

Investigative Journalism Guidance

Investigative journalism is an important part of the BBC's programme armory. It can be a vital tool for uncovering matters of significant public interest, usually the detection of crime or serious anti-social behaviour, revealing corruption or injustice, or exposing wrong doing relating to health, public safety or the making of misleading claims.

It is therefore important that anyone the BBC engages to assist in its investigations must themselves be untainted by any current criminal involvement, free from any suggestion of bias, or any potential conflict of interest.

In researching and investigating criminal behaviour, it may sometimes be necessary to engage people who have some understanding or experience of crime and criminals, but their involvement must always serve an overriding public interest. It will normally be inappropriate to reward former criminals for knowledge based exclusively on their criminality. Payment of any fee will only be approved for a contribution or remarkable importance with a clear public interest which could not be obtained without payment.

It is the responsibility of the Editor or the Executive Producer to put sufficient checks in place to reassure themselves about the background of anyone they propose to use on an investigation. If it is proposed to engage someone who has a criminal past, the Head of Department and Controller, Editorial Policy must be involved in the final decision to engage the operative.

Clear terms of engagement must be established from the outset to clarify:

- The exact nature of the role and the responsibility involved
- The line between the use of specialist knowledge or access and any journalistic work
- What is expected to ensure compliance with the Producers' Guidelines on issues of proportionality, deception and entrapment