

Revision Summary Sheet – The Role of the Media and the Free Press.

Free Press/Media Freedom	a body of book publishers, news media , etc., not controlled or restricted by government censorship in political or ideological matters.	In the Public Interest	Information that the public have a right to know, such as a plan to close a local hospital.
Interest of the Public	information that might interest members of the public, such as a celebrity's private life.	Media Regulation	the control or guidance of mass media by governments and other bodies
Censorship	is where free speech, public communication or other information which may be considered objectionable, harmful, sensitive, politically incorrect or inconvenient as determined by governments, media outlets, authorities or other groups or institutions is limited or blocked.	Social Media	websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. E.g. youtube, facebook etc
Right to Privacy	refers to the concept that one's personal information is protected from public scrutiny.	Libel	a published false statement that is damaging to a person's reputation – this is a civil matter and the person accused of libel has the responsibility of proving that their published comments were either true or, if they were false, did no damage to the persons reputation
Freedom of Expression	the right to hold opinions and express them freely without government interference, this includes expressing views in the media and social media.	Legal Responsibilities	the responsibility to obey the law. E.g. your parents have a responsibility to ensure that you go to school.
Regulatory Body	An organisation responsible for the oversight of an activity or service. Regulatory body often publishes reports on the effectiveness of the service providers. These reports are made available to the media and general public.	Judicial Public Enquiry.	an independent investigation by an experienced judge into a matter of concern. Most meetings are open to the public and can be reported by the media.
Digital Media	Created and shared using computers e.g. blogs, websites, digital video/audio etc.	Self Regulation	Some activities are regulated by independent

What is the role of the media in a modern society?

- **Inform** the public about what is going on and provide information on complex issues in such a way that they are accessible to their readership
- **Encourage** public debates on major issues of public concern
- **Uncover** abuses of power and challenge decision-makers and press for changes
- **Campaign** and create and support public opinion in regard to issues and injustices
- **Speak to power** so that those who hold positions of power (political, economic, social) are both accountable and aware of public opinion and also ensure that a range of political views and opinions are made available to the public.

What are the responsibilities of the media towards society?

- **Ensure** that there is a balance between fact, analysis and opinion when reporting news
- **Work in a professional manner** ensuring their reporting is as accurate as possible
- **React/set the political agenda** by explaining issues to allow the public to understand and participate in the debate
- **Publish corrections** and be **accountable** for what they publish
- **Ensure** that the **public interest** is a priority both what is and what is not published, for example not to print information that could be harmful to national security or endanger individuals.

What must society ensure exists so that there is freedom of the press?

- **Establish** a legal and taxation framework that allows the media to thrive/survive
- **Ensure** that there is a legal and regulatory framework that encourages a range of views (plurality) and addresses issues such as the concentration of media ownership and ownership by non-UK individuals or companies, for example:
 - **make available** the necessary airwaves and infrastructure to allow for a range of media outlets
 - **encourage** both the private media and public media sectors
 - **ensure** that all political parties have access to the media especially during election campaigns
 - **establish** a legal framework that encompasses freedom of information laws but also legislates for privacy to provide a limit to media intrusion
 - **create** a regulatory framework that enables citizens, groups and organisations to hold the media accountable for their actions.

Balancing rights and responsibilities.

The dividing line between media “investigation” and “intrusion” is not always clear. Judges can find it difficult to settle legal disputes over media reporting. The media has a right to hold people to account in the public interest, so that citizens are aware of what is being done on their behalf and know about the behaviour of public officials. However, sometimes reporters have justified unreasonable invasions of people’s privacy by claiming to be acting in the public interest. Nevertheless most journalists accept moral responsibility to report accurately and to treat people with dignity. These standards are reflected in media organisations codes of practice.

Extract adapted from *The Guardian's editorial code – August 2015*

Five questions we should ask ourselves about a situation before intruding on privacy:

1. *There must be sufficient cause – the intrusion needs to be justified by the scale of potential harm that might result from it.*
2. *There must be integrity of motive – the intrusion must be justified in terms of the public good that would follow from publication.*
3. *The methods used must be in proportion to the seriousness of the story and its public interest, using the minimum possible intrusion.*
4. *There must be proper authority – any intrusion must be authorised at a sufficiently senior level (from within the organisation) and with appropriate oversight.*
5. *There must be a reasonable prospect of success; fishing expeditions are not justified.*

Revision Summary Sheet – The Role of the Media and the Free Press.

