

Press Gazette

JOURNALISM TODAY

13 March, 2012

The Leveson Inquiry
Royal Courts of Justice
Strand
London
WC2A 2L

Dear Lord Leveson,

I'm editor of Press Gazette, the UK's only monthly magazine for journalists.

I don't know any journalists who haven't felt ashamed about the shabby practices which have been unearthed by your inquiry. But at the same time, the picture of British journalism you have been presented with is unrecognisable to most journalists.

I hope you can take the time to look through the 12 pages of this month's Press Gazette magazine which carry the 'Proud to be a journalist' logo.

This is just a tiny snapshot – but I can assure you it is indicative of the honest work in the public interest which the vast majority of Britain's journalists are engaged in.

Last month Press Gazette asked its 24,000 Twitter followers for reasons why they are Proud to be a Journalist. Their responses are published across pages 16,17,18 and 19 and give you some insight into what motivates journalists working across national and regional newspapers, consumer magazines, business publishing and broadcasting.

The vast majority of Britain's journalists work very hard for comparatively little money because, yes the job is fun, but also because they passionately believed in the ethical grounding for what they are doing.

Here are a couple of examples:

Antonia Hoyle, journalist: "Today a woman I interviewed said that the finished feature helped her come to terms with her illness."

Carys Shepworth, Bridgend Reporter, Wales Online: "Exposing those who abuse power and giving a platform to those who have none."

There are around 100 more of these.

On pages 20 and 21 former 'paparazzo' photographer Nick Stern talks about the ethical considerations which are made behind the lens of those in the press pack.

"We are there as impartial observers to record in a dignified manner and in a way that no reasonable celebrity or member of the public could have an issue with."

Perhaps most powerfully, on pages 22-24, is the report from John Dale about the real journalism in the public interest which goes on at one of our best local weekly newspapers – the Essex Chronicle. You would find a similar story at hundreds of other newsrooms.

And finally, on page 26, we report on the investigation by Sun chief feature writer Oliver Harvey to track down former famine victim Birhan Woldu in Ethiopia, sparking a campaign which would help raise £3m for Africa.

In making your recommendations, please consider the vast majority of journalists who do work in the public interest in increasingly tough economic circumstances. Thousands of British journalists have lost their jobs in recent years in the face of the economic downturn and technological change.

While crooked journalists should be shown no quarter, the vast majority of honest journalists need your support.

Ordinary journalists need stronger protection from pressure to behave unethically and for having the courage to blow the whistle on those who do.

And any reforms must not erode the competitive edge of an industry which is already under extreme commercial pressure.

Dominic Ponsford
editor
Press Gazette



culture, practices and ethics of the press

Steps before publication

1. If you are happy for the Inquiry to publish your submission please add and sign the following statement of truth to the end of your submission/statement:

Statement of Truth

I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed

[Redacted signature box]

Date 14/2/2012

Please be aware that by signing the statement of truth you are confirming that you agree that the contents of the submission/statement are true. Please take extra time to ensure that you are completely happy with your submission/statement before you sign it.

If you have provided a submission/statement in your private capacity you should state your full name in the submission/statement but should provide in a separate document personal details (e.g. address, contact address, mobile telephone number and e-mail address), which will not be published.

Please remove any personal details such as home address or telephone number before forwarding the final signed submission/statement.

If you have provided the submission/statement on behalf of an organisation, please state this clearly in the first line of the submission/statement.

2. Your signed submission/statement, in its entirety, should be returned to us by email.

3. Returning your signed submission/statement will confirm that you are content for the Inquiry to publish it on its website in the form you have provided. If this is not the case and you have any concerns or wish for certain sections to be withheld please make this clear in any response.

4. Your signed submission, once received, will initially be provided to those groups who have been designated as Core Participants to the Inquiry (a full list is available on our website: www.levesoninquiry.org.uk).

5. If the Core Participants do not raise any matters your statement will then be referred to in open session and at that point it will be published, along with your name, on the Inquiry's website.

The Inquiry intends to begin publishing submissions/statements on the website shortly and would therefore be grateful for your response by return.