

INITIATED INVESTIGATION REPORT

511 – Unity News Network

Relevant clauses of IMPRESS Standards Code

Clause 1: (Accuracy)

- 1.1. Publishers must take all reasonable steps to ensure accuracy**
- 1.3 Publishers must always distinguish clearly between statements of fact, conjecture, and opinion.**
- 1.4 Whilst free to be partisan, publishers must not misrepresent or distort the facts.**

Breach of Clauses 1.1, 1.3 and 1.4.

Before IMPRESS Regulatory Committee A

Andrea Wills, Claire De Than, Cordella Bart-Stewart, David Leigh, Paul Herbert, and Richard Ayre (Chair)

Approved by the IMPRESS Board

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The following summarises the outcome of an initiated investigation launched by IMPRESS on 9 May 2022.
- 1.2. A social media enquiry was made to IMPRESS from a concerned third party regarding a retweet, by former Southampton footballer Matt Le Tissier, of a post published by Unity News Network (“The Publisher”) via its official Twitter account on 5 April 2022 in relation to the Bucha massacre in Ukraine. IMPRESS does not actively monitor the social media content of its regulated publishers. However, considering the seriousness of the subject matter and the media attention surrounding Le Tissier’s retweet, the decision was made to undertake a wider examination of all the posts made from the Publisher’s official Twitter account between 1 March 2022 and 31 May 2022.
- 1.3. Through examination of these Tweets, the Executive determined that two key themes were prevalent in the subject matter of the Publisher’s social media output: reporting on the Covid-19 vaccine and the Ukraine-Russia conflict. The Executive proceeded to compile a selection of relevant Tweets and articles from the specified period for consideration. The Committee considered whether 13 Tweets and 2 articles were within IMPRESS’s regulatory remit.
- 1.4. The Committee was further tasked with deciding whether there is sufficient evidence to justify commencement of an investigation into the publisher on IMPRESS’ own initiative for potential breaches of the Code.
- 1.5. The Committee considered that 12 of the 15 published items fell within IMPRESS’s regulatory remit and should be investigated further.
- 1.6. The Publisher was informed of the Committee’s decision to proceed with the investigation and provided with questions in relation to the substantive matters raised by IMPRESS. The Publisher declined to respond to these questions and elected to give notice to end its Agreement with IMPRESS.
- 1.7. The reconvened Committee found that the Publisher breached clause 1 – Accuracy of the IMPRESS Standards Code in relation to 10 of the 12 items investigated. It further found that the Publisher had breached its obligations under its Agreement with IMPRESS.
- 1.8. The Committee agreed therefore that the proportionate remedy in this matter would be to end the Publisher’s regulatory scheme agreement with IMPRESS without notice.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1. The Publisher is Unity News Network Ltd, which publishes an online publication called Unity News Network, has been regulated since 9 April 2019, and describes itself as a 'News and Grassroots Information Centre' on their 'Our Ethics' page. No further information, such as financing or indication of ideological or political leanings, is provided on its website. However, the Publisher has frequently characterised itself as an 'alternative news platform to mainstream media'. The Publisher has a dedicated news website, <https://unitynewsnetwork.co.uk/>. It also has a significant social media following; it posts daily on Twitter via the official publication handle @UnityNewsNet and has 33.8K Twitter followers as of September 2022. While the Publisher occasionally posts news stories with links to articles, most of its Tweets appear to be formulated as short 'takes' on the latest news. Of the period examined, the Publisher Tweeted approximately 500 times.
- 2.2. IMPRESS was first alerted to the matter after receiving an email from a third-party journalist on 9 May 2022, seeking a media response from IMPRESS regarding Matt Le Tissier's retweet of the Publisher's post on the Bucha massacre in Ukraine.
- 2.3. Upon review of the subject matter raised by this enquiry, the IMPRESS Executive determined that the Tweet initially raised by the journalist may engage the Code, and therefore decided to review the Publisher's recent activity on Twitter in relation to the Ukraine-Russia conflict to see if there was any other material of a similar nature that may engage the Code. The Executive examined content published on both the Publisher's Twitter page and its website between 1 March 2022 and 31 May 2022, from which specific Tweets and articles were selected for assessment. It became apparent that the Publisher was also frequently reporting on the Covid-19 pandemic, with a particular focus on the Covid-19 vaccine and its effects. Therefore, IMPRESS decided to consider material relating to this matter as well.

