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ABC National Newspapers Reporting Standards

A change has been agreed to the standards for ABC National Newspapers. The latest Reporting Standards incorporate this change and you can now view or download these from 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 ABC's Commercial Director, Jan Pitt (jan.pitt@abc.org.uk) or any member of the [ABC National Newspaper Reporting Standards Group](#).

Reporting Free Circulation - Summary

- Free copies can be claimed from the February 2020 Reporting Period (published in March 2020).
- Copies will be reported as 'Free Pick Up' alongside the existing paid circulation categories.
- Free copies will be broken out into regular (every issue) or sample, and whether they are reported as a net figure or capped according to the location/audience type.
- A further breakout by issue(s) and description will provide additional information on the nature of the free circulation.
- Overall free circulation in the Reporting Period will be capped at the higher of:
 - 25,000 copies (average per issue); or
 - 5% of the total average circulation
- There will be an additional audit cost associated with claiming free copies. Fourteen days advance notice of free distributions to ABC is required to enable appropriate review and testing arrangements to be made.

The wording of the sections added to the National Newspaper Standards are reproduced below.

trust in media

FREE PICK UP COPIES (REGULAR)

DEFINITION

Copies distributed on a regular and consistent basis to known distribution points for pick up or receipt by consumers.

PRINCIPLES

1. Prior notification of distribution details and any changes to ABC
2. Distribution follows a regular and consistent pattern to known distribution points
3. Copies are made available at the known distribution points for pick up or receipt by consumers
4. Quantity claimed should not exceed potential demand by the intended consumers
5. Effective management controls over distribution

REQUIREMENTS

1. Prior notification of distribution details and any changes to ABC
 - a) You must obtain ABC's agreement that your distribution system is capable of being compliant and verifiable to ABC standards before the distribution of the first issue for which you intend to claim pick up copies, including providing the following information with at least 14 days' notice in advance of the planned distribution:
 - i) Details of how, when and where the copies will be distributed
 - ii) A list of all distribution points.
 - b) After initial approval of the distribution system, you must, on an on-going basis, notify ABC of any changes to the method of distribution or details on the master list of distribution points (such as changes in distribution quantities, distribution dates, new or ceased distribution points) as and when they occur.
2. Distribution follows a regular and consistent pattern to known distribution points
 - a) A distribution point is defined as an agreed location at which copies are handed to or left for pick up by the consumer. Note:
 - i) You must be able to provide the auditor with access to distribution points for verification purposes.
 - ii) A distribution point is defined at the micro level. *For example: a single dispensing bin or single hand merchandiser as opposed to say a group of dispensing bins at a particular location.*
 - iii) Only distribution points in the UK or Republic of Ireland can be claimed.

- iv) The distribution points claimed must be consistent with the description or analysis reported.
- b) Gross distribution (i.e. supply) quantities must be broadly the same and to the same Distribution Points for all issues (except for permitted variations detailed in (c) below).
- c) The permitted temporary* variations in gross distribution (i.e. supply) quantities for an issue are as follows:

When compared to the previous ABC Reporting Period’s total average gross Free Pick Up distribution, an issue may be varied:

- For all titles:
 - i) By up to 25%, without any stipulation or notification requirements.
 - ii) By greater than 25%, on an ad hoc basis as long as it is due to exceptional circumstances (*for example due to tube strikes, severe weather*) and ABC is notified within one month of the issue or before the claim is submitted to ABC (whichever is the sooner).
 - iii) By greater than 25% on a planned and regular basis to account for seasonal variations in the audience (*for example a two week reduction in gross pick up copy distribution due to a holiday period*). In this instance the publisher must notify ABC and obtain our agreement in advance, and include details of the seasonal change within the description on the affected Certificate.
- Only for publications published more frequently than weekly (e.g. daily):
 - i) The gross distribution (i.e. supply quantity) may be varied without limit between different publication days/issues. *For example: Mondays 10,000 copies, Tuesdays no copies, Wednesdays 5,000 copies etc.*
 - ii) If applying the permitted variation under points i) to iii) above you must compare the gross distribution for a Monday issue compared against the previous ABC reporting Period’s total average Monday gross pick up distribution, same for Tuesdays, Wednesdays etc.

*If a change in distribution is permanent (i.e. will continue at that level for the foreseeable future) then these limits do not apply.

For example: Daily title with different distributions on different days

	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tues</i>	<i>Weds</i>	<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Fri</i>
<i>Free Pick Up Circulation Qty</i>	<i>10,000</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>5,000</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>20,000</i>
<i>Dist’n points</i>	<i>City Centre</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>City Centre</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>City and Suburbs</i>

In this case, with the exception of ad hoc or seasonal variations:

10,000 for Mondays must be within 25% of total average free pick up for Mondays for previous ABC reporting period.

5,000 for Wednesdays must be within 25% of total average free pick up for Wednesdays on previous ABC reporting period.

20,000 for Fridays must be within 25% of total average free pick up for Fridays on previous ABC reporting period.

