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Dear Jeremy

Thank you for your 12 February letter regarding Dame Frances Cairncross's review of press sustainability. A number of Frances's recommendations touch on Ofcom's remit and you asked for our initial views on these.

Recommendation 5: the BBC's market impact

Our first BBC Annual Report, published in October last year, set out our intention to review the BBC's news and current affairs output across TV, radio and online. We are publishing the terms of reference for our review today, and they are attached to this letter.

The review will examine how the BBC is delivering its public purpose to provide impartial news and information to help people understand and engage with the world around them. Our intention is to focus on audience views of BBC news, including how informed they feel they are by its output and the role it plays within their wider media consumption. As part of our review, we will examine the broader context within which BBC news online operates, and how the BBC differentiates its content from that of other providers, including newspapers. We expect that some of the evidence we gather for our review, together with our ongoing monitoring of the BBC's performance against all its public purposes, will be relevant to the questions Frances raises about the BBC news website. We will be publishing our findings this autumn alongside our next annual report into the BBC.

Recommendation 4: Media literacy

Over recent months there has been a growing public focus on media and digital literacy. As well as Frances's report, the Science and Technology and DCMS Select Committees have recommended that more should be done in this area.

In our evidence to the Science and Technology committee last November, we said that we planned to expand significantly our media literacy work in relation to people's use, attitudes and understanding of being online – both the benefits and the harms. The result is our new Making Sense of Media research and engagement programme. We will be building on our long established, in-depth research with insights into online habits, harms and internet users' ability critically to evaluate the content and services they interact with. The findings should be helpful to policymakers seeking to tackle online harms. Our priorities for the coming year, which will be set out publicly in our 2019-20 Annual Plan later this month, are to:

- Develop an in-depth understanding of specific harms. This will initially include more detailed research into people's understanding of platforms' use of their data (working closely with the Information Commissioner's Office) as well as harms that affect children online.
- Work with partners to develop a rounded view of online harms and potential solutions. Given the complex nature of the issues we are looking at, we will bring together a range of experts – ranging from policymakers to academics to charities to platforms - to provide insights based upon the data and evidence that are available.
- Contribute to the international discussion about online harms and media literacy. We will continue to use our research and expertise to engage in the global debate about how to understand and address the range of challenges linked to online harms, and the role that media literacy can play.

Recommendation 1 – New codes of conduct between publishers and online platforms; and Recommendation 3 – News quality obligation

These recommendations call for regulatory oversight of online platforms, and directly relate to the remit of the review by Jason Furman into digital competition and to the Government's forthcoming Online Harms White Paper.

We do not have concerns with either recommendation. We have been engaging positively with the Furman Review. Ofcom and the Competition Markets Authority have a shared interest, given our concurrent powers as competition regulators of the communications sector, including digital platforms. Likewise, we are engaging with your officials on factual aspects of the White Paper, where our experience of content standards has a useful read-across.

I am copying this letter to Lord Hall and Sir David Clementi.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'S' followed by a long horizontal line that ends in a small loop.

Sharon White