3. Remit

- 3.1. IMPRESS has powers to investigate potential Code breaches whether in response to a complaint or not. This is set out in the introduction to and in paragraph 5.1 of the IMPRESS Regulatory Scheme:

IMPRESS may exercise its powers in response to complaints (including complaints that are withdrawn), or to information received via its whistleblowing hotline, or on its own initiative.

(5.1.) IMPRESS may investigate potential Code breaches or breaches of its internal governance requirements whether in response to a complaint or not. Publishers are required to cooperate with IMPRESS in any investigation, and to produce information and documents that IMPRESS considers necessary.

3.2. The extent of IMPRESS's remit is set out in paragraph 2.6 of the IMPRESS Regulatory Scheme:

(2.6) The effective date of such Agreement marks the commencement of IMPRESS's regulatory remit and the publisher's regulatory obligations. IMPRESS's regulatory remit in relation to a publisher extends to materials first published and acts occurring after its commencement.

3.3. All IMPRESS regulated publishers are contractually bound to follow the IMPRESS Regulatory Scheme by virtue of clause 1.1 of the Agreement they sign when they voluntarily subscribe to IMPRESS.

3.4. Publisher social media accounts, including those belonging to individuals acting in their capacity as employees for a regulated publisher, are within IMPRESS's remit for consideration as part of any investigation conducted under the authority of the Regulatory Scheme. The guidance on the Preamble to the IMPRESS Standards Code sets out:

The Code regulates news-gathering activities and news-related material published online and in print by IMPRESS publishers. This extends to audio-visual material, photographs, headlines, and user-generated content including comments on news stories.

4. Material subject to Investigation

Accuracy Clauses 1.1 and 1.4 - Covid-19 Vaccine Tweets

- 4.1. As part of its initial review, the Executive noted that over 40 of the Tweets examined during the period concerned the Covid 19 pandemic and the vaccine, many of which were critical and speculative, questioning the Government's actions during the pandemic, and questioning vaccine safety. As this is a matter of public safety and considering the prevalence of disinformation and misinformation that has hampered the public health response to the pandemic, the Executive considered it was prudent to review the Publisher's output on this subject. The Executive noted much of this material was within the bounds of journalistic speculation and inquiry, and in view of the publisher's right to freedom of expression, did not include much of this material in the scope of its investigation. However, of those 40+ Tweets, the Executive noted the following 8 Tweets referred to either an athlete or child who had allegedly 'died unexpectedly'. These Tweets were selected due to their similarities in terms of style and structure, as well as the unique public response described below. The preliminary assessment of the Committee was that these Tweets engaged Accuracy clauses 1.1 and 1.4.
- 4.2. ***BREAKING NEWS Aussie cricket LEGEND Shane Warne has died at the age of 52 of a suspected heart attack. (Tweet 1, Posted 4 March 2022)***
- 4.3. This Tweet had received 14 comments, 3 retweets and 46 likes as of July 2022. User comments with the highest engagement in direct response to this Tweet included "*What the vax does to you.*", "*Everyone awake yet?*", and "*If famous people are dying at a young age on a weekly basis, how many normie's are that we don't hear about? I've heard of three locally in the last two months.*"
- 4.4. The Executive noted that further contextual information regarding Shane Warne's health was made available following his death. It was reported in wider media, including The Daily Mail and ABC News, that he had a history of asthma and heart problems and had contracted Covid-19 twice in the 12 months prior to his death.
- 4.5. ***Commonwealth Games cyclist John Paul dies suddenly at aged 28. Tributes have flooded in and as yet no reasons for the passing have been given. (Tweet 2, Posted 10 March 2022)***

