

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to respond to your consultation titled *Overseeing press regulation in the UK*. I am responding as a member of the public and these views are my own. You may publish my response (or parts of it) if you like, but not my name please.

Question 1

I am encouraged to see that Parliament and the UK Government have taken a few steps towards holding the press to account for the wrongdoing that has taken place in recent times. The press holds huge influence over people's opinions on issues and therefore it should seek to be truthful, independent and ethical. All public institutions and most commercial organisations with similar levels of influence are accountable to an external regulator or a parliament-type body. While it would be unwise to make the press accountable to parliamentary or government institutions, the underlying principle still stands and I believe that organisations with substantial influence should be accountable for their actions.

Apart from local opinion, the British press is widely recognised around the world as being crass, self-righteous and overly influential. For example, the Sun newspaper's headline on 11 April 1992 claiming that its influence helped the Conservative party to win that year's general election, "It's the Sun wot won It" (<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=dm6iBQAAQBAJ>). The United Nations human rights chief "urged British Authorities and media to take steps to curb incitement to hatred by tabloid newspapers" after The Sun newspaper called migrants 'cockroaches' on 17 April 2015 (<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50675#.V1WFkvrLIU>). Does this kind of journalism reflect well on the UK?

However, given the positive steps that have been taken so far, I am disappointed that the government has not continued to implement all of the Leveson Report's recommendations. Given the public outcry surrounding press abuses when news of phone hacking and related illegal activities emerged, I do not perceive that wrongdoers have been held to account or that robust accountability going forward has been implemented yet. I support Leveson's view that "if some or all of the industry are not willing to participate in effective independent regulation, my own concluded view is to reject the notion that they should escape regulation altogether. I cannot, and will not, recommend another last chance saloon for the press. With some measure of regret, therefore, I am driven to conclude that the Government should be ready to consider the need for a statutory backstop regulator being established, to ensure, at the least, that the press are subject to regulation that would require the fullest compliance with the criminal and civil law, if not also to ensure consequences equivalent to those that would flow from an independent self-regulatory system."

Question 2

Having read the background information it is clear that regulation will take the form of a 'carrot and stick approach' which seems reasonable. But, in my opinion, this approach still does not deal with the underlying issue of holding large commercial organisations, with well-resourced legal teams, to account when they misrepresent events and opinions. The average person does not have the resources to pursue privacy or libel cases through the justice system, whether or not the publisher chooses to join a regulator. In my opinion, section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act where access to the justice incentive is guaranteed should be enacted or the statutory instrument introduced, as Parliament had intended. This would level the playing field a little more and hopefully encourage people to pursue valid libellous claims through the courts.

Yours faithfully,

David Dinham