



The Media - key content guide

Freedom of expression - the right to express your own opinion and challenge other ideas including the ability to criticise government

Freedom of Information Act - means the government can be held to account. You can't act and challenge abuses of power if government is able to cover them up.



Article 10 of the Human Rights Act - places certain responsibilities upon the media e.g. cannot publish stories that will jeopardise national security; instigate crime/violence/terrorism; invade people's privacy; or incite racial or religious hatred.

The **public interest** is the justification for publishing information that the public have a right to know.

Role of the media in a democracy

- **Informing and influencing public opinion** - provide information upon which people make decisions; allow public to make informed voting decisions; avoid public being misled and truth is reported.
- **Exchanging ideas and opinions** - allows citizens to be heard; allows views/ideas to be challenged and scrutinised and therefore better laws to be made; can promote worthy and popular issues.
- **Holding those in power to account** - powerful and elites are held to account i.e. incompetence, wrongdoing or corruption is highlighted e.g. *Paradise Papers* (2017) revealed how wealthy individuals hide their wealth to avoid paying tax; *Panama Papers* (2016) led to David Cameron publishing a summary of tax affairs following criticism of an offshore fund he benefited from; e.g. *MP expenses scandal* (2009) whereby many MPs had been found to be unlawfully claiming too many expenses.



How is the BBC different to privately owned media companies? Why is this important?

Funded through taxation (i.e. the licence fee) rather than from selling advertising space to companies (the BBC does not have ad breaks). The overall goal of privately run media companies is to make a profit whereas the BBC Charter

ensures the BBC's goal is to inform, educate and entertain. The BBC can have wider aims and objectives (see below) rather than just making a profit for shareholders.



The public purposes of the BBC Royal Charter:

- Sustain citizenship and civil society
- Promote education and learning
- Stimulating creativity and cultural excellence
- Represent the UK, its nations, regions and communities
- Bring the UK to the world and the world to the UK

Political persuasion of UK newspapers

Conservatives: Daily Mail, Sun, Daily Telegraph, Financial Times, Times

Labour: Guardian, Daily Mirror, Morning Star

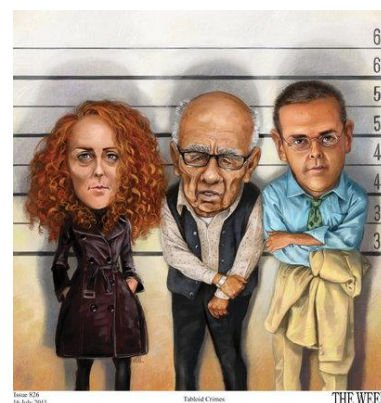
The press (unlike broadcast news on TV and radio) do not need to be impartial i.e. they can support one political party over another, support certain viewpoints and purposefully aim to persuade citizens to vote one way or another.



Media regulation and censorship

Phone-hacking scandal - where journalists at the News of the World newspaper illegal hacked into people's mobile voicemail to obtain private information they could use to write stories. It led to a criminal trial where several journalists were sent to prison.

Leveson enquiry - was set up following the phone-hacking scandal to investigate the culture, ethics and practices of the press. Leveson concluded that the media's own system of self-regulation through the Press Complaints Commission had failed and proposed a new tougher system of self-regulation.



IPSO - Several newspapers rejected the Leveson proposals amid concerns it would limit the power of the press to report freely and so set up their own regulator - the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO)

Judicial public enquiry - an independent investigation by a judge into a matter of serious public concern e.g. the phone-hacking scandal and Grenfell Tower fire

Regulatory body - an organisation responsible for oversight of a service or area of activity e.g. Ofsted, Ofcom



The government did not create an official regulatory body for the press despite the criminal activities exposed by the phone-hacking scandal due to the important role the press plays in a democracy. **By creating legislation to oversee the work of the press there were fears that the powers of the press would be limited and potentially their ability to expose incompetence, corruption or scandal would be reduced i.e. their ability to hold those in power to account would be reduced.**



OFCOM does regulate broadcast media but not the press.

Regulation of digital / social media is also hard e.g. Ryan Giggs was named by several thousand Twitter users despite there being an injunction preventing details of his affair from being published

Using the media

The media can influence the decision making process - **can support one party over another, support certain viewpoints, raise awareness, influence how people vote, run own campaigns; highlight corruption or incompetence e.g. MP expenses row, Panama Papers**

The image is a screenshot of a petition page on the UK Government and Parliament website. The page has a green header with the text 'Petitions UK Government and Parliament'. The main heading of the petition is 'Prevent Donald Trump from making a State Visit to the United Kingdom.' Below this, there is a short description: 'Donald Trump should be allowed to enter the UK in his capacity as head of the US Government, but he should not be invited to make an official State Visit because it would cause embarrassment to Her Majesty the Queen.' There is a 'More details' link and a green 'Sign this petition' button. The number of signatures is displayed as '1,858,046 signatures'. At the bottom, there are links for 'Show on a map' and '100,000'.

Citizens and pressure groups also use the media e.g.:

- **e-petitions e.g. for a second EU referendum (4.1million signatures); ban Donald Trump state visit (1.8million signatures); free meningitis vaccine which gained over 800,000 signatures**
- **run campaigns and raise awareness e.g. EU referendum campaign - Vote Leave and Britain Stronger in Europe; HS2 Action Alliance; Frack Off; Also industry groups (CBI, FSB) and trade unions (British Medical Association holding protests and striking over new working conditions),**