



Department for
Digital, Culture,
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Dear Ian,

Thank you for your letter of 23 March regarding the Government's Online Harms White Paper and press regulation.

As you know we published the White Paper this week and I want to reassure you that the Government's stance on press regulation has not changed. The Government strongly supports press freedom and editorial independence. A vibrant, independent, plural and free press that is able to hold the powerful to account is essential to our democracy. High quality journalism also plays a key part in tackling misinformation and disinformation. I am completely committed to supporting this and taking forward the work of the Cairncross Review.

As you acknowledge, people have strong and legitimate concerns about their safety and security when they are online. Our challenge as a society is to help shape an internet that is open and vibrant but protects users from harm. The White Paper sets out an ambitious and comprehensive regulatory framework for tackling online harms - establishing a duty of care between companies and their users and requiring them to take proportionate and reasonable steps to protect users from harm on their services. This will be overseen and enforced by an independent regulator.

We are consulting on proposals for the statutory duty of care to apply to companies and other bodies that allow users to share or discover user-generated content or interact with each other online. These services are offered by organisations of all sizes, including social media platforms, file hosting sites, public discussion forums, messaging services, and search engines. However, as I made clear at the White Paper launch and in the House of Commons, where these services are already well regulated, as IPSO and IMPRESS do regarding their members' moderated comment sections, we will not duplicate those efforts.

Journalistic or editorial content will not be affected by the regulatory framework. Furthermore, the regulator will have a legal duty to pay due regard to protecting users' rights online, particularly their privacy and freedom of expression. We are clear that the regulator will not be responsible for policing truth and accuracy online.



This Government absolutely upholds the core principle of freedom of expression, recognising the invaluable role a free press plays in our cultural and democratic life. I hope this letter reassures you of our intentions, and that we are seeking to build sufficient safeguards into our proposals to protect these freedoms. We are consulting on the scope of our regulations, and I am keen that we work closely with you and the press industry to ensure our proposals are effective, proportionate and do not have unintended consequences.

I am copying this letter to IPSO, IMPRESS, the NUJ and the News Media Association.



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