



Department for  
Digital, Culture,  
Media & Sport

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12<sup>th</sup> February 2019

Dear Sharon,

Dame Frances Cairncross has today published her report into press sustainability. I know that you met Dame Frances during the course of her review, and that you will have a keen interest in its conclusions. Indeed the report makes a number of recommendations with relevance to Ofcom's remit and activities.

It rightly recognises the good work being done by the BBC in this area, and indeed notes that "the BBC offers the very thing that this Review aims to encourage: a source of reliable and high quality news, with a focus on objectivity and impartiality, and independent from government".

In relation to the BBC's market impact, it also makes a direct recommendation to Ofcom, as follows: "*Ofcom should assess whether BBC News Online is striking the right balance between aiming for the widest reach for its own content on the one hand and driving traffic from its online site to commercial publishers (particularly local ones) on the other*" (recommendation 5).

The Review suggests that Ofcom undertakes this assessment as part of its forthcoming review into the way the BBC is adapting to the changing news and current affairs environment. It is right that the role of BBC is appropriately transparent and clear in this regard.

A further two of the review's recommendations call for regulatory oversight of online platforms: firstly, in relation to the development of proposed codes of conduct between online platforms and news publishers (recommendation 1); and secondly, as part of a News Quality Obligation (recommendation 3). The review is, rightly, neutral as to the most appropriate body to take on the regulatory tasks identified in the recommendations. Such issues are not unconnected with the review into digital competition being led by Jason Furman, or the government's considerations as part of the government's Online Harms White Paper.

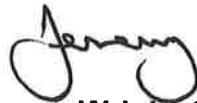
Finally, the Review also recommends that the government should develop a media literacy strategy, working with Ofcom. As you know, Ofcom has already agreed to undertake a mapping exercise to understand the extent of media literacy initiatives across the UK, and to identify gaps and opportunities for collaboration.

Government will want to consider the above recommendations carefully, and it is appropriate that we take account of Ofcom's insight and expertise as we do so. I recognise that these issues are complex, however I am determined that Government explores all the options to support high-quality journalism. Journalism clearly plays a vital role in our democracy at a national and local level and provides significant public good. It will be important that we work together to take this forward.

Given the importance of these issues, I would be grateful if Ofcom could look carefully at Dame Frances' recommendations, and identify if there are any new concerns deserving attention. I would very much appreciate a response with your initial view by the end of February and meeting in person in March to discuss options and next steps.

I am copying this letter to Lord Burns, Sir David Clementi and Lord Hall.

*Yours ever*



**Rt Hon Jeremy Wright QC MP**  
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