

**The Challenge for
Freedom of Information**

Press Freedom Survey

New Year's Resolutions

Britain's regional press is read – and trusted – by over 40 million adults. As part of Local Newspaper Week's press freedom theme in 2004, the Newspaper Society asked a selection of editors of regional and local daily and weekly titles what they felt were the greatest obstacles to informing their readers about what was happening around them. We asked them to rank reporting problems and to suggest some improvements to the law. A summary of the emerging views was published during Local Newspaper Week. A more detailed commentary is now available.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gave us all new information rights on 1 January 2005. But editors believe that FoI alone will not overcome the legal problems and institutional secrecy that they encounter daily.

Central and local government secrecy and reduction in information released by the police, local government, schools and health bodies, were ranked highest as obstacles to local government reporting. The chilling effect of the libel laws, data protection regime, court reporting restrictions, use of the law of confidence and exploitation of any exception to local government access to information rights, inhibit investigation and reporting.

Editors want the law to promote the release of accurate information. They want public bodies to act on a presumption of openness. They want public and private bodies, and individuals to look for ways of lawfully releasing more information, instead of exploiting any legal ground that might allow refusal.

Editors want the police, local government, schools and hospitals to provide more information and to engage in informed dialogue with the press and public. They want reform of the libel laws, including the no-win, no-fee regime.

Editors want ways of countering spurious excuses, sometimes of doubtful legal validity, that restrict investigation and reporting. They believe that there is a need for clear, consistent and accurate advice or guidance to prevent automatic refusals and unnecessary resort to legal exceptions to access to information rights, or data protection, or the law of confidence, or contempt and court reporting restrictions or child protection.

Editors want direct dialogue with decision-makers, helped not hindered by press officers. They want issues, information, reasons, arguments, debate, policy formulation, decision making and decisions to be open to the public and the press.

They also want to be able to identify those involved in newsworthy events. They want to be able to publish photographs that also inform, comment and entertain: photographs that could substantiate their investigations, reveal crime, deter accidents, celebrate sport, record local events and publicise the successes enjoyed by their readers and their readers' children.

The survey was intended to provide an impressionistic overview of the concerns of local and regional newspaper editors, in their own words. The Newspaper Society, regional newspaper publishers and regional and local newspaper editors campaign hard on press freedom and the public right to know. The survey establishes what editors identify as their main difficulties in everyday newsgathering and publication, so that they can be tackled by the regional newspaper industry.

I would like to thank all the editors who participated in the survey and Santha Rasaiah for producing the overview from their responses.

David Newell
Director, The Newspaper Society

The Challenge for Freedom of Information

Newspaper Society Local Newspaper Week 2004 Press Freedom Survey

The Newspaper Society and the regional press have campaigned hard on press freedom and to promote the public's right to know. In the run up to Local Newspaper Week 2004 and its press freedom theme, the Society invited a selection of editors of regional and local newspapers, drawn from morning and evening, daily and weekly, paid-for and free titles, to identify what they felt were the greatest obstacles to reporting.

Their comments provide an insight into the impact of the law on day to day newsgathering. They also suggest how institutional practice can create unnecessary obstructions. The culture of official secrecy needs to be changed. The press has to defend existing freedoms and promote new opportunities. Yet this remains reliant on the basic strengths of the local and regional press: good local knowledge, close contact with the local community, constant cultivation of local contacts and maintenance of local relationships and decisive action on behalf of their readers and the public interest when warranted.

The survey shows how the local and regional press has had to be robust, face legal threats and undertake legal action. One evening newspaper reporter was threatened with prosecution for breach of the Official Secrets Act when he refused to disclose a source. A test case on the hard won journalistic provisions of the Human Rights Act to prevent over-ready use of injunctions was successfully fought by the Liverpool Echo through the courts up to the House of Lords. The Romford Recorder's dogged challenge of reporting restrictions imposed by the criminal and family courts was taken over by the national press and victory secured in the House of Lords, where the Law Lords acknowledged how public debate could be impoverished if the regional press was muzzled by such over stringent reporting restrictions.

In reporting the issues that affect the lives of their readers: local government, health, education, law and order, newspapers find that data protection, human rights, the law of confidence and child protection are too readily cited, rightly or wrongly, as reasons to withhold information that was once readily available. The chilling effect of the libel laws, despite qualified privilege developments, has been increased by the operation of the no win no fee regime.

An instinctive institutional resistance to press interest seems endemic. Some councils take legal action and even seek injunctions to stop solicitation of information or ask the courts to impose reporting bans on legal proceedings, especially where children are involved. New style cabinet government persists in old style reticence, using any plausible exemption possible to access to information rights, such as commercial confidentiality, to justify the exclusion of press and public from meetings and to withhold information from public scrutiny. The introduction of press officers can obstruct, not facilitate, the flow of information to the public. At worst, they can constitute or create an unnecessary barrier to communication as they prevent the direct discussion between journalist and decision-maker necessary to establish contact, build a working relationship, provide explanation for action - and most importantly inform reporting, without inhibiting it.

Open Justice remains of crucial importance. Local and regional newspapers continue to report the local courts. The criminal courts can still seem over-ready to make unnecessary reporting restrictions, especially anonymity orders, although magistrates and judges are often prepared to hear newspapers' representations. Editors complain of police reluctance to provide information about crime, accidents and policing. Automatic reporting restrictions and discretionary court orders that prohibit publication of anything that might lead to an individual's identification, be they defendant, victim or witness, can prevent reporting of a

host of matters that affect readers' lives: the incidence, effect, detection and prevention of anti-social behaviour, burglary and other crime, youth crime, and the attempts of the police and local authorities to take effective action against its perpetrators, road traffic accidents and work of emergency services.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 is intended to promote cultural change. There was scepticism about local preparation for the new regime in the first half of 2004. However, some local public bodies had already held discussions with the local press on implementation of the Act. Editors had also been planning training, investigations and reader information campaigns.

While challenging or seeking to change the law, local and regional newspaper editors do try to resolve problems and improve communication, with the courts, the police, the local authority, local schools, local health bodies and others. This might require a calculated effort - using and building upon a combination of changes achieved to the law, local experience, local campaigns, legal argument and constructive discussion, informed by guidance resulting from their own and the Newspaper Society's discussions with the judiciary, government ministers and regulators. The help of the Press Complaints Commission in conciliating complaints is also mentioned.

The Newspaper Society released an overview of editors' responses to the survey in Press Freedom week. It has subsequently used their views to contribute to the work of the Lord Chancellor's and Information Commissioner's Advisory Group on implementation of the Freedom of Information Act; to the work of the Office of Deputy Prime Minister's Review Group on Access to Information in Local Government; to the review of Government Communications; and to its wider discussions on press freedom, open government, open justice, including contempt, reporting restrictions and reform of the coroners' system, freedom of information, libel law reform, review of conditional fee arrangements, operation of human rights and data protection legislation, press self regulation and discussions involving government ministers, government departments, the judiciary and law officers, the Information Commissioner and other regulators, and representatives of other public services and public bodies.

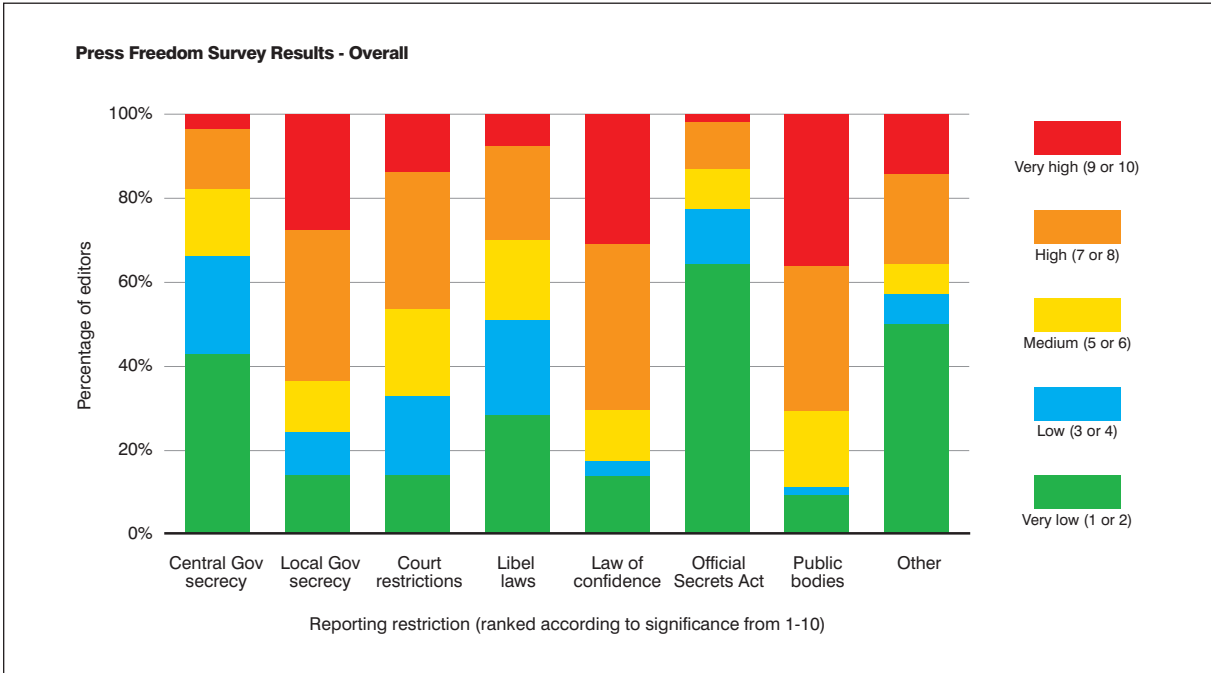
Editors recognise that reporting rights won or defended by industry lobbying have also to be maintained by local vigilance. Their editorial campaigns, investigations, their legal battles and lobbying, have helped to safeguard reporting rights and relax reporting restrictions.

Overview of Comments

Question One

Editors were asked to rank in terms of significance seven different obstacles to their freedom to report, with 1 being the least significant and 10 being the most significant barrier. The results were compiled as a whole and then split into regional daily and regional weekly newspaper groups.

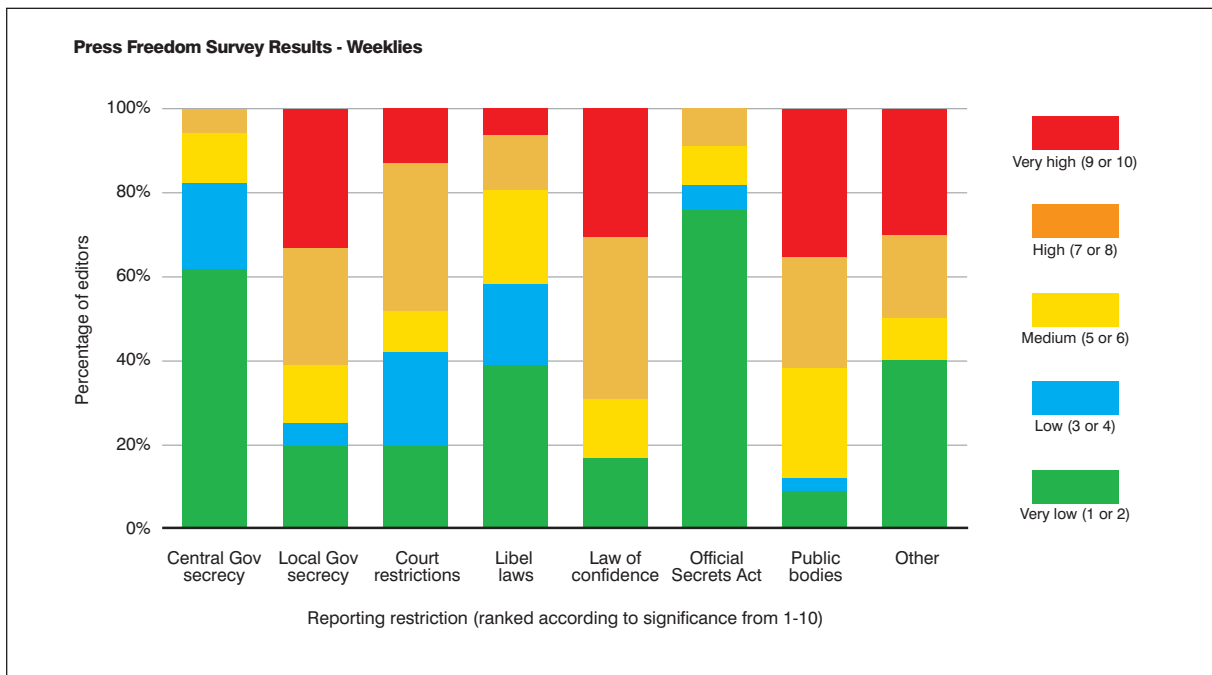
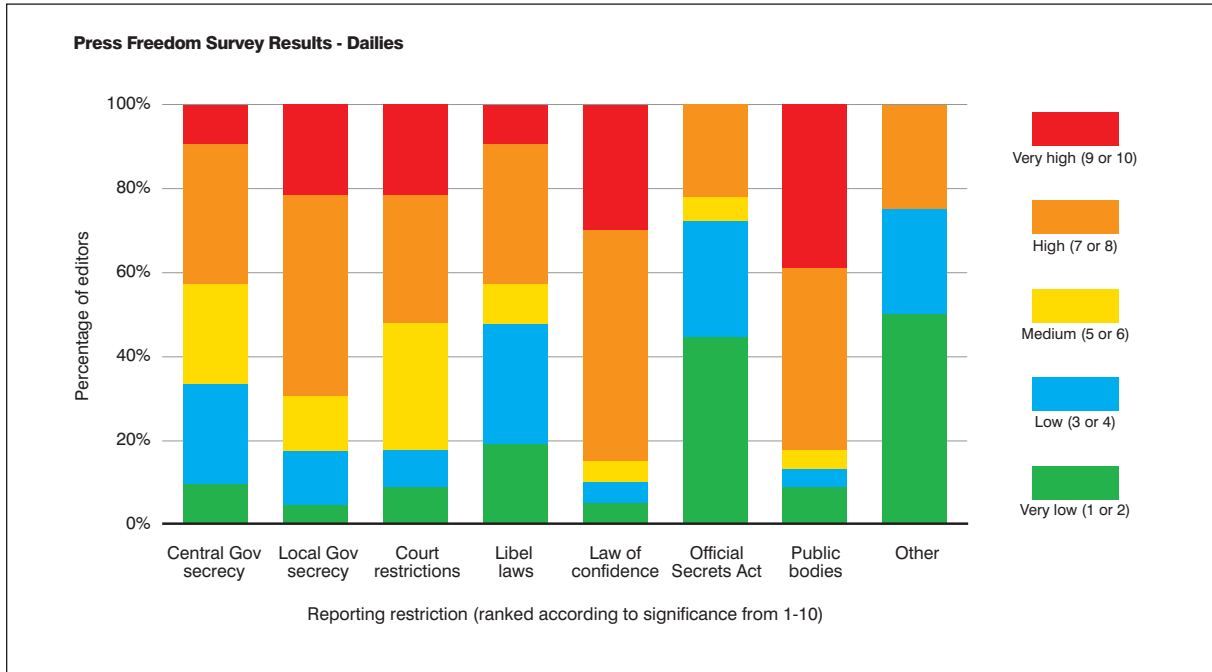
OVERALL: Question 1



Secrecy among public bodies and services was seen as the greatest obstacle to free reporting in the regional press with 70.9% of editors ranking this of **high or very high** significance (7 or over on a scale of 1-10) and 31% of these respondents ranking it the highest (10 on the scale).

82.6% of daily regional newspaper editors and 61% of weekly regional newspaper editors ranked secrecy among public bodies of **high or very high** significance (7 or over on a scale of 1-10).

DAILIES compared to WEEKLIES: Question 1



82.6% of daily regional newspaper editors and 61% of weekly regional newspaper editors ranked **secrecy among public bodies** of **high** or **very high** significance (7 or over on a scale of 1-10).

Question 1

Rank the greatest obstacles to your freedom to report

a) Central Government

Daily morning and evening newspapers reported a variety of difficulties. Weekly newspapers tended to have more limited contact with central government giving it low problem ratings and few comments.

The Liverpool Echo rated central government secrecy as 10. The editor felt that departments were *'hugely paranoid about the power and influence of No 10'*.

The Aberdeen Press & Journal contrasted central and devolved government, commenting that there was *'less trouble with Scottish executive in obtaining documents than could be the case with Westminster'*.

Some editors and correspondents gave a lower rating but identified particular problems. The Eastern Daily Press felt that the Data Protection Act was used and abused in a way that enabled *'all types of official body to keep secret information that should be available to the media. Of course the Act has validity but lack of understanding and fear means that all too often petty officialdom hides behind it'*. The Kent Messenger highlighted PFI deals where there was *'too little transparency about eventual costs to taxpayers'*. The Western Morning News felt *'For most of the time this is not an issue of information withheld-but spin'*.

A number of editors experienced difficulties in obtaining access to ministers. *'Access to Ministers should be available to regional press as well as national. We appreciate briefings but do not welcome being shunted into a media ghetto'* Sheffield Star. *'As a small daily paper we really struggle to get access to ministers or junior ministers to talk on subjects important locally'* Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph. *'Despite promises to the contrary, it is notoriously difficult for us to get even a five-minute conversation with a junior minister on a subject of local importance'* Portsmouth News. *'We have had many issues where we have wanted Ministerial comments/interviews. Despite time and persistence, these have been very difficult to come by'* Bradford Telegraph and Argus. The Westmoreland Gazette noted the problems in trying to question Ministers when their decisions impinged on, or overturned local democratic processes.

Government Press Offices provided a variable service for the regional and local press. The Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph felt that their occasional contacts had been met with prompt and helpful service. The Manchester Evening News considered that the Home Office, Downing Street and the Department of Health provided good service, in contrast to the poorer performance of some other departments. The Hereford Times, with GCHQ within its circulation area, felt that the Minister of Defence provided little help on the occasions when there was contact, which was somewhat frustrating when national newspapers appeared to benefit from leaks rather than the local newspaper. Conversely, the Cornish Guardian in contrast found the MoD generally forthcoming in its regular dealings. Rotherham and South Yorkshire Advertiser considered that the DfES and Foreign Office were particularly unhelpful, *'they seldom respond in time to meet our deadline and very rarely with more information than we already hold'*.