- 4.6. This Tweet had received 66 comments, 256 retweets and 27 likes as of July 2022. User comments with the highest engagement included “*Covid booster. When can they just come out with the truth!*” and “*They are going to need a big carpet to keep sweeping these obvious vaccine deaths under!*”. One user also attached a screenshot of a Daily Express article, published on 9 March 2022, titled ‘Pfizer vaccine side effects: new documents uncover a shocking 158,000 adverse events’.
- 4.7. ***A year seven boy died yesterday in Essex following a ‘medical emergency’. The boy, thought to be 11 or 12, was flown away in an air ambulance with paramedics but sadly died. An email sent to councillors suggested he could have suffered a heart attack. (Tweet 3, Posted 29 March 2022)***
- 4.8. This Tweet had received 5 comments, 21 retweets and 27 likes as of July 2022. A user comment with the highest engagement stated, “*Another child murdered yet they continue with the bioweapon injection. It disgusts me.*”
- 4.9. ***Pictures have been released of Ryan Heffernan, 12, who died on Monday at Shoeburyness High School. He was playing at lunch with friends and was said to have had a heart attack shortly after. (Tweet 4, Posted 31 March 2022)***
- 4.10. This Tweet had received 23 comments, 194 retweets and 255 likes as of July 2022. User comments with the highest engagement included “*Why are parents still insisting their children get the vax*”; and “*Never ever in all my life have I heard of children and so many young people suddenly dying from heart attacks, until these mRNA gene therapy jabs began being given*”.
- 4.11. ***ITALIAN swimmer Mariasofia Paparo has died following a heart attack just shy of her 28th birthday and only a month after getting engaged to be married. (Tweet 5, Posted 15 April 2022)***
- 4.12. This Tweet had received 315 comments, 1,137 retweets and 1,775 likes as of July 2022. User comments with the highest engagement included “*Another vaxx death*”, “*Heart attacks, blood clots etc etc are quite common among the young people nowadays, apparently.*” and “*If only was some connection between all these otherwise fit and healthy athletes dying suddenly from heart conditions*”.

- 4.13. ***Layth Maumoniati, suddenly died in his family home earlier this week. The 12-year-old was a Year Seven pupil at Allerton High School in King Lane. Staff and pupils have been left distraught as a result. Nothing further has been said about the cause of his untimely passing. (Tweet 6, Posted 30 April 2022)***
- 4.14. This Tweet had received 5 comments, 18 retweets and 15 likes as of July 2022. User comments with the highest engagement included “*Is he vaxed? This seems to [sic] happening a lot recently kids just falling over dying in my area I'm not into conspiracy but it's starting to add up that something is not right.*” and “*The jab. wake up.*”
- 4.15. ***A 13-year-old footballer has died. Samuel Akwasi collapsed on the pitch after suffering a Sudden Cardiac Arrest in Nottingham. This is the second such incident in less than a year after Dylan Rich, 17, died during an FA Youth Cup fixture in September with a cardiac arrest. (Tweet 7, Posted 9 May 2022)***
- 4.16. This Tweet had received 7 comments, 73 retweets and 63 likes as of July 2022. User comments with the highest engagement included “*It's not the vaccine. It's because of the climate change for sure.*” and “*We all know its from the covid vaccine! When with big pharma just admit it, and when will the [@US_FDA](#) admit their fuckup?*”
- 4.17. ***Former Carlisle & York City professional footballer Craig Farrell has died aged 39. He played for many other clubs and no cause of death has been indicated as yet. (Tweet 8, Posted 30 May 2022)***
- 4.18. This Tweet had received 12 comments, 103 retweets and 117 likes as of July 2022. A user comment with the highest engagement included “*Pfizer or Moderna?*”.

