

Full Fact Submission to the Leveson Inquiry

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Introduction

This evidence is intended to help the Inquiry understand how persistent the problem of inaccuracy is in our national newspapers, and how dismissive attitudes from publishers serve to slow down and obstruct the complaints mediation process.

We believe it is sufficient to show that there is a widespread and serious problem with basic accuracy in the press. At least in some sections of the press, it seems fair to conclude that there is a widespread and serious problem with basic honesty too, and one that goes beyond individual reporters.

It will be clear that both of these have malign effects on our democracy, whether or not individual 'victims' can be identified in a particular piece.

Moreover, basic honesty is the foundation of all other press ethics. It is hard to believe that members of parts of the industry who show little commitment to basic honesty can credibly reform themselves in other areas but leave that one untouched.

This submission starts with this summary of some of themes we have noted in the examples.

Section 1 consists of a series of examples of inaccuracies organised by newspaper. Each has its own code for ease of reference, along with a summary of the claim and the problem with it. In trying to be concise there is a risk of over-simplifying so we provide the URL of our original factcheck if further details are needed.

Section 2 details our experiences trying to get some of these inaccuracies corrected. These summaries are in date order, and there is an index at the beginning of the section which lists them and relates them back to the section 1 examples.

The work is based on the media monitoring and factchecking carried out by Full Fact since its official launch in April 2010. For many reasons, however, this cannot be said to be a comprehensive record of inaccurate reporting across all national publications.

- Due to our small team, and the length of time it takes to thoroughly factcheck a claim (usually without cooperation from the claimant), we can check at most a handful of things each day.
- Our work covers claims from politicians, think-tanks, and campaign groups as well as the press.
- We operate a formal working arrangement around a Monday to Friday week, so Saturday editions and Sunday newspapers are under represented in this evidence. This is not because we feel the Sunday titles perform better than their weekday counterparts.

- We choose which claims to check having regard to their prominence, salience, relevance to active policy processes etc. We are not trying to assess a random or even representative sample of reporting. For that reason our work cannot be said, for example, to *prove* that one paper is more or less accurate than another, although we think there is persuasive evidence to that effect.
- We ran a thematic project on Welfare Reform, prompted by deficiencies we had found in both government and press presentation of the issue, so that topic provides more of our examples than would otherwise be the case.
- The AV referendum is not covered. Although the debate and coverage of the referendum was frequently misleading – and the regulator too slow to make a useful contribution – our work here was based on informing people about disputed issues rather than monitoring and factchecking in our usual way.
- It is important to note that not everything we factcheck is inaccurate! We publish what we find either way.

Within these practical constraints, we still feel the information offered to the Inquiry highlights important points about press practices, both in how inaccurate information comes to be printed, and how ineffectively the regulatory system responds to problem.

We would have been in a better position to provide comprehensive evidence after another year or two of factchecking but our strong and consistent impression is that it would just be better evidence for the same conclusions.

Section 1: Press Practices and Examples of Inaccuracy

Types of Inaccurate Information

The first clause of the Editors' Code of Practice states that 'the Press must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information.'

This accepts that from time to time mistakes get made, but that editors have a duty to ensure that they are minimal and corrected quickly when identified.

This evidence suggests that not only is insufficient care taken, but the way information is presented sometimes seems to actively seek to mislead readers.

Aside from typographical errors, there are three key types of inaccurate or misleading information in terms of what they tell us about the culture and practices behind them:

1. Where a clear misunderstanding has taken place on the part of the newspaper, which might well be blameless, or careless, or reckless.
2. When a reporter quotes information given by another party, which turns out to be inaccurate.

3. Reports which while technically accurate are presented in a way that gives a distinctly misleading impression.

Full Fact does not normally see it as our job to reach these sorts of conclusions about claims we investigate: that is for our readers. Our concern is with the accuracy of a claim in itself. However, for this purpose it seems essential to offer a more critical view.

1. Misunderstanding the information reported

Misunderstandings are common, particularly with statistics. They often arise when a reporter is dealing with data or an official report and veers 'off road' with the information. In some cases it is quite easy to do this when you are striving to present the data fairly, but in some cases it is not clear that the reporters are.

There are examples in this evidence where shocking rises in things such as workless households, or school violence, came about through flawed analysis on the part of a reporter, despite being based on official statistics.

Similar errors emerge where single paragraphs from official reports become blown out of proportion, or small-print warnings about limitations of data are ignored for the sake of a report that becomes more inaccurate as it becomes more eye-catching.