There were various similar complaints about press offices failures to answer the practical needs of the regional press. *'Some departmental press officers still do not understand evening paper deadlines'* Manchester Evening News. Government departments were *'poor at communicating information in advance of launches thereby preventing coverage in evening papers'* Lancashire Evening Post. *'We are often left with the distinct impression that London-based press offices do not wish to be bothered'* Huddersfield Daily Examiner. *'Central Government Departments are not geared up or interested in the needs of local newspapers. Their efforts seem focused on the needs of the national media'* Kentish Express Series. *'General difficulties getting clear issue related information from press offices'* Market Rasen Mail. *'Electronic information is often presented in a form that we cannot access'* Reading Evening Post. *'Many government departments seem to withhold information simply because collating the information would be a hassle, especially for smaller papers'* Evening Courier, Halifax.

b) Local Government

Daily and weekly newspapers generally gave concern over local government secrecy very high rankings. Many felt that the new style Cabinet Government had led to less open debate and decision making. The Government News Network and councils' press officers could block rather than facilitate access to information and officials.

Not all newspapers were gloomy – the Western Morning News said that it enjoyed good access, information and openness in the main. The Cambridge Evening News said that given the amount of coverage this was an area of potential concern, but in fact that it had to date experienced no problems surrounding secrecy or access to information with the local councils.

Others were not so fortunate. The Express and Star, Wolverhampton summed up many editors' views: *'Rating 10 - Cabinet Local government means far less debate and decisionmaking in public. Vast numbers of press officers now try to stop reporters getting to officers and information'*. The Liverpool Echo concurred *'10 - The cabinet system has led to hugely more secrecy and control, and privatisation to lack of accountability'*. *'Rating 10 - very important to us - we are concerned about cabinet style local government. Key decisions are taken in private by a few individuals and then simply rubber-stamped'*. Bolton Evening News; *'New cabinet system allows total secrecy and decisions are taken behind closed doors'* Gloucestershire Echo. *'The new cabinet style structure has stifled debate and sidelined backbenchers. We get fed endless press releases which are little more than propaganda. Forums have been set up which discuss matters of public interest and importance in secret'* Chichester Observer Series. *'More and more meetings are being held behind closed doors'* Louth Leader. *'The governments reforms to the local government system have made it harder for the press and public alike to hold those in positions of authority to account'* Kentish Express Series. Problems created by the new style regime were also described by the Kent Messenger Group, the Bury Free Press, Lynn News, Hexham Courant and Harrogate Advertiser Group. The Cornish Guardian felt that too many parish council meetings - a prime source of local newspaper stories - were held in private.

The Manchester Evening News reported that councils still generally put entire items into the closed session rather than separating out the exempt information and holding the rest in public. The Evening Courier Halifax and Cumberland News had similar complaints. The Rotherham Advertiser felt that its challenges had ensured that there was no chronic problem, but there was still a tendency to include items under the provisions that allowed closed sessions rather than find reasons to include them on the open agenda. The Sheffield Star and Newbury Weekly News cited commercial sensitivity and confidentiality as the favourite excuse for keeping information out of the public domain, the Lynn News felt that almost anything involving money was exempted from the public session.

The Westmoreland News set out the underlying issue: *'Local government is largely helpful but there is an inherent mistrust of why information is needed to put into the public domain - re-organisation and cabinet style has been a major hindrance to relationships'*. Another weekly newspaper, the Hereford Times concurred *'This is a continual source of frustration to reporters with very mixed messages about willingness to be open at one level, and a complete lack of understanding at another, leading to delayed and partial responses, meaning further inquiries. Information that's at all ticklish has to be dragged out and meets such questions as 'Why do you want to know' and 'Surely you don't think that's a story'*. The Belfast Telegraph commented on the problems of extracting information, *'particularly if it's embarrassing for the department'*.

Many newspapers were highly critical of local government press offices. *'VAST numbers of press officers now try to stop reporters getting to officers and information'* Express and Star, Wolverhampton. *'Phalanxes of press officers making up half baked rules about why we can't speak directly to officers'* Portsmouth News. *'Lancashire County Council instruct officers not to talk to the press'* Lancashire Evening Post. *'Contact with press offices has replaced contact with officer/members to the detriment of the flow of information'* Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph. *'Press Officer control freakery - directed by politicians'* Reading Evening Post. *'No problems with access to meetings but the council has a policy which prevents access to officers. All press inquiries MUST go through the press office and the council actively prevents us from speaking directly to officers'*. Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph. *'Local government press officers can have a knack for obstruction, lack of interest and tardy replies. Council bosses are*

rarely aware of the deficiencies' Barnsley Chronicle. 'Press office and cabinet system appear to work to actively exclude press, public and even councillors not on cabinet. Subject of many stories'. Western Telegraph. 'While my reporters are encouraged to cultivate councillors and council officers as contacts, press officers are trying to exert increasing control over the flow of information' Kentish Express Series. 'Council press officers slow to respond to inquiries or downright defensive when quizzed.' Milngavie and Bearsden Herald.

Some councils have taken steps to avoid such problems: 'All local government allows access to agendas and meetings. District Council holds regular press brief problems with secrecy or access. I am happy with current arrangements' Daventry Express.

c) Contempt/court reporting restrictions (e.g. family proceedings, crown, magistrates and district courts, high court, coroners' court, employment tribunal)

Local and regional newspapers report the local courts, criminal proceedings heard by the Crown Court, the criminal and civil matters dealt with by the Magistrates Court, inquests held in Coroners Court and a wide variety of civil proceedings involving local people or raising local issues.

The most common complaints were that court reporting was sometimes unnecessarily hampered by the bans on publication of defendants' names and addresses, by automatic bans on the identification of children, by obstacles to the supply of court information such as court lists and denial of access to the Magistrates' Court register of judgments. Coroners' Courts could also be unhelpful. Encouragingly, editors were clearly prepared to challenge inappropriate orders and in turn the courts were willing to hear their representations and then vary orders.

'Increasing inappropriate use of court orders and deference and reference to personal privacy and data protection is overriding the public interest and the right to know: creeping ad hoc privacy law' Liverpool Echo.

'Misuse of restrictive court orders remains the biggest problem facing the media. More and more defence lawyers are 'trying it on' by applying the s 39 orders that only serve to protect a parent and s 11 orders that do not go close to meeting the original criteria. The most worrying recent development is the growth of s 11 orders involving paedophile cases where the lawyers are claiming public order problems will result should an address be given. We have worked hard in Norfolk to challenge all such orders and have recently agreed a protocol with the county's magistrates' courts on guidelines that go beyond the Judicial Studies Board Document' Eastern Daily Press.

'A proper system of notifying ALL press of court orders needs to be introduced. Trying to establish whether a section 39 or other order is in place if you have picked up the story some time after the court case, is a nightmare. Usually papers have to rely on PA advisories. There is no official notification-and the Attorney General's website is next to useless' Manchester Evening News.

'Difficult, especially at Lincoln Crown Court verifying defendant's name, address and charges' Market Rasen Mail; *'Courts are generally unhelpful in releasing information to the press. Magistrates' courts do not co-operate with the release of a court register'* Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph.

'The law is a real mess when it comes to reporting cases of juveniles who are subject to anti-social behaviour orders per se are sentenced to them and then breach them' Kentish Express. *'Much better over the last 12 months-constant challenges and publicity surrounding ASBOs has helped the courts to understand our position. We don't challenge as much as we used to but we remain vigilant'* Bolton Evening News.

The conduct of inquests was subject to select but concerned comment.

'While we are blessed with a good relationship with our local coroner, coroners' courts are among the most secretive' Kentish Express Series; *'Coroner occasionally slips a difficult case before the usual start time'* Hexham Courant; *'coroners not reading much of written statements*

during inquests-information missing' Lynn News; 'coroner who even tells police not to issue details even after relatives of deceased people have been informed' Derbyshire Times; 'Coroner's officer tells families that the press sensationalises and not to talk' Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph. Only one title reported readers' reaction to reports 'increasing reader criticism of inquest coverage seen as intrusive' Harrogate Herald.

d) Libel

Daily newspaper editors in particular criticised the inhibiting combination of UK defamation law and a litigation culture. The libel laws 'make it very difficult to prove accusations against people' Belfast Telegraph; 'Potentially high costs of defending actions brought under contingent fee (no win, no fee) is a deterrent to investigative journalism' Barrow North West Evening Mail 'Cost of defending cases means we are sometimes too cautious. Particular problems with professionals who are represented by unions e.g. police, teachers, local government officials'. Sheffield Star. 'More people are prepared to try it on with no win/no fee solicitors' Portsmouth News. 'People are far more willing to sue for defamation' Aberdeen Press & Journal. 'It is the cost of successfully defending a libel action that is hampering investigatory journalism' Eastern Daily Press 'Mischief-making complaints have increased. Led by some as political pressure'. Lancashire Evening Post. 'Malice hampers investigative journalism where a newspaper takes the lead rather than a third party' Cornish Guardian. 'A litigious population produces cautious weekly newspapers' Harrogate Advertiser Group. The Liverpool Echo considered the libel laws as 'no worse than before, annoying but workable' but pointed out the problem with 'gagging writs which also make a presumption on right to privacy or confidentiality' that led the newspaper to fight its case against injunction through to victory in the House of Lords.

e) The law of confidence (including commercial confidentiality), data protection and 'privacy'

f) Official Secrets, protection of sources and whistle blowers

g) Public bodies and public services secrecy (e.g. Police, schools and universities, hospitals, armed forces, prisons, quangos).

Daily and weekly newspaper editors throughout the United Kingdom deplored the citing of data protection as the routine excuse for refusal to release information. The police were the worst offenders, but councils, hospitals, schools and other local public bodies were also heavily criticised. Forty three editors singled out data protection as the greatest obstacle to reporting in their answers to question one alone. Further complaints were made in answer to the survey's other questions. A sample selection is set out below.

'Privacy is the opposite and anathema to the public interest-data protection A FARCE re Huntley, ACPO, most public bodies and quangos hide behind it' Liverpool Echo. 'The Data Protection Act and Human Rights Act are constantly misused mainly by the Police) to prevent us having access to information/pictures which often have a strong public interest' Kentish Gazette Group. 'This is a growing problem. Data Protection is quoted by everyone from councils to the police. We suspect sometimes it means that they can't be bothered to get permission to release details, or are too cautious to test a public interest defence.' Sheffield Star. 'Much quoted and abused by officials who want to obstruct newspapers-notably police/hospitals' Lancashire Evening Telegraph. 'Who understands data protection? Certainly not the police.' Portsmouth Evening News. 'The inappropriate use of data protection to attempt to stop all sorts of aspects of reporting, especially schools from exam results to children's names, can drive you bonkers', Hereford Times. 'Schools quote the Act for everything' Lynn News. 'The Data Protection Act is being used by police, council and public bodies to suppress information of enormous public interest' Oxford Mail. 'The misuse of data protection and human rights legislation to block details of crime and accident victims by police, fire, ambulance, condition checks from hospitals, mountain rescue teams, coast rescues by the coastguard, school and leisure centre pictures-even exam results, is the biggest threat to local newspapers and their ability to inform the public.' Westmoreland Gazette.

The Manchester Evening News however believed that the Human Rights Act had 'probably helped the press as the courts seem less likely to issue orders because of the public's right to know.'

Commercial confidentiality figured as another convenient excuse. 'Local authorities are

becoming more and more eager to hide behind 'commercial confidentiality' when dealing with taxpayers money. The growth of PFI schemes in local government and hospital trusts is having the same impact' Eastern Daily Press. *'Council often hides behind 'commercial sensitivity' on big money deals.'* East Fife Mail.

Daily newspaper editors strongly criticised the UK's law as inadequately protecting sources and whistleblowers. Journalists had been threatened with legal action and potential whistleblowers were afraid to approach the press.

'One of our reporters faced gaol after refusing to reveal his sources to a court - it was a huge ordeal for him. Journalists should be free to protect their sources' Manchester Evening News. *'Whistle blowers are afforded little or no protection under current legislation - most are hounded through the courts - many by the courts'.* Liverpool Echo. *'People are often afraid of coming forward'* Belfast Telegraph. *'People are generally frightened of losing their job if they talk to us.'* Torquay Herald. *'Increasingly the NHS and other organisations are telling staff and users (who might be or are whistle blowers) to talk to them directly, not through the press'* Hereford Times, which deplored unnecessary institutional secrecy *'our relations with the local regiment suffer from overemphasis on the need for secrecy - a Royal visit for instance which we were reporting retrospectively, did not need denials from the palace and the MoD surely'.*

The responses to questions on public bodies and public services secrecy largely echoed editors' frustration with dealing with officials and press officers who acted on a presumption to withhold rather than to release information; hindrance rather than help of police press officers, police family liaison officers, army press officers; police, councils and schools citing data protection as a reason to withhold information, names, prevent school photographs.

'Nearly all these bodies are using data protection or human rights regulations as excuse to cut costs and not provide information which is obviously in the public interest' Liverpool Echo. *'The presumption by public servants that, wherever there is a choice that they should withhold information rather than divulge'* Evening Courier Halifax. *'Increasingly the blurring of responsibilities between authorities and private companies means it is increasingly difficult to access information. Release of names and photographs a particular issue'* Northamptonshire Telegraph. *'Press officers again. Lack of understanding about what we have a right to ask for, particularly when it comes to financial information'.* Portsmouth News. *'Schools caught up in a controversy often refer all press inquiries to the Council press office. Heads should be free to speak about their own school's affairs'* Manchester Evening News. *'Schools are a particular problem. They are now a strident marketing operation that will do anything to keep bad news out of the paper'* Reading Evening Post. *'Most are highly defensive when a reporter contacts them with sensitive issues. It seems the need for a positive public image outweighs the importance of being open, frank and honest with reporters'.* Llanelli Star Series.

The Torquay Herald and Hereford Times noticed that an increasing number of ordinary people appeared to be concerned not to talk to the press or would only do so on an off the record basis or without their names being used.

Editors work hard to overcome the problems. *'Police, as ever, hide behind press offices but we have built good local contacts. Hospitals do hide behind PR firms'.* Bury Free Press. *'We rely on local contacts and trusted contacts to keep us informed'* Newbury Weekly News. *'Strong and trustful relations between the local paper and these bodies have mitigated their natural secrecy tendencies. Generally speaking we are finding such bodies much more open than they traditionally were - mainly because they realize that image and reputation is these days all important.'* Eastern Daily Press.

Question 2

Please identify your biggest area of concern, what improvements would you like to see?

Daily and weekly editors were again united in their concern about refusal of information on data protection grounds - twenty-three explicitly cited this as a major problem.

The answers have been compiled in a separate document, rather than set out at length below. They do provide compelling evidence of the way that data protection is perceived and used, rightly or wrongly, as a convenient way to block investigation and reporting, to the continued exasperation of editors.

There is little to suggest that organisations might be prepared to investigate whether the law actually allows the information requested to be released lawfully in the particular case, or whether they can establish systems to facilitate release of information to the press and public.

'The Data Protection Act is constantly given as a reason why increasingly more information, which would have been freely available in the past, is being withheld'. Aberdeen Press & Journal.

However criticism was not confined to data protection or other law. There was common concern about institutional secrecy and organisations' unhelpful approach to publicity and attitude to the press.

These were clearly obstacles to newspapers' staple coverage of local life, local happenings, local issues and the matters of interest to their readers and of genuine public interest

The police were widely condemned, but editors identified court secrecy and reporting restrictions, schools and local government, as other areas of major concern, while community partnerships emerged as potential problems.

'Worried that police are giving less and less information out' Manchester Evening News.

'Privacy creep' encouraged by data protection, the Human Rights Act and the law of confidence were cited more times than the libel laws as obstacles to reporting.

However editors made clear that not all problems stemmed from the law: the appointment of press officers who then obstructed direct contact between press and decision-maker was widely criticised.

'Every public body is appointing vast numbers of press officers to help media inquiries. They are only there to prevent us getting any sort of honest, detailed information. Getting to people who do the job is getting harder and harder.' Express and Star, Wolverhampton.

Improvements required:

- Reform of the defamation laws; reversal of the burden of proof so that it is no longer uniquely upon the defendant; more robust public interest defences;
- Greater openness and the actual adoption and implementation of the presumption of openness by public bodies and public services, particularly the police, local government and schools;
- Issue and implementation of accurate, clear and consistent guidance to encourage and assist the release of more information by public bodies and public services, particularly in relation to the operation of data protection and human rights;
- Greater and more efficient access to local government material, particularly financial information.

Question 3

Considering recent developments, changes in the law, or improvements in regulation and practice, what has been the most helpful change and why?

Some improvements were reported in open justice and in the relationship between the media and the courts. The Judicial Studies Board/Newspaper Society/Society of Editors joint guidelines on reporting restrictions in the Magistrates Court and Crown Court Guidelines and legal changes intended to facilitate the identification of those sentenced to ASBO orders by the youth court were cited by eleven titles as helpful developments.

'The recognition by senior judges of the positive role we play in the community has been very helpful in our battle to stop unnecessary reporting restrictions in court. Lower courts and a host of other organisations need to follow suit' Kentish Express Series.

A few looked to the future with caution *'FOI will - should - be the most single important change'* Kent Messenger.

Many commented that there had been no helpful changes and most made no response.

Question 4

What other areas of concern need to be addressed and why? (e.g. Coverage of sporting events) Please suggest the type of improvements that you would like to see.

Football clubs' attempts to control coverage of their affairs occasioned most complaints about attempts to deny fans and press access to information, restrict internet publication, control the use of press photographs by licencing agreements, produce their own exclusive photographs on a charged for basis or copyright royalties for use of fixture lists.

Many titles complained about the way that schools and sports clubs over-zealously prevented the publication of photographs and names of children.

Some cited continuing problems about press officers, access to court information, data protection and local government secrecy and *'a worrying growth in the number of unelected and unaccountable bodies making key decisions'* without direct accountability yet responsible for spending millions of taxpayers' money. Eastern Daily Press.

Question 5

How are you, your readers, local interest groups, local public bodies and public services preparing for freedom of information legislation which comes fully into force in 2005.

The responses reflected the preparations up to May 2004 while some public authorities were still preparing publication schemes, seven months prior to individual access rights came into force. Seven reported that local public bodies were engaged in active dialogue, more had contacted the local organisations as a result of the then Lord Chancellor's initiative with the Newspaper Society, but many felt that the local bodies were as yet unaware of its implications. Editors meanwhile were running training schemes for their reporters and some were considering future investigations and ways to make best use of it.

