

Minutes of the Meeting of the Press Distribution Forum held on Thursday 24th February 2011 at the Offices of the Professional Publishers Association, Queens House, 28 Kingsway, Holborn, London, WC2B 6JR

Present:	Neil Robinson	Chairman
	Jonathan Denton	Smiths News
	Carrie Rooks	PPA
	Darren Barker	NPA
	Dave Shedden	Menzies Distribution
	Richard Church	Independent Retailer
	Mark Williams	Independent Retailer
	Raj Ganatra	Independent Retailer

In Attendance:

Dorothy King	Call On Us
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1. **Apologies** – No apologies recorded.
2. **Minutes of Last Meetings:**
 - 2.1 As this is the Inaugural Meeting, there have been no previous minutes of last meeting recorded.
3. **Opening Meeting and Introductions**
 - 3.1 NR welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the PDRP and invited members to introduce themselves, giving a brief biography on themselves and where they have come from.
 - 3.2 Confidentiality clause – the panel was reminded that there will be confidential and sensitive issues raised at PDRP meetings and, accordingly it is critical that everyone maintains strict confidentiality in relation to any items designated as ‘confidential’.

- 3.3 NR addressed the issue that members of the panel should be at ease and work to the common purpose of what benefits the industry and not for personal/political gain.

4. PDRP/PDF Awareness

- 4.1 DB requested the background to the PDF/PDC/PDRP and asked to what extent information had been published and what awareness levels had been achieved.

NR advised that:

- A copy of Charter was made available to every retailer from 1st November 2010.
- Launch of the Charter Press Day 28th October 2010, where Trade Press were invited to attend.
- 4 publications attended and gave positive coverage and this was countered by a Trade Associations who tried to give negative spin.

5. Press Distribution Review Panel (PDRP)

- 5.1 NR took the panel through the Press Distribution Charter (PDC) Complaints Resolution Process and summarised the responsibilities of the PDRP Review Panel:-

- a) **STAGE1** – Informal Discussion with wholesaler/publisher where a Charter standard has not been met. The aim is to resolve the complaint within 48 hours. If not resolved, then proceed to:
- b) **STAGE 2** – Fast Track Resolution – contact the company responsible for the service breach and follow that company's complaints procedure by obtaining a Fast Track Resolution Form and returning to the company with evidence supporting the complaint. This stage should be resolved within 14 days of receipt of form - but may take a maximum of 28 days.
- c) **Stage 3** – Independent Arbiter - If the retailer is still not satisfied after completing Stages 1 and 2 of the process they have the choice to refer the issue onto independent arbitration by writing to the Chairman of the PDR within 7 days of the end of the Fast Track Resolution process.
The Chairman will arrange for the arbitration to be heard. The Arbitration's decision and recommendations shall be final and conclude within 14 days of receipt of all information relating to the complaint.
The Arbitrator shall base his determinations on what is fair and reasonable having regard to good industry practice relevant industry agreements and the law.

5.2 PDRP is a self regulatory body that is monitored by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT), it is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the Dispute Resolution Process works.
- That the Charter and the Dispute Resolution Process is accessible to everyone within the industry.
- Identifying trends that evolve through the monitoring process and reporting back to PDF findings to aid efficiency of supply chain and sales.
- To be open and transparent and publish results and observations via the website or other methods of communication to the whole industry complete.

5.3 MW opened discussion on what the definition of a “**Complaint**” is – NR by stating that it arose when a retailer made a formal claim that a Charter standard had not been met by a wholesaler or publisher. He reminded members that not every issue raised with a call centre constituted a ‘complaint’ as explained above.

5.4 Discussion on Stage 1 followed, it was recognised that call centres are generally good for dealing with enquiries, alterations and etc., but that operatives are not suitably trained to handle formal Charter complaints. Furthermore, calls are often not returned as requested/promised. **It was recommended that wholesalers and publishers give proper training to call centre operatives on the Charter and its Complaints Process.**

Retail representatives pointed out that there is frustration at not being able to communicate to supplying wholesale house with geographic and supply knowledge– but understand the necessity of call centres for general enquiries.

DS gave examples of the different types of calls that are fed in through the call centres and the volume of calls, acknowledging that it is difficult to get the balance right. For the more specialised issues and complaints there is further training required and this is being currently addressed so the operator can give an immediate accurate response rather than passing the issue back to wholesale house or a manager – therefore taking more ownership and resolving issues quicker.

NR questioned whether there is a need to record all received at Call Centres as had been requested by certain retail trade bodies. It has been reported that 44,000 calls per week go into the call centres of which between 3-4,000 are general trading complaints not necessarily related to the Charter.

DB reiterated that Stage 1 should be the ideal stage for getting complaints resolved and acknowledged that the call centres operatives require further training on the PDF/PDC and how to handle Stages 1 & 2 complaints. This should also assist in transparency in performance.

CR asked what training has been given to wholesale at the launch of the PDC.

