IMPRESS | Code Consultation

Debrief from public research

June 2016
Objectives & methodology

• IMPRESS aims to set a new code of standards for press regulation in line with Leveson’s recommendation to ‘develop a clearer statement of the standards expected of editors and journalists’

• BritainThinks carried out a consultation with members of the public to find out their views on the draft code of standards
  • We tested 10 principles in workshops but added an 11th principle to test in the survey due to prominence of ‘bias’ as an issue

• In order to do this BritainThinks conducted 2 x 3 hour deliberative workshops in London and Glasgow and a nationally representative survey of the public
Sample

Workshops

- 16 respondents in each (8 men, 8 women)
- Spread of ages
- BAME & socio-economic groupings reflective of city
- Spread of newspaper readership
  - Online, print & non-readers
  - Tabloid, broadsheet, free/local, social media
- Spread of 2015 voting histories

Survey

- Nationally representative (including England, Scotland, Wales & N. Ireland)
- 2,104 adult members of the public
Key findings

• There is widespread public approval of the draft standards code
  • Support for concept of an independent body (rather than government or editors/publishers) designing and enforcing the code
  • Support for specific principles contained in the code
    • Especially accuracy, privacy, harassment and the rights of children
    • An additional principle on balance, not initially in the draft standards code, was deemed very important in combating news bias

• Perceptions of the press are very cynical and there is support for strict regulation of its conduct
  • Indeed, there is some demand for the code to be made even stricter
  • Some confusion about the nature of a standards code (and how this differed from other regulation or law)

• However, this is not a particularly salient topic and there are generally low levels of engagement with the issue of press misconduct
  • Widespread support for the code - but not spontaneous clamour
  • There was low awareness of the issue of press regulation (and little reference to Leveson)
Background attitudes & context
Spontaneous engagement with the issue of press standards is low

- Proportion of public not having an opinion on the issues is very high
  - 51% can’t name a single positive contribution that news publications make
  - 42% can’t name anything news publications might do that are wrong or unfair
  - 41% aren’t able to name a single standard or principle that should apply to news publications

- None of the workshop participants referenced Leveson and many declared it was an issue they had never really thought about
  - Although phone-hacking was mentioned by a few participants

- According to Ipsos MORI Issues Tracker May 2016, press standards/conduct is not in the top 36 issues facing country
  - Which means it is a less salient issue than constitutional reform, AIDS and foot & mouth/farming crisis
People struggle to think of deeper societal benefits of free and active news publications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Contributions</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raises awareness of what is...</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide news to the public</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World news/ issues from abroad</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposes corruption/wrongdoing/</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide expert opinion/ analysis</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holds the Government to account</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educates/ provides knowledge</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report sports coverage</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local news/ coverage of local...</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know/ no opinion</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.2 What positive contributions do news publications make to society? Base: all respondents (n=2,104)

Most responses superficial and narrow, even in workshops with more time to think about and discuss the issues.

“They let the public be aware of events that have occurred and any future news that may affect our lives.”

Participant, Glasgow
There is cynicism toward the press and a clear sense of an industry where misconduct is rife.

Q.3 What are the kinds of things that news publications might do that are wrong or unfair? Base: all respondents (n=2,104)

- Bias/not being impartial: 28%
- Dishonesty/Lies/Not truthful: 16%
- Inaccurate/not checking facts: 10%
- Invades privacy: 9%
- Exaggerate/sensationalise stories: 6%
- Spread fear/scaremongering: 4%
- Distort the truth/ misquote...: 4%
- Celebrity news/celebrity culture: 4%
- Harass/hound people for a story: 4%
- Defamation/demonise...: 3%
- Publish gossip: 2%
- Other answers: 25%
- Don't know/no opinion: 42%
There is cynicism toward the press and a clear sense of an industry where misconduct is rife

- Workshop participants found it relatively easy to think of instances of press misconduct
  - Wide variety of examples recognised
  - Widespread agreement that there was a problem

- Tabloid news publications were generally perceived more negatively than their broadsheet counterparts