Question 6

Please provide details of any further issues you wish to raise relating to press freedom and the right to know

Editors re-iterated their concerns about data protection, police, schools, local government secrecy, barriers constructed by use of press officers, the chilling effect of the libel laws and need for reversal of the burden of proof and a robust public interest defence and the need for media representations to be heard at the time that courts are considering imposing reporting restrictions.

Compilation of responses to the Newspaper Society's Local Newspaper Week Press Freedom survey of selected editors conducted in April 2004

Please note that some changes have occurred since the survey. The overview of comments and the compilation lists the respondents' positions, newspaper titles and readership figures at the time that their survey responses were supplied.

Question 1 – Rank the greatest obstacles to your freedom to report

a) Central Government secrecy/access

Daily Morning - Paid

Press & Journal, Aberdeen

News Editor, Fiona McWhirr

Readership: 241,539

Rating 5 - Less trouble with Scottish Executive in obtaining documents and information than can be the case with Westminster.

Norwich Eastern Daily Press

Editor, Peter Franzen

Readership: 233,802

Rating 5 – Central Government secrecy/access: Misuse and abuse of Data Protection Act enables all types of official bodies to keep secret information that should be available to the media. Of course, the Act has validity, but lack of understanding and fear means that all too often petty officialdom hides behind it.

Western Morning News

Executive Editor, Philip Bower

Readership: 96,376

Rating 5 – For most of the time this is not an issue of information withheld – but spin.

Daily Evening – Paid

Manchester Evening News

Editor, Paul Horrocks

Readership: 404,211

Rating 5 – Some departments good (Home Office, Downing Street, Department of Health), others poor. Better access now to Ministers. Some departmental press offices still do not understand evening paper deadlines.

Liverpool Echo

Editor in Chief, Mark Dickinson

Readership: 388,386

Rating 10 – All departments are hugely paranoid about power and influence of No. 10 and its department of the PM. Shameful unwillingness to follow the Americans in this while borrowing everything else.

Sheffield Star

Editor, Peter Charlton

Readership: 196,589

Rating 4 – Access to ministers should be available to regional press, as to national. We appreciate briefings but do not welcome being shunted into a media ghetto.

Portsmouth News

Editor, Mike Gilson

Readership: 187,814

Rating 4 – Despite promises to the contrary, it is notoriously difficult for us to get even a five-minute conversation with a junior minister on a subject of local importance.

Lancashire Evening Post

Editor, Simon Reynolds

Readership: 182,248

Rating 8 – Government departments poor at communicating information in advance of launches, prevents coverage in evening papers.

Bradford Telegraph & Argus

Group Editor, Perry Austin Clarke

Readership: 136,335

Rating 7 – We had many issues where we have wanted Ministerial comments/interviews. Despite time and persistence, these have been very difficult to come by. For example, Education Department during Bradford Schools shake-up. MOD re Samantha Roberts.

The Gazette Blackpool

Editor, Adrian Darbyshire

Readership: 108,346

Rating 1 – No comments.

Daily Echo, Bournemouth

Editor, Neal Butterworth

Readership: 100,758

Rating 4 – No comments.

Bolton Evening News	
Editor in Chief, Stephen Hughes Readership: 97,204	Rating 5 – As primarily a local paper, we don't have any direct contact with government departments. No specific problems recently.
Cambridge Evening News	
Editor, Colin Grant Readership: 97,166	Rating 2 – Central Government issues of secrecy or access are usually tackled before they become a regional newspaper issue and, on a day-to-day basis have not been a particular problem for us.
Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph	
Editor: David Penman Readership: 89,705	Rating 3 – We generally have few problems with central government departments. Press office contacts are usually helpful and prompt. We have, however, only occasional contact.
Grimsby Evening Telegraph	
Editor, Michelle Lalor Readership: 88,768	Rating 3 – No comments.
Oxford Mail	
Editor: Simon O'Neill Readership: 83,537	Rating 4 – No comments.
Huddersfield Daily Examiner	
Editor, Roy Wright Readership: 83,373	Rating 8 – We are often left with the distinct impression that London based press offices do not wish to be bothered.
Torquay Herald Express	
Editor, Brendan Hanrahan Readership: 79,690	Rating 9 – Access not bad, but on secrecy their law making drives all the other problems.
Gloucestershire Echo	
Editor, Anita Syvret Readership: 78,031	Rating 1 – No comments.
Reading Evening Post	
Editor, Andy Murrill Readership: 69,876	Rating 7 – Electronic information is often presented in a format we cannot access.
Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph	
Editor, Jon Grubb Readership: 59,066	Rating 7 – Not so much secrecy as ignorance. As a small daily paper we really struggle to get access to ministers or junior ministers to talk on subjects important locally.
Evening Courier (Halifax)	
Editor, John Furbisher Readership: 56,927	Rating 7 – Many government departments seem to withhold information simply because collating the information would be a hassle, especially for smaller papers.
Belfast Telegraph	
News Editor, Paul Connolly	Rating 7 – Extracting relevant information, particularly if it is embarrassing for the department.
Weekly Paid	
Kent Messenger Series	
Editor, Simon Irwin Readership: 161,061	Rating 1 – No comments.
Kent Messenger Group	
Political Editor, Paul Francis	Rating 8 – PFI deals – too little transparency about eventual costs to taxpayers.
Derbyshire Times	
Editor, Mike Wilson Readership: 115,316	Rating 1 – As a local paper our dealings with government departments are strictly limited.

Hereford Times Editor, Liz Griffin Readership: 114,519	Rated 7 – As a local newspaper there are relatively few occasions when we seek direct access but, given our location, the MoD is probably the most regular and proves little help. This can be frustrating when national newspaper defence correspondents appear to benefit from leaks rather than the local paper.
Harrogate Advertiser Group Readership: 110,209	
Harrogate Herald Readership: 70,451	
North Yorkshire News Readership: 53,167 Editor: Jean McQuarrie	No Rating – Not particularly relevant to our weekly titles.
Mansfield Chad Editor, Jeremy Plews Readership: 104,642	Rating 1 – No comments.
The Cumberland News Editor, Keith Sutton Readership: 98,478	Rating 4 – The nature of our stories mean that we do not often deal with central government.
Chichester Observer Series Executive Editor, Keith Newbery Readership: 96,421	Rating 1 – No comments.
Cornish Guardian Editor, Alan Cooper Readership: 88,986	Rating 1 – I deal with the MoD on a regular basis and generally find them forthcoming.
Newbury Weekly News Editor, Brien Beharrell Readership: 86,690	Rating 1 – Since we are a local newspaper, central government difficulties have little impact and have usually been resolved before we become involved.
Westmorland Gazette Editor, Mike Glover Readership: 86,335	Rating 4 – Access to ministers to question them when their decisions impinge on/overturn local democratic processes.
Bury Free Press Editor, Barry Peters Readership: 81,884	Rating 1 – Weekly paper – deal mainly with local contacts.
Falkirk Herald Editor, Colin Hume Readership: 79,803	Rating 3 – Limited involvement but press office not the best.
Rotherham & South Yorkshire Advertiser Editor, Douglas Melloy Readership: 74,336	Rating 5 – MPs tend to return calls only when it suits them – avoiding contentious issues. Not surprisingly they are all over you like a rash when they want something published which suits either them or their political masters. The Department for Education is particularly unhelpful, as is the Foreign Office, where they seldom respond in time to meet our deadline and very rarely with more information than we already hold.
Kentish Gazette Group Editor, Bob Bounds Readership: 72,079	Rating 5 – No comments.
Western Telegraph Editor, Fiona Phillips Readership: 70,917	Rating 4 – No comments.
Lynn News (Fri) Readership: 69,801	
Lynn News (Tue) Readership: 55,619 Editor, Donna Semmens	Rating 2 – No comments.

Eastbourne Herald Editor, Peter Hindley Readership: 65,973	Rating 5 – No comments.
Kentish Express Series Editor, Leo Whitlock Readership: 58,783	Rating 4 – Central government departments are not geared up to, or interested in the needs of local newspapers. Their efforts seem focused on the needs of the national media.
Hexham Courant Editor, Eve Fuller Readership: 48,135	Rating 1 – No comments.
The Visitor, Morecambe Editor, Glen Cooper Readership: 46,562	Rating 1 – No comments.
Llanelli Star Series Editor, Andy Pearson Readership: 46,336	Rating 1 – No comments.
Motherwell Times Series Editor, Robert Wilson Readership: 40,621	Rating 1 – No comments.
East Kent Mercury Editor, Graham Smith Readership: 37,729	Rating 2 – No comments.
Kirkintilloch Herald Editor, Christine McPherson Readership: 33,788	Rating 1 – No comments.
Louth Leader Editor, Charles Ladbrook Readership: 29,731	Rating 5 – No comments.
East Fife Mail Editor, Iain Muirhead Readership: 27,616	Rating 1 – No comments.
Daventry Express Editor, Jason Gibbins Readership: 26,905	Rating 2 – We have limited dealings with central government and have not encountered any secrecy/access problems.
Arbroath Herald Editor, Craig Nisbet Readership: 25,545	Rating 3 – Few dealings with central government departments.
Linlithgowshire Journal & Gazette Editor, Jack Shennan Readership: 22,533	Rating 1 – No comments.
Milngavie & Bearsden Herald Editor, Alister Blyth Readership: 22,085	Rating 1 – No comments.
Market Rasen Mail Editor, Jason Hippisley	Rating 5 – General difficulties getting clear issue-related info from press offices.
Carlisle & Lanark Gazette Editor, Aileen McCulloch	Rating 1 – No comments.
News Shopper Group Editor, Andrew Parkes	Rating 3 – Seldom an issue for us, but when it is it is a real problem. Getting Home Secretary David Blunkett to reply to a personal letter was difficult in the extreme.
Weekly Free	
Slough Observer Editor, Martin Biddle Readership: 78,859	Rating 4 – No comments.

b) Local Government secrecy/access

Daily Morning - Paid

Press & Journal, Aberdeen

News Editor, Fiona McWhirr

Readership: 241,539

Rating 6 – Press office problems with some local authorities. General unwillingness to give information to the press for fear of consequences.

Norwich Eastern Daily Press

Editor, Peter Franzen

Readership: 233,802

Rating 4 – More government departments seem to be making use of GNN (the old COI) to make media announcements and this is filtering direct access to departmental press offices.

Western Morning News

Executive Editor, Philip Bown

Readership: 96,376

Rating 2 – Good access, information and openness in the main.

Daily Evening – Paid

West Midlands Express & Star

Editor, Adrian Faber

Readership: 476,336

Rating 10 – Cabinet local government means far less debate and decision making in public. VAST numbers of press officers now try to stop reporters getting to officers and information.

Manchester Evening News

Editor, Paul Horrocks

Readership: 404,211

Rating 5 – Legal/Access: Councils still generally put entire items into part 'B' rather than separating out exempt information and holding the rest of the debate in public; Press office/Access: Responses still take far too long – often even after a working day the response is not satisfactory/not forthcoming. Access: Full meeting agendas with officer reports could and should be posted on the Internet and left there.

Liverpool Echo

Editor in Chief, Mark Dickinson

Readership: 388,386

Rating 10 – Cabinet system has led to hugely more secrecy and control and privatisation to a lack of accountability.

Sheffield Star

Editor, Peter Charlton

Readership: 196,589

Rating 7 – Particular problems with planning and licensing officials claim commercial sensitivity for keeping information out of public domain.

Portsmouth News

Editor, Mike Gilson

Readership: 187,814

Rating 8 – Phalanxes of press officers (usually failed reporters) making up half-baked rules about why we can't speak directly to officers.

Lancashire Evening Post

Editor, Simon Reynolds

Readership: 182,248

Rating 9 – Lancashire County Council instruct officers not to talk to press. Most decisions taken at political group meetings in secret.

Bradford Telegraph & Argus

Group Editor, Perry Austin Clarke

Readership: 136,335

Rating 8 – Cabinet system has meant fewer things going through full committee process. Our contacts and tenacity are vital in reporting local government.

The Gazette, Blackpool

Editor, Adrian Darbyshire

Readership: 108,346

Rating 8 – Use of green papers to try to prevent reporting of controversial issues – although we invariably find a way round the problem.

Daily Echo, Bournemouth

Editor, Neal Butterworth

Readership: 100,758

Rating 7 – Bournemouth council will block bids to name people made the subject of anti-social behaviour orders.

Bolton Evening News Editor in Chief, Stephen Hughes Readership: 97,204	Rating 10 – Very important to us – we are concerned about cabinet style local government. Key decisions taken in private by a few individuals and then simply rubber-stamped.
Cambridge Evening News Editor, Colin Grant Readership: 97,166	Rating 4 – Given the amount of coverage we give to local councils, this is a potential area for concern. However, to date, we have had no problems surrounding secrecy or access of information with the local councils.
Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph Editor, David Penman Readership: 89,705	Rating 7 – This differs between authorities. Contact with press offices has replaced contact with officer/members to the detriment of the flow of information.
Grimsby Evening Telegraph Editor, Michelle Lalor Readership: 88,768	Rating 3 – No comments.
Oxford Mail Editor, Simon O'Neill Readership: 83,537	Rating 7 – No comments.
Huddersfield Daily Examiner Editor, Roy Wright Readership: 83,373	Rating 7 – It is getting better, but still some times we struggle to obtain information which is theoretically in the public domain.
Torquay Herald Express Editor, Brendan Hanrahan Readership: 79,690	Rating 9 – Water and stone come to mind. Lots of spin doctors and manipulation, little or no truth.
Gloucestershire Echo Editor, Anita Syvret Readership: 78,031	Rating 10 – New cabinet system allows total secrecy and decisions are taken behind closed doors.
Reading Evening Post Editor, Andy Murrill Readership: 69,876	Rating 8 – Press office control freakery – directed by politicians. Often we receive downright lies.
Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph Editor, Jon Grubb Readership: 59,066	Rating 8 – No problems with access to meetings, but the council has a policy which prevents access to officers. All press inquiries MUST go through the press office and the council actively prevents us from speaking directly to officers.
Evening Courier (Halifax) Editor, John Furbisher Readership: 56,927	Rating 6 – Inappropriate use of the “below the line” rule.
Barrow North West Evening Mail Editor, Stephen Brauner Readership: 54,445	Rating 7 – Local authorities seem unwilling to accept that the public is entitled to know how its money is being spent. Senior officers’ salaries, for example, should be publicly declared.
Belfast Telegraph News Editor, Paul Connolly	Rating 8 – Extracting relevant information, particularly if it is embarrassing for the department.
Weekly Paid	
Kent Messenger Series Editor, Simon Irwin Readership: 161,061	Rating 1 – No comments.

Kent Messenger Group Political Editor: Paul Francis	Rating 10 – Access to information/decisions taken by council executives (cabinets) where those decisions are not part of public meetings. Councils are making too little effort to be more transparent. Also PFI deals – little info.
Barnsley Chronicle Editor, Robert Cockroft Readership: 132,746	Rating 6 – Local government press officers can have a knack for obstruction, lack of interest and tardy replies. Council bosses are rarely aware of the deficiencies.
Derbyshire Times Editor, Mike Wilson Readership: 115,316	Rating 3 – Only real issues often involve data protection issues and release of information in full.
Hereford Times Editor, Liz Griffin Readership: 114,519	Rated 8 – This is a continual source of frustration to reporters with very mixed messages about willingness to be open at one level and a complete lack of understanding at another, leading to delayed and partial responses, meaning further inquiries. Information that's at all ticklish has to be dragged out and meets questions such as 'Why do you want to know?' and 'Surely you don't think that's a story?'
Harrogate Advertiser Group Readership: 110,209 Harrogate Herald Readership: 70,451 North Yorkshire News Readership: 53,167 Editor, Jean MacQuarrie	Rating 5 – The "new" cabinet and scrutiny system makes coverage of local government more difficult generally.
Mansfield Chad Editor, Jeremy Plews Readership: 104,642	Rating 1 – No comments.
The Cumberland News Editor, Keith Sutton Readership: 98,478	Rating 10 – We believe that too many items are put into part 2 for spurious reasons. We have successfully challenged this once, but it is difficult to do this without detailed knowledge of items discussed.
Chichester Observer Series Executive Editor, Keith Newbery Readership: 96,421	Rating 10 – The new 'cabinet-style' council structure has stifled debate and sidelined backbenchers. We get fed endless press releases which are little more than propaganda. Forums have been set up which discuss issues of public interest and importance in secret.
Cornish Guardian Editor, Alan Cooper Readership: 88,986	Rating 9 – Secrecy surrounds many Parish Councils, which are a prime source for local newspapers. Too many meetings are held in secret.
Newbury Weekly News Editor, Brien Beharrell Readership: 86,690	Rating 8 – We attend as many meetings as possible so that our presence is expected, rather than being unusual. The concealment of information under "commercial sensitivity" is one of the most common areas of dispute.
Westmorland Gazette Editor, Mike Glover Readership: 86,335	Rating 5 – Local government is largely helpful, but there is an inherent mistrust of why information is needed to put in the public domain – reorganisation and 'cabinet' style has been a major hindrance to relationships.
Bury Free Press Editor, Barry Peters Readership: 81,884	Rating 10 – Always suspect cabinet-style government is not as good as old committee system. Try to go to councilors rather than press office.

Falkirk Herald

Editor, Colin Hume

Readership: 79,803

Rating 2 – Good relations at moment.

Rotherham & South Yorkshire Advertiser

Editor, Douglas Melloy

Readership: 74,336

Rating 10 – We have no chronic problems as I have consistently challenged our local authority on secrecy in the past and they are now pretty sensitive. They do not seek to bar us from meetings, other than for those parts of the agenda which can fall under their right to exclude the press and public. There is, however, a tendency to seek to include items under that provision rather than find reasons to include items on the open agenda.

Kentish Gazette Group

Editor, Bob Bounds

Readership: 72,079

Rating 7 – Our local authorities are generally open. However, they occasionally set up panels/working groups on important local issues which sit in private for no justifiable reason.

Western Telegraph

Editor, Fiona Phillips

Readership: 70,917

Rating 10 – Press office and cabinet system appear to work to actively exclude press, public and even councillors not on cabinet. Subject of many stories.