It is not always possible to say with certainty whether these distortions arise from wilful misunderstandings or otherwise, and thus how they relate to the duty to take care not to publish misleading information.

One director of a campaign group told us that when his organisation released a report, and a number of publications made the same error in the coverage, this was more likely to be down to an error when briefing journalists. He thought this was less likely to be the case when only one paper made the error.

The former seems to have been the case with a briefing from Ofsted about the number of special needs children who are misdiagnosed. The briefing resulted in an array of figures being quoted in the press; rarely the correct one. Ofsted did themselves and the topic a great disservice by refusing to publicly make clear which was correct until forced to do so by a Parliamentary Question [DM6, DT5, GU2, ID3].

Yet the best briefing in the world cannot account for a reporter deliberately stretching information in a story beyond breaking point.

In cases where one paragraph or figure in a report has been taken out of context, or caveats have been wilfully ignored, it is impossible to see how this constitutes editors 'taking care' not to publish misleading information.

2. Reporting a third party's spurious information

The same can be said of the second area, namely the reporting of figures from a third party which turn out to be inaccurate. This often takes the form of reporting figures from politicians or government departments which turn out to be untrue, and there are several examples of this in the evidence.

However, figures presented by campaign groups also suffer the same fate. We must therefore ask which sets of figures newspapers opt not to scrutinise, and why?

Although lack of time is certainly a factor, newspapers seem to give less scrutiny to claims which fit their world view.

After all, why would a newspaper which supports a particular political party see any reason to rigorously check figures provided by that party? Or, if a paper takes a strong law and order stance, it often seems less likely to rigorously scrutinise stories which show the criminal justice system as being soft.

Contrasting takes on society are vital to the vibrancy of the press, but this should not offer a license to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information just because it conforms to a publication's political positions.

Put another way, higher standards in the press would have a beneficial knock-on effect on other actors in the political process.

3. Wilful inaccuracy

The type of inaccuracy where it cannot remotely be said that a newspaper had inadvertently presented information in a misleading way is the third category. The story may have some basis in fact but is presented in a way that seems bound to give the wrong impression.

This might for example be through misleading headlines that are subsequently undermined in the final paragraphs of a story; selective quotation of reports; or a failure to provide relevant context which would severely undermine the report.

Such reporting seems designed to perfect a balance between observing the letter of the PCC code while nevertheless giving a misleading impression to readers.

One particular example is coverage of Sentencing Council guidelines for drug offences. Though the guidelines seem to offer change in only a few areas, they were presented as a significant relaxation of drug sentencing [DM4, EXP14].

Equally a front page splash from the Mail on Sunday reported that the BBC was to abandon the use of BC and AD when referring to dates. The piece did include in its final paragraphs a quote from the BBC explaining that this was not what was

happening. But in light of this apparent debunking of the story the paper still saw fit to report it as the front page lead, where not all readers would pursue reading the story to the end [MOS2].

Problem Topic Areas for Newspaper Coverage

This evidence highlights all these types of errors, and also the newspaper and PCC responses to them.

Though a range of issues are covered, we would like to draw particular attention to two topics where we have clear evidence of the wider implications of some of the coverage.

Benefits, Welfare Reform and the Disabled

Over the past year the government has been taking its proposals for reforming the welfare system through Parliament.

During this time there has been frequent coverage of data relating to the welfare system in a number of newspapers, but primarily the Daily Mail, the Sun, the Daily Express, and to a lesser extent the Daily Telegraph.

Partly because we ran a thematic project on the Welfare Reform Bill such coverage makes up a significant proportion of the examples cited in this evidence. It is important for a number of reasons.

First, while some errors arose from a lack of understanding of the welfare system, in some cases it was clear that there was an attempt to give a negative impression of those claiming incapacity benefits, including people claiming them legitimately, while trying to remain within the letter of the Editors' Code.

Second, there appeared to be a degree of collusion between the Department for Work and Pensions and the newspapers over the coverage. In the summer and autumn of 2010 the Department regularly passed figures to the press showing the welfare system in a negative light.

The result was a steady stream of articles, some accurate, some not, that painted a picture of waste, fraud, and idleness in the benefits system, particularly in respect of payments to those with disabilities. Headlines included '1 in 30 Brits has never had a job' and 'Scandal of 2m on Jobless Benefit for the Last Five Years'.

These were important claims which needed to be open to scrutiny. Unfortunately the statistical releases on which these stories were based were not made available to the public, making factchecking – and meaningful trust – impossible.