4.19. Following examination of the Tweets referred to above, the Executive judged that it was appropriate to review articles on the Publisher's website which were published (during the same specified period) on the same issues. The Executive only considered articles in relation to the reviewed subject matter. The Executive selected the relevant articles by scrolling through all categories on the Publisher's website during the period, including Crime, UK News, UK Politics, World, and Opinions. Two articles were selected for the Committee's consideration. Both related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Both articles are categorised under the 'Opinions' section on the Publisher's website. The preliminary assessment of the Committee was that these articles engaged Accuracy clauses 1.1, 1.3 and 1.4.

4.20. **Article 1: *Military Doctor Fired for Giving Informed Consent Briefing (31 March 2022)*** The first article, titled 'Military Doctor Fired for Giving Informed Consent Briefing', explains how a military doctor (Dr Chambers) was relieved of his duties because of an informed consent briefing he delivered to soldiers, before those soldiers were then offered the Covid-19 vaccine. This briefing resulted in a low uptake of the vaccine amongst the group of soldiers. The article describes the vaccine as 'an unlicensed experimental "mRNA Gene Therapy" in the article, before making the following statement:

The army had no problems at all with what was said. It was all accurate. They just didn't like the fact that nobody wanted the vaccine when they were told the truth about how safe it was (or wasn't in this case).

4.21. The article goes on to explain how Dr Chambers 'is an expert on vaccine injuries because he took the Covid vaccine himself and became 'injured with severe vertigo'.

4.22. The article then analyses 'The Defence Medical Epidemiology Database' data, which she considers to be an illustration of 'skyrocketing disease rates in military servicemen following covid-19 vaccination'. The article cites an article by the 'Rounding the Earth' newsletter to advance the argument that the medical database was 'manipulated to cover the safety signals'.

4.23. The article concludes the article with an 'Analysis' section and states the following:

It is a matter of national security to have a fit and healthy military, therefore it goes without saying that the health of troops is one of utmost priority and MUST NEVER be put at risk through folly of experimental medications/procedures.

This of course applies also to our first responders and indeed the world's population. We have never before witnessed a medical experiment of this scale, and released at such speed upon the world's population and with no apparent "stop button" ...Why?

Oh yes we were hit by a deadly pandemic – weren't we?

4.24. The Executive decided to undertake an internet search to determine which vaccine the article was referring to in the article, by an online search for related keywords and phrases from the article. The search brought back several results, including independent US news sources reporting on the same story, such as the Desert Review and Life Site News; these websites report that the military doctor suffered an adverse reaction after taking the Moderna vaccine. The Moderna vaccine has been approved and licensed by the relevant medical regulatory authority in the United States and in the United Kingdom.

4.25. The Executive investigated the assertion that the Defence Medical Epidemiology Database data indicated 'skyrocketing disease rates in military servicemen following covid-19 vaccination'. Following an internet search, the Executive noted that this claim had been previously found by fact-checkers, including Reuters, Full Fact and Health Feedback, to be inaccurate; these fact-checks took place one month before publication of this article.

4.26. **Article 2: We are moving to a Global Communitarian System unless we RESIST! (9 March 2022)** Another article analyses the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The article opens with the following statement:

No one can deny that during the past 2 years of the "alleged Covid-19 Pandemic" the British state unleashed extreme and unprecedented political power over its citizens, enforced by the police, all under the pretext of fighting "a deadly invisible enemy".

- 4.27. The article continues by describing ‘governments across the world acting in lockstep with shocking scenes’, citing how ‘Australia and New Zealand effectively locked people into what amounted to “covid concentration camps”’. The article then describes events in Canada, specifically referencing a ‘Freedom rally’ in which a Romanian woman spoke of ‘similarities’ between Romania ‘falling under communism’ and restrictions imposed in response to the pandemic.
- 4.28. The article concludes the piece with her take on the possibility of Britain ‘falling to Communism’, before claiming that ‘the British Government surrounded itself with behavioural scientists’ during the pandemic to ‘manipulate’ the population into taking what the article describes as ‘an experimental unlicensed mRNA gene therapy. The final ‘Analysis’ section presents a plea to readers not to ‘ignore the Great Reset’, asserting that ‘this is no conspiracy theory’.