Lynn News (Fri)

Readership: 69,801

Lynn News (Tue)

Readership: 55,619

Editor, Donna Semmens

Rating 9 – More and more ‘delegated powers’ decisions with no reports that come before council. One administration officer is made ‘press officer’ and all calls, including leaders, should go through her. She has no experience and is not able to provide the help/information necessary. More ‘below the line’ items – in fact almost anything involving money (our money!!) is exempted.

Eastbourne Herald

Editor, Peter Hindley

Readership: 65,973

Rating 10 – No comments.

Kentish Express Series

Editor, Leo Whitlock

Readership: 58,783

Rating 8 – I think this should read Local Government. Council reporting is the bread and butter of local newspapers. While my reporters are encouraged to cultivate councillors and council officers as contacts, press offices are trying to exert increasing control over the flow of information. The government’s reforms to the local government system have made it harder for the press and public alike to hold those in positions of authority to account. Councils are adept at using section 47 of the Local Government Act to stifle debate – parish and town councils are particularly fond of using this route.

Hexham Courant

Editor, Eve Fuller

Readership: 48,135

Rating 0 – Information regarding local authority matters is harder to come by and does not come to light so regularly with the reorganized ‘cabinet’ style district council which restricts the number of meetings and debates we can cover.

The Visitor, Morecambe

Editor, Glen Cooper

Readership: 46,562

Rating 5 – Some issues taken as ‘exempt items’ when there probably is no need.

Llanelli Star Series

Editor, Andy Pearson

Readership: 46,336

Rating 1 – No comments.

Motherwell Times Series

Editor, Robert Wilson

Readership: 40,621

Rating 1 – No problem with North Lanarkshire Council as enquiries are answered promptly.

East Kent Mercury Editor, Graham Smith Readership: 37,729	Rating 5 – No comments.
Kirkintilloch Herald Editor, Christine McPherson Readership: 33,788	Rating 9 – Access to everyone is through a poor press department.
Louth Leader Editor, Charles Ladbrook Readership: 29,731	Rating 8 – More and more meetings are being held behind closed doors.
East Fife Mail Editor, Iain Muirhead Readership: 27,616	Rating 8 – Our local council makes accessing useful information very difficult.
Daventry Express Editor, Jason Gibbins Readership: 26,905	Rating 8 – All local government allows access to agendas and meetings. District council holds regular press brief problems with secrecy or access. I am happy with current arrangements.
Arbroath Herald Editor, Craig Nisbet Readership: 25,545	Rating 8 – Often reports/debates hidden behind data protection/commercial confidentiality unnecessarily.
Linlithgowshire Journal & Gazette Editor, Jack Shennan Readership: 22,533	Rating 1 – No comments.
Milngavie & Bearsden Herald Editor, Alister Blyth Readership: 22,085	Rating 9 – Council press offices being slow to respond to inquiries or downright defensive when quizzed.
Market Rasen Mail Editor, Jason Hippisley	Rating 3 – Generally good relations – dependent on journalist, officer and PR person.
Carlisle & Lanark Gazette Editor, Aileen McCulloch	Rating 7 – Council does a lot in Labour Group meetings so there is not the same airing of views – most items are passed on the nod. Also major decisions are being taken at town forums closed to the public.
News Shopper Group Editor, Andrew Parkes	Rating 4 – Day-to-day dealings with different local councils vary enormously. Generally Bexley is good, Greenwich is much improved, Lewisham is okay, Bromley is Bromley and always will be.
Weekly Free	
Slough Observer Editor, Martin Biddle Readership: 78,859	Rating 5 – No comments.

c) Contempt/court reporting restrictions (e.g., family proceedings, crown, magistrates' and district courts, high court, coroners' court, employment tribunal)

Daily Morning - Paid

Press & Journal, Aberdeen

News Editor, Fiona McWhirr

Readership: 241,539

Rating 8 – Reporting restrictions can be applied rather liberally by some. Some court officials still unwilling to provide court lists and details of civil lists.

Norwich Eastern Daily Press

Editor, Peter Franzen

Readership: 233,802

Rating 9 – Misuse of restrictive court orders remains the biggest problem facing the media. More and more defence lawyers are “trying it on” by applying the s 39 orders that only serve to protect a parent, and s 11 Contempt Act orders that do not go close to meeting the original criteria. The most worrying recent development is the growth of s 11 orders involving paedophile cases where lawyers are claiming public order problems will result, should an address be given. We have worked hard in Norfolk to challenge all such orders and have recently agreed a protocol with the county’s magistrates’ courts on guidelines that go beyond the Judicial Studies Board document.

Western Morning News

Executive Editor, Philip Bown

Readership: 96,376

Rating 4 – Not a major problem – but occasional over-zealous use of reporting restrictions is a problem.

Daily Evening – Paid

West Midlands Express & Star

Editor, Adrian Faber

Readership: 476,336

Rating 8 – Far more willingness to place anonymity orders on proceedings to prevent particularly teenager’s identification.

Manchester Evening News

Editor, Paul Horrocks

Readership: 404,211

Rating 9 – A proper system of notifying ALL press of court orders needs to be introduced. Trying to establish whether a section 39 or other order is in place if you have picked up the story sometime after the court case is a nightmare. Usually papers have to rely on PA Advisories. There is no official notification – and the Attorney General’s website is next to useless.

Liverpool Echo

Editor in Chief, Mark Dickinson

Readership: 388,386

Rating 8 – Increasing inappropriate use of court orders and deference and reference to personal privacy and data protection is overriding the public interest and right to know, creeping ad hoc privacy law.

Sheffield Star

Editor, Peter Charlton

Readership: 196,589

Rating 5 – Some judges believe no children should be named. Occasionally courts do not make such orders transparent enough: i.e. omit to place notices in proper place.

Portsmouth News

Editor, Mike Gilson

Readership: 187,814

Rating 8 – Staggering lack of legal knowledge from clerks and magistrates. What happened to Judge Judge’s guidelines?

Lancashire Evening Post

Editor, Simon Reynolds

Readership: 182,248

Rating 10 – Magistrates’ court highly secretive. Refuses to help with information to confirm charges, addresses etc., despite legal requirement to do so.

Bradford Telegraph & Argus Group Editor, Perry Austin Clarke Readership: 136,335	Rating 8 – We have had several instances of judges trying to use section 4 orders under Contempt of Court Act to stop us naming victims of sex offences – despite the fact they already have automatic anonymity. Orders unnecessary and, in one instance where we failed to overturn such an order, it hampered proper reporting of case.
The Gazette, Blackpool Editor, Adrian Darbyshire Readership: 108,346	Rating 8 – Continuing use of section 39 identity bans on interim and full ASBO hearings.
Daily Echo, Bournemouth Editor, Neal Butterworth Readership: 100,758	Rating 6 – Local courts are generally reluctant to give out address details of defendants.
Bolton Evening News Editor in Chief, Stephen Hughes Readership: 97,204	Rating 7 – Much better over last 12 months – constant challenges and publicity surrounding ASBOs have helped courts understand our position. We don't have to challenge as much as we used to but we remain vigilant.
Cambridge Evening News Editor, Colin Grant Readership: 97,166	Rating 5 – Another area in which we devote much time and resource. There are cases in magistrates' court where we have been banned from naming defendants or people associated with them. On occasions, we have challenged such bans and have, sometimes, been successful in getting the ban lifted.
Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph Editor, David Penman Readership: 89,705	Rating 6 – Courts are generally unhelpful in releasing information to the press. Magistrates' courts do not co-operate with the release of a court register. Coroner's officer tells families the press sensationalises and not to talk.
Grimsby Evening Telegraph Editor, Michelle Lalor Readership: 88,768	Rating 9 – Court case involving juveniles.
Oxford Mail Editor, Simon O'Neill Readership: 83,537	Rating 8 – Human Rights argument being used to obtain bans on identifying defendants in court cases.
Huddersfield Daily Examiner Editor, Roy Wright Readership: 83,373	Rating 5 – We are now clued up on making challenges in open court and the benches do seem to be willing to co-operate.
Torquay Herald Express Editor, Brendan Hanrahan Readership: 79,690	Rating 8 – All levels of court are seeking to restrict and direct identification.
Gloucestershire Echo Editor, Anita Syvret Readership: 78,031	Rating 2 – No comments.
Reading Evening Post Editor, Andy Murrill Readership: 69,876	Rating 5 – We are successful at challenging the courts over unreasonable restrictions.
Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph Editor, Jon Grubb Readership: 59,066	Rating 3 – Good access – no real problems.
Evening Courier (Halifax) Editor, John Furbisher Readership: 56,927	Rating 5 – Over zealous use of section 39 and unwillingness to i.d. kids who get ASBOs.

Barrow North West Evening Mail

Editor, Stephen Brauner

Readership: 54,445

Rating 7 – Inappropriate use of reporting restrictions/court orders banning publication of names.

Belfast Telegraph

News Editor, Paul Connolly

Rating 8 – Mostly in cases where judge or magistrate bans publication of identity/address of offender/accused.

Weekly Paid

Kent Messenger Series

Editor, Simon Irwin

Readership: 161,061

Rating 10 – Such restrictions affect me at Crown Court, especially section 39 orders banning identification of defendants under 18. Such orders are not automatic, but judges often treat them as such.

Barnsley Chronicle

Editor, Robert Cockroft

Readership: 132,746

Rating 2 – We have good relations with the magistrates' court, so problems rarely arise.

Derbyshire Times

Editor, Mike Wilson

Readership: 115,316

Rating 8 – Magistrates' court – even with District Judges sitting – imposing bans on reporting names in situations we believe fly in the face of law itself. Coroner who even tells police not to issue details even after relatives of deceased people have been informed.

Hereford Times

Editor, Liz Griffin

Readership: 114,519

Rated 8 – Although there have been improvements and restrictions are not so automatically imposed, there is still difficulty in obtaining court schedules from the magistrates in advance (short of going down on the day); late changes in venue and adjournments. It is more to do with the admin than the system.

Harrogate Advertiser Group

Readership: 110,209

Harrogate Herald

Readership: 70,451

North Yorkshire News

Readership: 53,167

Editor, Jean MacQuarrie

Rating 5 – Lack of knowledge of some local magistrates, e.g. access to youth courts, often has to be challenged, identifying recipients of ASBOs. Increasing reader criticism of inquest coverage seen as intrusive.

Mansfield Chad

Editor, Jeremy Plews

Readership: 104,642

Rating 4 – Magistrates' names not being given.

The Cumberland News

Editor, Keith Sutton

Readership: 98,478

Rating 8 – Blanket bans imposed by courts and requested by the County Council have prevented us from reporting wide ranging injunctions, included a clause not to identify any number of a family until they were all 18, meaning that some of them would have been 33 by the time the injunction lapsed. At an employment tribunal the Council got an order preventing naming of a manager "because mud sticks". We reported on a girl who became a mum aged 12 and the Council got an injunction which prevented us eliciting any further information about the case.

Chichester Observer Series

Executive Editor, Keith Newbery

Readership: 96,421

Rating 4 – At least we get the opportunity to challenge restrictive orders – often successfully.

Cornish Guardian

Editor, Alan Cooper

Readership: 88,986

Rating 7 – A positive improvement is being made with the naming of youth court offenders convicted of anti-social behaviour.

Newbury Weekly News

Editor, Brien Beharrell

Readership: 86,690

Rating 5 – We generally fare well with court reporting. Inexperienced magistrates who enforce section 39 orders etc, without legal foundation, is common. We challenge and are generally successful in having erroneous orders overturned.

Westmorland Gazette

Editor, Mike Glover

Readership: 86,335

Rating 3 – The odd wrongly imposed section 39 or section 11, but not a big issue.

Bury Free Press

Editor, Barry Peters

Readership: 81,884

Rating 3 – Some problems with one judge re ASBOs. Keep on challenging the orders though.

Falkirk Herald

Editor, Colin Hume

Readership: 79,803

Rating 2 – Generally no problems.

Rotherham & South Yorkshire Advertiser

Editor, Douglas Melloy

Readership: 74,336

Rating 10 – There is a problem with getting addresses from Crown Court as they are seldom given during proceedings. The police liaison officer used to be helpful, but he/she doesn't have to co-operate with us and some are downright unhelpful. In industrial tribunals, where we do not have the automatic right to be told names and addresses, we usually get the co-operation of either the applicant or the defendant. Sometimes a reporter needs to challenge the tribunal chairman to read out statements when he seeks to just admit them into evidence without them being read out. There is a similar problem, occasionally, at inquests when the coroner does not read out the statements of witnesses in the interests of expediency. Magistrates have a tendency not to be co-operative with information on juveniles.

Kentish Gazette Group

Editor, Bob Bounds

Readership: 72,079

Rating 8 – We have tried to persuade magistrates to lift identification bans in several cases and are nearly always unsuccessful. Strangely, we have a 100% success rate at Crown Court.

Western Telegraph

Editor, Fiona Phillips

Readership: 70,917

Rating 8 – These are things we have always worked with, although availability of lists etc is sporadic.

Lynn News (Fri)

Readership: 69,801

Lynn News (Tue)

Readership: 55,619

Editor, Donna Semmens

Rating 9 – Inconsistent use of orders (section 39/11/4 etc.) sometimes legally wrong – magistrates' courts – coroners not reading much of written statements during inquests – information missing.

Eastbourne Herald

Editor, Peter Hindley

Readership: 65,973

Rating 7 – No comments.

Kentish Express Series

Editor, Leo Whitlock

Readership: 58,783

Rating 5 – By ensuring my reporters have a sound knowledge of the law and the entitlements these bring, we manage to navigate the maze of reporting restrictions we now face. While we are blessed with a good relationship with our local coroner, coroners' courts are among the most secretive. The law is in a real mess when it comes to reporting the cases of juveniles who are subject to anti-social behaviour orders per se, are sentenced to them and then breach them. Despite efforts by the Newspaper Society and the

Judicial Studies Board, courts have a poor grasp of the law relating to the media.

Hexham Courant

Editor, Eve Fuller
Readership: 48,135

Rating 6 – Not too much trouble as we cover everything at local magistrates' court and reporters are well known to staff. Crown Court not so easy as they do send preliminary lists to us but sometimes bear little resemblance to the actual day's list – and we're 20 miles away. Coroner occasionally slips a difficult case before the usual start time.

The Visitor, Morecambe

Editor, Glen Cooper
Readership: 46,562

Rating 4 – Magistrates issuing 'naming bans' automatically for young criminals without assessing their virtue.

Llanelli Star Series

Editor, Andy Pearson
Readership: 46,336

Rating 5 – No comments.

Motherwell Times Series

Editor, Robert Wilson
Readership: 40,621

Rating 1 – No comments.

East Kent Mercury

Editor, Graham Smith
Readership: 37,729

Rating 7 – No comments.

Kirkintilloch Herald

Editor, Christine McPherson
Readership: 33,788

Rating 1 – No comments.

Louth Leader

Editor, Charles Ladbrook
Readership: 29,731

Rating 4 – No comments.

East Fife Mail

Editor, Iain Muirhead
Readership: 27,616

Rating 7 – Sheriff Courts often "too busy" to supply information.

Daventry Express

Editor, Jason Gibbins
Readership: 26,905

Rating 9 – Courts rarely impose restrictions which we feel we need to challenge. The biggest obstacle we face is trials being moved between courts. A current trial with 14 defendants has switched from Northampton and then to Nottingham, making it very difficult to attend all hearings and follow the case in detail.

Arbroath Herald

Editor, Craig Nisbet
Readership: 25,545

Rating 3 – No real problems in this area.

Linlithgowshire Journal & Gazette

Editor, Jack Shennan
Readership: 22,533

Rating 1 – No comments.

Milngavie & Bearsden Herald

Editor, Alister Blyth
Readership: 22,085

Rating 1 – No comments.

Market Rasen Mail

Editor, Jason Hippisley

Rating 5 – Difficult, especially at Lincoln Crown Court verifying defendant's name, address and charges etc.

Carlisle & Lanark Gazette

Editor, Aileen McCulloch
Readership: Not known

Rating 1 – No comments.

News Shopper

Group Editor, Andrew Parkes

Rating 3 – In general our dealings with magistrates' court are reasonable. Most Crown Court coverage comes from agencies.

Weekly Free

Slough Observer

Editor, Martin Biddle
Readership: 78,859

Rating 5 – No comments.

d) Libel Laws

Daily Morning - Paid

Press & Journal, Aberdeen

News Editor, Fiona McWhirr

Readership: 241,539

Rating 7 – People are far more willing to threaten to sue for defamation.

Norwich Eastern Daily Press

Editor, Peter Franzen

Readership: 233,802

Rating 8 – With a libel insurance excess of £25,000, we are having to steer well clear of anything that could be adjudged defamatory. It is the cost of even successfully defending a libel action that is hampering investigatory journalism.

Western Morning News

Executive Editor, Philip Bown

Readership: 96,376

Rating 2 – No real issues. We just take care and invest in good legal advice (touch wood!).

Daily Evening – Paid

Liverpool Echo

Editor in Chief, Mark Dickinson

Readership: 388,386

Rating 8 – Gagging writs which also make a presumption on right to privacy and or confidentiality re: Cream v. Trinity Mirror about to hit House of Lords (June). MASSIVELY significant milestone in the privacy/confidentiality racket should we lose. Libel and defamation no worse than before – annoying but workable.

Sheffield Star

Editor, Peter Charlton

Readership: 196,589

Rating 7 – Cost of defending cases means we sometimes are too cautious. Particular problems with professionals who are represented by unions e.g. police, teachers, local government officials.

Portsmouth News

Editor, Mike Gilson

Readership: 187,814

Rating 4 – More people prepared to try it on with no win/no fee solicitors.

Lancashire Evening Post

Editor, Simon Reynolds

Readership: 182,248

Rating 8 – Mischief-making complaints have increased. Led by some as political pressure.

Bradford Telegraph & Argus

Group Editor, Perry Austin Clarke

Readership: 136,335

Rating 7 – No comments.

The Gazette, Blackpool

Editor, Adrian Darbyshire

Readership: 108,346

Rating 1 – No comments.

Daily Echo, Bournemouth

Editor, Neal Butterworth

Readership: 100,758

Rating 3 – No comments.

Bolton Evening News

Editor in Chief, Stephen Hughes

Readership: 97,204

Rating 7 – No examples.

Cambridge Evening News

Editor, Colin Grant

Readership: 97,166

Rating 3 – No problems to date.

Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph

Editor, David Penman

Readership: 89,705

Rating 1 – Generally speaking the law is understood and does little to inhibit our day-to-day work.

