

The Press Complaints Commission notes today's Report by the Culture Media and Sport Select Committee.

The PCC welcomes the level of scrutiny which the Committee has applied to its practices and looks forward to considering its recommendations at the next meeting of the Commission. Commenting on the report, Stephen Abell, Director of the PCC, said:

"We are glad to see the fundamental recognition of the Select Committee that 'self-regulation of the press is greatly preferable to statutory regulation, and should continue'. We are also grateful that the Select Committee has publicly commended the staff of the PCC, and acknowledged that the PCC 'does a great deal of valuable work both in preventing breaches of the Code and in addressing complaints'. The Select Committee has accepted that 'many people have benefited from a free and discreet service in exactly the way the PCC's founders envisaged'.

"There are constructive suggestions for improving the system which the Commission must look at, analyse and respond to. The role of maintaining press standards is vitally important, and the Commission will consider - in light of this report - how it can most appropriately improve in the future. In doing so, it will have to pay due regard to the best means of obtaining results for complainants and the public more broadly.

"The PCC agrees with the Select Committee's view that we should take an active role in ensuring that standards are upheld. We are, however, concerned that the Select Committee has somewhat underrated the level of proactive work already undertaken by the PCC. This includes the widespread contact with potential complainants, and with representatives of vulnerable people. It also encompasses the training of journalists and editors, and work behind the scenes to prevent harassment and media intrusion. It should not be lost that, every year, thousands of people choose to come to the PCC rather than resort to law. We look forward to improving the Committee's knowledge of our activities in these areas.

"The PCC accepts that the report contains criticisms of some of its structures and practices, which will need to be given due consideration. The Select Committee acknowledged the ongoing independent review into the governance of the Press Complaints Commission, and the Review demonstrates that the PCC is not complacent and is seeking to improve itself and to become more transparent and accountable. The Governance Review is taking a fundamental look at how the PCC matches up to the challenges posed by the media in the 21st Century. It will ensure that the PCC reflects public expectations and good practice in governance generally, and takes account of how media content is now produced and delivered.

"Robust and responsible self-regulation is clearly the most effective, adaptable and desirable way of ensuring high standards in journalism. The PCC is committed to delivering this."

ENDS

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