After seeing this pattern repeatedly, Full Fact complained to the UK Statistics Authority. Once they had investigated they warned the Department that there were 'serious deficiencies' in the way it released data, and ordered the DWP to change its processes to comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Of course, by that time, the unverifiable stories had made their impression.

Earlier this year the House of Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee was critical of much press coverage of Welfare Reform (6th Report, Conclusions para 5).

'Sections of the media routinely use pejorative language, such as "work-shy" or "scrounger," when referring to incapacity benefit claimants. We strongly deprecate this and believe that it is irresponsible and inaccurate,' the Committee's report stated.

It continued: 'Portraying the reassessment of incapacity benefit claimants as some sort of scheme to "weed out benefit cheats" shows a fundamental misunderstanding of the Government's objectives.'

The impact is also being felt beyond Westminster. One of our readers wrote to us explaining that the inaccurate stories have a real impact on people's quality of life.

'My carer reads the Daily Mail. She believes the stories printed in the Mail are true, no matter how many times I try to point out the reality of how the system actually works. Just like the vast majority of readers. She thinks if it's in the paper it must be true.

'This constant barrage of misinformation has most definitely caused/contributed significantly to the increased number of verbal and physical attacks on the disabled, as represented in recent crime figures. Anecdotal reports among disabled people are truly shocking – from people in wheelchairs being spat at to having their cars vandalised. Walking with a stick is now an invitation for abuse. ...

'The disabled, including me, are terrified...'

That may sound extreme to the Inquiry but it is one of several unsolicited messages we have received from disabled people along those lines. We note that inaccurate negative coverage of disabled people is not limited to benefits issues (see, for examples, our factchecks of special educational needs coverage).

The Inquiry may also be aware of the recent Glasgow University study 'Bad News for Disabled People: How the newspapers are reporting disability' which found that 'has been a significantly increased use of pejorative language to describe disabled people' between 2004/05 and now.

None of this is to imply that there are not important stories that need to be told about, for example, abuses of disability benefits. But that seems to us simply to make it more reprehensible when newspapers exaggerate or distort them.

Underlying all this is the fact that the PCC is largely focused on protecting individuals and, however damaging a claim may be, if it is not directly discriminatory then the absence of a named individual 'victim' makes it much less of a priority. Might the same also be said of the Inquiry so far?

Crime, Law and Order

Though not featured extensively in the evidence presented here, the law and the criminal justice system is a significant area where inaccurate reporting occurs. It is hard for generalist factcheckers to be as authoritative in legal matters.

For example, one need only look at the coverage of Article 8 of the Human Rights Act, in cases where foreign nationals have avoided deportation, to see this tendency to exaggerate and distort.

The cases of people who, according to the papers and the Home Secretary, got to remain in the UK because of a pet cat or a gym membership are clear examples of this [DM2, DM29].

But there is also the case mentioned above where new proposals for sentencing were presented as a significant relaxation on guidelines for drug crimes, when they seemed to be nothing of the sort [DM4, EXP14].

The frequent portrayal of high crime and a criminal justice system that is not tough enough to cope – regardless of what is happening – appears to have an impact on public perceptions.

Both the Office for National Statistics ('Crime in England and Wales 2009/10') and Ipsos Mori have found a correlation between newspaper readership and the belief that crime is rising even when it is falling.

The Ipsos-Mori research 'Closing the Gaps: Crime and Public Perceptions' from 2008 suggested there was a correlation between the type of newspaper a person read and their satisfaction with the way governments tackle crime.

It has also been suggested by judges that newspaper portrayals of criminal justice issues in turn influence the sentences handed out.

Sir Stephen Sedley told the Joint Committee on Privacy and Injunctions that 'over the 20 years or so since I first became a judge a relentless campaign of accusing judges of being soft on crime and under-sentencing has led to the escalation of sentencing, which has now filled our prisons to bursting, about which it is recognised something

needs to be done. That is insidious; it is very difficult to put your finger on any one newspaper article or case in which it has happened, but as a trend it undoubtedly has happened.’ (Uncorrected Oral Evidence, 17 Oct 2011, Q23; to be published as HC 1443-i).

The influence can also be seen in debates over government policy. Prior to the government’s decision to introduce jail terms for juveniles convicted of knife crime, The Sun called for the move, claiming that more than 40 per cent of those caught carrying a knife were under 18. The actual figure was less than 20 per cent, but the 40 per cent figure was cited in Parliament when the Prime Minister was pressed by MPs on whether he would introduce the policy [SU1].