3. Copies are made available at the known distribution points for pick up or receipt by consumers
 - a) You must be able to provide evidence, from the third party responsible, of the number of copies of the publication made available for pick up or receipt at each distribution point by consumers. Note:
 - i) Where the copies are made available for pick up or receipt at distribution points by drivers/distributors that are not 3rd party to the publisher (such as in-house distributors or from a joint venture), it may be possible to include these in the claim as long as:
 - It can be demonstrated that the drivers/distributors have sufficient independence and are specifically contracted to deliver/distribute the publication.
 - The auditor/ABC has full and unrestricted access to the relevant parties' documentation and financial records.
 - ABC has specifically agreed this distribution method.
 - b) Where your ABC pick up claim is for the net number of copies picked up or received by consumers at a distribution point, you must be able to provide evidence of the number of copies returned/not picked up at each relevant distribution point.
 - c) For publications other than dailies or Sundays, all copies must be delivered and made available within 24 hours of the majority of the rest of the distribution
 - d) You cannot claim distribution of back issues.
4. Quantity claimed should not exceed potential demand by the intended consumers
 - a) Your ABC pick up claim must be reported as a minimum as follows:
 - i) Daily and Sunday publications (except copies distributed airside and on trains): must be reported on a net basis (i.e. those made available less copies not picked up by consumers);
 - ii) Publications other than dailies or Sundays, and copies distributed airside and on trains: must be reported on a capped basis. (A capped basis means the number of copies claimed will be limited to designated caps at a particular location – see Caps by Supply Type section for details).
5. Effective management controls over distribution
 - a) The publisher is responsible for ensuring that the copies they claim have been delivered and if applicable returns/copies not picked up are accounted for. This requires a publisher to have appropriate management controls and processes in place to ensure that this is happening.

REPORTING

You will report pick up copies as follows, which will be broken out on the ABC Certificate:

1. By geographical type:
 - a) United Kingdom
 - b) Scotland – as a subset of UK
 - c) England, Wales & N. Ireland – as a subset of UK
 - d) Republic of Ireland (ROI)
2. By total average pick-up copies per issue for the period, analysed as ‘Regular’ and broken into:
 - a) Net distribution
 - b) Capped distribution
3. By issue/type, including for each:
 - a) Description of distribution location/type and issue(s). Additional detail, such as number of distribution points, can be added as required.
 - b) Quantity

Note: Overall free circulation (regular and sample combined) in the Reporting Period cannot exceed the higher of:

- 25,000 copies (average per issue); or
- 5% of the total average circulation

FREE PICK UP COPIES (SAMPLE)

DEFINITION

Free copies distributed, on an irregular basis, using an existing ABC Free Distribution method.

PRINCIPLES

1. Distribution uses an existing ABC Free Distribution category, without the need for a regular and consistent basis.
2. Prior notification of distribution details to ABC
3. Distribution must be of an existing edition claimed on the certificate

REQUIREMENTS

1. Distribution uses an existing ABC Free Distribution category, without the need for a regular and consistent basis.
 - a) The requirements of the relevant National Newspaper Free Distribution category apply, with the exception that distribution may be of a single issue.
 - i) The Free Distribution categories eligible for reporting as Sample Free Distribution are:
 - o Free Pick Up
 - b) Requirements relating to distribution across issues being on a regular and consistent basis and changes from previous certificates are ignored.
2. Prior notification of distribution details to ABC
 - a) You must obtain ABC's agreement in advance of the distribution, having provided full details of timings, delivery locations etc with at least 14 days' notice in advance of the planned distribution. This is to enable audit work to be conducted at the appropriate time, including real time testing where appropriate.
 - b) You must be able to provide the auditor with access to distribution points for verification purposes.
3. Distribution must be of an existing edition claimed on the certificate
 - a) The copies must be broadly similar to an existing edition being claimed on the certificate. Therefore a certificate cannot comprise copies claimed in the Sample Free Distribution category alone.

REPORTING

You will report sample free copies as follows, which will be broken out on the ABC Certificate:

1. By geographical type:
 - a) United Kingdom
 - b) Scotland – as a subset of UK
 - c) England, Wales & N. Ireland – as a subset of UK
 - d) Republic of Ireland (ROI)
2. By total average pick-up copies per issue for the period, analysed as 'Regular' and broken into:
 - a) Net distribution
 - b) Capped distribution

3. By issue/type, including for each:
- a) Description of distribution location/type and issue(s)
 - b) Quantity (total not average)

Note: Overall free circulation (regular and sample combined) in the Reporting Period cannot exceed the higher of:

- 25,000 copies (average per issue); or
- 5% of the total average circulation

[Shading denotes new text to Reported Data section]:

REPORTED DATA [extract]

1. Total Average Circulation

- a) You must report the total Average Circulation per issue.
 - i) Copies claimed in the following categories will be included in the total Average Circulation figure, broken down by geographical area:

Paid Single Copies, including:

- Retail Sales (Sale or Return)
- Single Copy Sales
- Firm Sale

Paid Subscriptions, including:

- Single Copy Subscription Sales
- Voucher Subscription Sales
- Corporate Subscription Sales

Paid Multiple Copies

Free Copies

The geographical areas are:

- United Kingdom
- Scotland - as a subset of UK
- England, Wales & N. Ireland – as a subset of UK
- Republic of Ireland (ROI)