- It was generally seen as a problem that was getting worse
  - Online news has meant more ‘fake news’ stories, more sensationalism (and ‘click-bait’) and greater difficulty in verifying sources

“The press shouldn’t be able to get away with everything and just say it’s freedom of speech.”
Participant, Glasgow

“I think the upper class papers are more trustworthy. The cheaper the paper, the cheaper they behave.”
Participant, Glasgow

“Anyone can write anything online so you trust them less.”
Participant, London
Attitudes to idea of standards code
There was strong support for the concept of a code of conduct for news publications

- Workshop participants strongly supported the idea of some form of regulation of news publications

- Participants wanted this regulation to be both wide-ranging and strictly enforced

- Nevertheless, there was some confusion about the nature of a standards code
  - Many participants envisaged something stricter, more akin to legal rules

  “There should be an ombudsman or something like that so you can complain.”
  Participant, Glasgow

  “The more [rules], the merrier in my opinion!”
  Participant, Glasgow

  “How does this work alongside the law? Shouldn’t this be covered?”
  Participant, Glasgow
Independent experts were the preferred option for designing and enforcing a standards code.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation/Role</th>
<th>Design a standards code for the press</th>
<th>Regulate news publications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An organisation of independent experts (e.g. legal practitioners, journalists, academics)</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government (e.g. MPs, DCMS, Ofcom)</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishers or editors of news organisations</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent body/no affiliations</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The general public / Panel of members of public</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.4 There are different people or organisations who might design a standards code and regulate news publications. Which of the following would you most trust to...? Base: All respondents EXCLUDING THOSE WHO ANSWERED DON'T KNOW (n=1,439/1,521)
Asked spontaneously, honesty and balance were seen as the most important principles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not mislead or tell lies/Be honest/Tell the truth</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be fair/balanced/unbiased/impartial</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be factual/give the facts</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect privacy</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be accurate/provide accurate information</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verify information/check facts/sources</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (e.g. be ethical, be considerate, abide by law)</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know/no opinion</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.5 What do you believe are the three most important principles or standards that should guide the conduct of journalists and news publications? Base: All respondents (n=2,104)
As asked spontaneously, honesty and balance were seen as the most important principles.

In the workshops, participants usually suggested a small number of rules:
- Honesty
- Not being biased
- Demonstrating facts
- Respecting privacy

Beyond these, participants often struggled to think of additional rules or principles (despite having a strong sense of press misconduct).

“Tell the truth and be honest is the most important thing.”
Participant, London

“They can decide what stories you see. They hide important stories because it doesn’t fit their agenda.”
Participant, Glasgow
Overall response to draft standards code
There was strong and widespread support for the draft standards code

- Participants in the workshop were generally satisfied with the draft standards code

- Even after extensive exposure and consideration, there was very little critical comment
  - No principles seen as missing
  - No principles to be removed
  - No principles to be drastically changed

  “Must be very difficult to compile a clear, concise, complete, correct enactment. I’m impressed.”
  Participant, London

  “I think it covers all the important issues. No improvement needed, it’s very thorough.”
  Participant, Glasgow

  “I thought it was specific and covered most of the points that were needed. It has to be waterproof as the journalism industry has the reputation to be sneaky and slippery.”
  Participant, Glasgow
There was strong and widespread support for the draft standards code

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Publishers should ensure information is accurate</td>
<td>9.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishers should respect the rights of children</td>
<td>8.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishers should not allow journalists to harass people</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishers should respect the right to a fair trial</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishers should provide balanced news coverage</td>
<td>8.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishers should avoid discrimination</td>
<td>8.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishers should respect people’s privacy</td>
<td>8.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishers should declare conflicts of interest</td>
<td>8.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishers should not plagiarise</td>
<td>8.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishers should protect confidential sources</td>
<td>8.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There may be exceptions to these principles where there is a public...</td>
<td>7.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only 10% could name any additional principles they thought were missing.

These were often rephrased versions of standards in the code.

No single ‘additional’ principle was mentioned by more than 2%.

