

of accessibility in digital services and maintaining government programmes on digital inclusion.

8.2 Freedom of speech and the free press

As the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris showed, freedom of expression cannot be taken for granted. In an open society there can be no right 'not to be offended', which is why Liberal Democrats in government have strengthened the law to make it harder for prosecutions to be brought for using 'insulting words', and have led the way in protecting journalists' sources under the 2000 Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA). Yet censorship and self-censorship are still rife, and the threat of prosecution can have a chilling effect on the willingness of people to speak out against injustice and corruption. To change this and promote investigative journalism, we will:

- ♦ Introduce statutory public interest defences for exceptional cases where journalists may need to break the law (such as RIPA, the 2010 Bribery Act, and the 1998 Computer Misuse Act) to expose corruption or other criminal acts.
- ♦ Ensure judicial authorisation is required for the acquisition of communications data which might reveal journalists' sources or other privileged communications, for any of the purposes allowed under RIPA; and allow journalists the opportunity to address the court before authorisation is granted, where this would not jeopardise the investigation.
- ♦ Undertake a post-legislative review of the 2013 Defamation Act, which Liberal Democrats drove through Parliament, to ensure the new provisions are reducing the chill of libel threats.
- ♦ Introduce, after consultation on the detail, the changes to the 1998 Data Protection Act recommended by Lord Justice Leveson to provide a fairer balance between personal privacy and the requirements of journalism, ensuring that the position of investigative journalists is safeguarded.

To promote the independence of the media from political influence we will remove Ministers from any role in appointments to the BBC Trust or the Board of Ofcom.

To guarantee press freedom, we will pass a British 'First Amendment' law, to require the authorities and the courts to have regard to the importance of a free media in a democratic society.

To nurture public interest journalism and protect the public from press abuse, we are committed to a system of accountability that is totally independent of both government and the newspaper industry, as set out in the Royal Charter on Press Regulation.