

Submission from Jane Winter

Dear Impress,

Response to Consultation on your Code

I have the following comments to make, which I hope are useful.

Preamble

The code currently does not include in its preamble any requirement on IMPRESS to direct size, timing and placement of corrections, apologies and/or adjudications. This is an essential feature of a Leveson-compliant regulator, and IMPRESS should be clear about its powers in introducing the code. Without this, newspapers will be free to continue hiding corrections and adjudications in small print, and start doing so for apologies which Leveson said should be within the power of a regulator to require, on an obscure back page. Nothing annoys victims of mistakes, and, particularly abuse, more than the inequality between the original headlines and the tiny, well-hidden correction or apology.

Source Protection

1. Anyone who contributes anonymously should be considered a confidential source by default.
2. However, as has been seen over the past few years of court cases, source protection can be exploited by criminals, and IMPRESS should include provision to seek to prevent this happening by advising that confidentiality should not be offered where it would protect serious criminality.
3. Clause 8 should include a provision to outlaw paying of public officials (which is presently under Clause 6) save where this is permitted by law. It should be restricted to only apply to that information which is held by or accessible to officials as a result of their public function.

Public Interest Justifications

IMPRESS should say that the code should only be breached on public interest grounds after anxious scrutiny and, in respect of code breaches during newsgathering, when alternative means of news-gathering are not available or have been reasonably considered to be ineffective.

Yours sincerely,
Jane Winter.