

SUBMISSION TO LEVESON INQUIRY – CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE UK PRESS

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Introduction

We, the undersigned, believe the Leveson Inquiry and the current debates within the Press Complaints Commission and Press Board of Finance about the culture, ethics and regulation of journalism in the UK provides an opportunity to highlight potential discriminatory practice by the print media with regards to children and young people. This submission makes a number of recommendations to effect improvements around the Press Complaints Commission procedures and the Editors Code of Practice itself which we hope will find support from the Leveson Inquiry team. We believe that these four recommendations will help to improve press coverage of children and young people in the future, and so engender more interest and trust among young readers.

Are the media and regulatory processes discriminatory against Children & Young People?

“When a photo of a group of perfectly ordinary lads standing around wearing hooded tops has become visual shorthand for urban menace, or even the breakdown of society, it's clear that teenage boys have a serious image problem. The teen boys' "brand" has become toxic. Media coverage of boys is unrelentingly negative...our research shows that the media is helping make teenage boys fearful of each other.” Fiona Bawdon, Women in Journalism

“Newspapers and TV have in the past demonised and stereotyped young people..” Nick Clegg, Deputy PM¹

“Media reporting of children is mainly hostile” Polly Toynbee, Guardian Columnist

“...the media should try and report on children and young people in a fair and balanced way” Boris Johnson

“It feels like everyday there is another news story denigrating young people” Shami Chakrabarti, Liberty

In 2008 the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child urged that the UK government take ‘urgent measures to address the intolerance and inappropriate characterization of children, especially adolescents, within society, including the media...’ For over 5 years, there have been countless campaigns on this issue, with little success (appendices attached). This submission will highlight particular evidential reference to research carried out by Women in Journalism, Children and Young People Now, Citizenship Foundation, Children’s Rights Alliance for England, UK Youth Media Council, Youth Media Agency, British Youth Council, Barnardos and Institute for Global Ethics UK Trust.

• **Misrepresentation of young people in the Media – showing imbalance**

- 76% of press coverage of young people is negative. (Children and Young People Now 2009)
- “Young people are, on the whole, not asked or given the opportunity to comment in an article which involves young people, especially if the article is negative”. Tom Webb, 18
- “I felt overwhelmed with the way the riots was publicised and was very scared. There are no real positive role models in the press especially for me a young black boy”. 15 yr old
- ‘We are a group of 14-year-old boys from the Reclaim project; we have been approached by so many different newspapers, magazines and TV companies, most of who want to talk to us about guns and knives and gangs. We keep trying to explain that we are not involved in gangs and crime; we’re doing positive things in this area – and then journalists go away, as they tell us that’s not the story people are interested in...’ Open letter from Manchester-based Reclaim, published in Guardian, 25 August 2008.

¹ Quotes taken from Another Perspective, Children’s Rights Alliance for England, 2009

Generalisations of all children and young people in a negative light

- 85% of teen boys said newspapers portray them in a bad light. Research Conducted by Echo 2009 for Women in Journalism
- 79% of children and young people feel that adults see them in a negative light. Youth Media Agency Pilot Survey, November 2011
- What the papers say - 'What word other than "feral" better describes the swarms of hooligans abandoned to their own devices by slattern mothers and absentee "babyfathers"? No one crosses the road if they spot a crocodile of Boy Scouts coming in the other direction. But nor does anyone in their right mind risk walking through a scrum of hoodies hogging the pavement – not unless they fancy a knife in their ribs.' Richard Littlejohn, Daily Mail, 18 November 2008

Case Study – August Riots

Thomas Hammerberg from the Council of Europe raised an issue with the media's coverage of the August riots, which from the onset singled out children and young people as the rioters, despite only 26% being 10-17. In a survey to find out the views of young people on the riots, one teenager commented on the media's unfair coverage of the events: "I saw a headline which said 'teenagers rob local shop'. It's stupid because you wouldn't say 'adults rob local shop'!" <http://www.crin.org/resources/infodetail.asp?id=26583>