That an incorrect figure, based on exaggerated newspaper coverage, can be used as the basis for successful calls for a change in such important policy is extremely worrying.

Section 2: Complaints Mechanisms and Regulation

The second section of this evidence deals with how corrections published by newspapers were arrived at as a result of our factchecking, through contacting newspapers, through the PCC mediation system and through two PCC adjudications.

This evidence highlights a number of problems with the current regulatory system that it is vital that the Inquiry addresses.

Delays in the system

As can be seen from the evidence, newspapers can take a significant amount of time before replying to complaints, particularly when made through the Press Complaints Commission.

When points of inaccuracy are raised directly with newspapers, a response is received within a day or two or not at all, usually the latter.

However there are numerous examples of newspapers taking three weeks to respond to our latest correspondence given to the PCC.

In one case, a complaint to the Evening Standard, we did not receive a response from the newspaper for almost two months – from 19 July to 8 September 2011 [ES1].

‘Footdragging’ and abuse of process by newspapers

There are clear cases where newspapers, despite acknowledging an error, will offer the minimum possible corrective action in clear defiance of their Clause 1 duty to correct inaccuracies promptly.

Papers routinely reject complaints about inaccuracy that are later upheld or are conceded at a later stage in the PCC process. Most papers' goal seems to be minimising corrections.

Take, for example, the case of an indisputable error on the part of The Sun when making unfavourable comparisons between life expectancy in Merthyr Tydfil and Haiti [SU12].

The newspaper corrected the online version of the story as soon as they were notified. But as late as a month and a half after the original story was published the paper was still refusing to issue a printed correction, merely offering to publish a letter from Full Fact explaining the error and thus not admitting it themselves.

The correction for such a clear cut error was not published until over two months after the original story.

At times one is left with the impression that little effort is made on the part of newspapers to avoid making the process extremely awkward and time consuming for complainants.

This evidence highlights four cases involving complaints to the Daily Mail where, after a correction was agreed, the newspaper contacted the PCC on just before publication to suggest changes [DM3, DM6, DM17, DM30].

This means unilaterally reopening the complaints process on an evening before publication, when complainants may not be in a position to respond immediately. Indeed, this means demanding a response time from the complainant that we never receive from newspapers themselves.

That this has been done on three separate occasions over four complaints to our knowledge, all by the same newspaper and not just to Full Fact, gives such moves the impression of a considered tactic to disrupt the process.

Even if this is not the case it is extremely unhelpful, and not conducive to public faith in the PCC process.

Prominence

The evidence reflects deep disagreements about the meaning of 'due prominence'.

On the one hand, it shows that the PCC has taken action in two cases to ensure a correction was printed a second time when it was buried by the newspaper in question first time around [DM6, SU2].

On the other hand, the PCC regards the offer of a published letter, rather than a printed correction, as an adequate way to settle complaints [DM8]. Not only does this serve as a way for a newspaper to avoid acknowledging the error (in breach of Clause 1), but the correct information will only be published on the letters page, normally some way into the paper, and duly prominent in some cases but not others.

The PCC has also been happy for corrections to be published without being identified as such [e.g. DM6 but it is the usual approach of all tabloid papers], even ignoring our attempts to challenge this.

And in two other cases where prominent and significant errors were made on the front page of a newspaper, the adjudication of the Commission decided that no mention of the corrections was necessary on the front page at all [DM3, DM17].

The PCC runs two standard arguments in defence of the status quo:

1. Most corrections (now) run on the same, or an earlier, page than the original article and this is good evidence that due prominence is being upheld
2. Equal prominence does not work, so the status quo must hold

Many factors other than the page on which the original claim appeared influence what prominence would be due to a correction: the importance of the claim itself; its importance within the article and to the article's thrust; how wrong the claim was and potentially why it was wrong, etc.

And many factors other than the page on which the correction appears influence what prominence it has been given: how they are headlined, positioned, what day they appear on etc. The Commission takes almost no interest in these, save that after much persistence we may be moving towards corrections being labelled as such rather than, as in the past, presented as if they were dull news articles.

For both reasons, reducing prominence to a page count is unhelpful and the repeated use by the Commission of equal prominence as a straw man to justify the status quo is misplaced. (That said, it is important to recognise that corrections regularly appearing much further back in the paper than the original article has been an effective indicator of corrections being buried.)

Underlying all this is the fact that there is no agreement on what corrections are for, even though what is 'due' depends on what your goal is.