Grimsby Evening Telegraph

Editor, Michelle Lalor

Readership: 88,768

Rating 5 – No comments.

Oxford Mail		
Editor, Simon O'Neill		
Readership: 83,537		Rating 2 – No comments.
Huddersfield Daily Examiner		
Editor, Roy Wright		
Readership: 83,373		Rating 3 – Not much of a problem but obviously always have to be vigilant.
Torquay Herald Express		
Editor, Brendan Hanrahan		
Readership: 79,690		Rating 5 – Used to them, so this is not an in depth analysis.
Gloucestershire Echo		
Editor, Anita Syvret		
Readership: 78,031		Rating 3 – No comments.
Reading Evening Post		
Editor, Andy Murrill		
Readership: 69,876		Rating 3 – The law's the law.
Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph		
Editor, Jon Grubb		
Readership: 59,066		Rating 2 – No real problem.
Evening Courier (Halifax)		
Editor, John Furbisher		
Readership: 56,927		Rating 3 – Like the poor, they are always with us and we've more defends now than we ever had.
Barrow North West Evening Mail		
Editor, Stephen Brauner		
Readership: 54,445		Rating 10 – Potentially high cost of defending actions brought under contingent fees (no win, no fee) is a deterrent to investigative journalism.
Belfast Telegraph		
News Editor, Paul Connolly		Rating 9 – These make it very difficult to prove accusations against people.

Weekly Paid

Kent Messenger Series		
Editor, Simon Irwin		
Readership: 161,061		Rating 1 – Court proceedings are privileges.
Barnsley Chronicle		
Editor, Robert Cockroft		
Readership: 132,746		Rating 2 – No comments.
Derbyshire Times		
Editor, Mike Wilson		
Readership: 115,316		Rating 7 – Legal problems time consuming. For those involved in local press 'fear' can lead to questioning of some facts in reports that, with legal support, could be legitimately aired and substantiated.
Hereford Times		
Editor, Liz Griffin		
Readership: 114,519		Rated 3 – These don't appear to have changed their role as inhibitors.
Harrogate Advertiser Group		
Readership: 110,209		
Harrogate Herald		
Readership: 70,451		
North Yorkshire News		
Readership: 53,167		
Editor, Jean MacQuarrie		Rating 5 – A litigious population produces cautious weekly newspapers. But Leeds Weekly News and Reynolds case have helped.
The Cumberland News		
Editor, Keith Sutton		
Readership: 98,478		Rating 5 – No comments.
Chichester Observer Series		
Executive Editor, Keith Newbery		
Readership: 96,421		Rating 2 – No comments.

Cornish Guardian Editor, Alan Cooper Readership: 88,986	Rating 8 – ‘Malice’ can often hamper investigative journalism where the initiative is taken by a newspaper rather than a 3rd party.
Newbury Weekly News Editor, Brien Beharrell Readership: 86,690	Rating 4 – Libel laws have not presented obstacles to our freedom to report. When in doubt, we seek legal advice before publication and, as a local newspaper, have generally been able to publish something without feeling “gagged”.
Westmorland Gazette Editor, Mike Glover Readership: 86,335	Rating 1 – Very rarely an issue.
Bury Free Press Editor, Barry Peters Readership: 81,884	Rating 1 – No comments.
Falkirk Herald Editor, Colin Hume Readership: 79,803	Rating 1 – Comfortable with this area.
Rotherham & South Yorkshire Advertiser Editor, Douglas Melloy Readership: 74,336	Rating 10 – Not a problem until it is a problem. I can’t remember the last time we were threatened with libel but then, as we should, we are very careful not to breach the law.
Kentish Gazette Group Editor, Bob Bounds Readership: 72,079	Rating 6 – No comments.
Western Telegraph Editor, Fiona Phillips Readership: 70,917	Rating 8 – No comments.
Lynn News (Fri) Readership: 69,801	
Lynn News (Tue) Readership: 55,619 Editor, Donna Semmens	Rating 2 – No comments.
Eastbourne Herald Editor, Peter Hindley Readership: 65,973	Rating 8 – No comments.
Kentish Express Series Editor, Leo Whitlock Readership: 58,783	Rating 3 – We do not find libel legislation too much of a problem.
Hexham Courant Editor, Eve Fuller Readership: 48,135	Rating 10 – We try to be careful.
Llanelli Star Series Editor, Andy Pearson Readership: 46,336	Rating 5 – No comments.
Motherwell Times Series Editor, Robert Wilson Readership: 40,621	Rating 1 – No comments.
East Kent Mercury Editor, Graham Smith Readership: 37,729	Rating 6 – No comments.
Kirkintilloch Herald Editor, Christine McPherson Readership: 33,788	Rating 1 – No comments.
Louth Leader Editor, Charles Ladbrook Readership: 29,731	Rating 5 – No comments.
East Fife Mail Editor, Iain Muirhead Readership: 27,616	Rating 3 – No comments.

Davertry Express

Editor, Jason Gibbins

Readership: 26,905

Rating 4 – Libel laws do not represent any great obstacle to our freedom to report issues important to a small market town.

Arbroath Herald

Editor, Craig Nisbet

Readership: 25,545

Rating 5 – No comments.

Linlithgowshire Journal & Gazette

Editor, Jack Shennan

Readership: 22,533

Rating 1 – No comments.

Milngavie & Bearsden Herald

Editor, Alister Blyth

Readership: 22,085

Rating 5 – No comments.

Carlisle & Lanark Gazette

Editor, Aileen McCulloch

Rating 1 – No comments.

News Shopper

Group Editor, Andrew Parkes

Rating 3 – We obviously operate within libel laws and understand the need for such laws.

Weekly Free

Slough Observer

Editor, Martin Biddle

Readership: 78,859

Rating 2 – No comments.

e) Law of confidence (including commercial confidentiality), data protection, and 'privacy'

Daily Morning - Paid

Press & Journal, Aberdeen

News Editor, Fiona McWhirr

Readership: 241,539

Rating 9 – Regularly quoted “data protection” as a reason to withhold information.

Norwich Eastern Daily Press

Editor, Peter Franzen

Readership: 233,802

Rating 6 – Law of confidence is not really an issue for us, although local authorities are becoming more and more eager to hide behind “commercial confidentiality” when dealing with council taxpayers money. The growth of PFI schemes in local government and hospital trusts is having the same impact.

Western Morning News

Executive Editor, Philip Bower

Readership: 96,376

Rating 4 – Data protection only real issue here. Public bodies often hide behind it.

Daily Evening – Paid

West Midlands Express & Star

Editor, Adrian Faber

Readership: 476,336

Rating 9 – Police now using data protection on a daily basis to stop having to give out detailed information of names, addresses etc.

Manchester Evening News

Editor, Paul Horrocks

Readership: 404,211

Rating 2 – I believe the Human Rights Act has probably helped the Press because in privacy cases, courts seem less likely to issue orders because of the public's right to know.

Liverpool Echo

Editor in Chief, Mark Dickinson

Readership: 388,386

Rating 10 – As above, privacy is the opposite and anathema to the public interest – data protection A FARCE re Huntley, ACPO, most public bodies and QUANGOS hide behind it.

Sheffield Star

Editor, Peter Charlton

Readership: 196,589

Rating 8 – This is a growing problem. Data protection is quoted by everyone from councils to police. We suspect, sometimes it means they can't be bothered to get permission to rolcass details or are too cautious to test a public interest defence.

Portsmouth News

Editor, Mike Gilson

Readership: 187,814

Rating 8 – Who understands data protection? Certainly not the police.

Lancashire Evening Post

Editor, Simon Reynolds

Readership: 182,248

Rating 9 – Much quoted and abused by officials who want to obstruct newspapers – notably the police/hospitals.

The Gazette, Blackpool

Editor, Adrian Darbyshire

Readership: 108,346

Rating 1 – No comments.

Daily Echo, Bournemouth

Editor, Neal Butterworth

Readership: 100,758

Rating 7 – Police will often say they can't give details of individuals because it breaks the Data Protection Act.

Bolton Evening News

Editor in Chief, Stephen Hughes

Readership: 97,204

Rating 7 – No examples.

Cambridge Evening News

Editor, Colin Grant
Readership: 97,166

Rating 7 – Breach of confidence has always been a difficult area for journalists and will continue to be so because of having information that you want to publish but feel duty bound not to, for fear of losing the contact who gave you the news in the first place. In regional and local newspapers, I do not believe that has changed in recent times. We know that if we publish something given to us in confidence then that valuable contact will never speak to us again. Where possible, it is about finding ways around the info and using it in another guise without breaching confidence. As regards data protection, we do, at times, get this thrown at us as a reason for not releasing names.

Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph

Editor, David Penman
Readership: 89,705

Rating 7 – Organisations, particularly local authorities etc., using data protection and privacy legislation as an excuse not to release information.

Grimsby Evening Telegraph

Editor, Michelle Lalor
Readership: 88,768

Rating 10 – Data protection – unable to print names etc., of accident victims due to police policy. School exam results also affected.

Oxford Mail

Editor, Simon O'Neill
Readership: 83,537

Rating 9 – The Data Protection Act is being used by police, council and public bodies to suppress information of enormous public interest

Huddersfield Daily Examiner

Editor, Roy Wright
Readership: 83,373

Rating 9 – Data protection a huge pain – you wonder whether organisations are hiding behind it.

Torquay Herald Express

Editor, Brendan Hanrahan
Readership: 79,690

Rating 8 – Police in particular and health bodies.

Gloucestershire Echo

Editor, Anita Syvret
Readership: 78,031

Rating 9 – Public bodies (e.g. Police) use data protection as an excuse not to release details about crimes.

Reading Evening Post

Editor, Andy Murrill
Readership: 69,876

Rating 7 – A growing issue.

Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph

Editor, Jon Grubb
Readership: 59,066

Rating 7 – Data protection continues to cause problems with health authorities, police and the council.

Evening Courier (Halifax)

Editor, John Furbisher
Readership: 56,927

Rating 8 – Data protection is a nasty grey area and I fear some day someone could come a big cropper.

Belfast Telegraph

News Editor, Paul Connolly

Rating 8 – Increasingly used by hospitals, health trusts etc.

Weekly Paid

Kent Messenger Series

Editor, Simon Irwin
Readership: 161,061

Rating 1 – No comments.

Kent Messenger Group

Political Editor: Paul Francis

Rating 7 – No comments.

Barnsley Chronicle

Editor, Robert Cockroft
Readership: 132,746

Rating 5 – Police use data protection to deny access to anything they cannot be troubled to give us. It is a ridiculous misuse of legislation.

<p>Derbyshire Times Editor, Mike Wilson Readership: 115,316</p>	<p>Rating 9 – Police/ambulance/hospitals can hide behind data protection in reporting of incidents. More and more educational establishments adopting policies on refusing to name pupils.</p>
<p>Hereford Times Editor, Liz Griffin Readership: 114,519</p>	<p>Rated 8 – The inappropriate use of data protection to attempt to stop all sorts of aspects of reporting, especially schools from exam results to children’s names, can drive you bonkers. Very clear guidelines from the NS have helped greatly – it’s unfortunate that the DofE doesn’t send them out too.</p>
<p>Harrogate Advertiser Group Readership: 110,209 Harrogate Herald Readership: 70,451 North Yorkshire News Readership: 53,167 Editor, Jean MacQuarrie</p>	<p>Rating 8 – Data protection seems a great excuse for withholding names, e.g. schools naming children in photographs.</p>
<p>Mansfield Chad Editor, Jeremy Plews Readership: 104,642</p>	<p>Rating 10 – Major impact on ability to report because the police press office quote data protection constantly to refuse information e.g. names of RTA victims.</p>
<p>The Cumberland News Editor, Keith Sutton Readership: 98,478</p>	<p>Rating 2 – No comments.</p>
<p>Chichester Observer Series Executive Editor, Keith Newbery Readership: 96,421</p>	<p>Rating 10 – Data protection – especially as employed by the police and fire service. The names of people involved in accidents, crimes and fires are invariably withheld.</p>
<p>Cornish Guardian Editor, Alan Cooper Readership: 88,986</p>	<p>Rating 8 – Data protection constraints are widely misused by the police i.e. Huntley/Soham murder trial. It has become a catch phrase used as a pretext by the police for not passing on information.</p>
<p>Newbury Weekly News Editor, Brien Beharrell Readership: 86,690</p>	<p>Rating 8 – Privacy and data protection have been major issues. There is great public confusion over these and to what they legitimately refer. Both were cited by local schools as reasons not to participate in a “First class” supplement of children starting school, even though no names were used.</p>
<p>Westmorland Gazette Editor, Mike Glover Readership: 86,335</p>	<p>Rating 10 – The misuse of data protection and human rights legislation to block details of crime and accident victims by police, fire, ambulance, condition checks from hospitals, mountain rescues by rescue teams, coast rescues by the coastguard, school and leisure centre pictures – even exam results, is the biggest threat to local newspapers and their ability to inform the public.</p>
<p>Bury Free Press Editor, Barry Peters Readership: 81,884</p>	<p>Rating 10 – People quote privacy and data protection and we fight to secure what is essential content (as in schools not wanting us to use kid’s pix).</p>
<p>Falkirk Herald Editor, Colin Hume Readership: 79,803</p>	<p>Rating 8 – Lack of knowledge of data protection poses problems.</p>
<p>Rotherham & South Yorkshire Advertiser Editor, Douglas Melloy Readership: 74,336</p>	<p>Rating 8 – Data protection legislation is occasionally trotted out as a reason</p>

not to provide even basic information when there is absolutely no grounds for doing so under the Act.

Kentish Gazette Group

Editor, Bob Bounds
Readership: 72,079

Rating 10 – The Data Protection Act and Human Rights are constantly misused (mainly by police) to prevent us having access to information/pictures which often have strong public interest.

Western Telegraph

Editor, Fiona Phillips
Readership: 70,917

Rating 10 – Data protection appears to be the overall phrase used by all authorities to cover the fact that they won't disclose anything.

Lynn News (Fri)

Readership: 69,801

Lynn News (Tue)

Readership: 55,619
Editor, Donna Semmens

Rating 9 – Data Protection Act: Police will no longer give names/details of RTA victims. Schools quote the Act for everything.

Eastbourne Herald

Editor, Peter Hindley
Readership: 65,973

Rating 8 – No comments.

Kentish Express Series

Editor, Leo Whitlock
Readership: 58,783

Rating 9 – Organisations are increasingly hiding behind the Data Protection Act and its provisions to stop the flow of information. It is too easy for overworked, lazy press officers to cite the Act as a reason for not supplying information even when could not be deemed personal, sensitive information. Police press offices in particular, determined to promote a positive image of their forces, are using the Data Protection Act and human rights legislation in an attempt to stop bad news stories from getting into our newspapers. Those organizations genuinely fearful of the effects of this legislation seem to become paralysed in its gaze and are automatically over cautious.

Hexham Courant

Editor, Eve Fuller
Readership: 48,135

No Rating – Police not quite as liberal with info as they used to be. Luckily readers tell us about incidents and police will give info if we ask specifically. Nuisance that names etc. are withheld.

Llanelli Star Series

Editor, Andy Pearson
Readership: 46,336

Rating 5 – No comments.

Motherwell Times Series

Editor, Robert Wilson
Readership: 40,621

Rating 7 – As a result of the Data Protection Act the names of commercial premises which are the target of crime are not released.

East Kent Mercury

Editor, Graham Smith
Readership: 37,729

Rating 2 – No comments.

Kirkintilloch Herald

Editor, Christine McPherson
Readership: 33,788

Rating 5 – Data protection – some police officers take this more seriously than others.

Louth Leader

Editor, Charles Ladbrook
Readership: 29,731

Rating 7 – Police use Data Protection Act too much.

East Fife Mail

Editor, Iain Muirhead
Readership: 27,616

Rating 8 – Council often hides behind 'commercial sensitivity' on big money deals.

Daventry Express

Editor, Jason Gibbins
Readership: 26,905

Rating 4 – Libel laws do not represent any great obstacle to our freedom to report issues important to a small market town.

Arbroath Herald

Editor, Craig Nisbet

Readership: 25,545

Rating 8 – Sometimes used as an excuse for unnecessary exclusion.

Linlithgowshire Journal & Gazette

Editor, Jack Shennan

Readership: 22,533

Rating 1 – No comments.

Milngavie & Bearsden Herald

Editor, Alister Blyth

Readership: 22,085

Rating 5 – No comments.

Carlisle & Lanark Gazette

Editor, Aileen McCulloch

Rating 5 – Police interpretation of data protection is throwing up anomalies.

News Shopper

Group Editor, Andrew Parkes

Rating 8 – Data protection is particularly annoying when it is quoted by people who do not understand it.

Weekly Free

Slough Observer

Editor, Martin Biddle

Readership: 78,859

Rating 2 – No comments.

f) Official secrets legislation, protection of sources and whistleblowers

Daily Morning - Paid

Press & Journal, Aberdeen

News Editor, Fiona McWhirr

Readership: 241,539 Rating 4 – No comments.

Norwich Eastern Daily Press

Editor, Peter Franzen

Readership: 233,802 Rating 3 – We always protect our sources. Only once in the last ten years or so has this led to legal action against us – involving a police informer – and we won!

Western Morning News

Executive Editor, Philip Bower

Readership: 96,376 Rating 1 – Not an issue for us.

Daily Evening – Paid

Manchester Evening News

Editor, Paul Horrocks

Readership: 404,211 Rating 7 – One of our reporters faced jail after refusing to reveal his sources to a court – it was a huge ordeal for him. Journalists should be free to protect their sources.

Liverpool Echo

Editor in Chief, Mark Dickinson

Readership: 388,386 No Rating – Whistleblowers are afforded little or no protection under current legislation – most are hounded through the courts – many by the court.

Sheffield Star

Editor, Peter Charlton

Readership: 196,589 Rating 1 – This has not been a problem.

Portsmouth News

Editor, Mike Gilson

Readership: 187,814 Rating 3 – Minimal problems.

Lancashire Evening Post

Editor, Simon Reynolds

Readership: 182,248 Rating 5 – Not an issue for us.

The Gazette, Blackpool

Editor, Adrian Darbyshire

Readership: 108,346 Rating 1 – No comments.

Daily Echo, Bournemouth

Editor, Neal Butterworth

Readership: 100,758 Rating 3 – No comments.