Accuracy Clause 1.1 and 1.4 - Ukraine-Russia Conflict

- 4.29. The Publisher posted over 100 Tweets on the Ukraine-Russia conflict during the period examined, which relate to ‘MSM’ (Mainstream Media) reporting on events, NATO involvement, and alleged acts of aggression by Ukrainian authorities against its own citizens. The Executive noted much of this material was within the bounds of journalistic speculation and inquiry, and in view of the publisher’s right to freedom of expression, did not include much of this material in the scope of its investigation. The Executive selected five Tweets for consideration. The first is the Tweet in relation to the Bucha massacre in Ukraine, which IMPRESS had been alerted to by a third-party journalist. The other four Tweets selected all refer to the Publisher’s opinion about news reporting on the developing situation in the Ukraine conflict. The preliminary assessment of the Committee was that two of the five Tweets engaged Accuracy clauses 1.1 and 1.4.
- 4.30. ***The media lied about Weapons of Mass Destruction. The media lied about Covid. The media lied about the Hunter Biden laptop. But honestly they are telling the truth about Bucha! (Tweet 9, Posted 5 April 2022)***
- 4.31. This Tweet refers to the massacre of residents in Bucha, Ukraine by Russian forces in March 2022. The events were widely reported in the media through outlets such as the BBC and The New York Times. The Tweet had received 81 comments, 560 retweets and 1,227 likes as of July 2022.

- 4.32. A now deleted retweet by former Southampton footballer Matt Le Tissier (@mattletiss7) on 5 April 2022, in which he simply stated ‘this’ with a pointing emoji, received significant attention on Twitter. Le Tissier subsequently posted from his own account the following on 5 April 2022:

“Deleted previous tweet as people as usual missing the point, the point was about the media manipulation but you knew that really”.

- 4.33. Several commenters were critical of Le Tissier in response to this tweet:

“No we got the point. You are so conditioned to questioning/dismissing media that you refuse to believe anything presented via media - even if that results in questioning the clear reality of mass murder. You need to reflect on that.” (@LUFC_Arizona, 5 April 2022)

“Don't think that was the point. Your point was that you thought Bucha massacre had been faked. You've been radicalised Matt.” (@Hasselhoof75, 5 April 2022)

“The implication was perfectly clear though - “The media were lying about Bucha”. If you couldn't see that perhaps you should consider having someone moderate your tweets” (@dougsdone, 5 April 2022)

You are the one who has missed the point! Implying war crimes weren't happening or that the media is exaggerating is deeply offensive to all those who have been victims of incomprehensible suffering in Ukraine. Rather than defend your tweet, you should be apologising. (@BarneyMartez, 5 April 2022)

- 4.34. It was then widely reported on 6 April 2022 by outlets such as the BBC, The Times, and The Daily Mail that Le Tissier had ‘stepped aside’ from his ambassador role at Southampton, due to his Tweet dated 5 April 2022.

- 4.35. Following Le Tissier’s resignation from his Southampton position, the Publisher appeared to defend the position taken by Le Tissier and the original Tweet 9, posting the following Tweets on 6 April 2022:

“This is what happens when an outrage mob takes hold and is deliberately whipped up. Matt neither confirmed or denied anything he merely showed up the LIES & HYPOCRISY of the MSM and this is what they do! [#scummedia](#)”

“All Matt Le Tissier did was share our tweet that said the MSM has a history of lies and shouldn't be trusted As a result he is cancelled after paid state agents like Lineker & Baddiel joined the pile on We say Matt is entitled to his opinion #westandwithmatt Get it TRENDING!”

“Matt Le Tissier did NOTHING wrong! The MSM lie and twist everything to suit their wicked agenda. [#westandwithmatt](#) [video message attached]”

The Publisher also retweeted others in support of Matt Le Tissier, such as Laurence Fox (@LozzaFox), Maajid Nawaz (@MaajidNawaz) and Paul Joseph Watson (@PrisonPlanet). Each of these original tweets received thousands of likes, and hundreds of retweets and comments.