Q.6 Here is a list of potential principles to guide the conduct of journalists and news publications. On a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 is not at all important and 10 is very important, how would you rate each of the principles? Base: All respondents (n=2,104)
While all principles are deemed important, accuracy is generally seen as the most important.

- Publishers should ensure information is accurate: 53%
- Publishers should respect people’s privacy: 30%
- Publishers should provide balanced news coverage: 29%
- Publishers should not allow journalists to harass people: 26%
- Publishers should respect the rights of children: 24%
- Publishers should respect the right to a fair trial: 15%
- Publishers should avoid discrimination: 14%
- Publishers should declare conflicts of interest: 12%
- Publishers should protect confidential sources: 8%
- There may be exceptions to these principles where there is a public interest in the...: 8%
- Publishers should not plagiarise: 4%
After deliberation, there was some demand for the code to be more emphatic & specific

- Some workshop participants believed the language of the code to be either too vague/general or not strict enough

- Many thought that the use of the word ‘should’ was too soft and that it should be changed to ‘must’

- ‘Reasonable’ was also seen to be too broad and open to interpretation
  - Some suggested it would be helpful to have some guidelines to show what behaviour would/wouldn’t qualify as reasonable

- However, participants felt more reassured if an independent body was interpreting the code (rather than news publications themselves)

- And this emerged only after considerable probing and deliberation for areas to improve - and was not a spontaneous reaction

“The wording should be more precise and there should be more detailed guidelines. It should be more black and white.”
Participant, Glasgow

“It’s a good start but some of the language could be reinforced or changed so to avoid people arguing that they have taken reasonable steps.”
Participant, London
There was also widespread support for a number of additional press responsibilities.

Publishers have a duty to exercise care in reporting on stories that may cause feelings of grief:
- Agree: 85%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 13%
- Disagree: 2%

Publishers should remove interviews or photographs whenever they are asked to do so:
- Agree: 60%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 27%
- Disagree: 12%

Q.11 Please state how far you agree or disagree about each of the following statements. Base: All respondents (n=2,104)
Response to specific standards in draft code
Unsurprisingly, given the public’s spontaneous view that ‘honesty’ is the most important principle for news publications, this principle received overwhelming support.

Workshop participants felt the core purpose of news publications was to inform the general public and accurate information was seen as crucial to delivering this.

Although recognition amongst some that the ‘facts’ can be transient.

93% rated its importance 7+/10
Mean importance score: 9.27/10

“It all comes under one, you need to make sure what you’re printing is actually the truth. Not making things up as you go along.”
Participant, London

“Things that you publish at one point could be accurate, but after you publish information continues to evolve. It is a grey area.”
Participant, London
Principle: Publishers should ensure information is accurate

What this means in practice

• Publishing corrections
  • Proportionate in size to the original, inaccurate stories
    • 86% agreed that publishers should do this

• Ensuring that headlines match news stories
  • And do not sensationalise

• Differentiating between confirmed stories and allegations
  • 89% agreed that publishers should do this
  • For some this also means only publishing confirmed stories, whereas others feel that checking sources is enough
    • Some concern that news will not be as timely if accuracy principle is overly stringent

• Being specific in reporting

• Not taking quotes out of context

“You need to correct things. You need to clarify when things are written if there is uncertainty.”
Participant, Glasgow

“There should be a disclaimer to mention the limitations of your evidence.”
Participant, Glasgow
Overall views

- Strong, intuitive support for the principle of privacy
  - Deemed important for protecting people’s integrity (as well as protecting their wellbeing)
  - Would be difficult to justify the public interest exception to respecting the principle

- Nevertheless, this principle was generally seen to apply mainly to ‘ordinary individuals’
  - Workshop participants believed it to apply less strictly to celebrities “where publicity has been sought” (or for ‘undesirable’ criminals)
  - Fully 29% think it is always in the public interest to publish stories about the private lives of public figures
    - And 68% think it is always or sometimes in the public interest to publish stories about the hypocrisy of a celebrity