Too often the PCC treats corrections as an end in themselves (after all, the PCC's task is over once a correction is published), leaving prominence as a secondary question.

Full Fact believes that corrections should seek, as far as possible and proportionate, to undo the harm done by the original inaccuracy. It is hard to see, for example, how not mentioning a full-page front-page error on the front page achieves this.

If you believe, as many do, that there should be an element of deterrence involved in the publishing of corrections, then a still stronger line must be taken on prominence.

Our problem with the PCC is not over due prominence vs. equal prominence, and still less about quibbling over page numbers. It is that their version of 'due' prominence makes very little sense.

Repeat offenders and widespread errors

The evidence shows a large volume of inaccurate reports from the Daily Mail. It is hard to conclude that all were the result of the pressures on journalists to turn around stories in a short space of time.

The sheer volume of these complaints itself makes the case that the current attitudes of some newspapers, and the regulatory system behind them, are not sufficiently strong to encourage papers such as the Daily Mail to address why these errors keep occurring.

Similarly, the fact that newspapers repeat errors made by other newspapers suggests that a better mechanism needs to be put in place to be sure that an error once proven in one national newspaper is corrected by all who made it, and not repeated by others.

Publications not covered by the Code

There is also a significant number of examples in this evidence from the Daily Express, a newspaper not covered by the PCC.

While there has been a case where the Express corrected an inaccurate story the day after the original report, when the Sun and the Mail took a number of months, there is another side to the story.

Not long after the Express withdrew from the PCC, we flagged up an indisputable error with some figures on Incapacity Benefit claimants. After a phone call to try to find a relevant contact, correspondence with the journalist, then the news editor, the online version was amended [EXP10].

However no print correction was issued, and within a fortnight the error was repeated.

Following this experience we have largely restricted our efforts seeking corrections to the papers regulated by the PCC.

But it is not only the Express which falls between the regulatory cracks. We have also found examples of errors made by agencies such as the Press Association, which are then difficult to correct at source. This is particularly a problem when newspapers subsequently use this copy for their own articles.

In a similar way there is no obvious mechanism for seeking corrections from prominent news websites, including broadcasters' websites such as Sky News or Channel 4.

Section 1: Press Practices and Examples of Inaccuracy

The Daily Mail

Headline: Conservative UK: Most Britons still oppose gay marriage	
Date: 23 September 2011	Ref: DM1
<p>Summary: The article claimed that official statistics used in a government report showed that most people were opposed to gay marriage.</p> <p>It reported figures, sourced from the British Social Attitudes Survey, that showed 45 per cent of people supported same sex marriages, thus meaning that the majority did not support it.</p> <p>Problem: What the original Eurobarometer survey was as follows: British citizens were asked whether or not they agreed that ‘homosexual marriage should be allowed throughout Europe’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 per cent strongly agreed • 28 per cent tended to agree, a total of 46 per cent against. • 15 per cent tended to disagree • 30 per cent strongly disagreed; a total of 45 per cent against. <p>The remaining 9 per cent responded ‘don’t know’.</p> <p>Clearly the figures did not show that the majority of people opposed gay marriage. The Daily Mail had misrepresented the ‘don’t knows’ as opposing gay marriage. Putting ‘don’t knows’ on the side of the survey a paper favours is a fairly common trick.</p>	
Link: http://fullfact.org/blog/mail_gay_marriage_civil_partnerships_public_opinion-2993	

Headline: Truth about Tory catfight: Judge DID rule migrant’s pet was a reason he shouldn’t be deported	
Date: 6 October 2011	Ref: DM2
<p>Summary: An Asylum and Immigration Tribunal judgement had ruled that a man was allowed to remain in the UK; in the original decision the man in question had highlighted the fact that he and his girlfriend owned cat. This was taken into consideration. However the ultimate decision to allow the man to remain in the UK was based on a technicality rather than any feline matter.</p> <p>The Daily Mail and other papers had reported this in 2009. Theresa May had used</p>	

this as an example of the Human Rights Act being misapplied in a speech to the 2011 Conservative party conference.

The claim that the man involved was allowed to stay 'because he had a pet cat' had been widely debunked, including by the Judiciary and his own lawyers. Nevertheless, the Daily Mail reported that the cat was the reasons why the man was allowed to stay, playing down the significance of the second ruling, which did not place so much emphasis on the cat.

Problem: The ownership of the cat by the appellant and an unmarried partner was one of several pieces of evidence proving that he was in a committed relationship; by no means was the cat in itself a reason for which the appellant should be allowed to stay.