4.36. ***Talk Radio, GB News, Hartley Brewer, Mike Graham etc will NEVER report on the fact that Ukrainians are treating their fellow people in the most despicable way. You either call out ALL war crimes or none at all! [Video footage attached] (Tweet 10, Posted 23 March 2022)***

4.37. This Tweet contains a short 21-second video which shows two people, allegedly Ukrainians, being spoken to aggressively while tied to a tree. The Tweet has received 18 comments, 79 retweets and 104 likes as of July 2022.

5. Publisher Response

- 5.1. On 29 July 2022, the Publisher was informed of the investigation by IMPRESS and was invited to provide a substantive response as well as additional information required to undertake the IMPRESS investigation.
- 5.2. The Publisher indicated that it would not respond to the specific points raised in the investigation and issued notice of its resignation from the IMPRESS Regulatory Scheme on 29 July 2022.
- 5.3. The Publisher stated that, upon joining IMPRESS, it was assured of having full editorial independence and social media freedoms. The publisher argued that it did not sign up to be subjected to an IMPRESS-initiated investigation and therefore took exception to the notion of the investigation itself.
- 5.4. The Publisher considered that the matters raised by IMPRESS had a pre-determined outcome, which was to label Unity News Network as ‘anti-vaccine’ and a purveyor of ‘fake news’ and ‘Russian apologetics’. The

Publisher argued that it was asking questions in relation to subjects deemed 'taboo' by the 'media' and the Government.

- 5.5. The Publisher stated that Covid-19 vaccines have killed people and that there is evidence to suggest the Ukrainian Government has deliberately engaged in propaganda to evoke anger in the West.
- 5.6. The Publisher argued that the investigation may in fact improve its fortunes and secure its reputation amongst its following, while claiming that IMPRESS will no longer be regarded as an independent regulator but instead a 'fact-checker' and 'gatekeeper' for 'the establishment'.
- 5.7. The Publisher stated that it has grown a very loyal audience during the last four years of its existence but has faced massive social media censorship and lost a YouTube channel with 50,000 subscribers. The Publisher added that it has never participated in doorstepping, phone hacking, attacking private individuals, or doxing. The Publisher also stated that it has tried to be as fair as possible by providing the right of reply and adhering to the IMPRESS Standards Code.
- 5.8. The Publisher expressed concern about censorship, claiming that any opinion outside the 'permitted paradigm' would soon be forbidden, resulting in a chilling effect on a free but responsible press.
- 5.9. IMPRESS further contacted the Publisher via email on 29 July 2022 and then again on 16 August 2022, to seek a response to specific questions about the Publisher's compliance with the Accuracy clauses. It sought responses to questions including what steps the Publisher had taken to ensure accuracy, how it had distinguished fact from opinion, and how it ensured the information underpinning the expression of its opinions was accurate. The Publisher declined to respond to these questions and confirmed via a phone call on 23 August 2022 its decision to resign from the Regulatory Scheme. The Publisher agreed to send a statement to IMPRESS outlining its position in relation to the Investigation, which was received via email on 24 August 2022.

6. Compliance

- 6.1. The Publisher elected not to cooperate with IMPRESS in relation to the investigation, declining to provide information in response to IMPRESS's specific questions concerning the matter.

- 6.2. Via emails on 29 July 2022 and 13 August 2022 the publisher communicated its intention not to engage with the substantive matters of the Investigation in response to IMPRESS requests. The publisher subsequently confirmed this decision, first via a phone call made to them on 23 August 2022 and then via email on 24 August 2022.
- 6.3. IMPRESS considers that the information requested was necessary for it to conduct a full investigation, and to come to a fair, open, and proportionate determination, in exercise of its regulatory powers. Therefore, by failing to engage with IMPRESS and provide the necessary information, and electing to resign from the scheme rather than complete the investigation requirements, the Publisher did not comply with the following requirements of the IMPRESS Regulatory Scheme:

(5.1) IMPRESS may investigate potential Code breaches or breaches of its internal governance requirements whether in response to a complaint or not. Publishers are required to cooperate with IMPRESS in any investigation, and to produce information and documents that IMPRESS considers necessary.