- Daily Mail –Child looters' rampage: How rioters as young as nine pillaged Manchester city centre 'Feral' children run wild in the streets of UK cities, Police struggle with marauding gangs 'Brazen attitudes' of thugs stuns police <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2024678/Machester-riots-2011-How-looters-young-9-pillaged-city-centre.html>
- Daily Mail - Riots were like 'a rave' and a chance for young people to get 'free stuff' <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2057492/England-riots-2011-chance-young-people-free-stuff.html>
- Daily Mail - There were far too many young people on the streets of London last night. Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2023874/UK-riots-2011-16k-police-ready-use-plastic-bullets-lid-Londons-looters.html#ixzz1eMC4qrIH>
- Daily Mail - 215 people arrested since Saturday night - including one aged 11 - and 25 charged Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2023554/Tottenham-riot-2011-London-lockdown-David-Cameron-flies-home.html#ixzz1eMCpKZ36>



10p DAILY EXPRESS

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WIN A VW CALIFORNIA CAMPERVAN WORTH £42,000

DECENT BRITONS HIT BACK AT THE MOBORS

OLYMPIC GIRL'S RIOTING SHAME

Disgusted mum shops daughter after seeing her throw bricks on TV



5 OFFICIAL BIG BROTHER PAPER 5

DAILY STAR

WILD CHILD TARA BUSTS INTO B BRO

+ Anarchy in the UK +

WE'LL SHOOT THE LOOTERS

Fightback starts NOW



THE Sun

2 FREE TICKETS

NAME AND SHAME RIOTERS

SHOP A MORON



An angry crowd in Manchester and across West Midlands last night, police issued these pictures of police searching our country. If you know any of these faces or the identities of any of the 1,000 looters and rioters, call 0800 555 111

THE INDEPENDENT

NEWS AND FEATURES POLITICAL ANALYSIS COMMENTARY REGIONAL ENLIGHTENMENT

DAILY Mirror

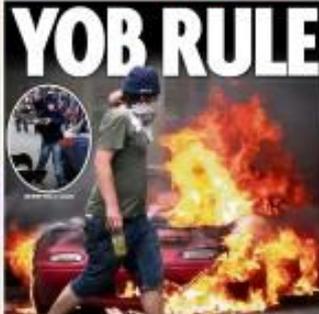
COLIN HOLLAND EXCLUSIVE: I'm sad for cheat Shane

YOB RULE

Kate's secret terror advice

EAT FOR ONLY 10p

Amy wept while I sang



London burns as riots spread Cops in running battle with thugs PM files back for crisis summit

Mob rule

Police and politicians powerless as London burns for a third night and riots spread

PEEL REPORTS, PAGE 2

Markets plunge again as panic continues

Arab leaders condemn Assad at last

THE Sun

2 FREE TICKETS

65 ARRESTS IN NIGHT OF SHAME

RIOTERS AGED 7

US 'set for new blow to rating'

● Kids took on cops in £100m rampage

● Police chief on hol as violence spreads



DAILY Mirror

The Prem's back!

Clean travel from £4.50

FREE inside

SHOP YOUR CHILD ..IT HURTS BUT IT'S RIGHT

Olympic 'riot teen' mum's plea to parents over lawless youths

NOT LATEST: COUNCILS ACROSS THE COUNTRY BEGIN EVICTING YOB FAMILIES



The Daily Telegraph

Our sick society

As Cameron condemns riots, suspected looters in court include a boy of 11, a grammar school girl, and a teaching assistant



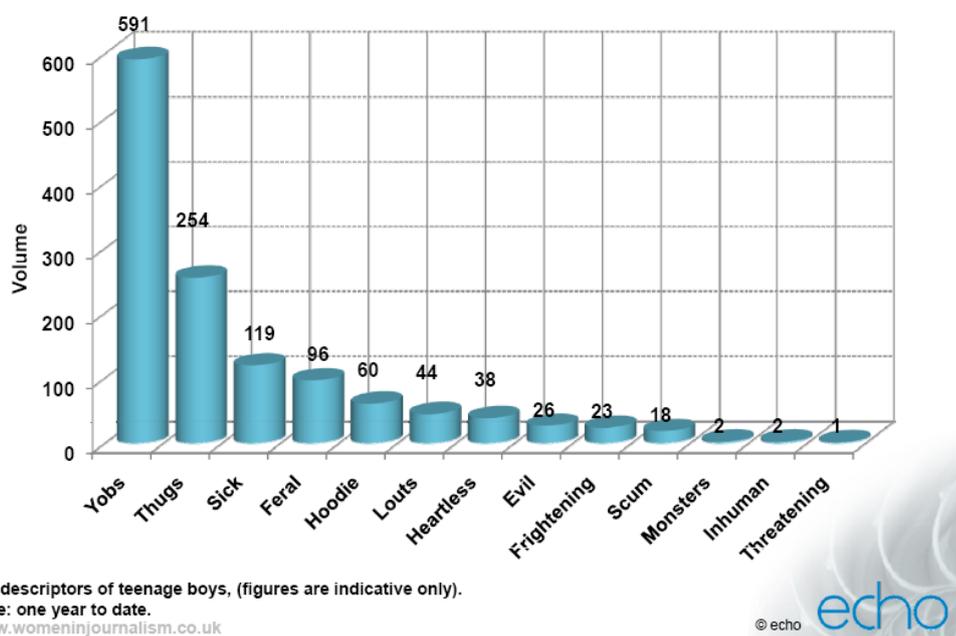
Victim's father appeals for justice after being mugged in London

