figures?

The Customer Service team did not advise him to complete a formal complaint form within the MDL Service Pledge Booklet (2nd Edition). MW was of the opinion that clarity is required as to whether complaints are just being handled without going to MDL head Office or is there an attempt to avoid capture of the complaint.

Response: To submit a formal complaint a formal Stage 2 Complaint Form is required to be completed and submitted to the appropriate company. When a complaint is submitted verbally over the phone, it is generally accepted as a Stage 1 complaint and is not captured within the submitted Stage 2 data. Unless the retailer states to the call handler that he wishes to escalate the claim, the call handler can either advise the retailer to contact the PDF/ PDRP Helpline or complete the appropriate paperwork and forward it to the central point for investigation and response at Stage 2.

- 8.2 RG – Generally happy with the level of service, except that he still has an issue on the quality of the Mail, and has not received a response from either the wholesaler or publisher.

On a daily basis, the top and bottom copies are scrunched up or torn, but he has also experienced damaged copies in the middle of bundles.

RG states that he has completed details on his PDC form but has never received a response or explanation regarding the damaged and unsaleable copies.

- 8.3 RC confirmed that his supply of Mail received on 28.11.13, had the first four copies from the top of the bundles damaged, and in his case each bundle had brown paper protection.

RC stated that he had been experiencing lateness of deliveries, mainly due to re runs and particularly with the Mirrors/ l's/ Independent/ Sun and Times.

RC stated that his philosophy is to get through the problem, and is so busy that he does not have time to complete complaint forms; although his wife will follow through with complaints on his behalf.

RC advised that he would raise a complaint at branch level if he got wrong supplies due to packing errors, e.g. on pack sheet 70 x l's received instead of 70 x Independents.

He reported that he never gets a call back from his branch manager.

He was put on security check, but still receiving incorrect supplies, e.g. 27.11.13 received 5 Car Talk Extra – they were returned as over packs.

- 8.4 RS reported that the Helpline is very helpful, resolving problems, which they would not normally have dealt with. As an example, he recently received delivery where the order was 20 copies of Sun short. He contacted the Helpline, who said they would contact the warehouse, and within five minutes he received a call from the manager apologising and sending a driver to drop the copies off.

He went on to report that one issue of concern is that a main day for selling out is a Saturday when stock has gone by 9.30 – 10.00am. He has tried to revise figures, but

these are not activated. He proposes to record sell out times over the next few weeks, and see how many consumers ask for an off supply title in order to demonstrate approximate loss of sales.

DD advised that if it is specific to a newspaper title, then retailers can ask to speak with the account manager of the relevant title.

9. Report on Complaints Resolved Via PDF Help Line

9.1 All the complaints handled by the PDRP Help Line are conducted in the nature of a Stage 2 Customer Complaint, the Administrator informed the panel that there had been:

29 complaints received

	Stage 2	Stage 3	Other	Total
Smith's News	18	3	0	21
Menzies	3	0	0	3
NPA	3	0	2	5

Breached of Standards – 33 Breaches

T&C	DT	O&S	SBR	RM	Invoice	VP	CS
1	19	4	0	3	0	0	6

10. Any Other Business

10.1 DD reported that SN has held a meeting with Inzone.

Inzone stated that there had been issues with some forceful sales within their sales department, but these issues have been addressed.

When making contact with retailers, they do state that Inzone is a supplier of SN, and retailers have the option to opt out of being contacted by Inzone.

All calls are recorded, so if unauthorised orders are placed or received, this can be investigated by reviewing the calls.

10.2 DS mentioned that there is a campaign being started within 'Retail Newsagents' regarding the re-runs of newspaper titles.

An issue was raised as to how retailers can claim restitution for re-runs when it does not fall within the NPA guidelines of Please see Appendix 1:

DK was requested to update the NPA contact numbers on the PDF website

NR suggested that the Guidance Notes for Retailers, (v25.10.2010) be reviewed and it was unanimously agreed that they should be.

11. Dates for Meetings 2014

- 08/05/2014 2pm Blue Fin Building
- 04/09/2014 2pm Blue Fin Building
- 27/11/2014 2pm Blue Fin Building

Meeting closed at 16.05pm with thanks to the Chairman.

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 30th January 2014 at 14:00 at the Marketforce Offices – Blue Fin Building.

MEETING –28th November 2013 SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Item	Action	By Whom
3.1	Copies of Stage 2 complaints to be forwarded to the PDF Administrator when the matter has been resolved and formally signed off	MD/SN/NPA/ PPADK
7.1	To forward sample of PDF Survey	DK
8.1	DS to look into MW RDT to see if this has been changed and will report back to MW.	DS
8.2	Quality of Mail – damaged and unsaleable copies. BA to investigate and report.	BA
10.2	Update NPA telephone contact no sheet on PDF website	DK
10.3	MD considering designing a rerun app	DS
10.4	SN to consider app for logging Stage 1 informal complaints	DD

Appendix 1

NPA GUIDELINES TO RETAILERS

The guidance below relates specifically to complaints about late delivery which result in a claim against the publisher for restitution (and is based on the existing NPA Fast Track Restitution process).

1. A claim for restitution against the **publisher** will only be accepted if there is late delivery to the retailer i.e. the delivery is later than the Retailer Delivery Time (RDT) or the Scheduled Delivery Time (SDT), and if the publisher has delivered late to the wholesaler.

The definition of late delivery by the publisher to the wholesaler is:

The Publisher delivers to the wholesaler less than 15 minutes prior to the NPA cut-off time.

2. A claim must be for a serious or persistent breach of the standards.

3. The definition of persistent is:

a. Three occurrences of lateness for a specific title in a two week period for Monday to Saturday editions.

b. Three occurrences of lateness for a specific title in a six week period for Sunday editions

4. Where restitution is paid for the loss of profit on the sale of a specific title, it will be calculated on a net lost sales basis. However, publishers will consider claims for reasonable costs associated with the protection of home news delivered copies.

5. The maximum amount of restitution agreed under the scheme will be £30 for each single claim, in respect of any one shop, with a maximum claim of £3,000 in respect of one incident covering all retailers.

6. Publishers will not pay restitution in circumstances which are beyond their control.

7. The publisher will issue a unique reference number to each complaint.

8. Publishers may use the facilities of the wholesaler to verify the retailer's claim or to pass on any relevant payment.

Menzies Distribution Guideline to Retailers

MD has published within its Customer Service Pledge (Second Edition) the following:

“In addition, if you were forced to rerun your HND rounds you can claim a fixed rate of 40p per copy. However, you will receive at least £4 restitution even when your reruns involve less than 10 copies.

The maximum value which will be awarded for any one claim is £75.”