



Dame Caroline Dinenage MP
Member of Parliament for Gosport
Chair of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Tuesday, 25 July 2023

Dear Dame Caroline,

Thank you for your letter dated 24 July 2023.

You have requested information on the editorial processes in relation to the Huw Edwards publications in The Sun on behalf of the members of your Committee. The Sun is a responsible media organization which has strict editorial and legal frameworks in place so as to ensure that articles are accurate and lawful.

This story was the subject of significant scrutiny pre-publication. The Sun has documentary evidence and had conducted interviews with many of the primary witnesses. We sought comment prior to publication from the BBC and its presenter. In depth considerations were made around the privacy and public interest justifications for publishing the story. The matter is and remains deeply sensitive and the decision was made not to name any of those involved nor give any detail which may identify them.

One of those involved is one of the most trusted and well-known television journalists, who has since been named by his family, and the other is a vulnerable young person with an addiction to crack cocaine. We had safeguarding responsibilities on behalf of both of these people and took great care with our reporting. At no point have we identified the gender of the young person, which the BBC has done on more than one occasion.

In itself, maintaining this anonymity made the amount of evidence which could be published more challenging. We have since provided significant further evidence to the BBC to assist their investigation.

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The parents had previously sought a resolution to the situation by complaining to the BBC. No action had been taken in response to their complaint and they turned to The Sun. Tim Davie himself has acknowledged that it was 'clearly a serious allegation'. It is now a matter for the BBC to rigorously investigate this complaint and the others which have also now emerged. The BBC must report back transparently on the findings of their investigation.

The questions raised about our reporting have come in particular from the BBC itself as well as a small group of anti-press campaigners who have sought to misrepresent our reporting or use selective extracts. The vulnerability and drug addiction of the young person is also frequently omitted. We have sought to correct the reporting or commenting of opinion formers along the way.

Legal oversight and verification

The story had significant pre-publication legal oversight, as any story of that nature would do.

As a publisher, we are subject to IPSO regulation, and a legal space in libel, privacy and data protection that is tougher and more complex than it has ever been. Court decisions have developed over time and require careful case by case analysis of evidence, the balance around free speech, privacy and public interest as well as data protection matters.

The Sun has in-house lawyers with vast experience in this area and with access to experienced external advice, including in this case a KC. This experience was brought to bear in this case. Affidavits were obtained from key witnesses before publication, with corroborative evidence. Further comment would encroach into editorial decision making and legal privilege and extend beyond proper enquiry by parliament into a free press.

We stand by our reporting which is subject to law and regulatory oversight.

Additionally, we have handed over relevant material to the BBC's Corporate Investigations Team which supports and corroborates our reporting of the original story. This material includes a significant number of texts, social media messages and pictures. We are in ongoing contact with them.

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Dan Wootton

On Mr Wootton we are investigating relevant matters raised by reports by Byline Times and The Guardian last week. We have appointed Kingsley Napley to assist. We take these allegations seriously but we are in no position to comment further and indeed we make no commitment to make any further comment depending on the outcome of our investigation.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Victoria Newton", written over a thin horizontal line.

Victoria Newton
Editor-in-Chief, The Sun

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