

The logo for IMPRESS, consisting of the word "IMPRESS" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The text is centered between two thick, solid black horizontal bars, one above and one below the text.

IMPRESS

PRP Consultation on the Recognition System

7 September 2017

On 20 January 2016, IMPRESS applied to the Press Recognition Panel (PRP) for recognition as an independent and effective regulator under the terms of the Royal Charter on Self-Regulation of the Press. The application process was rigorous and transparent, with three opportunities for the public to submit information. On 25 October, the PRP granted recognition to IMPRESS at a meeting held in public

To date, 68 publications have so far successfully applied to be regulated by IMPRESS, with many more in discussions about joining. These publications operate both in print and online and reach an estimated audience of more than four million people every month. Some IMPRESS members are developing innovative new business models that are firmly rooted in the professional standards of journalism. They see regulation as a necessary part of their work in the digital era, as facts rapidly give rise to 'alternative facts' and audiences struggle to know which news sources they can trust. By subscribing to a recognised regulator, these publications confirm that they are committed to high standards of journalism and that they are prepared to be held accountable for any failings. In return, these publications carry the IMPRESS 'Trust in Journalism' kitemark. Proper press regulation builds trust in journalism to the benefit of us all.

While the expansion of IMPRESS's membership clearly demonstrates that a growing network of news publishers value the benefits of joining a recognised regulator and understand that trust is good for business, reaching a point where most significant publishers have signed up to a recognised regulator is likely to be challenging in the absence of any further incentives to do so.

By virtue of sections 34-39 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013, members of IMPRESS are protected against the risk of exemplary damages in legal actions for libel, invasion of privacy or harassment. Members of IMPRESS should also be protected against the risk of costs-shifting, by virtue of section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act. However, the Government has yet to commence this provision and therefore the recognition system has not been fully-implemented at this time. The commencement of section 40 would be a major incentive for publishers to join an approved regulator such as IMPRESS and may also provide an incentive for other regulators to apply for recognition.

The Government is currently reviewing responses to its consultation on the Leveson Inquiry and its Implementation, which includes a consideration of whether section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013 should be commenced, in full, in part, or not at all. Whatever the outcome of this consultation, it is likely to have a significant impact on the recognition system's prospects of success, if this is to be defined mainly by reference to the proportion of significant publishers who have signed up to a recognised regulator.

It would therefore be premature to attempt to reach a definitive judgement on whether the system has been successful at this time.