

## **Local Press Ltd Response to Review of Government Advertising October 2005**

### **Background**

Local Press Ltd and its significant portfolio of newspaper titles which include the News Letter, Belfast News, Farming Life and Derry Journal Group of Newspapers provides unrivalled reach and penetration amongst many major demographic, geographic and religious groups currently targeted by EIS.

The News Letter provides a strong province wide solus readership (67,000 solus readers (88%) which it combines with a unique penetration of the Unionist community in provincial towns across Northern Ireland. Coverage of this political demographic is not covered by any other newspaper in this way. In addition to its strong local, national and international editorial content, the News Letter has strong complimentary community based editorial content relating to all communities across the province.

The Derry Journal is UK leader amongst regional newspaper titles with regard to total penetration of its own indigenous area i.e. Derry City and County, delivering by far the greatest circulation than any other newspaper title in this part of Northern Ireland. Combined with the newly launched Coleraine Journal, Derry Journal Group, offers a complete North West and North Coast press solution at one point of access.

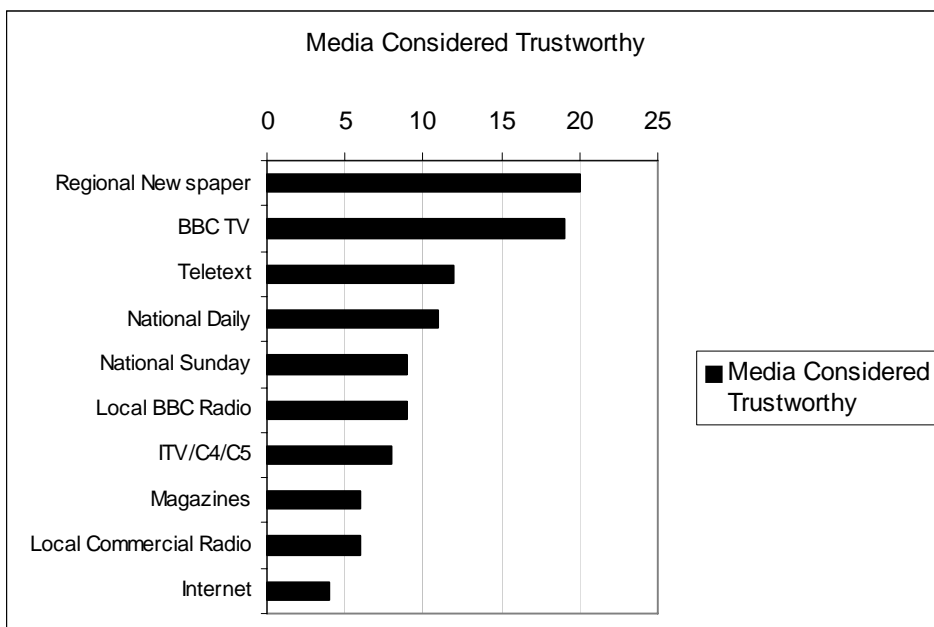
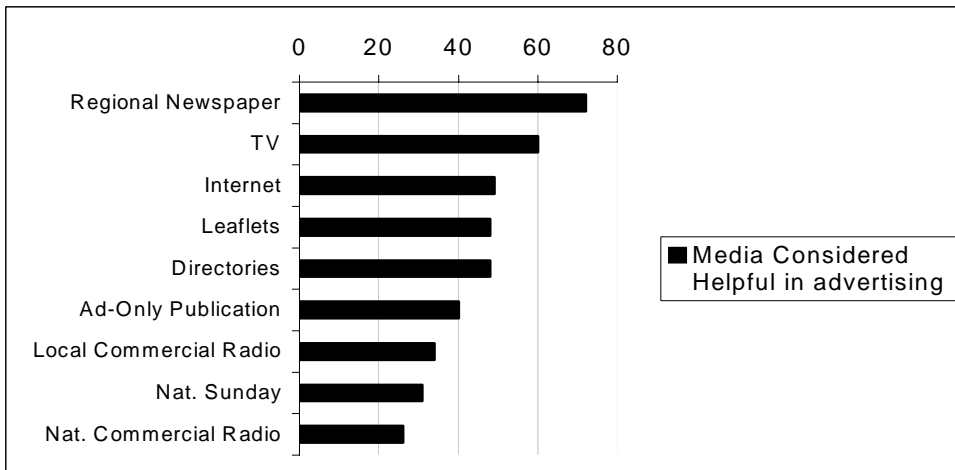
Farming Life, Northern Ireland's market leading agricultural newspaper reaches 90% of all farmers in Northern Ireland (Millward Brown), a further enhancement to our portfolio of titles.