85% rated its importance 7+/10
Mean importance score: 8.56/10

“Privacy is just a basic human right.”
Participant, London

“The reality is that every public figure loses that right to privacy immediately. You have already become a public figure.”
Participant, London
Principle: Publishers should respect people’s privacy

What this means in practice

• Asking permission before publishing photos of individuals
  • 80% agreed that publishers should do this
  • Including those on social media (regardless of privacy settings)

• Withdrawing interviews or photos of individuals on request
  • 60% agreed that publishers should do this

“*If someone doesn’t want you to take pictures of them or write about them and it doesn’t affect the public then they should have that right to privacy.*”
  Participant, London

“*On TV use have to sign a release form to agree to them using your image. There should be some form of consent. For example, when people get injunctions, you can stop things getting into the public eye, but you have to pay so much money.*”
  Participant, London
Workshop participants explored a scenario where animal rights activists broke into someone’s pig farm (adjacent to their home) to take photos of potential animal cruelty. A newspaper published a story with the photos

- Participants unanimously agreed that the newspaper’s conduct was wrong and that it was a clear breach of privacy
- Further, they did not think the newspaper’s conduct was justified on the public interest exception

Participants also discussed a scenario where a celebrity couple’s daughter posted photos of her parents, which a newspaper published in relation to a story about their divorce

- Participants again believed that the newspaper’s conduct was wrong: both because using photos from personal social media accounts was an invasion of privacy but especially because the daughter was not a celebrity herself (and was underage)
- Participants also suggested that their verdict might have been different had it been the parents’ own social media account

“It’s breaking the law. Breaking and entering! They shouldn’t encourage that.”
Participant, London

“It’s an invasion of privacy. It’s wrong. They actually got into that account, hacked the account and then published the image without her permission. The fact that she has low privacy settings doesn’t give you permission to take it, you can see but not to publish.”
Participant, London
Overall views

- Strong and spontaneous support for a principle around balance
  - A principle of balance was not tested in the workshops as part of the draft standards code
  - But bias was one of the main criticisms of news publications that emerged in both workshops and the survey, where it was the most frequently spontaneously-cited form of wrong doing
    - Participants talked about papers being more concerned about their image than the news
    - Injunctions were also mentioned - and the perception that people with power are able to influence what is reported
  - So we introduced the principle of balance and tested it in the survey, where it was very popular (third most frequently mentioned as most important principle)

- There was some recognition that truly balanced news publication is problematic
  - And doesn’t necessarily equate with a free press

88% rated its importance 7+/10
Mean importance score: 8.75/10

“They should just have the courage to tell both sides of the story, instead of just pushing their agenda.”
Participant, Glasgow
Principle: Publishers should provide balanced news coverage

What this means in practice

• Ensuring a spread of views

• Distinguishing between news stories (which present facts) and comment pieces (which present opinions)
  • 83% agreed that this should happen

• Presenting both sides of a story
  • 53% believe that a news publication has a right to express an opinion but not distort facts - but fully 41% think that a news publication should always present both sides of a story and not express an opinion
  • Only 6% think a news publication should be free to express an opinion and not have to present both sides of a story
During the qualitative workshops many felt that any form of harassment would be unacceptable due to the impact it could have:

- Harassment was seen to be harmful to someone’s mental health as well as being upsetting for their friends and family.

However, others could envisage situations in which the public interest would outweigh the right to not be harassed:

- These situations predominantly relate to those who are rich or powerful and/or those accused of serious crimes.

There was also recognition that this principle could conflict with the desire for balanced reporting:

- For example, if a publication was unable to get the point of view of both parties involved in a news story.

And a question over how this could be policed with freelance journalists.