Bolton Evening News

Editor in Chief, Stephen Hughes

Readership: 97,204 Rating 7 – No examples.

Cambridge Evening News

Editor, Colin Grant

Readership: 97,166 Rating 6 – The most likely area of conflict for us in this section would be protection of sources and whistleblowers. We would always protect such people and have not had any conflict, as yet, with authorities demanding to know where we got particular info from.

Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph

Editor, David Penman

Readership: 89,705 Rating 2 – Rarely an issue.

Grimsby Evening Telegraph

Editor, Michelle Lalor

Readership: 88,768 Rating 2 – No comments.

Oxford Mail

Editor, Simon O'Neill

Readership: 83,537 Rating 1 – No comments.

Huddersfield Daily Examiner Editor, Roy Wright Readership: 83,373	Rating 3 – This has barely touched us in a practical sense, to be honest.
Torquay Herald Express Editor, Brendan Hanrahan Readership: 79,690	Rating 8 – People are generally frightened of losing their job if they talk to us.
Gloucestershire Echo Editor, Anita Syvret Readership: 78,031	Rating 8 – We can't get a squeak out of GCHQ (based on our patch).
Reading Evening Post Editor, Andy Murrill Readership: 69,876	Rating 2 – Don't often come into contact with this issue.
Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph Editor, Jon Grubb Readership: 59,066	Rating 1 – No comments.
Evening Courier (Halifax) Editor, John Furbisher Readership: 56,927	Rating 2 – Simply not one that impacts frequently on a small evening paper.
Belfast Telegraph News Editor, Paul Connolly	Rating 9 – People are often afraid of coming forward.

Weekly Paid

Kent Messenger Series Editor, Simon Irwin Readership: 161,061	Rating 1 – No comments.
Barnsley Chronicle Editor, Robert Cockroft Readership: 132,746	Rating 1 - No comments.
Derbyshire Times Editor, Mike Wilson Readership: 115,316	Rating 1 – Not an issue so far with us.
Hereford Times Editor, Liz Griffin Readership: 114,519	Rated 8 – Our relations with the local regiment suffer from over-emphasis on the need for secrecy – a Royal visit for instance, which we were reporting retrospectively, did not need denials from the palace and the MoD surely. Increasingly, the NHS and other organisations are telling staff and users (who might be or are whistleblowers) to talk to them directly, not through the press.
Mansfield Chad Editor, Jeremy Plews Readership: 104,642	Rating 1 – No issues.
The Cumberland News Editor, Keith Sutton Readership: 98,478	Rating 2 – No comments.
Chichester Observer Series Executive Editor, Keith Newbery Readership: 96,421	Rating 1 – No comments.
Cornish Guardian Editor, Alan Cooper Readership: 88,986	Rating 2 – Whenever I have been quoted the Official Secrets Act, particularly by the MoD, I believe it has been for good reason. I have not experienced misuse.
Newbury Weekly News Editor, Brien Beharrell Readership: 86,690	Rating 4 – This ranks low on impact for us.
Westmorland Gazette Editor, Mike Glover Readership: 86,335	Rating 2 – Not an issue.

Bury Free Press		
Editor, Barry Peters		
Readership: 81,884		Rating 1 – No comments.
Falkirk Herald		
Editor, Colin Hume		
Readership: 79,803		Rating 2 – Few problems.
Rotherham & South Yorkshire Advertiser		
Editor, Douglas Melloy		
Readership: 74,336		No Rating – Not an issue which particularly affects us.
Kentish Gazette Group		
Editor, Bob Bounds		
Readership: 72,079		Rating 2 – No comments.
Western Telegraph		
Editor, Fiona Phillips		
Readership: 70,917		Rating 5 – No comments.
Lynn News (Fri)		
Readership: 69,801		
Lynn News (Tue)		
Readership: 55,619		
Editor, Donna Semmens		Rating 2 – No comments.
Eastbourne Herald		
Editor, Peter Hindley		
Readership: 65,973		Rating 8 – No comments.
Kentish Express Series		
Editor, Leo Whitlock		
Readership: 58,783		Rating 1 – No comments.
Hexham Courant		
Editor, Eve Fuller		
Readership: 48,135		Rating 6 – No real problems. We have moles in most of our larger organisations (factory, hospital etc.) but obviously protect their identities.
The Visitor, Morecambe		
Editor, Glen Cooper		
Readership: 46,562		Rating 1 – No comments.
Llanelli Star Series		
Editor, Andy Pearson		
Readership: 46,336		Rating 1 – No comments.
Motherwell Times Series		
Editor, Robert Wilson		
Readership: 40,621		Rating 1 – No comments.
East Kent Mercury		
Editor, Graham Smith		
Readership: 37,729		Rating 2 – No comments.
Kirkintilloch Herald		
Editor, Christine McPherson		
Readership: 33,788		Rating 1 – No comments.
Louth Leader		
Editor, Charles Ladbrook		
Readership: 29,731		Rating 5 – No comments.
East Fife Mail		
Editor, Iain Muirhead		
Readership: 27,616		Rating 3 – No comments.
Daventry Express		
Editor, Jason Gibbins		
Readership: 26,905		Rating 1 – Again, in a small market town we have little reason to worry about official secrets or protection of sources.
Linlithgowshire Journal & Gazette		
Editor, Jack Shennan		
Readership: 22,533		Rating 1 – No comments.
Milngavie & Bearsden Herald		
Editor, Alister Blyth		
Readership: 22,085		Rating 1 – No comments.

Carlisle & Lanark Gazette

Editor, Aileen McCulloch Rating 1 – No comments.

News Shopper

Group Editor, Andrew Parkes Rating 2 – Annoying at times, but understandable – we have done stories on whistleblowers.

Weekly Free

Slough Observer

Editor, Martin Biddle
Readership: 78,859 Rating 1 – No comments.

g) Public bodies' and public services' secrecy (e.g. Police, schools & universities, hospitals, armed forces, prisons, quangos)

Daily Morning - Paid

Press & Journal, Aberdeen

News Editor, Fiona McWhirr

Readership: 241,539

Rating 10 – Poor press officers at several Scottish police forces – including former journalists – who are un-cooperative and unwilling to provide off the record guidance.

Norwich Eastern Daily Press

Editor, Peter Franzen

Readership: 233,802

Rating 2 – Strong and trustful relations between the local paper and these bodies have mitigated their natural secrecy tendencies. Generally speaking, we are finding such bodies much more open than they traditionally were – mainly because they realize that image and reputation is these days all-important.

Western Morning News

Executive Editor, Philip Bower

Readership: 96,376

Rating 8 – Police are a problem. In particular, family liaison officers who see it as their role to prevent us doing our job.

Daily Evening – Paid

West Midlands Express & Star

Editor, Adrian Faber

Readership: 476,336

Rating 9 – Health authorities/police – very unwilling to provide information on anything that is not “soft” – e.g. Asylum seekers, race relations etc.

Manchester Evening News

Editor, Paul Horrocks

Readership: 404,211

Rating 10 – Schools caught up in a controversy often refer all press inquiries to the Council press office. Heads should be free to speak about their own school's affairs.

Liverpool Echo

Editor in Chief, Mark Dickinson

Readership: 388,386

Rating 10 – Nearly all these bodies are using data protection or human rights regulations as excuse to cut costs and not provide information which is obviously in the public interest.

Sheffield Star

Editor, Peter Charlton

Readership: 196,589

Rating 7 – Schools occasionally do not want to name pupils (including in exam results), council licensing committee meets in private. This is a growing and worrying trend.

Portsmouth News

Editor, Mike Gilson

Readership: 187,814

Rating 8 – Press officers again. Lack of our understanding about what we have the right to ask for, particularly when it comes to financial information.

Lancashire Evening Post

Editor, Simon Reynolds

Readership: 182,248

Rating 9 – Quangos have become worse. Road safety partnership refused to publish accounts. Police and hospitals routinely conceal information.

Bradford Telegraph & Argus

Group Editor, Perry Austin Clarke

Readership: 136,335

Rating 9 – Obtaining full info on crimes, including names, is consistently an issue. Although there are guidelines regulating release of photos on conviction, there seems to be no consistency in how those are applied.

The Gazette, Blackpool

Editor, Adrian Darbyshire

Readership: 108,346

Rating 7 – Problems with hospitals not giving condition checks – at request of family members. Also problems with some police divisions in not informing us of incidents or withholding full details.

Daily Echo, Bournemouth Editor, Neal Butterworth Readership: 100,758	Rating 6 – Police will often say they can't give details of individuals because it breaks the Data Protection Act.
Bolton Evening News Editor in Chief, Stephen Hughes Readership: 97,204	Rating 10 – One of our main areas of concern, especially police. No consistency. Still hide behind data protection. Less and less co-operation in naming victims of accidents and crime whether dead or injured. Hospital also very secretive.
Cambridge Evening News Editor, Colin Grant Readership: 97,166	Rating 8 – We do have some schools who refuse to name pupils in photographs. This is only a limited number to date so we have not 'rocked the boat'. However, if it became a big issue then we would seek talks with the authorities. Police still release details of people involved in road accidents and victims of crime. Releasing of pix of convicted criminals – if we don't have one ourselves – is sometimes an issue.
Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph Editor, David Penman Readership: 89,705	Rating 7 – Increasingly the blurring of responsibilities via 'partnerships' between authorities and private companies, means it is increasingly difficult to access information. Release of names and photographs a particular issue.
Grimsby Evening Telegraph Editor, Michelle Lalor Readership: 88,768	Rating 2 – No comments.
Oxford Mail Editor, Simon O'Neill Readership: 83,537	Rating 9 – The Data Protection Act is being used by police, council and public bodies to suppress information of enormous public interest.
Huddersfield Daily Examiner Editor, Roy Wright Readership: 83,373	Rating 8 – Again, citation of data protection laws a big problem. School photographs especially problematic.
Torquay Herald Express Editor, Brendan Hanrahan Readership: 79,690	Rating 7 – Getting worse. Particularly the police and schools. Picture ID etc., withholding names.
Gloucestershire Echo Editor, Anita Syvret Readership: 78,031	Rating 4 – No comments.
Reading Evening Post Editor, Andy Murrill Readership: 69,876	Rating 9 – Schools are a particular problem. They are now strident marketing operations that will do anything to keep bad news out of the paper.
Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph Editor, Jon Grubb Readership: 59,066	Rating 7 – Good relations with police here in North Lincolnshire – but health, hospitals etc., are still very difficult to deal with.
Evening Courier (Halifax) Editor, John Furbisher Readership: 56,927	Rating 10 – The presumption by public "servants" that, wherever there is a choice, they should withhold information rather than divulge.
Barrow North West Evening Mail Editor, Stephen Brauner Readership: 54,445	Rating 8 – Difficult to get access to board papers, reports which explain how decisions are made.
Belfast Telegraph News Editor, Paul Connolly	Rating 7 – People are often afraid of coming forward.

Weekly Paid

Kent Messenger Series

Editor, Simon Irwin

Readership: 161,061

Rating 1 – No comments.

Kent Messenger Group

Political Editor: Paul Francis

Rating 8 – Quangos (e.g. Learning and Skills Council, various development agencies). No real accountability/openness because they are not covered by same legislation on council meetings/documents. May change with Freedom of Information.

Barnsley Chronicle

Editor, Robert Cockroft

Readership: 132,746

Rating 6 – Local health trusts have their own Masonic rites when it comes to disclosure.

Derbyshire Times

Editor, Mike Wilson

Readership: 115,316

Rating 5 – Schools continue to present obstacles i.e. photographs and names.

Hereford Times

Editor, Liz Griffin

Readership: 114,519

Rated 8 – The fight to get the names of victims of road accidents or crime from the police appears to have been well lost despite mighty battles. West Mercia and the local editors have had well-documented and lengthy run-ins over this, going back several years, but to no avail. Armed forces see earlier comments. NHS, schools etc., are OK until they appoint press officers who seek to only give out the good news and block you from the bad. They also attempt to alarm ordinary staff against talking to newspapers (although in some cases this may be wise advice, sadly).

Harrogate Advertiser Group

Readership: 110,209

Harrogate Herald

Readership: 70,451

North Yorkshire News

Readership: 53,167

Editor, Jean MacQuarrie

Rating 8 – Data protection often cited as reason for withholding information. Schools are very sensitive. Every service seems to have a press officer who tells the story “their way”.

Mansfield Chad

Editor, Jeremy Plews

Readership: 104,642

Rating 10 – Major issue with schools withholding names of children even when newspaper has been invited to take pictures of activities. Police not always being entirely frank about crime incidents, e.g. their importance.

The Cumberland News

Editor, Keith Sutton

Readership: 98,478

Rating 5 – The police, schools and hospitals are able to manipulate the news by providing a very poor flow of information (crimes unreported or news releases are days late).

Chichester Observer Series

Executive Editor, Keith Newbery

Readership: 96,421

Rating 4 – Because we do not receive names of accident victims, hospitals refuse to give us the condition of patients because we don't have a name. Catch 22!

Cornish Guardian

Editor, Alan Cooper

Readership: 88,986

Rating 8 – Police/schools/universities etc., misuse of Data Protection legislation to withhold information from media.

Newbury Weekly News

Editor, Brien Beharrell

Readership: 86,690

Rating 7 – Police and schools are our main areas of interest here. We rely on local contacts and trusted sources to keep us informed.

Westmorland Gazette

Editor, Mike Glover

Readership: 86,335

Rating 10 – See (f) above.

Bury Free Press

Editor, Barry Peters

Readership: 81,884

Rating 5 – Police, as ever, hide behind press office but we have built good local contacts. Hospitals do hide behind PR firms.

Falkirk Herald

Editor, Colin Hume

Readership: 79,803

Rating 1 – Very good relationships locally.

Rotherham & South Yorkshire Advertiser

Editor, Douglas Melloy

Readership: 74,336

Rating 8 – To many, public and private organizations are reluctant to provide information, but it is an occasional rather than a chronic problem. Some schools can be problematic by refusing to give the names of children for picture captions. Once our photographer was turned away from a swimming gala because it was “improper” to photograph children in swimming costumes.

Kentish Gazette Group

Editor, Bob Bounds

Readership: 72,079

Rating 10 – Most schools now prevent us having full names of children appearing in photos – otherwise our relations with the above bodies are open and constructive.

Western Telegraph

Editor, Fiona Phillips

Readership: 70,917

Rating 10 – Police press office and individual stations very reluctant to give away info to press. Worst offenders of hiding behind Data Protection Act.

Lynn News (Fri)

Readership: 69,801

Lynn News (Tue)

Readership: 55,619

Editor, Donna Semmens

Rating 9 – Police much less open than before. Information almost impossible to gain unless they want our help. Schools/colleges quote privacy/data protection at the drop of a hat. Armed forces - really as they ever were – not often helpful, particularly during recent Iraq conflict.

Eastbourne Herald

Editor, Peter Hindley

Readership: 65,973

Rating 10 – No comments.

Kentish Express Series

Editor, Leo Whitlock

Readership: 58,783

No Rating – As already stated, public bodies are increasingly hiding behind or are scared by the Data Protection Act and human rights legislation. This has the effect of stopping the flow of information to the media. They have scant regard for freedom of expression and our rights under the same legislation. Another worrying trend is the refusal of police forces to release pictures of those convicted of heinous crimes, especially sexual offences, because of a duty of care to the offender.

Hexham Courant

Editor, Eve Fuller

Readership: 48,135

Rating 5 – Police now giving more info, but don't take initiative about telling us things. Will respond to questions about specific incidents. Health trust good at responding to questions, but complain bitterly at anti-trust info in the paper.

The Visitor, Morecambe

Editor, Glen Cooper

Readership: 46,562

Rating 5 – Schools particularly are extremely sensitive about any slightly negative issues and often refuse to comment.

Llanelli Star Series

Editor, Andy Pearson

Readership: 46,336

Rating 10 – Most are highly defensive when a reporter contacts them with sensitive issues. It seems the need for a positive public image outweighs the importance of being open, frank and honest with reporters.

Motherwell Times Series Editor, Robert Wilson Readership: 40,621	Rating 7 – We have a good relationship with the police who provide us with plenty of information, but names of accident or assault victims are not released unless the incident is fatal.
East Kent Mercury Editor, Graham Smith Readership: 37,729	Rating 8 – Some schools still hiding behind guidelines. Names/pictures of children appearing.
Kirkintilloch Herald Editor, Christine McPherson Readership: 33,788	Rating 1 – No comments.
Louth Leader Editor, Charles Ladbrook Readership: 29,731	Rating 5 – No comments.
East Fife Mail Editor, Iain Muirhead Readership: 27,616	Rating 6 – Police tend to issue information only when it suits them.
Daventry Express Editor, Jason Gibbins Readership: 26,905	Rating 10 – Police – press offices blocking direct access to officers and taking long periods of time to respond. Schools – growing problems with schools naming children in photographs due to false belief that legislation has been introduced or children are at risk from wider members of the public.
Arbroath Herald Editor, Craig Nisbet Readership: 25,545	Rating 7 – Once again, data protection has become the biggest obstacle to release of information.
Linlithgowshire Journal & Gazette Editor, Jack Shennan Readership: 22,533	Rating 10 – Problems with photographs of school children under the Data Protection Act.
Milngavie & Bearsden Herald Editor, Alister Blyth Readership: 22,085	Rating 5 – Beginning to have (anticipated for some time) problems re names for school captions.
Market Rasen Mail Editor, Jason Hippisley	Rating 5 – Generally positive relations.
Carlisle & Lanark Gazette Editor, Aileen McCulloch	Rating 7 – Police, as already stated. Council's concerns about pupil safety and identification will potentially restrict photos at schools, though only one example so far.
News Shopper Group Editor, Andrew Parkes	Rating 5 Schools – Rating 10 Police – Rating 3 Hospitals Rating 2 Prisons. Schools regularly get confused about press freedom. In general, seem to take an obstructive approach. Met have become worse, Kent have always been bad.
Weekly Free	
Slough Observer Editor, Martin Biddle Readership: 78,859	Rating 4 – No comments.

h) Others

Daily Evening – Paid

The Gazette, Blackpool

Editor, Adrian Darbyshire

Readership: 108,346

Rating 1 – No comments

Cambridge Evening News

Editor, Colin Grant

Readership: 97,166

Rating 1 – No comments.

Grimsby Evening Telegraph

Editor, Michelle Lalor

Readership: 88,768

Rating 1 – No comments.

