



EDITORIAL POLICY & CODE OF CONDUCT

Summary

The Lit project was established to combat fake news, promote freedom of speech and expression, reduce rates of political radicalisation and promote tolerance in the UK. With this in mind, our editorial policy and code of conduct embody these aims. While these guidelines must be adhered to, we encourage all Lit staff and freelancers working for the project to promote the spirit as well as the letter of the guidelines. Fairness, transparency, accuracy and tolerance are central to the Lit project.

1. PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Attribution

- **Anonymous Quotes**

Anonymous quotations should be used sparingly, if at all, and must not be used in the case of pejoratives as this denies the subject the right of reply.

- **Anonymous Contributions: comment articles**

Lit does not publish comment pieces anonymously, unless the life or security of the author is threatened.

- **Anonymous Contributions: explainer articles**

Lit's explainer articles are the subject of collaborative work across entire teams and do not feature a byline for this reason. Lit explainer articles must, if possible, be vetted by an expert in the relevant field prior to publication.

Credits

Lit staff and freelancers must not reproduce other people's material without attribution. Where applicable, all contributors to Lit content will be clearly labelled.

Lit's ethos is concerned with promoting freedom of information and speech. For this reason our content aims to reference work on external sites to encourage end users to read other sources of information (on our site, we refer to this policy as "don't take our word for it"). For this reason we regularly reference the works of other companies and writers. All references to external material must be clearly labelled and attributed.

Bribery and facilitation payments

Lit notes the provisions of The Bribery Act 2010, which creates a number of criminal offences, which

even if committed abroad can be prosecuted in the UK. These include:

- (i) bribery – including offering someone in the UK or abroad a financial or other advantage to improperly perform an activity (whether public or private),
- (ii) being bribed and
- (iii) bribing a foreign public official. In some circumstances, offers or acceptances of hospitality and / or facilitation payments paid to public officials abroad in order to secure or expedite the performance of a routine or necessary action will come within the Act. There is no public interest defence, although where an individual is left with no alternative but to make a facilitation payment in order to protect against loss of life, limb or liberty there may be a defence of duress.

Children

At Lit we do not hire workers who are under the age of 18. Our content must be mindful of the age of some viewers, who maybe under the age of 18, so offensive language and adult topics are avoided in our content when possible. If any member of Lit staff is required to work with any young person under the age of 16 they must be accompanied by a caregiver or other adult, and this must be discussed with the board of directors in advance to ensure safeguarding. When applicable staff must be subject to DBS checks.

Commissioning

At Lit we believe in fairness and individual empowerment. With this in mind we pay our freelancers in a timely manner and treat them with respect. We also aim to ensure all freelancers have relevant insurance cover, when applicable, and support all staff if they wish to unionise.

Copy approval

We do not give the right of copy approval to interviewees.

Copyright

Journalists must not use content from non-authorized third-party sources - whether pictures, text or other media - without obtaining the necessary permissions. All third party sources of information must be clearly marked. Our educational videos will employ the use of UK government session footage under fair use, while clearly signposted, in-line with UK government guidelines.

Direct quotations

Must not be amended to change or distort their context or meaning.

Errors

It is Lit policy to correct significant errors as soon as possible and, when necessary, issue a correction and/or apology.

Grief

People should be treated with sensitivity during periods of grief and trauma. (See also IPSO Editors' Code Section 4)

Legal

We encourage the Lit team and freelancers who work for the project to be familiar with libel law.

As a not-for-profit, legal advice is available to our team via our acceptance onto the competitive Thompson Reuters scheme. This means pro bono legal advice is available for our core team and in rare circumstances freelancers working for us, but there may be a lag-time of several weeks between lodging a query and sourcing a lawyer who is available and qualified to help. For this reason Lit policy is to err on the side of caution in relation to libel and copyright laws and any queries to be forwarded to lawyers should be passed onto the board of directors well in advance of any potential problems.

Payment

Lit does not pay for stories.

Photographs

Digitally enhanced or altered images must be clearly labelled as such. Photographs sourced from third party sources must be labelled as such.

Privacy

We respect individuals' right to privacy and their right to a private and personal life.

Race

We do not publish someone's race or ethnic background or religion unless that information is pertinent to the story.

Sources

Sources promised confidentiality must be protected at all costs. However, where possible, the sources of information should be identified as specifically as possible.