(5.3) IMPRESS may require parties to produce any information or document that it considers necessary for the determination of the complaint.

7. Committee's Findings

- 7.1. On matters of remit, the Committee noted that 'IMPRESS may investigate potential Code breaches or breaches of its internal governance requirements whether in response to a complaint or not' (IMPRESS Regulatory Scheme 5.1).
- 7.2. The Committee determined that the Publisher had breached its Agreement with IMPRESS by refusing to comply with the investigation, in contravention of the requirements expected of IMPRESS-regulated publishers described under paragraph 5 of the IMPRESS Regulatory Scheme. All the determinations below, were based on the evidence available to the Executive and Committee at the time. The Committee noted that its determinations were limited by a lack of response and cooperation by the Publisher.

- 7.3. In relation to the Tweets concerning athletes or children who had allegedly ‘died unexpectedly’ (Tweets 1-8), the Committee noted that many commenters across all 8 Tweets appear to have concluded that the deaths were due to fatal reactions to a Covid-19 vaccine. The Committee determined that, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, the Publisher did not appear to take the requisite action in response to this commentary. The Committee noted that, once it had been made aware of the comments burgeoning in a thread under its direct control (and that a self-selecting echo chamber had emerged), the Publisher should have taken steps to address its cumulative impact. The Publisher did not, for example, provide clarification, such as further contextual information or details surrounding these deaths, or the vaccination status of the subjects. This enabled Twitter users to cast their own judgment without correction or clarification on the causes of death. Considering this, the Committee cited the relevance of guidance sub-clause 1.13 on Accuracy, which states that a publisher ‘may mislead through the omission of a crucial fact, or facts’. The publisher then went on to report on similar deaths in the same manner which generated the same response, indicating a systemic pattern of reporting activity. The Committee therefore found that the Publisher had breached the Accuracy clause in respect of the 8 Tweets, and that this was a systemic breach of its obligations under the Code.
- 7.4. Regarding Article 1, the Committee acknowledged that the article was clearly labelled as an opinion piece, and that the hypothetical ordinary, reasonable reader would be able to discern that the information contained therein was opinion (guidance sub-clause 1.23 on Accuracy). The Committee determined that the statement ‘It was all accurate’ in reference to the ‘full informed consent’ provided by Dr Chambers, as well as the description of Dr Chambers as an ‘expert’ on vaccine injuries following a personal experience, were statements that could be interpreted broadly and be based on anecdotal evidence. Erring on the side of the Publisher’s right to freedom of expression and in the absence of evidence to the contrary, the Committee felt unable to make a final determination on whether the statements were in breach of the Accuracy clause.
- 7.5. The Committee judged the Publisher’s characterisation of the vaccine as an ‘unlicensed experimental “mRNA Gene Therapy”’ and ‘a medical experiment’ to be clear statements of fact within the context of an opinion article. The Committee determined the hypothetical ordinary, reasonable reader would understand these statements to mean that the vaccine which was the subject of the article had not been approved by relevant medical

regulatory authorities and had not been subjected to rigorous clinical trials in accordance with established scientific methodology. The Guidance at 1.25 of the Code states publishers must 'ensure the information underpinning the expression of their opinions and their 'take' on a given story is accurate'. It had been evidenced by the Executive that the military doctor who was the subject of the story suffered an adverse reaction to the Moderna vaccine, which has been tested, approved, and licensed in various countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom, by the relevant medical regulatory authorities. Therefore, the use of terminology such as 'unlicensed', 'experimental' and 'an experiment' to describe the vaccine was deemed by the Committee a breach of clause 1.4.