Torquay Herald Express

Editor, Brendan Hanrahan

Readership: 79,690

Rating 8 – People are generally frightened to speak out. Won't put names to letters. They seek safety in numbers. Seem to feel vulnerable or frightened as individuals.

Reading Evening Post

Editor, Andy Murrill

Readership: 69,876

Rating 4 – Relationship with local police greatly improved after much effort from both sides. Reading police know they need us to improve public confidence.

Weekly Paid

Hereford Times

Editor, Liz Griffin

Readership: 114,519

Rated 8 – Alarming, increasing numbers of ordinary people appear to be concerned not to talk to the press or, if they do, that it should be 'off the record' or given without their names being used.

Kentish Express Series

Editor, Leo Whitlock

Readership: 58,783

Rating 10 – Education authority and youth organization guidelines on the naming/photographing of children pose the biggest threat to press freedom. Many organizations have overreacted to the guidelines issued by the DfES and over-blown fears about the activities of paedophiles. These restrictions are hampering local newspapers reporting on the many positive stories emanating from these organizations and preventing a whole generation of children of being proud to appear in their local newspaper. The industry needs to fight the misinformation and misunderstandings surrounding this issue with one voice.

Hexham Courant

Editor, Eve Fuller

Readership: 48,135

No Rating – Community partnerships. Huge spending powers but unaccountable because not elected.

Llanelli Star Series

Editor, Andy Pearson

Readership: 46,336

Rating 10 – Press offices, in my experience, are too wound up in the agendas of their own organizations to tap into newspapers' agendas and get positive coverage that way.

Kirkintilloch Herald

Editor, Christine McPherson

Readership: 33,788

Rating 1 – No comments.

East Fife Mail

Editor, Iain Muirhead

Readership: 27,616

Rating 7 – Problems with schools supplying names for picture captions.

Linlithgowshire Journal & Gazette

Editor, Jack Shennan

Readership: 22,533

Rating 5 – Occasional problems at community council meetings with people saying: “That’s not for quoting!”.

Milngavie & Bearsden Herald

Editor, Alister Blyth

Readership: 22,085

Rating 1 – No comments.

Weekly Free

Slough Observer

Editor, Martin Biddle

Readership: 78,859

Rating 1 – No comments.

Question 2 – Please identify your biggest area of concern, what improvements would you like to see?

Daily Morning - Paid

Press & Journal, Aberdeen

News Editor, Fiona McWhirr

Readership: 241,539

The Data Protection Act is constantly given as a reason why increasingly more information, which would have been freely given in the past, is being withheld. Some fire brigades refuse to give street numbers of properties on fire, while the most scant of details are given by other emergency services and public bodies.

Norwich Eastern Daily Press

Editor, Peter Franzen

Readership: 233,802

Restrictive court orders – wrongly applied for and made for the wrong reasons. The conflict between ASBOs in the civil court and ASBO breaches dealt with in the criminal court is particularly annoying and needs clarifying in law, probably by legislation.

Daily Evening – Paid

West Midlands Express & Star

Editor, Adrian Faber

Readership: 476,336

Every public body is appointing vast numbers of press officers to help with media inquiries. They are only there to prevent us getting any sort of honest, detailed information. Getting to people who actually do the job is getting harder and harder.

Manchester Evening News

Editor, Paul Horrocks

Readership: 404,211

Worried that police are giving less and less information out, particularly names of accident victims etc. Also concerned that police starting to act as intermediaries between us and families. Need greater access to police picture files. ASBOs – need more evidence to be given in court when ASBO order is made so we can report the details (while we are free to name ASBO people now, we cannot report the evidence given earlier during the criminal part of the youth court hearing if we intend to name them).

Liverpool Echo

Editor in Chief, Mark Dickinson

Readership: 388,386

All could be covered by a presumption of a right to know when in the public interest. The onus should be on organisations or individuals to demonstrate why something is not in the public interest – otherwise all this (3 points) adds up to a retrogressive cover-up for the great and allegedly good.

Sheffield Star

Editor, Peter Charlton

Readership: 196,589

Authorities quote Data Protection and Commercial confidentiality as reasons for keeping information from public scrutiny. Police and council are most secretive but schools increasingly are cautious in dealing with the press.

Portsmouth News

Editor, Mike Gilson

Readership: 187,814

The growing willingness of public bodies to hide behind press officers and make up rules and regulations as they go along.

Lancashire Evening Post

Editor, Simon Reynolds

Readership: 182,248

Would support Freedom of Information Act. Believe political bodies have become un-democratic and more secretive in recent years.

Bradford Telegraph & Argus

Group Editor, Perry Austin Clarke

Readership: 136,335

Better information from police and clear understanding of how some guidelines are being implemented.

The Gazette, Blackpool Editor, Adrian Darbyshire Readership: 108,346	Human rights legislation and its impact on court reporting. Among other things, legislation gives extra protection to sex offenders – police reluctant to give us pictures of them when they would with those convicted of less serious offences.
Daily Echo, Bournemouth Editor, Neal Butterworth Readership: 100,758	Police using the Data Protection Act to withhold information and councils not willing to identify those give ASBOs.
Bolton Evening News Editor in Chief, Stephen Hughes Readership: 97,204	Main concern is being deprived of names and addresses by police, especially road accidents, and constant quoting of data protection as reason for not divulging information.
Cambridge Evening News Editor, Colin Grant Readership: 97,166	The biggest area of concern has to be data protection and the times this is thrown at us as a reason for not giving out information. Given the recent evidence from the Blichard inquiry, it would appear that the whole issue needs a rethink as some authorities appear to interpret it differently to others.
Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph Editor, David Penman Readership: 89,705	Police and public authorities who use an increasingly large number of press officers to apparently stifle the flow of information. For example, local authority which released details of road casualties but insisted in KSI (killed or seriously injured) but could, or would, not specify numbers of fatalities.
Grimsby Evening Telegraph Editor, Michelle Lalor Readership: 88,768	Data protection – clearer guidance for organisations.
Oxford Mail Editor, Simon O'Neill Readership: 83,537	The use of the Data Protection Act and Human Rights legislation to withhold information which should be in the public domain.
Huddersfield Daily Examiner Editor, Roy Wright Readership: 83,373	School photographs. We would like to see it drilled into every employee paid from the public purse that the public have a right to know.
Torquay Herald Express Editor, Brendan Hanrahan Readership: 79,690	Courts – woeful sentencing, they seem to hate the media. Police – paralysed by contradictory laws, frightened to speak out, more social engineers than law enablers and enforcers. Schools – being strangled by political correctness.
Gloucestershire Echo Editor, Anita Syvret Readership: 78,031	Random use of Data Protection Act as an excuse to withhold information.
Reading Evening Post Editor, Andy Murrill Readership: 69,876	Reporting on schools is now very difficult especially the fear they will stop us taking pictures of children. They are also shrill when we try to report what they don't want us to. Data protection excuses also increasingly used.
Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph Editor, Jon Grubb Readership: 59,066	Council and health authorities and their blatant refusal to allow us to speak directly to paid officials. All inquiries are going through press offices in an attempt to “control” flow of information to the media. I would like to see some wider implementation of “inspections” of health and council information services – they usually shake them up a bit!
Evening Courier (Halifax) Editor, John Furbisher Readership: 56,927	Public service secrecy. The public sector needs an entirely different culture of openness instead of secrecy. More like America's. Not easily achieved.

Barrow North West Evening Mail

Editor, Stephen Brauner

Readership: 54,445

Law of libel. More robust public interest defence.

Belfast Telegraph

News Editor, Paul Connolly

Libel laws. The burden of proof uniquely falls on the defendant. This needs to be reversed.

Weekly Paid

Kent Messenger Series

Editor, Simon Irwin

Readership: 161,061

More consultation with the media over court orders.

Kent Messenger Group

Political Editor: Paul Francis

Many public sector organisations, from councils to hospitals and police forces regard it as necessary to manage the release of information in a way which casts them in a good light. There is no culture within these organisations of a presumption in favour of full disclosure of reports/ documents, regardless of the impact such disclosure may have on their reputation. Newspapers carry too many “tame” stories and need more resources to dig out the controversial stuff and more specialist correspondents.

Barnsley Chronicle

Editor, Robert Cockroft

Readership: 132,746

We would like to see greater openness by the police and greater and more efficient access to council material, particularly financial details present and past.

Derbyshire Times

Editor, Mike Wilson

Readership: 115,316

Data Protection Act and the way public bodies hide behind it when they want. Clearer guidelines to those administering release of information, at whatever level, would make our job easier.

Hereford Times

Editor, Liz Griffin

Readership: 114,519

People say we give them hell – we don’t, we just tell the truth and they think its hell. I am concerned that the general public, as much as the decision-makers, don’t understand that what most of us are trying to do is tell the truth about people, events, situations. I would like a greater trust that we are on their side and that, in seeking to uphold freedom of speech and open justice, we are protecting the rights of everyone.

Harrogate Advertiser Group

Readership: 110,209

Harrogate Herald

Readership: 70,451

North Yorkshire News

Readership: 53,167

Editor, Jean MacQuarrie

On weeklies, my current big concern is naming children in school pictures which is now massively restricted or banned by our schools.

Mansfield Chad

Editor, Jeremy Plews

Readership: 104,642

Lack of openness from police. They appear so nervous of falling foul of data protection and human rights, which they tend to use as a catchall excuse for not giving information. This issue needs sorting.

The Cumberland News

Editor, Keith Sutton

Readership: 98,478

Injunctions related to parties in family proceedings and council part 2 agenda items.

Chichester Observer Series

Executive Editor, Keith Newbery

Readership: 96,421

Local government and data protection.

Cornish Guardian

Editor, Alan Cooper

Readership: 88,986

Data protection legislation misuse to withhold information.

Newbury Weekly News

Editor, Brien Beharrell

Readership: 86,690

Privacy and data protection are our most significant concerns. Greater public clarity is needed, plus consistent and accurate advice issued by such bodies as local authorities and the police; both of whom have been muddled and inconsistent locally. We have overcome our difficulties but people take a great deal of persuading when it is a newspaper who is telling them the true situation, which is at odds with advice from other authorities.

Westmorland Gazette

Editor, Mike Glover

Readership: 86,335

Scrapping of current data protection legislation and abandon human rights convention.

Bury Free Press

Editor, Barry Peters

Readership: 81,884

Police more open – great source of stories.

Falkirk Herald

Editor, Colin Hume

Readership: 79,803

Data Protection Act. Public bodies don't know how to work within it. Guidelines needed on how it should be implemented properly.

Rotherham & South Yorkshire Advertiser

Editor, Douglas Melloy

Readership: 74,336

Getting names, or addresses, or photographs from the police. They are even reluctant to supply photographs of criminals when there appears to be absolutely no grounds for resisting the request. In a recent breach of ASBO breach, where the judge merely adjourned sentence, the police refused to provide us with the photograph they had previously confirmed they would allow us to have, because publication could prejudice the judge's sentencing. This, despite the fact that the judge already knew what the defendant looked like and clearly stated that identification was necessary in the public interest. On another recent occasion the police press office informed us that juveniles from our patch would be appearing in a court off our patch accused of something nasty. However, we couldn't follow it up because they refused to give us their names or any other information to enable us to check when they would be appearing in court. We wouldn't be able to identify them in the newspaper anyway! It would be helpful if ACPO could provide stricter guidance – and all the forces applied it consistently.

Kentish Gazette Group

Editor, Bob Bounds

Readership: 72,079

The volume of information coming from the police has reduced noticeably over the past five years. Often data protection and human rights are cited but generally police do not seem interested in providing information about their day-to-day activities. Home Office and LEA guidance to schools regarding protection of child in relation to the media is confused and causes difficulty in our relations with schools. Our local magistrates courts will not provide a results service to the paper, despite agreement from the chairman of the bench! Our coroner is a nightmare. She will not give us information regarding any forthcoming inquests.

Western Telegraph

Editor, Fiona Phillips

Readership: 70,917

Up to date information no longer available from police. County Council quick to promote self but reluctant to disclose or discuss anything controversial, instead relies on personal criticism of individual councillors who try to question cabinet.

Lynn News (Fri)

Readership: 69,801

Lynn News (Tue)

Readership: 55,619

Editor, Donna Semmens

1) Information availability from police and local authorities. Clear guidelines on the issuing of such information and the fact that secrecy is not the normal course.
2) Clarity on data protection – not for the press, we know the law, but for the authorities.

3) Schools and pictures of children – more pressure on the issue of names – now affecting all organisations involving juveniles. Becoming a major problem.

Eastbourne Herald Editor, Peter Hindley Readership: 65,973	Local council secrecy – more openness.
Kentish Express Series Editor, Leo Whitlock Readership: 58,783	The names and addresses of local people appearing in our papers is under threat because of the combination of data protection legislation, over cautious guidelines and the restrictive interpretation of human rights legislation.
Hexham Courant Editor, Eve Fuller Readership: 48,135	We have several community partnerships which were initially very secretive but are responding to our pleas to be more open. One opens all its meetings to us now and the others are reviewing the situation in the light of that decision and are, in any case, keeping us informed of their work – the risk is that it's censored!
The Visitor, Morecambe Editor, Glen Cooper Readership: 46,562	Occasionally juvenile and magistrates' courts, some police and ambulance services, the officers themselves are not clear about what we can or cannot report. They need to be better educated on that aspect.
Llanelli Star Series Editor, Andy Pearson Readership: 46,336	Local authority and 999 press offices becoming more open and trusting. "This is the full story but there are good, honest reasons why I'd not like you to print certain details..."
Kirkintilloch Herald Editor, Christine McPherson Readership: 33,788	Confusion over data protection and what information can be released or not.
Louth Leader Editor, Charles Ladbrook Readership: 29,731	The police should give names of accident victims and not hide behind the Data Protection Act.
East Fife Mail Editor, Iain Muirhead Readership: 27,616	I'd like to see more agencies routinely putting information online.
Daventry Express Editor, Jason Gibbins Readership: 26,905	Naming of school children – By losing the right to name children in our newspapers we could set a precedent that could destroy our newspapers. The time has come for national guidance outlining the real level of risk involved in naming children. An Education Secretary statement could then be fed through education authorities to the schools. Unless we act now the issue could get out of all proportion.
Arbroath Herald Editor, Craig Nisbet Readership: 25,545	As indicated, the use of the Data Protection Act and commercial confidentiality can sometimes lead to local government decisions being reached without open public debate.
Linlithgowshire Journal & Gazette Editor, Jack Shennan Readership: 22,533	Arranging to take photographs of school children, which can be a nightmare. We usually want to do this to celebrate child's or school's achievements. Would like to see more flexibility in Data Protection Act to cover innocent situations like this.
Milngavie & Bearsden Herald Editor, Alister Blyth Readership: 22,085	Confusion over Data Protection Act and what information can be released to press and public.

Market Rasen Mail

Editor, Jason Hippisley

Clearer direction across departments and institutions as each interprets positions differently.

Carlisle & Lanark Gazette

Editor, Aileen McCulloch

Schools issue because this would hit a basic part of local newspaper coverage if schools have to ask individual parents/guardians for permission. Has potential for delaying and blocking even happy pictures.

News Shopper

Group Editor, Andrew Parkes

The worst problems come when people/organisations with little or no knowledge start quoting data protection and human rights for no good reason.

Weekly Free

Slough Observer

Editor, Martin Biddle

Readership: 78,859

With regard to press freedom, the biggest concern is the imminent action by the Attorney General and the further constraints on reporting. Much of this will be seen as a knee-jerk reaction to wild reporting and speculation in the national press. Whether what the national press reports is right or wrong is another question, but the effects of any government reaction to its methodology will be felt by all.

Question 3 – Considering recent developments, changes in the law, or improvements in regulation and practice, what has been the most helpful change and why?

Daily Morning - Paid

Press & Journal, Aberdeen

News Editor, Fiona McWhirr

Readership: 241,539

Some courts circulating contempt orders to the media.

Norwich Eastern Daily Press

Editor, Peter Franzen

Readership: 233,802

The Judicial Studies Board-NS Reporting Restrictions booklets have been very helpful over the last couple of years. Our local agreement here in Norfolk has built on that.

Daily Evening – Paid

Manchester Evening News

Editor, Paul Horrocks

Readership: 404,211

New ASBO Act has tried to help but has left an awkward loophole – see question 2.

Liverpool Echo

Editor in Chief, Mark Dickinson

Readership: 388,386

None. Even the magistrates courts now seek to avoid giving information if they possibly can.

Sheffield Star

Editor, Peter Charlton

Readership: 196,589

Local strategic partnerships, holding their meetings in public, help us to identify and research current trends.

Portsmouth News

Editor, Mike Gilson

Readership: 187,814

There hasn't been one. What's happened to Freedom of Information?

Lancashire Evening Post

Editor, Simon Reynolds

Readership: 182,248

Not aware of any helpful changes.

Bradford Telegraph & Argus

Group Editor, Perry Austin Clarke

Readership: 136,335

Hopeful that more to allow youngsters who receive ASBOs as punishment in youth court to be named will better equip us to report on an area which is of great concern and interest to our readers.

Bolton Evening News

Editor in Chief, Stephen Hughes

Readership: 97,204

Magistrates' courts have a much better understanding of our needs than they did 12 months ago. ASBOs and naming of serious young offenders very helpful.

Oxford Mail

Editor, Simon O'Neill

Readership: 83,537

None.

Torquay Herald Express

Editor, Brendan Hanrahan

Readership: 79,690

Can't think of one. Let's see freedom of information in action before judging it.

Evening Courier (Halifax)

Editor, John Furbisher

Readership: 56,927

Developments in libel case law. "Stretching" of our interpretations of contempt laws.

Belfast Telegraph

News Editor, Paul Connolly

Some improvements in openness among press officers, etc.

Weekly Paid

Kent Messenger Series

Editor, Simon Irwin

Readership: 161,061

Not aware of any affecting my job.

Kent Messenger Group

Political Editor: Paul Francis

FOI will – should – be the single most important change.

Derbyshire Times

Editor, Mike Wilson

Readership: 115,316

Nothing springs to mind as very helpful.

Hereford Times

Editor, Liz Griffin

Readership: 114,519

The continued spreading the word through the courts of the role of the media. FOI should also assist but, with most organisations still developing their processes, it is hard to determine how effective it will be in reality.

Harrogate Advertiser Group

Readership: 110,209

Harrogate Herald

Readership: 70,451

North Yorkshire News

Readership: 53,167

Editor, Jean MacQuarrie

Reynolds and Leeds Weekly News ruling.

