

ASSOCIATED NEWSPAPERS LTD.

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From: The Editor-in-Chief

25th July 2008

Northcliffe House,
2 Perry Street,
Kensington,
London, W8 5TT

Mr Richard Thomas
Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

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For Richard,

Thank you for coming to Northcliffe House recently. It was good to see you and subsequently to watch (in admiration!) the way your body is changing the landscape of freedom and secrecy in this country. As promised, I'm now writing to you about the progress we're making over DPA.

You already know about the various undertakings at Associated Newspapers to ensure that our journalists understand and comply with the Data Protection Act, especially in regard to section 55, and, at our very useful meeting I promised you an update on the various other industry initiatives on the DPA.

At the last meeting of the Code Committee, which I chair, I made it clear that the Committee will examine the current provisions of the Code on Data Protection and the Guidance notes issued, as well as the wording in the Editors' Codebook, to see whether they can be strengthened or clarified. That work is in hand.

The Director of the NPA and the Newspaper Society has, of course already been talking to his members about the importance of compliance with the Act. Our more formal actions are as follows...

First of all, work is underway on an industry-wide education and information notice which will be made available to all journalists. We hope this can be completed quickly, as the plan is to launch it in the early autumn.

Daily Mail

The Mail
ON SUNDAY

Evening Standard

METRO

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The notice will be distributed digitally – with some hard copies available as requested – through the industry trade associations and the Society of Editors. It will contain a link to your website, and the other relevant sites (such as the Editors' Code Committee and the PCC).

We aim to keep it informative but simple so that it is as widely read as possible. At the time it is launched I, as Chairman of the Code Committee, plan to make a press statement drawing attention to it, and underlining again – as I did earlier this summer – the vital importance of the issues.

Second, we are planning during the autumn to carry out a cross-industry survey on data protection issues to gauge levels of awareness, information and education.

As I have pointed out before, individual publishers already do a huge amount to train journalists in this area and ensure procedures to deal with queries are in place. We aim to collate this information, both because it will be useful to know and also so that we can use it as a benchmark in the future.

We plan to conduct this survey among publishers – again through the trade associations – in the autumn, after the distribution of the information note. That way, we can also check that the note has been distributed, understood and read.

We will continue to keep section 55 high on the agenda and our Managing Editors will make details of our seminar programme, which I have explained to you, available to other Managing Editors on other newspapers and I'm grateful for your offer to nominate one of your people to give advice to such seminars.

I am determined that the industry will react positively to the compromise we all reached earlier in the year.



PAUL DACRE