88% rated its importance 7+/10
Mean importance score: 8.8/10

“‘They should tell you where they are from. But if it’s a politician and they’ve done something wrong...’”
Participant, Glasgow

“There are stories that wouldn’t have come out if people weren’t harassed. If people didn’t keep at the same thing over and over again.”
Participant, Glasgow
Principle: Publishers should not allow journalists to harass people

What this means in practice

- Ceasing to contact people if asked
  - Although this did not necessarily apply to public figures
- Journalists declaring where they’re from
  - And always showing ID
- Journalists not entering someone’s property uninvited
- NB when talking about harassment participants often spoke about having their ‘privacy invaded’ and found it difficult to identify clear differences between being harassed and having your privacy invaded
  - For example, entering someone’s property without permission, or into an event under false pretences were both seen as harassment and invasion of privacy
Principle: Publishers should respect the rights of children

Overall views

- Workshop participants strongly supported this principle
  - Children are seen to be particularly vulnerable to press misconduct and less well equipped to deal with the ramifications

- There were some concerns around using parents’ or guardians’ consent as the primary measure to protect children, as some parents are not seen to have their child’s best interests at heart

90% rated its importance 7+/10
Mean importance score: 8.92/10

“They should have someone in charge of safeguarding. You wonder if there is a safeguarding officer on the staff at most newspapers?”
Participant, London

“They once something is in print, it’s there for the rest of these children’s lives.”
Participant, London
Principle: Publishers should respect the rights of children

What this means in practice

- Protecting children’s identities
  - 84% agreed that new publications should do this
  - Particularly in cases of negative stories

- Considering the impact of the images used on children
  - 86% agreed that news publications should do this
  - Participants were concerned about images or headlines that could scare or mislead young children (e.g. the body of Alan Kurdi)
  - And some discussion around unrealistic images (e.g. photoshopping, Size 0 models)

- ‘Safeguarding’ children
  - This could mean having a member of staff at each news publication who would be required to think about the potential impact of news stories on children

“They should have age appropriate news for children. Some of the images aren’t appropriate.”
Participant, Glasgow

“Children should be able to revoke their consent if the story affects their future.”
Participant, Glasgow
Overall views

• Workshop participants thought it was important because it might prevent a ‘level playing field’ - and objected to the idea of trial by media
  • However it was not an issue that was of particularly interest to participants (possibly, like plagiarism, because it wasn’t one that affected them directly)

• The public slightly favour the simpler wording ‘publishers should treat everyone as innocent until proven guilty’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>57%</th>
<th>43%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Publishers should treat everyone as innocent until proven guilty</td>
<td>Publishers should respect the right to a fair trial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“They shouldn’t character assassinate. We have a thing called innocent before proven guilty.”
Participant, London

89% rated its importance 7+/10
Mean importance score: 8.05/10

Principle: Publishers should respect the right to a fair trial
Principle: Publishers should respect the right to a fair trial

What this means in practice

- Not publishing stories about someone’s past
- Not paying for stories about people involved in a trial
Principle: Publishers should avoid discrimination

Overall views

- In the qualitative workshops participants were immediately supportive of this principle
  - There was comprehensive support for the characteristics outlined in the principle being protected
  - Participants recognised that the consequences of discriminatory language can be devastating e.g. stirring up hatred for an ethnic group

- A number of participants brought in examples of newspaper misconduct which related to discrimination on the basis of class, and this was seen to be missing from the principle
  - This was felt to be particularly important, with several participants bringing up the Hillsborough Disaster as an example of what could happen when class discrimination is allowed

- There were some concerns about how this principle would work in practice
  - For example, would removing references to someone’s protected characteristics from a story potentially make it dull?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>86% rated its importance 7+/10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean importance score: 8.66/10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- “They use words to scare people. They use jihadist but what does that mean?”
  Participant, Glasgow

- “’Scrounger benefits mum’, that type of thing is horrid and it tars everyone with that brush.”
  Participant, Glasgow

- “There have been times in the past where the press has whipped up hatred and people, whole ethnic groups have been murdered.”
  Participant, London
Ensuring language describing individuals is not pejorative or inflammatory

Adding class to the list of characteristics

Expanding and updating over time as different characteristics become important
  - Participants mentioned the rise in prominence of transgender rights in the past decade as evidence that new characteristics may emerge and need protecting

“Newspapers should ask ‘does it make it bitter or better?’ to decide whether to include it.”
Participant, London

“If they said all the things specifically that wouldn’t be discrimination. That would be factual. Without being specific it is inaccurate.”
Participant, Glasgow
Principle: Publishers should avoid discrimination

