

TEENAGE MAGAZINE ARBITRATION PANEL

ANNUAL REPORT

1998-1999

TMAP ANNUAL REPORT

Foreword

Twenty-nine complaints about the December 98 issue of one magazine (received some 6 months after its publication) provided the material for TMAP's only formal meeting of the year. These complaints bore the hallmarks of a co-ordinated campaign and almost half were non-specific in their comments. The editor's response (appended) preceded TMAP's adjudication.

The TMAP panel gave careful consideration to all elements of the complaints individually, but found no breach of the agreed guidelines.

Teenage pregnancy continued to grab the headlines, with the relentless presentation of young mothers and their offspring as intractable problems for British society. The unexpected (though warmly welcomed) Downing Street pregnancy may perhaps underline that even for intelligent, mature, motivated high-flyers, fertility control can be problematic. How much more so for teenagers, when access to both accurate information and user-friendly sexual health services (especially for young men) is patchy across the UK. The self-confidence necessary to make best use of services may elude young people from unsupportive family situations including, most importantly, those who have been in care.

Other consequences of teenage sexual activity such as the incidence of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), however, did begin to hit the media, with the existence of chlamydia and its catastrophic and preventable effects on female fertility becoming more widely understood. Some teen magazines have carried features on the subject. Recent surveys have shown that young people feel they need more information on STDs - increasing rates of STDs in the teen years emphasise the accuracy of their assessment.

The eagerly-awaited Sexual Health Strategy has yet to emerge from the Department of Health (DoH). Agony aunts (and uncles) were among those included in the DoH's earlier discussion groups which fed into the extensive consultation exercise. The half million or so letters a year that teen magazines get from their readers give them an unrivalled insight into teenagers' own concerns and expressed needs. The Government, committed to user input into services, clearly understands the unique position of teenage magazines, well trusted by their readers.

The sexual health, and the separate HIV/AIDS, strategy will give direction and impetus and (hopefully resources) to services for young people which are known to be cost-effective. TMAP and their editors will be looking to identify the continuing role for teenage magazines.

Surveys continue to reveal the inadequacy of sex education in UK schools. Meantime every day young people embark on their first romance often ill-prepared for their first forays in the adult sexual world with inaccurate or ill-understood information. Teen magazines currently provide for some young people an unreplicated source of sex and health information in a language and format they find acceptable. For those

fortunate enough to be in enlightened schools with effective sex education programmes and with parents who can talk about the pleasures and responsibilities of sex, magazines will have marginal influence. For the less fortunate, they may still be a significant information resource.

The magazine editors and publishers in this sector, represented in TMAP, are committed to supporting teenagers' right to information and to supporting responsible press through effective self-regulation. Every year, a new generation of teenagers becomes sexually mature. For the magazines serving this sector, each year some readers graduate on and new readers are gained. Time does not stand still for teenagers or publishers, who aim to operate ethically in this high-profile market, while serving the real information needs of their readers. TMAP aims to continue to support this endeavour constructively.

Over the last year, the publishers of teen and young women's titles have reiterated their commitment to offer free space to the Government's Teenage Pregnancy Unit (TPU) in magazines, for messages aimed at curbing Britain's high rate of teenage pregnancy. Publishers hope to continue working with the TPU and the Brook Advisory Centres in the coming year to launch an effective ad campaign to encourage young girls to seek help and advice about sex and relationships.

There have been changes in TMAP at the end of the year with Nigel Fleming, QC, resigning through pressures of work and Prof Aidan Macfarlane, retiring. Both have contributed much to the establishment to TMAP's role and as Chairman I have appreciated their wise advice. Job changes have resulted in changes in the publishers' and Clare James, replacing Kevin Whitchurch, has joined the Panel. I would like to thank Kevin for his valuable contributions to the Panel, and wish him all the best in his new role at Haymarket publishing.

Over the last year, I have realised that TMAP does need regular meetings of the panel to fulfil our monitoring role as well as adjudicating on complaints. So the new panel will meet quarterly. The panel has been ably supported by Safo Kordestani of the PPA over this period and the panel wishes to express our thanks for all her work.

