

The Inquiry is currently looking at the relationship between the press and the public.

**We're interested in hearing from professionals and the public with information and examples in response to the specific questions below. Your answers may be considered as potential evidence to the inquiry.**

Culture, practices and ethics:

- 1 The Inquiry needs to understand how newsrooms operate, particularly in the tabloid and mid-market sectors. Can you provide a personal account of culture, practices and ethics in any part of the press and media?
- 2 Seminar debates have suggested that commercial pressures were not new, were not unique to the press, and did not impact adversely on standards of journalism or ethical behaviour. The Inquiry would be interested in submissions on this, with examples where possible.
- 3 Some seminar attendees suggest reader loyalty limits competition between titles. Professional competition to be first or best with a story, though, could be a powerful force. Other participants suggested some papers put journalists under significant pressure to produce a story within a tight timeframe. The Inquiry would be interested in experiences of the competitive dynamics in journalism and how that impacts on the way in which journalists operate, with examples where possible.
- 4 With the advent of the internet and 24 hour news as well as declines in revenue and circulation, we have heard that fewer journalists are having to do more work. The seminars also raised the issue of the casualisation of the workforce. The inquiry would be interested in experiences of how this may have changed the culture in newsrooms and what it might mean in terms of journalistic practice, with examples where possible.
- 5 The issue of stories that attract a high degree of press attention but subsequently turn out to be false was raised at the seminars. The Inquiry would be interested in submissions from editors, reporters and subjects of such stories - why they occur (what are the pressures that drive press interest), and how they occur (what checks and balances are or should be in place to stop this happening and why do they sometimes not operate)?
- 6 One seminar attendee suggested that the National Council for the Training of Journalists does not teach ethics. The Inquiry would be

interested in experience of how ethics are taught and promulgated amongst journalists.

## Standards

- 7 Attendees proposed that the general law, as it applies to everyone, should be the only constraint on the press. The inquiry would welcome submissions on whether, and if so why, the press should be subject to any additional constraints in relation to behaviour and standards, for example relating to accuracy, treatment of vulnerable individuals, intrusion, financial reporting or reporting on crime, other than those imposed by existing laws.
- 8 Editors at the seminars argued that the Editors' Code was a good set of standards to work to. The Inquiry would be interested in submissions from all parties on the coverage and substance of the Editors' code including accuracy and redress for those who are affected by breaches of the code.
- 9 It has been argued that the statutory regulation and impartiality requirements that apply to broadcasting do not chill investigative reporting on television. Broadcasters are able to rely on the printed press to break controversial stories and then follow on behind. The inquiry would be interested in submissions on the extent to which the regulatory regime for broadcasting casts a chill on broadcast reporting and the relationship between the printed press and broadcast media as a result of the different regulatory environments.

## Public interest

- 10 The Inquiry has heard strong arguments for the importance of a free press in a democratic society. The Inquiry would be interested in submissions on the special role to be played by the press in a democracy, what 'freedom' requirements need to be in place for that role to be played and the whether this role places any obligations or responsibilities on the press.
- 11 We've heard arguments that sometimes it will be in the public interest for journalists and media organisations to do things that would otherwise be ethically or legally questionable. The inquiry would be interested in submissions on the extent to which, if at all, should acting in the public interest be a complete or partial defence in relation to unlawful or unethical activity in pursuit of journalism; and, if so, subject to what conditions.
- 12 In practice any public interest argument would need to be considered in the context of specific cases. The Inquiry would be interested in submissions on who should be responsible for reaching decisions on whether something is in the public interest, and on what basis. Illustrative examples would be helpful.

All submissions should be sent to [generalenquiries@levesoninquiry.org.uk](mailto:generalenquiries@levesoninquiry.org.uk)