- Workshop participants discussed a hypothetical news story about a transgender bank robber
  - Participants felt this story was discriminatory as it made repeated and - in their opinion - irrelevant reference to the bank robber’s gender identity
  - Participants felt this was a cynical attempt to make the story more salacious and interesting

- They explored another news story about a Mosque which evidence suggested had been fundraising for extremist groups, titled ‘Mosques fundraising for terror’
  - This story was seen to be discriminatory through its use of a generalised term, ‘Mosques’ which implied multiple mosques were fundraising
  - Participants felt that stories on sensitive issues, such as this, should make sure to use specific language, to avoid generalising groups of people

“They just talk about her being transgender to make it a bit more salacious.”
Participant, London

“It’s a generalisation again, saying they collected for ‘Muslim charities’, it’s not defined which ones.”
Participant, London

“It’s going to whip up anger. They need to be careful when they talk about this kind of thing.”
Participant, Glasgow
While not the most immediately pressing principle, some workshop participants did cite concern with marketing masquerading as editorial.

- There was unanimous support for journalists declaring potential conflicts of interest they are aware of at the beginning or end of an article.
- Some went further and thought there should be a duty on journalists to proactively make themselves aware of potential conflicts of interest.

The public slightly favour ‘Publishers should declare all conflicts of interest’ over ‘publishers should make it clear if they benefit in any way from the publication of a story’:

- 55%: Publishers should declare all conflicts of interest
- 45%: Publishers should make it clear if they benefit in any way from the publication of a story

“It is extremely important. It stops corruption.”
Participant, London
Making it clear when an article has been paid for by an advertiser
- 83% agree that publishers should always do this
- Workshop participants, too, called for clear differentiation between advertisements and editorial

(For some) Journalists educating themselves of potential conflicts of interest

“If an owner of a newspaper company owns or has interest in another political organisation, that should be made public. Tell them so it is honest and true.”
Participant, London

“Sometimes they do things that look like it is part of the newspaper but actually it is an advert. It needs to be clear what is news and what isn’t.”
Participant, London
In the qualitative workshops there was some understanding of why protecting confidential sources would be important:

- For example, protecting their safety, their job and ensuring that other people feel confident to come forward with stories.

However, some think that protecting confidential sources is problematic:

- For example, if unfounded allegations are made against someone by a confidential source.

Additionally, being unable to assess the potential motivations of a source is felt to run counter to news publications being honest to their readers.

Ultimately, this issue was seen as less immediately relevant than some of the other principles:

- Focusing on journalistic process.

77% rated its importance 7+/10

Mean importance score: 8.02/10

"If I’m trying to tell the newspaper about the gangster who lives next door I’d hope they’d keep my identity safe!"
Participant, Glasgow

"You want to make sure people still feel safe to give stories. If people know they can trust the newspaper to protect you, you will come forward?"
Participant, London

"What about the person who said there was a Westminster paedophile ring, and it just wasn’t true?"
Participant, London
Workshop participants agreed that the principle was important—but were less concerned about the issue of plagiarism:

- It was seen to affect only rival news publications rather than the ordinary member of the public.
- After exposure to the scenario where a news publication used a photo belonging to a member of the public without permission/accreditation, there was more support for the idea.
- Some wanted to see compensation provided to victims of plagiarism.

Public split on how to express the principle:

| 53% | 47% |

- Publishers and journalists should not copy other people’s words or photographs and pretend it is their own work.
- Publishers should take all reasonable steps not to plagiarise.