Suicide

The Lit team is asked to exercise particular care in reporting suicide or issues involving suicide, bearing in mind the risk of encouraging others. This should be borne in mind both in presentation, including the use of pictures, and in describing the method of suicide or any motivation that could be attributed to it. (See also: IPSO Editors' Code, section 5).

When appropriate a helpline number should be given, such as the Samaritans (116 123).

Verification

Verifying stories and sources in the age of social media can sometimes be difficult, but trust in the authenticity of Lit's content is essential to the viability of the project. For this reason the Lit team is urged not to share social media stories until they have been verified by a trusted source, including

the Lit team itself. Scepticism should be the starting point when using email and web sources of information.

Lit's explainers are verified by experts in the relevant field where possible, and expert opinions on topics such as STEM and public health are particularly vital.

2. PERSONAL BEHAVIOUR AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Respect & Dignity

The Lit team and freelancers working for the project are expected to treat colleagues, and individuals outside work, with dignity and respect. The Lit team should be mindful that bullying and hateful conduct, including but not limited to social media interactions, reflect negatively on the company and the project. The Lit project aims to promote tolerance between people of differing opinions and backgrounds; social media interactions on the part of Lit staff should reflect this ethos. The Lit team and freelancers working for the project must also respect individuals' right to privacy both during work and elsewhere.

Confidentiality & Data Rights

Individuals' personal data must remain confidential and only be used in relation to normal responsibilities detailed in Lit's privacy policy. As a not-for-profit organisation, Lit is not required to register with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), but Lit has registered in any case. Any complaints about misuse of data can be sent to Lit or the ICO. Our privacy policy sets out individuals' data rights in more detail.

Conflicts of interest

The Lit team and freelancers working for the project should be mindful that activities outside work may impact on their (im)partiality when reporting. All conflicts of interest must be reported to the Lit editorial team. Transparency regarding any potential interests relevant to any work commissioned by Lit is of paramount importance.

Declarations of interest

In some circumstances, Lit staff or freelancers may be required to produce content on which they already have a significant connection or vested interest. In this circumstance, the interest must be declared to Lit editorial staff and, when relevant, the personal connection must be signposted in any relevant content. Lit staff and freelancers must not quote relatives or those with whom they have a close interpersonal relationship in their content. Any potential problems arising from such conflicts of interest must be presented as early as possible to the Lit editorial team.

3. GUIDANCE FOR LIT EDITORIAL STAFF

At Lit we expect editorial staff to be guided by the principles of ethics and trust, in addition to our formal guidelines. At the heart of our project is the aim to tackle fake news and promote freedom of

expression and tolerance. These principles must be central to the actions and work of our editors, as well as other staff.

Accuracy

Editors must aim not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information. This includes film and visual content. Significant errors or inaccuracies must be recognised and corrected promptly and, when appropriate, an apology published.

Opportunity to reply

A fair opportunity for reply to inaccuracies must be given when reasonably called for.

Privacy

Editors must respect individuals' rights to a private and family life. It is unacceptable to photograph individuals in private places without their consent, or to continue contact with an individual if requested to stop.

Harassment

The Lit team must not engage in harassment, bullying or intimidation. Workers must cease contact with an individual if they are requested to stop.

Intrusion into grief or shock

Families and loved ones who are grieving or subject to shock should be treated with sympathy and editors must show discretion and sensitivity while publishing during periods of grief or shock. This should not restrict the right to report legal proceedings, such as inquests. Editors must follow the PCC guidelines regarding reporting of suicide, in particular taking care not to report motivations or methods of suicide.

Hospitals

Members of the Lit team must identify themselves and obtain permission from the relevant authorities before recording or entering non-public areas of hospitals. The right to anonymity and privacy of patients must be respected.

Reporting of Crime

Relatives or friends of persons convicted or accused of crime should not generally be identified without their consent, unless they are genuinely relevant to the story. Editors must be aware of potentially vulnerable people such as children, who may be victims or have witnessed crime. This should not restrict the right to report legal proceedings.

Victims of sexual assault

The press must not identify victims of sexual assault or publish material likely to contribute to such identification unless there is adequate justification and they are legally free to do so.

Discrimination

Editors and Lit staff must avoid prejudicial or pejorative reference to an individual's race, colour, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or to any physical or mental illness or disability. Details of an individual's race, colour, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or physical or mental illness or disability must be avoided unless genuinely relevant to the story.

Confidential sources

Editors and Lit staff have a moral obligation to protect confidential sources of information.