Dr Fleur Fisher

Introduction

The Teenage Magazine Arbitration Panel (TMAP) was created in November 1996 for the main purpose of monitoring the sexual content of teenage magazines, ensuring that all sexual information in such magazines remains accurate and appropriate for the target readership, and in accordance with the TMAP guidelines. The guidelines are the publishing industry's own standards, produced in co-operation with magazine publishers, editors and retailers, and approved by the Home Office. They are administered by a Panel of health professionals and publishers who meet to adjudicate on complaints and to decide whether there has been a breach of the guidelines. Magazines falling within the remit of TMAP are all those where 25 per cent or more of the readership are girls aged under 15 years.

The Panel

The Panel currently consists of five representatives from the fields of child development, public health, law and publishing and is chaired by Dr. Fleur Fisher. Dr. Aiden MacFarlane, recently retired from the Oxfordshire Health Authority, has stepped down from the Panel. The Panel thanks him for his contribution and unique perspective on child psychology. TMAP is seeking an appropriate replacement.

Dr. Fleur Fisher

Until recently Head of the British Medical Association's Ethics, Science and Information Division, she is now chairman of the BMA Foundation for Aids and vice-chairman of the International HIV/AIDS Alliance. She was president of the Medical Women's Federation from 1996 to 1997.

Before joining the staff of the BMA in 1991, she was a member of the BMA Council, served on the Committee for Public Health and Community Health Doctors, and was the public health representative on the BMA Committee for General Practice (GMSC). She also spent six years in NHS management.

She spent fifteen years in family planning developing community services and educational programmes for doctors, nurses, teachers, and social workers. She has worked on sex education programmes for Piccadilly Radio and Granada TV, including the award winning radio series "My Generation".

Dr. Diana Ermaelsteen

Dr. Diana Ermaelsteen CBE is a paediatrician. From 1983 to 1995 she was senior medical officer to the Department of Health and senior medical adviser to the Department of Education and Her Majesty's Inspectorate (OFSTED). She has been consultant medical adviser to the Department for Education and Employment since 1995. She is honorary senior consultant paediatrician to the Tavistock Clinic and chairman of the National Association for the Education of Sick Children.

Nigel Pleming QC

Nigel Pleming became a QC in 1992 and was deputy chairman of the Mental Health Act Commission from 1994-1996. He was called to the Bar in the Inner Temple in 1971 and was also a lecturer at Kingston Polytechnic from 1969-1973. He has been

in practice since 1974 and his practice has included a great deal of public policy work as Junior Counsel to the Crown (Common Law) 1987-1992.

Sarah Fisher

Sarah Fisher has been publisher of IPC's young women's brands *Mizz* and *19* since November 1996 and has responsibility for the brand positioning and development, and the marketing of the two titles.

Clare James

Clare James is publisher of *Sugar* at Attic Futura.

Marie O'Riordan

Marie O'Riordan, former editor of *Elle*, is group publishing director of youth titles at EMAP Elan which publishes *Bliss* and *J17*.

The Panel is administered by PPA through the TMAP secretariat.

Enquiries

Enquiries have far out-numbered complaints, with over 50 requests for the TMAP guidelines, research report and position paper from students and teachers.

Monitoring

As of January 2000, the Dr. Fisher and Dr. Erenalsteen will be logging and monitoring targeted sections of teenage magazines using a 'grid' log which will be available to be viewed by the public. The purpose of open monitoring is to ensure an accurate record is kept of the nature of sexual content in specific areas such as problem pages, 'real life' articles and general features.

Complaints

TMAP received 29 complaints during the year, which were considered during the Panel's meeting on 14 October. The complaints fell into a familiar pattern of an organised campaign. All letters centred on the December 1998 issue of Bliss, with most complaining about the same articles, in similar terminology.

Fourteen of the complaints were of a general nature, not citing particular articles or sections of the magazine that the complainants felt had breached the guidelines.

The Panel's decisions on the remaining 15 specific complaints were as follows:

The Panel supported the publisher's view that the article, on male puberty, was acceptable. The article was reproduced from a Family Planning Association booklet, and was clearly credited as such.