76% rated its importance 7+/10
Mean importance score: 8.05/10

“I don’t think there’s any negative impact on the public—that’s just between businesses.”
Participant, London

“If everyone copies each other you’ll just get the same news in different words, get a narrow focus of news.”
Participant, London

“It’s about breach of copyright isn’t it? It should be a law, breach of copyright, you can’t steal content, that’s illegal.”
Participant, London
### Principle: There may be exceptions to these principles where there is a public interest in the publication of certain information or ideas

There are a large number of issues that are - potentially - in the public interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Mostly in the public interest (7-10)</th>
<th>Sometimes in the public interest (4-6)</th>
<th>Rarely in the public interest (0-3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A matter of public health and safety</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td></td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The corruption or abuse of power of a public official</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td></td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detecting or exposing crime or serious propriety</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td></td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A matter of national security or a national emergency</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The incompetence or negligence of a public body</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td></td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The hypocrisy of a public official</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td></td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The illegal or criminal activity of a relative of a public official</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td></td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The hypocrisy of a celebrity</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.8 Below are a number of different types of issues which might be in the public interest. Using a scale of 0-10, where 0 is never in the public interest and 10 is always in the public interest, please rate each type of issue by how likely it is to be in the public interest.

Base: all respondents (n=2,104)
Overall views

- Despite there being a large number of issues potentially in the public interest, workshop participants were very reluctant to apply the public interest exception in a case of a prima facie breach of one of the other principles
  - Partly because they struggled to spontaneously think of the benefits of investigative journalism (assuming that most cases would be better dealt with by going to the police)
  - Partly because they were so cynical about press conduct and wanted strict application of principles (with few, if any, exceptions) to avoid them being used as a ‘get out clause’
  - In none of the scenarios tested did participants think the public interest exception should apply

- The public is evenly split on how to express the principle:
  - 52% rated its importance 7+/10
  - Mean importance score: 7.37/10

  “Public interest is really important but they must not mislead the public about it. Not just use it to sell more papers.”
  Participant, London

  “They could use any excuse to publish a story as it is in the public interest.”
  Participant, London

- There may be exceptions to these principles where there is a public interest in the publication of certain information or ideas
- The public interest may outweigh one of these principles where a story is in the greater good
Principle: There may be exceptions to these principles where there is a public interest in the publication of certain information or ideas.

What this means in practice:

- Avoiding exceptions being interpreted too broadly
  - Through a set of guidelines indicating which situations might be in the public interest

- Having an independent body apply the exceptions
  - Rather than news publications using it as a smokescreen

“An independent body made up of different kinds of people could look at things case by case and decide if they really were in the public interest.”
Participant, London
Workshop participants considered a scenario where Amy saw a train derail. After giving an interview to a journalist where she stated seeing the driver on his mobile phone at the time of the crash, she decides to withdraw her consent for the interview being published.

- Participants generally thought that publishing her interview about the potentially reckless train driver did not amount to a public interest.
- In any case, the importance of respecting Amy’s permission and consent outweighed any potential public interest in publishing her interview.

Participants also considered a scenario where the victim of a drug overdose was repeatedly named in news coverage years after her death.

- They did not believe that naming her (and causing her parents grief) was justified by reason of being in the public interest.
- The public interest would have been equally satisfied had the story been anonymised (i.e. without causing the parents grief).

In other scenarios where a potential public interest exception was under consideration (e.g. Martin’s piggery), participants were equally reluctant to justify news publication’s conduct due to it being in the public interest.

Principle: There may be exceptions to these principles where there is a public interest in the publication of certain information or ideas.

“Would this information being made available to the public have any benefit which wouldn’t be got through the police having it?”
- Participant, London

“The interview, yes, they should withdraw it. She’s uncomfortable. She has clearly told them. On TV you can’t do that, so newspapers shouldn’t be able to.”
- Participant, London
Key findings

• There is widespread public approval of the draft standards code
  • Support for concept of an independent body (rather than government or editors/publishers) designing and enforcing the code
  • Support for specific principles contained in the code
    • Especially accuracy, privacy, harassment and the rights of children
    • An additional principle on balance, not initially in the draft standards code, was deemed very important in combating news bias

• Perceptions of the press are very cynical and there is support for strict regulation of its conduct
  • Indeed, there is some demand for the code to be made even stricter
  • Some confusion about the nature of a standards code (and how this differed from other regulation or law)

• However, this is not a particularly salient topic and there are generally low levels of engagement with the issue of press misconduct
  • Widespread support for the code - but not spontaneous clamour
  • There was low awareness of the issue of press regulation (and little reference to Leveson)