Mansfield Chad

Editor, Jeremy Plews

Readership: 104,642

New Freedom of Information has not been tested yet.

Chichester Observer Series

Executive Editor, Keith Newbery

Readership: 96,421

What helpful changes?!

Cornish Guardian

Editor, Alan Cooper

Readership: 88,986

Court reporting of juveniles – those convicted of anti-social behaviour can now be “named and shamed”.

Newbury Weekly News

Editor, Brien Beharrell

Readership: 86,690

Regrettably, none come immediately to mind.

Westmorland Gazette

Editor, Mike Glover

Readership: 86,335

The ‘Reynolds’ defence.

Bury Free Press

Editor, Barry Peters

Readership: 81,884

Education sector clarifying advice to county councils re. use of kids’ pix in newspapers. PCC has been a Godsend.

Falkirk Herald

Editor, Colin Hume

Readership: 79,803

Changes in law papers help in short-term. Too often leads to confusion as with Data Protection Act.

Rotherham & South Yorkshire Advertiser

Editor, Douglas Melloy

Readership: 74,336

The naming and shaming of defendants dealt with under ASBOs we, and the public, love. We ALWAYS make representations to the court to remove anonymity, although the application is not always granted.

Kentish Gazette Group

Editor, Bob Bounds

Readership: 72,079

None I can think of.

Western Telegraph

Editor, Fiona Phillips

Readership: 70,917

I have my reservations about FOI Act. Our local police force will answer all FOI inquires via the website, so goodbye to exclusives! My experience with data protection leaves me with little confidence the FOI Act will improve matters.

Lynn News (Fri)

Readership: 69,801

Lynn News (Tue)

Readership: 55,619

Editor, Donna Semmens

New guidelines to magistrates over the use of orders and the role of the press.

Kentish Express Series

Editor, Leo Whitlock

Readership: 58,783

The recognition by senior judges of the positive role we play in the community has been very helpful in our battle to stop unnecessary reporting restrictions in court. Lower courts and a host of other organisations need to follow suit.

Hexham Courant

Editor, Eve Fuller

Readership: 48,135

Nothing more helpful. All changes seem to have made our lives more difficult and we're grateful for a community that feels we are an integral part of their lives and keeps us informed.

The Visitor, Morecambe

Editor, Glen Cooper

Readership: 46,562

Many organisations have appointed specialist staff to deal with press relations (local council, police and fire in recent years) – that helps.

East Fife Mail

Editor, Iain Muirhead

Readership: 27,616

I have noticed no discernible improvements.

Arbroath Herald

Editor, Craig Nisbet

Readership: 25,545

Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act has resulted in clear guidance on where public bodies must make information available on request.

Linlithgowshire Journal & Gazette

Editor, Jack Shennan

Readership: 22,533

In my experience, changes in the law are rarely made with helpfulness to the media in mind.

News Shopper

Group Editor, Andrew Parkes

Nothing has been done to improve the situation – it has just got worse.

Weekly Free

Slough Observer

Editor, Martin Biddle

Readership: 78,859

No examples of helpful change come to mind.

Question 4 – What other areas of concern need to be addressed and why? (e.g.. Coverage of sporting events). Please suggest the type of improvements you would like to see.

Daily Morning - Paid

Press & Journal, Aberdeen

News Editor, Fiona McWhirr

Readership: 241,539

Schools and clubs with young people are increasingly bringing in policies preventing children under 16 being photographed without written permission from their parents which is restrictive and can prevent local news from getting into the paper. Local authorities go back to the old system of teachers acting in loco parentis and taking responsibility.

Norwich Eastern Daily Press

Editor, Peter Franzen

Readership: 233,802

There appears to be a worrying growth in the number of un-elected and unaccountable bodies making key decisions. Regional assemblies, strategic partnerships – even speed reduction partnerships that decide where speed cameras are placed – have no direct accountability, yet are responsible for spending millions of taxpayers money. The introduction of Cabinet-style administration in local authorities has also eroded local democracy and stifled open, public debate. That said, the introduction of scrutiny committees is a useful tool and one which journalists need to use more frequently.

Daily Evening – Paid

Manchester Evening News

Editor, Paul Horrocks

Readership: 404,211

Very concerned that Manchester United have started to take their own exclusive pictures of some events (new signings etc.) and then charge us for them. This is the thin end of the wedge.

Liverpool Echo

Editor in Chief, Mark Dickinson

Readership: 388,386

Sporting events e.g. football matches need a new status as a quasi-public event – otherwise clubs will charge you for the air you breath soon.

Sheffield Star

Editor, Peter Charlton

Readership: 196,589

Football league and premiership licenses are restrictive in theory. Luckily, in practice, we have a good understanding with local clubs.

Portsmouth News

Editor, Mike Gilson

Readership: 187,814

People talking to us before they run an event, press conference, announcement etc.

Lancashire Evening Post

Editor, Simon Reynolds

Readership: 182,248

Seen increased use of bullyboy tactics by football clubs on use of pictures.

Bradford Telegraph & Argus

Group Editor, Perry Austin Clarke

Readership: 136,335

There have been difficulties re naming children in pictures, especially those taken at schools. Although Education Secretary clarified his advice to schools, it is a situation we continue to monitor.

Bolton Evening News

Editor in Chief, Stephen Hughes

Readership: 97,204

Guidance at Greater Manchester Youth Games last year very restrictive. No photographs of individuals without parents' permission. No podium pics of winners, no names on group pics. This was later changed after protests from press but was still quite restrictive and there are fears that this is becoming a trend.

Cambridge Evening News

Editor, Colin Grant
Readership: 97,166

To get a definitive policy with regard to data protection e.g. all schools should give names of pupils in pix or not at all – unless parents have said ‘no’ or there are special reasons; police forces should either give names of accident victims etc. or not. At present, it is too haphazard and appears to be one rule for one and one for another.

Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph

Editor, David Penman
Readership: 89,705

Concerns over licensing arrangements at football clubs. Data protection being used by schools, sports clubs etc to prevent pictures/names being published.

Torquay Herald Express

Editor, Brendan Hanrahan
Readership: 79,690

Explosion of press officers and PR types who think they know us but don't.

Gloucestershire Echo

Editor, Anita Syvret
Readership: 78,031

Clarification on Data Protection Act.

Reading Evening Post

Editor, Andy Murrill
Readership: 69,876

Football clubs are now trying to protect their websites (which have their own journalists and compete with us for news) by restricting what we can put on the web.

Evening Courier (Halifax)

Editor, John Furbisher
Readership: 56,927

Premiership football etc. control over photographs and use of images.

Weekly Paid

Kent Messenger Series

Editor, Simon Irwin
Readership: 161,061

Easier access to personal details of court defendants i.e. addresses.

Derbyshire Times

Editor, Mike Wilson
Readership: 115,316

Photographic coverage of league football and licensing restrictions. Would like to see stronger rights for papers over use of photos.

Hereford Times

Editor, Liz Griffin
Readership: 114,519

Schools and educational establishments need to understand why we want to publish the details that we do.

The Cumberland News

Editor, Keith Sutton
Readership: 98,478

Football club chairman who can deny the press and fans access to information.

Cornish Guardian

Editor, Alan Cooper
Readership: 88,986

Naming of children in school photographs is often prevented by over-zealous authorities and often against the wishes of parents.

Newbury Weekly News

Editor, Brien Beharrell
Readership: 86,690

Coverage of sporting events. Data protection is cited as a bar to naming young people. Leagues unwilling to ‘risk’ identification of young players.

Bury Free Press

Editor, Barry Peters
Readership: 81,884

I think we do what is needed at a local level. The PCC offers a port of call for angry readers and they see it as credible.

Falkirk Herald

Editor, Colin Hume
Readership: 79,803

There is a danger of copyright regulations being introduced by bigger football clubs filtering down. We now have to pay to carry East Stirling fixtures when they only attract 100 or so fans. Agreement needs to be reached sensibly.

Rotherham & South Yorkshire Advertiser

Editor, Douglas Melloy

Readership: 74,336

The age on consent has, over many years, been lowered for almost everything, from voting to driving, marriage to consensual sex, almost everything, in fact, while the age at which young criminals can be identified has not been lowered – in fact it has been increased. In this day and age these young toe-rags know exactly what they are doing and it is about time we identified criminals from the age of 14 – but it ain't gonna happen.

Kentish Gazette Group

Editor, Bob Bounds

Readership: 72,079

Sports events involving children are encountering similar problems as schools specifically in terms of photos.

Western Telegraph

Editor, Fiona Phillips

Readership: 70,917

Photos of children is an abiding issue, particularly using them on the web, which concerns some parents. Clear guidelines accepted by all dealing with children would be useful.

Hexham Courant

Editor, Eve Fuller

Readership: 48,135

No real problems as we're a very local paper. School pics have been discussed but heads get permission from parents at the beginning of school year and the schools themselves are anxious for publicity. Parents seem more concerned that their child might be left out.

Llanelli Star Series

Editor, Andy Pearson

Readership: 46,336

Cabinet system in local government and the disenfranchisement felt by many councillors.

East Kent Mercury

Editor, Graham Smith

Readership: 37,729

No real concerns.

Kirkintilloch Herald

Editor, Christine McPherson

Readership: 33,788

None so far.

East Fife Mail

Editor, Iain Muirhead

Readership: 27,616

I have noticed no discernible improvements.

Linlithgowshire Journal & Gazette

Editor, Jack Shennan

Readership: 22,533

I'd like to see a campaign to educate the general public on the right of newspapers to report open court cases. One outraged reader done for possession of a large amount of cannabis raged at me: "This was a private matter."

Carlisle & Lanark Gazette

Editor, Aileen McCulloch

Prevent/restrict councils setting up bodies which meet in private to take major local decisions.

Weekly Free

Slough Observer

Editor, Martin Biddle

Readership: 78,859

Guidelines to courts should be regularly reviewed and mandatory for all court staff. Rules and regulations being followed by press offices should be clearly outlined for journalists.

Question 5 – How are you, your readers, local interest groups, local public bodies and public services preparing for Freedom of Information legislation which comes fully into force in 2005?

Daily Morning - Paid

Press & Journal, Aberdeen

News Editor, Fiona McWhirr

Readership: 241,539

I am not aware of much discussion at local level.

Norwich Eastern Daily Press

Editor, Peter Franzen

Readership: 233,802

We have arranged a day-long course for senior journalists in June to see how we can make best use of the FIA, understand its limitations, but also exploit the opportunities it provides. As a paper we have carried a number of features on the FIA, local democracy and accountability.

Daily Evening – Paid

Liverpool Echo

Editor in Chief, Mark Dickinson

Readership: 388,386

Not aware of any preparations.

Sheffield Star

Editor, Peter Charlton

Readership: 196,589

We have held meetings with local authorities and been assured that FOI will be implemented in such a way that press information flows are not interrupted/diluted.

Portsmouth News

Editor, Mike Gilson

Readership: 187,814

Sadly we are doing little and the rest even less.

Lancashire Evening Post

Editor, Simon Reynolds

Readership: 182,248

Not a lot!

Bradford Telegraph & Argus

Group Editor, Perry Austin Clarke

Readership: 136,335

We have written to all organisations in our district regarding this legislation.

Bolton Evening News

Editor in Chief, Stephen Hughes

Readership: 97,204

Hoping to set up a training course for editorial staff later this year.

Cambridge Evening News

Editor, Colin Grant

Readership: 97,166

Preparing a series of interviews on the subject as information for many of our readers who will know nothing – or very little – about the legislation. Also approaching the local authorities with a view to them holding an info session or two for our news gathering team to spell out exactly what it will mean to us.

Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph

Editor, David Penman

Readership: 89,705

We have had initial consultations with local authorities. Concern that most bodies will not use legislation to open up but rather make the access to information more complex and difficult.

Huddersfield Daily Examiner

Editor, Roy Wright

Readership: 83,373

I am not sure that anybody is preparing for it – it does not seem to be on the public radar. It is certainly something that newspapers will have to address.

Torquay Herald Express

Editor, Brendan Hanrahan

Readership: 79,690

Hardly at all.

Gloucestershire Echo

Editor, Anita Syvret

Readership: 78,031

Local authorities/NHS etc., are keeping us at arm's length.

Reading Evening Post	
Editor, Andy Murrill	
Readership: 69,876	We aren't.
Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph	
Editor, Jon Grubb	
Readership: 59,066	Looking into that now.
Evening Courier (Halifax)	
Editor, John Furbisher	
Readership: 56,927	Work in progress.
Belfast Telegraph	
News Editor, Paul Connolly	Not sure how it applies in Northern Ireland.

Weekly Paid

Kent Messenger Series	
Editor, Simon Irwin	
Readership: 161,061	No preparation that I am aware of.
Kent Messenger Group	
Political Editor: Paul Francis	We have run some in-house training seminars but, in general, I think the media is only marginally better prepared for FOI than many of the public sector groups/organisations.
Barnsley Chronicle	
Editor, Robert Cockroft	
Readership: 132,746	Thanks for reminding us!!
Derbyshire Times	
Editor, Mike Wilson	
Readership: 115,316	We have held meetings with local bodies (councils/primary care trusts) to discuss implementation of legislation and contributed to consultation and even sat on steering groups looking at local PCT planning
Hereford Times	
Editor, Liz Griffin	
Readership: 114,519	Dialogue is under way with the local health authorities and hospital trusts and local councils over the areas of concern. Stories have been carried in paper and there have been meetings/talks etc., held under the aegis of Charter 88.
Mansfield Chad	
Editor, Jeremy Plews	
Readership: 104,642	We have been in contact with local authorities, police and other public bodies and received a reasonably encouraging response, but will continue to monitor the situation.
The Cumberland News	
Editor, Keith Sutton	
Readership: 98,478	Arranging a briefing and training for staff.
Chichester Observer Series	
Executive Editor, Keith Newbery	
Readership: 96,421	Come the time we will inform our readers of their rights – especially with regard to local authorities. But much of the data will be complicated and sought and understood by relatively few people. It is not decisions – past or present – that interests most people, but the secretive way in which they are made. That situation will not be improved by the Freedom of Information Act.
Cornish Guardian	
Editor, Alan Cooper	
Readership: 88,986	We will be drawing up a list of investigations which have been 'blocked' in the past to see what further information will be available and when.
Newbury Weekly News	
Editor, Brien Beharrell	
Readership: 86,690	We are aware of nothing happening locally. As a newspaper editor, I have had contact with two police forces and the office of the Information Officer.
Westmorland Gazette	
Editor, Mike Glover	
Readership: 86,335	I have written to all public bodies reminding them of their obligations. A couple have replied.

Bury Free Press Editor, Barry Peters Readership: 81,884	Series of meetings seeking guidance.
Falkirk Herald Editor, Colin Hume Readership: 79,803	The Scottish version seems to be a lot better for journalists but I am hedging my bets on how successful it will be.
Rotherham & South Yorkshire Advertiser Editor, Douglas Melloy Readership: 74,336	No information/knowledge of what they are doing...which might suggest they are doing nothing.
Kentish Gazette Group Editor, Bob Bounds Readership: 72,079	All editorial staff have had a briefing session from our political editor. I have written to our local authorities to ask to see how their scheme will operate.
Western Telegraph Editor, Fiona Phillips Readership: 70,917	I have attended one meeting with local police force, other than that all organisations and authorities I contacted to inquire about ramifications of the Act have said they will contact me when a policy is devised.
Lynn News (Fri) Readership: 69,801	
Lynn News (Tue) Readership: 55,619 Editor, Donna Semmens	None so far as I am aware.
Kentish Express Series Editor, Leo Whitlock Readership: 58,783	The Kent Messenger Group's political editor Paul Francis is training editors, newsdesks and reporters in the operation of the Act and how we can best make use of it. Freedom of Information issues seem not yet to have registered with local organisations.
Hexham Courant Editor, Eve Fuller Readership: 48,135	We've been consulted by councils and I am a member of the Health Trust's FoI committee behind the establishment of a section on its website.
The Visitor, Morecambe Editor, Glen Cooper Readership: 46,562	As per previous requests, we've approached relevant bodies and sought updates on their own proposals as the legislation approaches.
Llanelli Star Series Editor, Andy Pearson Readership: 46,336	Chatting informally with contacts.
Motherwell Times Series Editor, Robert Wilson Readership: 40,621	Hopefully, the Scottish Freedom of Information Act will be more in our favour.
East Kent Mercury Editor, Graham Smith Readership: 37,729	No preparation plans as yet.
Kirkintilloch Herald Editor, Christine McPherson Readership: 33,788	We are hopeful that the Scottish FoI Act will not be a major problem as the exemption refers to 'substantial prejudice'.
Louth Leader Editor, Charles Ladbrook Readership: 29,731	Many are not aware of it.
Daventry Express Editor, Jason Gibbins Readership: 26,905	It has not been mentioned by anybody locally. I do not believe many groups, bodies or services are even aware of the legislation.
Arbroath Herald Editor, Craig Nisbet Readership: 25,545	Measures already in place in line with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

Linlithgowshire Journal & Gazette

Editor, Jack Shennan

Readership: 22,533

I aim to do further research into the legislation to determine how it may affect my title. The issue in general has not surfaced at grass roots level – so far.

Milngavie & Bearsden Herald

Editor, Alister Blyth

Readership: 22,085

Law in Scotland should be less strict than in England. Waiting to see how this pans out in practice.

Market Rasen Mail

Editor, Jason Hippiisley

As yet, we are not.

Carlisle & Lanark Gazette

Editor, Aileen McCulloch

Still awaiting information about what this will mean.

News Shopper

Group Editor, Andrew Parkes

We are not preparing.

Question 6 – Please provide details of any further issues you wish to raise relating to press freedom and the right to know.

Daily Morning - Paid

Press & Journal, Aberdeen

News Editor, Fiona McWhirr

Readership: 241,539

The Data Protection Act should not cover people who incur spending of public money on them.

Daily Evening – Paid

West Midlands Express & Star

Editor, Adrian Faber

Readership: 476,336

Why is no public organisation honest and upfront about the way it works anymore?

Bolton Evening News

Editor in Chief, Stephen Hughes

Readership: 97,204

Main concerns are police and local government.

Weekly Paid

Newbury Weekly News

Editor, Brien Beharrell

Readership: 86,690

The struggle to acquire or see, legitimately, background papers relevant to local authority meetings.



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