Early flight for US

Excessive use of derogatory language

- "...a terrifying generation of murderous, morally blank wolf children, feral, evil, animals, vermin', real words used regularly in the press about children and young people, Barnardos 2008
- 'Heartless hoodies have snatched a cherished pet chicken from a Barnstable home... A gang of youths broke into the shed, stole several eggs, and tried to make off with a large white rooster, before setting for the small friendly bantam. The youths were then spotted the following day, chasing the chicken around Pilton. PC [Andy] Greenslade said: '...We won't tolerate an innocent and friendly animal being tormented by a group of terrifying hoodies.' 25 February 2009, This is North Devon
- ECHO research showed the following terms used for teenage boys:

Terms used in stories about teen boys



• Impact of the negative Press of Children & Young People

- 39% of adults are unaware of the positive things that young people do Vinspired Survey 2008
- 79% of children and young people feel frustrated with the way they are portrayed, YMA 2011
- 16% of children and young people feel like they want to live up to the stereotype, YMA 2011
- Public perception of young people is also at an all time low. Would you be surprised to know only 12% of crime is committed by young people. This contrasts with public ideas, in a 2007-8 British Crime Survey most adults surveyed thought 50% of crime was committed by young people and 96% believing young people are 'a problem'.
- Aspirations of young people at an all time low, 26% of young people from deprived homes believe 'few' or 'none' of their career goals are achievable. Princes Trust, 2011
- 'Over 72% of young people change their behaviour because of their wariness of other young people' WIJ/ECHO Research 09
- 'Media stories about yobs and hoodies are the main reason why teen boys are wary of other teenager and 80% of teen boys think adults are more wary of them now than they were a year ago'. WIJ/ ECHO Research 09

- **Press Complaints Commission process inaccessible to children and young people**

The Press Complaints Commission website is not accessible for children and young people. The code is written in a legally framed language that would be impossible for children to understand and there are no youth friendly versions available on the site. The website is aimed at adults with considerable literacy capabilities, especially evident, as the PCC demands that the complainant has to 'make your case'. This process is not fit for purpose in the age of youth engagement and promotion of active citizenship.

A very recent survey conducted by Youth Media Agency, November 2011 with 65 children and young people aged 11-25 discovered:

- 53% did not even know about the Press Complaints Commission.
- 68% of children and young people stated that they would make a complaint about the press if it was easier to do so. 23% said they were 'not sure'.
- "Although I may make a complaint about the press, I doubt my views will be taken upon strongly due to my age". Young respondent

Case study - Student, 18

After the London riots a young person aged 18 wrote an article for a magazine. She initially strongly condemned the riots and then gave the personal opinion that young people had possibly become involved because they were upset with the excessive public cuts. She gave examples of how the cuts of youth clubs and community centres had left some youngsters in a vulnerable position.

The story was then picked up and twisted by a mainstream newspaper, using her as an example of young people wanting the government to fund Dizee Rascals and Plan Bs. This left the young person feeling incredibly frustrated.

Here is what she has said about the experience:

'I felt used and hurt. I felt that he had taken my statement out of context and found that very annoying. I couldn't comment on the site as the comments had been shut down, and I didn't want to deal directly with the Paper. When I tried to complain to the PCC I found the website very off putting and had to look up words that I am not normally used to. Going through the process I found that I was put off the language and simply gave up on making a complaint.'

