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## ABC Consumer Magazines Reporting Standards

This document details a change that has been agreed to the Reporting Standards for Consumer Magazines. You can view the updated ABC Reporting Standards on our [website](#).

### Have a suggestion or a query about a rule?

As an ABC member you can ask us to look at any aspect of the information we publish or the rules behind them. If you have any suggestions or comments please contact your ABC Account Manager, Charlotte Brown ([charlotte.brown@abc.org.uk](mailto:charlotte.brown@abc.org.uk)) or any member of the ABC team.

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## Excluded issues

### Clarification – ‘planned level of distribution’

The sudden imposition of a nationwide lockdown last Saturday and greater uncertainty over when this might end or what might follow, challenges the concept of what is the ‘planned level of distribution’ in the context of the rule relating to excluding issues from the average circulation.

Clearly if an issue has been printed and then restrictions outside of your control prevent it being distributed to outlets by a quantity greater than 10%, this will meet the requirement for exclusion.

However, due to the lead time required for print orders, publishers will have a deadline date, by which they must decide as to whether they will print copies for potentially affected outlets. At that point they may not know whether the distribution is likely to be curtailed or not (for example we don’t know whether the current lockdown will end on 2<sup>nd</sup> December or, as is rumoured, may be extended). This is a commercial decision, but is influenced by whether the issue could be excluded from the average ABC circulation.

We wish to avoid the situation where a publisher might feel forced to print the normal quantity of copies, suspecting that a significant portion might never be distributed, purely in order for the issue to qualify to be excluded from the average circulation figure.

Whilst this type of situation is expected to be rare, it has been agreed to add a clarification to the exclusion rule to address this, indicated by the shaded text below, followed by examples of its application.



trust in media

## ISSUES TO BE INCLUDED/EXCLUDED [extract]

### 2. Published issues that are allowed to be excluded according to this section may be removed from the average circulation

- a) There are certain circumstances under which you may exclude an issue from the reported circulation. The circumstances and information surrounding any exclusion are subject to audit.
- b) **ABC granted exclusion:** You may exclude an issue for which we have issued an exclusion note. You can apply for an ABC granted exclusion if:
  - i) Due to circumstances outside your control:
    - The distribution of an issue fails to achieve the planned level of distribution and that shortfall is greater than 10% of the planned distribution\*\*;
    - The planned level of distribution is achieved but is severely delayed or withdrawn prematurely from sale, resulting in a shortfall in the Actively Purchased sale\* and that shortfall is greater than 10% of the average of the previous four issues' actively purchased sales figures\*.

\* (print and Digital Edition combined)

\*\*If there is a potential event, about which you have advanced notice and that you reasonably consider has a strong possibility of curtailing the planned distribution of an issue by greater than 10%, then you may apply to exclude that issue, with an appropriate reduction in print quantity to account for that expected reduction in distribution. This is to avoid the commercial and environmental cost of printing copies that you do not consider will ever be distributed. Please submit the exclusion application in these circumstances ahead of your print order, in order that we can confirm if it's approved or not before you commit. You should be able to:

1. Demonstrate, with reference to previous issues, that the initial planned level of distribution declared is bona fide; and
2. Provide evidence of the potential event that threatens disruption to your distribution.

- ii) You submit your application to us using an ABC Exclusion Note Request Form.

If we do not issue an exclusion note we will issue a rejection notice detailing the reason for rejection

#### **Examples:**

***Example 1:** The current nationwide lockdown is declared as running to 2<sup>nd</sup> December. Say 20% of your circulation is free copies distributed to airports, and the airport supplier has refused to take any copies during the lockdown. Your next issue is planned to be distributed to airports on 6<sup>th</sup> December and you have to submit your print order by tomorrow. In this instance, cabinet ministers are not ruling out a lockdown extension beyond the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and there is much comment that it will be extended. This clarification means you could assess there is a strong possibility that airports will not be taking your next issue's copies on say 6<sup>th</sup> December, and you could therefore apply to ABC to exclude the issue on this basis, and remove those copies from your print run.*

*In this example, it maybe that airports do in the end open as normal on the 6<sup>th</sup>, but this clarification would allow you to make the commercial decision that is right for your business at the time of uncertainty.*

***Example 2 (outside COVID):** A strike is called at travel points, and while strike talks are ongoing, you may not know whether the strike is going to proceed. Using the same principle as detailed above, this clarification could allow you to potentially exclude the issue (if greater than 10% potentially affected) and avoid the possible waste of undistributed copies.*