Leveson Enquiry

Most people argue that the media should have the right to publish any story involving ordinary people, organisations, businesses, politicians or celebrities as long as it is accurate and in the public interest. People's right to privacy should only be infringed if the "public interest" requires such intrusion e.g. a reporter wanting to expose a people trafficking gang would be justified in infringing the gang's privacy. However, reporters should not obtain information by using unreasonable methods such as "hacking" into people's mobile phones.

The Milly Dowler Case

In 2002, 13 year old Milly Dowler was abducted on her way home from school in Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, on 21 March 2002, and subsequently murdered. Her body was found 20 miles away in September of the same year.

Voicemail messages on Milly Dowler's phone were accessed during the time that she was "missing" leading to her family and friends into thinking that she was still alive.

The Guardian Newspaper reported on 4 July 2011 that Scotland Yard had discovered Dowler's voicemail had been accessed by journalists working for the *News of the World* and the newspaper's private investigator Glenn Mulcaire.

Leveson Enquiry

The Leveson Enquiry was a judicial public enquiry, set up in 2011, to look into the culture ethics and practice of the press. This followed widespread revelations of phone hacking by newspaper reporters. One of the main aims was to investigate the balance between privacy and media freedom.

The enquiry found that the media's own system of self regulation through the Press Complaints Commission had failed to prevent abuses of power by reporters and newspaper editors. The report recommended that the people should be more easily able to make a claim against the media if their right to privacy was being ignored or if stories were untrue. As a result the Leveson report led to the Government set up a system for approving new proposals for media self regulation. (the Government felt that it would be a dangerous infringement of press freedom to control the media itself)

In response some media businesses set up their own regulatory body, (Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO)). This angered many victims of media reporting who had already formed a pressure group, Hacked Off, to represent their interests. Hacked Off felt that IPS would not go far enough in controlling the press.

The Media's role and importance in a democracy

Democracies rely on the media to:

- Reveal information that enables the public to make decisions.
- Expose wrongdoing and injustice
- Protect the public from danger
- Prevent the public from being misled

UK citizens get much of their information from social, digital, broadcast and print media. This helps them to keep up with news and, and other people's reactions to the news, helps citizens to move from opinions on issues such as whether students should pay tuition fees or whether the government should provide more resources for the National Health Service.

The table below indicates the declining circulations of national news papers in the UK most of these now also have paid or open online platforms so they can ensure that they operate a 24/7 news service as well as attract advertisers so that their business remains profitable.

Censorship

The UK Human Rights Act safeguards freedom of expression in line with Article 10. of the European convention on Human Rights. However, there are still some restrictions about what can be written or broadcast:

- Threatening, abusive or insulting words intending or likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress or cause a breach of the peace.
- Incitement of racial or religious hatred.
- Incitement of terrorism including encouragement or glorifying terrorism and dissemination of terrorist publications.
- Gross indecency – crimes involving sex/sexual images
- Court reporting that includes the names of victims or young offenders.
- Interviews with jurors
- Endangering national security or military operations.

Films, videos, Video Games are classified according to the ages of people allowed to see/play them, this form of age related censorship is designed to protect young people from bad language, sex and violence.

Under the 2003 Communications Act, OFCOM regulates the broadcasting media. They regulate what can and can't be broadcast on TV and radio, what is allowed reflects generally accepted standards and prevents harm. The code exists to protect viewers and listeners from harmful and offensive content but also ensures that broadcasters have the freedom to make challenging programmes. As a result, *Watershed* allows for certain programmes to be shown before whilst other programmes/ films must be shown after 9PM.

Social and digital media are much more difficult to regulate due to vastness of them and how many people have access to it and can also change what is published/publish fake news. Governments can intervene with the internet service providers to control potentially harmful content. However many people are still concerned about easy it is to find content that is sexually explicit, violent or promotes potentially dangerous behaviour.

Table 11.1 Newspaper sales July 1980, July 2011 and January 2017

Newspaper	Party political leanings since 1980	July 1980	July 2011	January 2017
The Sun	Has been both Labour and Conservative	3.7m	2.8m	1.7m
Daily Mirror	Labour	3.6m	1.2m	0.7m
Daily Mail	Conservative	1.9m	2.0m	1.5m
Daily Telegraph	Conservative	1.4m	0.6m	0.5m
The Times	Has been both Labour and Conservative	0.3m	0.4m	0.5m
The Guardian	Labour/Liberal Democrat	0.4m	0.25m	0.15m

Table 11.2 Number of people viewing news bulletins on the TV, June 2017

TV Channel	Viewing figures
BBC1 10 o'clock News	5.49m
ITV	3.13m
Channel 4 News	0.72m
This compares with the two most popular BBC and ITV programmes: 'EastEnders' and 'Coronation Street'	6m

On the social media format Twitter the top two most followed people are Katy Perry with 100,417,176 followers and in second place Justin Bieber with 97,421,312.