Belfast News is the final proposition and offers direct targeting of Belfast City and Greater Belfast with 50,281 copies delivered each week via verified free distribution (VFD). Combining Belfast News with the News Letter delivers a combined readership of 126,000 (NI TGi 2005).

### **The Role of Press**

Local Press Ltd, along with our fellow local Northern Ireland press publishers provide major qualitative attributes, in addition to its strong number of loyal readers. The strong editorial content provided by local titles on many occasions complements the communications undertaken by EIS. This content ensures that people read titles for a sustained period, with the Newspaper Society research indicating 32 minutes per reader of a paid-for regional newspaper, i.e. the News Letter, Derry Journal, Irish News or Belfast Telegraph. Trust in what you see is another issue, which is more that adequately addressed by the press medium and is something that EIS must have in order so that the public takes their message seriously. Without this what appears superficially to be good value for money is nothing more than ineffective waste.

The following charts effectively highlight this.



Source: Newspaper Society

## **Advertising Rates**

To base all categories of advertising on one general rate within each title is unrealistic. All advertisers, public and private sector alike have an array of advertising rates. There is no premium rate in place on any category which penalises Government, either on 'Situations Vacant' or 'Public Notice' advertising. Rates for these sections apply equally to all advertisers. Furthermore the desire to reduce the level of 'cost per thousand' is a task that press can undertake, but as a process overtime.

To do this at once would jeopardise commercial viability and local jobs within the media sector.

'Cost per thousand' as a unit of measurement must also be specific to targets i.e. geography, demography, communities etc, in order that a true reflection of efficiency is given.

Failure to ensure this will mean that the measures used for comparison would be inaccurate or discriminatory. More importantly this may lead to coverage of specific groups being undervalued.

## **The Billett's Review**

It should be noted that Press buying performed extremely positively in the Media Audit by Billett's, certainly better than TV, especially as production costs have been excluded. There is a danger of Press being "under the microscope" to a much greater degree than TV. Such unfair comparisons are misleading.

## **New Media**

New Media as a medium currently does not have an adequate level of coverage, something which is verified by your own figures which presented that only 50% of all households in Northern Ireland have digital TV and barely over this percentage have internet connection. Also content is a main driver of internet usage, consequently a web page dedicated to only 'Public Notice' and 'Tenders' will not succeed in providing general public consumption. Indeed it must also be noted that 'Offline Media' and in particular press, drive web traffic.

Furthermore is it accurate to equate internet connectivity and usage? The statistics referring to internet connection levels fail to make it clear whether or not the connection is at broadband capacity. If connection is not at this level that the ability of the user to make full use of the content provided by the government 'online' is restricted. Such restrictions either based on lack of connection or lack of connection capacity is inherently discriminatory. This would be especially true for those of lower income and rural areas where broadband is not fully operative.

## **Specific Responses**

We have detailed a specific response to section 6 of the review below.

### **6.1 – Classified Advertising**

#### **6.1.1**

#### **6.1.2**

'Specific Criteria' should be clearly identified and discussed and with agreed weightings per factor identified.

Any 'capped' cost per thousand should also take account of the weightings and criteria used. For instance the value of solus readers (readers that cannot be reached by any other way) is obviously different than easily reached and duplicated readers. Therefore it would be logical and acceptable for some titles with particular types of readership to be more expensive than others.

#### **6.1.3**

We support and are fully audited by ABC. However due recognition should be given to other research sources also provided they are independent. EG TGI, Millward Brown and specific campaign research.

#### **6.1.5**

It should be noted that the daily papers enjoy 'pockets' of geographical readership strengths which can make them the most cost effective in specified areas, therefore the use of the dailies to target geographically should not be simplistically ruled out.

#### **6.1.6**

Newspapers providing an online version or facility should be assessed more positively when being considered against any criteria and any move towards more online communications should take full advantage of these existing sites firstly.

#### **6.1.7**

Regarding the content of recruitment advertising we would advise that detailed monitoring of applicant numbers and quality would be essential.

The role of press in providing enough information to encourage the right number and quality of applicant should not be underestimated and reducing content may have an adverse reaction on response.

#### **6.1.8**

Any involvement with online recruitment sites should include existing newspaper sites. Selection should be subject to open and competitive tender and not unduly restricted to one named supplier.

#### **6.2.4**

In keeping with the 'spirit' of the overall review and especially any tender processes, the objectives and evidence used and recorded by Departments and their agencies should be made available to media owners to demonstrate fairness and equality.

#### **6.3.4**

Local Press Ltd would be willing to contribute and participate in any staff training programme.