



Strangulation in the UK media – An analysis of online article titles

Part Three: A Review of Existing Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) Media Guidelines

By Marianne McGowan & Harriet Smailes, June 2025



**Institute For
Addressing
Strangulation**

A Review of Existing VAWG Media Guidelines

Rules and guidance standards on reporting exist for UK media outlets through a range of bodies such as the National Union of Journalists[26] and IPSO editors' code of practice [27]. Through this review we sought to gather specific guidance on strangulation and/or reporting of criminal offences and social issues such as domestic abuse and sexual violence. Table one presents five online resources that act as guidance for reporting on issues such as strangulation:

Source	Details
Zero Tolerance https://www.zerotolerance.org.uk/resources/Media-Guidelines-on-Violence-Against-Women.pdf	<p>Zero tolerance guidelines state:</p> <p>"Zero Tolerance developed these guidelines in consultation with media representatives and organisations working to tackle VAWG. They are intended to support you to report on VAWG accurately and sensitively by providing information about violence against women and its root cause – gender inequality – and best practice tips, latest statistics, and a current list of helplines."</p> <p>The guidelines include the following key principles for reporting on VAWG:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Respect women 2. Include diverse voices 3. Name the cause: gender inequality 4. Name the crime 5. Consider how you present the perpetrator 6. Know when to use 'victim' or 'survivor' 7. Place voices of experts and victim/survivors at the centre of the story 8. Use statistics to show the prevalence of VAWG 9. Select images thoughtfully 10. Always include helplines
End Violence Against Women (EVAW) FINAL-RESOURCE-REPORTING-ON-RAPE.pdf	<p>EVAW's guidelines on reporting rape state:</p> <p>"With the rise of misogynistic influencers and a worrying regression in young people's attitudes towards rape, responsible reporting is more important than ever. Journalists are facing multiple pressures – balancing the demands of a 24-hour news cycle, pressure to drive high engagement, meeting standards of conduct and sensitivity to victims, journalistic ethics and integrity, and more. Bringing together analysis of 12 years of media reporting on rape, this resource is designed to help you recognise some of the most common rape myths in the media and guide you in reporting on rape responsibly."</p> <p>Their key principles for reporting on rape include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Shifting our language</i>– The words we use have power. Avoiding harmful tropes and clichés can help move us closer to a society where rape and sexual violence is no longer tolerated. 2. <i>Changing the narrative</i> – Changing the words we use is an important first step. But to see real change in media reporting on rape, we need to see further change to broader narratives about this violence.
Our Watch https://www.ourwatc.org.au/media-and-reporting/resources/guidelines-for-reporting	<p>Our watch guidelines state:</p> <p>"The Our Watch national media guidelines provide tips and information the media can use to ensure reporting does not further harm victim-survivors and is part of the solution to violence against all women and their children."</p> <p>Their key principles for reporting on VAWG include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Safety first (identifying the survivor) 2. Name it (use official terms, not minimising language) 3. Keep the perpetrator in view (accountable, relationship type) 4. Keep the tone respectful and appropriate (don't sensationalise/ trivialise) 5. Use evidence-based language (driven by gender inequality, not alcohol/ drugs/ stress/ finances) 6. Use appropriate images and footage 7. Call on experts for comment (not just police/ criminal justice) 8. Always include support options available 9. Know the law (on reporting details and the behaviour being reported) 10. Contextualise the story (use statistics on VAWG)

Source	Details
Ipsos https://www.ipsos.co.uk/resources/sexual-offences-guidance/	<p>IPSO guidelines for the reporting of sexual offences state:</p> <p><i>"This guidance provides editors and journalists with a framework for thinking through important questions related to the reporting of sexual offences and examples of relevant decisions by IPSO's Complaints Committee."</i></p> <p>Their key messages for editors and journalists include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are legal protections for victims of sexual offences (e.g., reporting of victim identity) 2. Additional protections are in place with cases involving children, especially with familial abuse 3. In Scotland, there is currently no automatic legal right to anonymity (but in practice, victims are not named without consent)
InHope https://www.inhope.org/EN/articles/shaping-the-story-media-guidelines-for-reporting-on-child-sexual-abuse	<p>InHope media guidelines for report on child sexual offences state:</p> <p><i>"Reporting about child sexual abuse should empower survivors to report abuse while raising awareness of the problem among the general public. This guide is intended for media outlets and control standards to ensure that Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) stories follow best practises set by child protection organisations."</i></p> <p>Their key principles include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Privacy and protection (identity of victim) 2. Language (precise but not sensationalist, making the offender the subject and the victim the object of sentences) 3. Narrative (expand focus of the story to encourage work on prevention and solutions) 4. Focused on CSA
FixedIt https://janegilmore.com/category/fixedit/	<p>The FixedIt guidance highlights examples of problematic headlines with suggested changes to achieve gender equity.</p> <p>Importantly they include the reasons why alternative wording is needed which acts as guidance for journalists.</p>



References

26. National Union of Journalists (NUJ) (2024). The NUJ Rule Book 2023–2025.

<https://www.nuj.org.uk/resource/the-nuj-rule-book-2023-2025.html>

27. IPSO (2025). Editors' Code of Practice (2025). <https://www.ipso.co.uk/editors-code-of-practice/>