- 7.6. The Committee further considered that the statement that the Defence Medical Epidemiology Database data indicated 'skyrocketing disease rates in military servicemen following covid-19 vaccination' purported to be a statement of fact. The Committee noted that fact-checkers such Reuters and Full Fact, had determined that this claim was inaccurate, and these sources published their findings one month before publication of this article. Further, the Committee judged that, having only cited the Rounding The Earth newsletter as evidence for the claim, the Publisher did not give sufficient consideration to the likely reliability of the source being used or make sufficient attempts to corroborate this factual claim against other sources (guidance sub-clause 1.12). Therefore, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, the Committee found that the Publisher had not taken reasonable steps to ensure accuracy; thereby it had breached clause 1.1.
- 7.7. Regarding Article 2, the Committee found that while the content may be viewed by some readers as highly partisan and controversial, the general tone and language of the article indicates that it was clearly an expression of opinion. However, the Committee found that reference to the Covid-19 vaccine as an 'experimental unlicensed mRNA gene therapy' was framed as a statement of fact. The Committee noted that, without evidence to the contrary, and akin to the previous article examined, the article was most likely referring to vaccines which have been approved by relevant medical regulatory authorities. Therefore, the Committee determined that this statement was a breach of clause 1.4.
- 7.8. The Committee considered the two Tweets regarding the Ukraine-Russia Conflict. The Committee determined that, despite the highly controversial nature of Tweet 9, the language and tone of the Tweet suggests it is an

expression of opinion rather than a clear statement of fact. Therefore, the Committee did not find a breach of clause 1.3.

- 7.9. Regarding Tweet 10, the Committee noted that the Publisher had stated in support of its position that various news outlets were failing to report on specific 'war crimes' in Ukraine. The Committee determined that, based on the tone and language of the Tweet, it was an expression of the Publisher's opinion. Therefore, the Committee did not find that there was a failure to clearly distinguish between fact and opinion (clause 1.3). The Committee further acknowledged that there is a lack of context and sufficient detail in the video itself, which the Publisher described in the text above it as Ukrainians 'treating their fellow people in the most despicable way'. Therefore, the Committee declined to make a further determination on the matter.

8. Sanctions and Remedies

- 8.1. In summary, the Committee concluded the investigation with the following findings:

Tweets 1-8 breached Accuracy clauses 1.1 and 1.4

Article 1 breached Accuracy clauses 1.1 and 1.4

Article 2 breached Accuracy clause 1.4

The Committee considered that the cumulative effect of all these individual breaches over a sustained period indicated a systemic breach of the IMPRESS Standards Code.

The Committee considered that Tweets 9 and 10 did not breach the Accuracy clause.

- 8.2. With reference to paragraph 6.4 of the IMPRESS Regulatory Scheme, the Committee judged that the Publisher did not take any steps to correct or mitigate the breaches which occurred. The Committee also noted that the Publisher did not cooperate with the investigation and failed to provide the Committee with the information it requested to complete its investigation and come to a full determination. The Publisher made clear that it did not intend to comply in the future. The Committee therefore determined that these were serious breaches by the Publisher of the IMPRESS Scheme

and Code requirements. The Committee further noted that the Publisher gave notice of its intention to resign from its Agreement rather than cooperate with IMPRESS.

- 8.3. The Committee considered that, due to the various and systemic breaches of the Code and the Scheme, a proportionate remedy in this instance would be to end Unity News Network's Agreement with IMPRESS without notice. The Publisher will no longer be a member of the IMPRESS Regulatory Scheme and is required to remove all references to its regulation by IMPRESS with immediate effect.

9. Publisher Further Reply

- 9.1. Upon receipt of the proposed adjudication, having previously declined to provide any substantive response to the investigation, the Publisher provided a statement in response to the proposed adjudication after the investigation had concluded. The Publisher disagreed with the findings of the Committee and set out general statements of belief without compelling evidence to support its position: it considers that there is evidence that suggests the Covid-19 vaccines are not safe or effective, that it is not under an obligation to moderate opinions expressed in Twitter replies and that it has the right to express contrary views and opinions, in particular on the war in Ukraine. Finally, it questioned the authority and objectivity of the investigation. The Committee reviewed this statement and did not consider that this reply materially affected their decision.