

Temporary Chief Constable Lisa Winward
North Yorkshire Police,
Police Headquarters,
Alverton Court,
Crosby Road,
North Allerton,
North Yorkshire DL6 1BF

30 May 2018

Dear Chief Constable Winward,

I am writing to express my concern about your forces' new policy on media recognition, as outlined in a letter sent on your behalf to NUJ member Tim Hicks dated 17th of April 2018 (your ref 720418).

All organisations are at liberty to decide how best to interact with the media and how much help it is appropriate to grant to journalists. Your letter, however, sets out a blanket policy that has serious implications for journalism in the UK and causes the NUJ considerable concern.

You state: *we define (the media) as: Those who are employed by publications on the Independent Press Standards Organisations' list of publications which abide by the Editor's Code, and Those who are employed by broadcast stations on OfCom's list of licensed TV and radio stations which abide by the OfCom Broadcasting Code of May 2016.*

This troubles me for a number of reasons. The UK has never operated a system of 'licensed' journalists and I don't believe that IPSO would wish for its membership to be considered to have that status. You will recall, no doubt, that the impetus that brought IPSO into being was a stern resistance to any kind of state regulation of the press. Applying membership as a qualification for being helped by a public body's communication staff would appear to be introducing state regulation of journalism through a back door.

Nor is membership of IPSO much of a guide to what might be considered the 'mainstream media'. The Guardian and the Financial Times both remain outside membership, but have long track records as competent, professionally run newspapers. IPSO itself, in its membership requirements, seeks only that applicants agree to abide by its Editor's code. There is no test of competence or professionalism beyond that, so far as I can see.

Nor is IPSO the only press regulator. I am sure that you are aware, Impress is the only body that has met the standards set out by the government for press regulators. I would imagine that its members, while less numerous than those of IPSO, would be dismayed to think that by favouring the legally compliant regulator, they were excluding themselves from access to news from your Force.

Your letter also suggests that your staff will not deal with freelance journalists, only with journalists who are employees of the media outlets they represent. I am not sure how you will be able to verify this? Freelance journalists have been a significant feature of the UK media scene since the nineteenth century. Approximately a third of all journalists working in the UK are freelance, including many who would generally represent themselves as 'working for' the BBC, among others.

Even among those freelance journalists who are wholly independent and might pitch stories to various media outlets from time to time, a great many are skilled, responsible and effective. A blanket ban against helping them with media enquiries simply because of their employment status would be troubling indeed.

Your new policy has major implications for UK journalism and would be troubling indeed, if sustained. The purpose of my letter is to ask that you reconsider your position on this issue and return to the status quo existing before the 16th of April. Excluding certain sections of the media on the grounds that they are, or are not, employees or members of a particular organisation, smacks of a kind of society that I can't imagine any of us would wish to contemplate. Needless to say, if you would like any help drawing up a more inclusive policy for future implementation, I would be happy to contribute to your discussion, if you thought this might be helpful.?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



TIM DAWSON
NUJ Freelance Office