"Celebs confess"

The Panel did not feel that this article contravened the TMAP guidelines. The celebrities who were asked about their first sexual experience broadly supported the stance that sex is only advisable within the context of a stable relationship. Contraception was mentioned, and on the whole the article was a positive piece with well-known figures being open, honest and humorous about their experiences.

"Lewd quizzes"

The Panel accepted the publisher's view that the words included in the quiz were ones commonly used in the playground, and found in the dictionary. None of the words described in the article were obscene or inappropriate, and the heading "*Lewd quizzes*" served only as a means of attracting readers' attention to the article.

"Scott reveals all"

The Panel agreed that this article was a normal 'pop' interview, and that there had been no contravention of the guidelines. The views of the interviewee were in no way irresponsible, and the article revealed the common attitude of a sexually active young man.

"Help, he wants oral sex"

The Panel could find no technical breach of the guidelines. The article addressed an issue relevant to many teenage girls, and the agony aunt had responded appropriately. However, the Panel did recommend that where a reader's letter is developed into an article, the reader's own personal problem should be dealt with in sufficient detail by the agony aunt.

Conclusion

Despite one incident of a co-ordinated campaign, the number of complaints against teenage magazines has remained low. In light of this, the Panel has agreed to meet four times a year regardless of whether there are specific complaints to adjudicate. This is to maintain the continuity of TMAP and to help ensure that complaints are adjudicated as quickly as possible.

ANNEX 1

Contact details

The secretariat

Safo Kordestani Legal and Public Affairs PPA

The Teenage Magazine Arbitration Panel (TMAP)
Periodical Publishers Association (PPA)
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London
WC2B 6JR

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ANNEX 2

TABLE 1

Youth TGI Figures 1999

TITLE	PUBLISHER	% FEMALE READERSHIP AGED UNDER 15	AVERAGE AGE OF F
Shout	DC Thomson	67.9	11.2
Smash Hits	EMAP Metro	63.00	10.5
Bliss	EMAP Elan	50.6	14.52
J17	EMAP Elan	46.8	14.79
Mizz	IPC Magazines	69.2	12.5
Sugar	Attic Futura	49.6	14.3
Top of the Pops	BBC Worldwide	61.10	10.9

Source: TGI Services, Youth TGI 1999

ANNEX 3

Guidelines For Coverage Of Sexual Subject Matter in Teenage Magazines

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Guidelines are the outcome of discussions between publishers of teenage magazines (represented through the Periodical Publishers Association [PPA]), retailers of teenage magazines (represented by, among others, the British Retail Consortium [BRC], National Federation of Retail Newsagents [NFRN], the Multiple Newsagents Association [MNA]) and magazine editors (represented by the British Society of Magazine Editors [BSME]).

1.2 The Guidelines cover the editorial content of teenage magazines. The final arbiter of the meaning and interpretation of the Guidelines is the Teenage Magazine Arbitration Panel (TMAP), to whom any complaints relating to alleged infractions of the Guidelines should be addressed.

1.3 There is a separate code of practice relating to advertisements, which is produced by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), which is the final arbiter in the meaning of the code of practice. The ASA deals with complaints about advertisement content.

SCOPE

2.1 The Guidelines apply to magazines published more than once a year when it is apparent that young women aged under 15 comprise 25% or more of the total readership.

2.2 A list of such titles will be drawn up on the basis of the latest available figures over a 12 month period, using the reports of the Youth Target Group Index survey (Youth TGI) or other figures or bases accepted by the TMAP.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES

3.1 Readers will always be encouraged to take a responsible attitude to sex and contraception, and where relevant to seek advice from General Practitioners and other professionals.

3.2 If sex is being discussed, then safer sex will be highlighted and encouraged wherever relevant.

3.3 Where under-age sex or sexual abuse is discussed it will be clearly stated as illegal. Under-age sex will be discouraged and the age of consent clearly stated.

3.4 Editorial advice will be given in good faith, with relevant professional organisations contacted for guidelines and named within the editorial if appropriate.

3.5 Readers will be encouraged to seek support from parents, guardians or other responsible adults wherever relevant. The emotional consequences of sexual activity will be highlighted where relevant.