RG stated that when he received his copy of the Charter in his tote box he had no idea what it was about – there was nothing to communicate that it comprised a set of minimum service Standards and Complaints Resolution. He then stated he contacted his call centre to discuss a couple of issues of the PDC and they were not aware of the Charter.

Any training programme needs to address two key elements:-

- I. Basic knowledge of the Charter and how to handle Stage 1 complaints with special emphasis on separating Charter complaints from general trading enquiries.
- II. To raise the profile and awareness of the Complaints Resolution of the Charter.

It was agreed that a one page flyer needed to be designed and distributed throughout the Industry to clearly demonstrate the process of the Charter dispute process; this should be for the benefit and awareness of retailers and call centre personnel alike.

The message needs to be simple and visual.

DS to organise his version of the one sheet flyer detailing what the PDC is, the 3 Stage Complaint Process, and detailing “What is a Complaint?”

DB stated that the retailers have a part to play when speaking to the call centres to assist the operator as to whether the complaint is a “serious or persistent” issue or just a one off.

- 5.5 Stage 2 - is where Fast Track Resolution commences, after Stage 1 has failed to resolve the issue. Stage 2 complaints are registered and recorded by the appropriate company (Smiths News, Menzies Distribution, Newspaper Publishers Association, Profession Publishers Association), and their company complaints procedure followed.

It was discussed and agreed that when the wholesaler gets a Stage 2 complaint that proves to be a PPA/NPA issue, the retailer should be formally written to and informed that the case has been passed across to the appropriate organisation for further investigation and response.

- 5.6 It was suggested that each wholesale head office prepare a set of guidelines to the Charter and its complaints process. Such publication to give wholesale staff a better understanding of what constitutes a formal complaint under the Charter and what needs to be done when such a complaint is identified.

- 5.7 NR suggested that the retail panellist needed to experience the “Nightly Miracle”, i.e. leaving editor’s office by 23:00 for the print centre, being distributed to wholesale by 04:00 and onward to 55,000 retailers by 06.00 – 07.00.

DB to organise the print centre at Broxbourne to coincide with a visit to Borhamewood, and a possible delivery run to retail to see the process from start to finish.

6. PDRP Constitution

NR briefly discussed draft constitution and requested any relevant feedback. The Charter was approved and formally adopted. A copy is appended to these minutes.

7. PDRP Database

- 7.1 NR circulated an internal JIG document for recording complaints and will email a copy of the document to members after the meeting. He asked if the report would be appropriate for monthly/quarterly reports and also for publishing on PDF website.

It was generally felt that the depth of information was overloaded and that the reporting should be more simplistic.

A PDRP Resolution Index which will be circulated and made available was discussed as a brief interpretation of the report in greater detail that will be published on the PDF website.

- 7.2 The draft PDRP Data Base Headings were circulated and this is seen as a dual purpose:-

- I. To monitor how well it is working.
- II. To provide regular reports on what is happening.

The proposed form for eventual Data Base is to be completed by the appropriate wholesale company at depot level, each newspaper publisher and the PPA.

The information is to be collected globally from each of the wholesalers, newspaper publishers or the PPA and fed to PDRP Admin monthly.

Discussion took place on which headings are appropriate to retain or delete. A copy of the agreed headings is attached to these minutes.

NR stated that the PDRP can only comment on matters relevant to the PDC Standards. However as it is the remit to report on trends if there is a complaint that is not encompassed within the Standards these may be recorded under trends and worth capturing.

DK to circulate amended draft PDRP Data Base Headings for feedback via post to PDRP, 67a South Street, Stanground Peterborough, PE2 8EX or email: admin@pdrp.co.uk .

7.3 For complaints covering November/December/January the following recordings of Stage 2 have been received:-

NPA (Mirror Group Only)	13 forms issued 13 forms returned 6 complaints found in favour
SN	5 forms requested 1 form downloaded from website 2 complaints Mirror has accepted and SN paid compensation on behalf of MG
MD	9 Forms Requested 3 complaints resolved

8. Dates of Next Meetings

Dates of Next Meetings:

19/05/11	14:00	Venue NPA
08/07/11	10:00	Venue PPA Offices

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 15:30pm with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

**MEETING – 24th February 2011
SUMMARY OF ACTIONS**

Item	Action	By Whom
5.4	Training to call centres on handling Stage 1 complaints	JD/DS/DB
5.4	One page flyer re raising awareness with brief pictorial of What is PDC/ What is a complaint and the step of the 3 Stages of complaint resolution process	DS
5.6	Wholesaler Guidelines to be published	SN/MD
5.7	Retail panellists to attend Nightly Miracle at print centre and wholesale house	DB/JD/DS
6.0	Feedback on draft constitution	ALL
7.1	Draft JIG document to be circulated to members as a suggestion of data recording	NR/DK
7.2	Draft Data base Headings to be circulated and discussed within organisations and returned via post/email to PDRP Admin	DK
8	Venue to be confirmed for 19.05.11	DK