Recommendations

We the undersigned recommend that:

1) **We strongly recommend ‘age’ be included as a classification of discrimination into the Editors Code, - Clause 12.i**, as in NUJ Code of Conduct 9. (Referring to Editors’ Code Clause 12 about discrimination i) *The press must avoid prejudicial or pejorative reference to an individual's race, colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or disability*)

2) Children are a particularly vulnerable group in our society, as identified in Clause 6 in the Editors’ Code. We recommend that a new clause be added both to the Editors Code and the NUJ Code of Conduct that reflects the damage caused by generalising negatively around children and young people.

'Journalists should exercise a duty of care and avoid negative generalisations about children and young people'.

3) We strongly recommend the **Press Complaints Commission is made more accessible to children and young people**. For example, the PCC should develop a ‘child and young person friendly’ interface on their website with language that is accessible to children and young people. We also recommend the Code is written in 'Child friendly' language.

4) We recommend the **Press Complaints Commission ensures someone within the organisation has trained skills in working directly with children and young people** in order to handle their complaints with sensitivity and discretion.

Endorsements

The above recommendations have been endorsed by the following organisations:

Bang Edutainment
British Film Institute
British Youth Council
Children’s Rights Alliance for England
Exposure Magazine
Fitzrovia Youth in Action
Hansard Society
Headliners UK
IARS – 99% Campaign
Institute for Global Ethics UK Trust
Live Magazine
Manifesta
MediaWise
National Children’s Bureau
National Children’s Deaf Society
National Council for Voluntary Youth Service
National Youth Agency
Oval House Theatre – Truth About Youth
Reprezent Radio
Save Kids TV
UNICEF UK
UK Youth
UK Youth Media Council
Youth Media Agency
Youthnet

Endorsements

The above recommendations have been endorsed by the following organisations:



Appendices

Women in Journalism/ECHO Research – Teenage Boys and The Media, 2009

<http://www.echoresearch.com/data/File/pdf/WIJ%20%20charts%20Echo%20Version.pdf>

Children and Young People Now (CYPN) - Addressing public and media perceptions of young people: a compilation of initiatives within the UK, May 2009

Citizenship Foundation – Our Stories 2009 <http://www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk/main/news.php?n660>

National Youth Agency - NYA Background Research: Public Perceptions and Media Portrayal of the Young Children's Rights Alliance for England - Report Right, 2009

<http://www.crae.org.uk/assets/files/s%20rights%20and%20equality%20in%20the%20newspapers%20CRAE%20May%202009.pdf>

Children's Rights Alliance for England - Another Perspective: How journalists can promote children's Human Rights and Equality, 2009 http://www.crin.org/docs/Another_Perspective.pdf

UK Youth Media Council - Survey 200, Children and young people and the Media 2010

http://ukymc.blogspot.com/2010_06_01_archive.html

Youth Media Agency - Survey on Children, Young people and the Fair Reporting 2011

Respect? Campaign – BYC and Youthnet, The Voice Behind the Hood 2006

<http://www.byc.org.uk/media/16154/Report.%20Respect%20Voice%20behind%20the%20Hood.%20July%202006..pdf>

IARS - 99% Campaign <http://www.99percent.org.uk/>

Truth About Youth Film after the Riots - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=en6DL6LJ19M>

Truth About Youth Campaign – Co-operative Foundation <http://www.ovalhouse.com/under26/truth-about-youth>

Institute for Global Ethics UK Trust Every Headline Matters

http://www.globalethics.org.uk/cms/fileadmin/igeuk/Supplementary_Images/EHM_report.pdf

Institute for Global Ethics – Make Hoodies History

http://www.globalethics.org.uk/cms/fileadmin/igeuk/Supplementary_Images/Make_Hoodies_History_report.pdf

Barnardos - Demonising Children Campaign 2009,

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2008/nov/17/barnardos-children-social-exclusion>

National Children's Bureau - <http://youtu.be/JkYmuDhIOZc>

Vinspired Survey, 2008

UK Youth Voice, Young Research Network Research Report 2008 <http://www.ukyouth.org/stories/item/103-headline-hoodie-lobbyists-10-young-people-visit-no10.html>

Media Trust - Shine Week Debate – Perception in the Media

<http://www.parliament.uk/visiting/access/events/shine/>

MediaWise – Satisfaction Guaranteed, Press Complaints Systems Under Scrutiny

http://www.mediawise.org.uk/www.mediawise.org.uk/display_pagea7e7.html?id=714

Hansard Society – Heads UP Forum, The Media, is it doing its job? Report 2011

<http://www.headsup.org.uk/content/mediaassets/pdf/Media%20forum%20report.pdf>