On Facebook, which has 1.79 billion users worldwide, the top five shared items in 2016 were:

- 1 'New Alzheimer's Treatment Fully Restores Memory Function' (5 million shares)
- 2 'How Sensitive is Your OCD Radar?' (3.4 million shares)
- 3 'Science Says the First Born Child is the Most Intelligent' (2.8 million shares)
- 4 'An Open Letter to my Friends who Support Donald Trump' (2.2 million shares)
- 5 'Bald Men are Sexier, More Masculine, Scientific Study Says' (2.1 million shares)

The BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation)

The BBC is one of the most influential media organisations, and is regulated by the government and currently funded largely from money paid by the public through an annual licensing fee (TV license). As a result the BBC has to be impartial – it is not allowed to promote a particular viewpoint support a particular political party. An advantage is this lack of bias is that people tend to trust the BBC for news. The BBC world service not only promotes cultures around the world but also promote British Culture around the world.

Extract from the BBC Royal Charter

The public purposes of the BBC are as follows:

- sustaining citizenship and civil society
- promoting education and learning
- stimulating creativity and cultural excellence
- representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities
- bringing the UK to the world and the world to the UK.

Privately owned Media Organisations

Other news organisations are owned privately and are more likely to try and influence public opinion than the BBC. E.g. The Sun and The Times Newspapers, Sky TV and Fox News are largely owned by the Murdoch Family who like to have some control over the viewpoints expressed by the media they own.

English news media support for the political parties – general election, May 2015

Conservative	Daily Mail
	The Sun
	The Daily Telegraph
	Financial Times
	The Times
Labour	The Guardian
	Daily Mirror
	Morning Star
UK Independence Party	Daily Express
No party supported	The Independent

Media Campaigns

Privately owned media also run campaigns to influence their readers and to put pressure on the Government. IN 2015, the Daily Mail newspaper and website (owned by Viscount Rothermere) celebrated the success of its campaign to release UK citizen Shaker Aamer, from 14 years detention without trial.

Exchanging Ideas and Opinions

Most news organisations encourage discussion and debate. Some shows on broadcast media use a debate format. This gives viewers and listeners access to a wide range of ideas and opinions, e.g. Any Questions on BBC radio and Question Time on BBC were amongst the first to ask politicians and other important opinion formers to face questions from the studio audience. The internet has given the everyone a platform which to talk to millions. This has huge benefits but also has led to huge concerns about bullying as well as anxiety over sharing ideas and opinions damaging to vulnerable people. Internet service providers have attempted to remove the most offensive/dangerous material, but there have been calls to for further action

Holding those in power to account

One of the media's main responsibilities in a democracy is to help scrutinise the actions of:

- The royal family
- MPs and members of the House of Lords.
- Civil Servants
- Judges and lawyers
- The clergy
- Military leaders
- Business and trade union leaders
- Political parties
- Pressure groups
- Charities
- Heads of schools, hospitals, police forces, prisons and other organisations.

Using the Media.

Most pressure groups have a media or press officer, their job is to send out regular messages through social media, email and texts; update social media sites and websites; and write and send press release to newspapers, radio and TV. This has to be done frequently to keep them in the public eye.

Using the Media.

Citizens often get information from the media when carrying out research or planning a campaign. E.g. the BBC website is a favourite for Citizenship students as it shows both sites of the argument and has links to other relevant sources of information. A well designed blog/website can have considerable influence and can be quickly spread with huge impact through the increasing use of social media.

Videos posted on an influential website can easily go viral, the Huffington post and YouTube are two of the most influential sites to find videos and have a citizenship focus.

Citizens running a campaign use digital media, print media, radio and TV to gain publicity and to encourage support from others. Citizens can also use websites such as change.org to start an online petition

Using the Media.

Citizen's opinions about politicians and their policies are strongly influenced by media coverage. As a result, politicians are keen to have good relations with reporters and private media owners. Politicians strive to project a positive image and sometimes hire media consultants to help them achieve this. Most politicians use social media, hiring professionals to update their blogs and websites to publicise their activities and promote their policies.

