

Report on the Recognition System 2018

Call for information

Introduction

The independent Press Recognition Panel (PRP) was established in 2014 as part of a new system of regulatory oversight to ensure the freedom of the press whilst also protecting the interests of the public.

Our Royal Charter requires us to report annually on any success or failure of the recognition system, and we will do so when we publish our third report on the system in autumn 2018.

To help inform our thinking, we are gathering views on the extent to which the recognition system has succeeded in its aims.

We would like to hear from anyone with an interest in UK press regulation, including members of the public, journalists, academics, news publishers, media organisation, politicians and campaigners.

Background

Our Charter was granted following the Leveson Inquiry (2011-2012) into the culture, practices and ethics of the press, in the light of phone hacking and other criminal activity. Victims included ordinary members of the public.

In his report, Lord Justice Leveson proposed a genuinely independent and effective system of self-regulation with politics playing no part in it.

The Charter gives the PRP a unique independence. It can only be changed by a two-thirds majority of those who vote in the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the Scottish Parliament, and with the unanimous agreement of our Board. The Charter prevents politicians from interfering with our work and decisions.

The Charter sets out 29 criteria based on Leveson's recommendations. The criteria are part of a scheme of recognition which embodies what the Leveson report considered to be the necessary minimum requirements for effective press regulators.

Our role is to consider applications from regulators who voluntarily apply to be assessed against the recognition criteria. In January 2016, IMPRESS applied.

In October 2016, following three public calls for information and a robust assessment process, we recognised IMPRESS as an approved regulator because it met all 29 recognition criteria. IMPRESS is the only approved regulator.

Leveson anticipated that incentives would be required to encourage news publishers to form or sign up to approved regulators while at the same time offering an alternative route to access to justice in relation to those who chose not to do so. The mechanism provided by section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013 in England and Wales has not yet been commenced. The Government now plans to ask Parliament to repeal section 40.

The range of news-related publications available in the UK is diverse and includes international, national, regional, local and hyperlocal titles, operating across both print and online. The Leveson Inquiry and the new system of regulation considered the full range of relevant publishers, and the system was intended to work for all 'relevant publishers' (as defined in the Crime and Courts Act 2013) that exist today.

It appears to us that several social media platforms may also fall within the definition of relevant publisher at least in relation to their production of news and news-related material.

The PRP is often asked to give a view on whether (in particular) the complaints (and any arbitration) systems operated by some news organisations meet the Royal Charter criteria and to give an indication of the extent to which the public safeguards intended by the post-Leveson system of regulation are in place on a voluntary basis.

As part of our 2018 report on the recognition system, we will provide an assessment of IPSO and some of the major publishers which are not members of IPSO including BuzzFeed UK, Facebook, the Financial Times, Google, the Guardian, HuffPost, the Independent, LADBible, Pink News, Private Eye, Reuters, Snapchat, Twitter, and Yahoo! News.

We have chosen significant publishers from across the press landscape and we consider it to be in the public interest for us to assess them as part of our Charter requirement to report on the success of the recognition system and as part of our consideration of how far the public is currently protected from potential harm. We will undertake this assessment based on facts available to us, including anything which those organisations provide in response to our requests to them.

Share your views

In producing this report, we would like to consider the full range of perspectives on the success of the recognition system so far.

We would also welcome views in response to the following questions:

- To what extent does the new system of genuinely independent and effective system of press self-regulation recommended by Leveson exist today?
- How much confidence can the public have in the systems that are currently in place to protect it from potential harm caused by the press?
- To what extent and in what way are social media platforms that publish news “relevant publishers” for the purposes of the Crime and Courts Act 2013 and what implications, if any, does that have for them, the PRP and/or the public?
- Are you aware of any facts or evidence related to the following organisations that would be useful in assessing their compliance with the Royal Charter criteria: BuzzFeed UK, Facebook, the Financial Times, Google, the Guardian, HuffPost, the Independent, IPSO, LADBible, Pink News, Private Eye, Reuters, Snapchat, Twitter, Yahoo! News?

How to respond to this call for information

If you have any information that you would like us to consider, we are happy to receive feedback in writing, by phone, or face-to-face.

Write to us: Mappin House, 4 Winsley Street, London W1W 8HF

Email: Consultation@pressrecognitionpanel.org.uk

Phone: 020 3443 7072

If you would like to meet with us, please contact us using the details above to arrange.

The closing date for the call for information is 8 October 2018.

Confidentiality

Where appropriate, the PRP wishes to publish a list of respondents and their responses. We may also quote or refer to specific responses in our final report. When providing information, please indicate whether you do not wish your name and/or response to be published.