3.6 The editorial content of the magazines will reflect the typical concerns of the magazine's readership, with advice given to provide readers with relevant and responsible answers to their concerns.

3.7 It is recognised that magazines have an important role to play in the field of sex education for, and emotional development of, teenagers.

IMPLEMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 Publishers of teenage magazines containing subject matter on sexual issues are responsible for ensuring that editorial policies for their magazines fall within the Guidelines.
- 4.2 Editorial policies with regard to the publication of subject matter on sexual issues will be formally recorded by the publishers. All editorial staff employed to work on such subject matter will be instructed on the magazine's editorial policy and informed of any changes to that policy if relevant.
- 4.3 Editorial instruction will incorporate clear examples of appropriate and inappropriate editorial treatment of subject matter on sexual issues.
- 4.4 Each magazine will appoint an independent consultant of good standing to advise the editor on an ongoing basis with regard to sexual, emotional and moral issues.
- 4.5 An annual audit will be conducted by the Teenage Magazines Arbitration Panel to ensure published material (those titles listed as a result of 2.2 plus any other titles apparently aimed at the defined readership) falls within the Guidelines.
- 4.6 All teenage magazines containing problem pages will ensure that published letters are based on genuine letters received by those magazines.
- 4.7 All published responses to letters on problem pages will be provided by relevant, professionally qualified advisors. Relevant qualifications will be approved by the Teenage Magazines Arbitration Panel.

RETAIL DISPLAY

- 5.1 Publishers will advise distributors and retailers of the appropriate display category of their magazines.
- 5.2 Distributors and retailers should ensure that displays of magazines reflect the perceived age of purchasers, as communicated by publishers.

ANNEX 4

HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT ABOUT THE COVERAGE OF SEX RELATED ISSUES IN TEENAGE MAGAZINES

Teenage magazines play a valuable role in educating teenagers about life. In particular they are used as a source of information about sexual and other emotional issues. To ensure that teenage magazines continue to take great care in providing accurate and informative advice on sexual matters, the industry including publishers, retailers and editors, have produced a set of Guidelines on how sex related material should be treated.

The Guidelines cover magazines where young women aged under 15 years make up 25 per cent or more of the total magazine readership.

If you are unhappy with an article in a teenage magazine, you can make a complaint in the following way:

- If you are unhappy with something in the magazine, you should firstly write to the editor of the magazine as it is important for them to know about your concerns .
- If you are not completely satisfied with the response from the editor, you can write to the Teenage Magazine Arbitration Panel (TMAP). This panel is made up of experts from the field of law, public health and child health care and development and also the magazine publishers themselves. It is administered by the Periodical Publishers Association (PPA), the industry organisation for magazines in the UK.
- All complaints will be carefully considered. If a complaint is clearly not in breach of the Guidelines your letter will be responded to immediately. All other complaints will be considered at TMAP meetings, held quarterly. They will write to let you know when the next meeting is to be held and that they will respond to your complaint at this time.
- If the magazine is considered to be in breach of the Guidelines, TMAP will write to the editor of the relevant magazine to inform them of the breach. A copy of this letter will be sent to you.
- If the magazine is considered to be in breach of the Guidelines, it will be highlighted in TMAP's annual report which will be made available to the Home Office, the publishing industry and other interested parties. You will also be able to obtain a copy.
- There is a separate code for advertising which is supervised and administered by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). The ASA will make the final decisions on any complaints about advertising within teenage magazines.

Examples of teenage magazines regulated by the Guidelines include:

<i>Bliss</i> (EMAP Elan)	<i>Live & Kicking</i> (BBC Magazines)	
<i>Just Seventeen</i> (EMAP Elan)	<i>Smash Hits</i> (EMAP Metro)	
<i>Sugar</i> (Attic Futura)	<i>Mizz</i> (IPC Magazines)	<i>TV Hits</i> (Attic Futura)
<i>Shout</i> (DC Thomson)		

To contact the TMAP and for a copy of the Guidelines or Annual Report please write to:

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TMAP is a self regulating body whose remit is to ensure that the Guidelines are adhered to. Breaches are

highlighted in a formal way ensuring that mistakes are unlikely to happen again.