The appellant had relied on Home Office policy DP3/96, which allows illegal immigrants to remain if they are in a 'genuine and subsisting relationship akin to marriage' with another person who has lived in the country for at least two years. The cat was invoked as evidence of the existence of such a relationship. In no way was the ownership of a cat the main reason for which the appellant was allowed to stay.

A complaint had already been submitted to the Press Complaints Commission over its 2009 coverage of the event. The Commission acknowledged that the claim was inaccurate, but as the appellant himself had chosen not to make a complaint, it could not resolve the matter. It 'trusted that the newspaper would take heed of the points raised in the complaint and bear them in mind for future coverage.'

Link: http://fullfact.org/blog/daily_mail_cat_theresa_may_human_rights_pcc-3022
http://fullfact.org/blog/catgate_catflap_Daily_Mail_imigrant_bolivian_cat_deportation-3018

Headline: Teachers will be allowed to use force on unruly pupils as ministers lift no touching ban after classroom violence doubled in a year

Date: 11 July 2011

Ref: DM3

Summary: The paper used a subheading reporting that 'classroom violence doubles in a year' based on their figures that pupil exclusion rates had increased from 452 children per day in the year 2008/09 to almost 1,000 children per day in the next academic year (2009/10).

Problem: There was no basis for the 452 children per day figure quoted by the Mail. In fact figures we obtained from the Department for Education showed that the number of exclusions had been falling in recent years.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/school_exclusions_statistics_education-2813

http://fullfact.org/blog/school_exclusion_rates_Daily_Mail_physical_verbal_abuse-2855

Headline: Heroin dealers to escape jail: New sentencing proposals mean pushers would go free.

Date: 29 March 2011

Ref: DM4

Summary: The report stated: ‘Drug dealers could in future escape jail even if they sell up to £2,000 worth of heroin. New guidelines would allow courts to give community penalties to those playing a ‘subordinate’ role in a criminal gang. The ‘lower level’ offenders – such as drug runners – could keep their liberty even if arrested over the sale of up to 50 grams of heroin or cocaine or up to 100 tablets of ecstasy’.

Problem: The changes in guidelines only dealt with the issues of drug mules and the production of cannabis. The new guidelines did not appear to change very much about supply sentencing.

According to the Sentencing Council: ‘In relation to supply offences, we aren’t proposing changes to current sentencing practice, so it cannot be said that sentences will become more lenient as a result of our proposals. We do not anticipate either more or fewer people being sent to prison for these offences’.

The resource assessment of the proposals also suggests the effects of the changes will be negligible: ‘Guideline sentencing ranges for these offences have been set with reference to data on current sentencing practice with the aim of having no effect on the average severity of sentencing’.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/drug_dealers_community_sentences-2601

Headline: 400,000 ‘were trying it on’ to get sickness benefits: 94% of incapacity benefits can work

Date: 26 January 2011

Ref: DM5

Summary: Statistics from the Department for Work and Pensions showed that of everyone who applied to receive Employment Support Allowance (the successor to Incapacity Benefit), 6 per cent were deemed eligible to receive the benefit unconditionally following assessment.

Problem: The problem with the headline claiming 400,000 were trying it on is that this assumes that all but the aforementioned 6 per cent are 'trying it on'. It included people who applied for ESA but withdrew their claim.

As such people are not assessed it is impossible to know how many of these people allegedly 'trying it on' simply saw their condition improved—or even died before they could be assessed.

The 400,000 also includes people placed in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG).

At the time the article was published claimants were placed in the WRAG group - and thus were 'fit to work' in the Daily Mail's terms if they were:

- 'Suffering from a life threatening disease in relation to which there is medical evidence that the disease is uncontrollable'
- 'An in-patient in a hospital or similar institution'
- '[Receiving] regular weekly treatment by way of haemodialysis or chronic renal failure'
- 'Receiving treatment by way of intravenous, intraperitoneal or intrathecal chemotherapy'

We contacted the journalist who stood by the article, but not the headline. She claimed that the headline was not written by her. Our request for the headline to be corrected went unheeded.

This demonstrates the need for clearer standards and responsibilities in relation to headlines.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/incapacity_benefit_94_per_cent_can_work-2458

Headline: Up to 750,000 special needs pupils are just badly taught

Date: 14 September 2010

Ref: DM6

Summary: The article misrepresented an assessment from Ofsted that as many as half of children deemed to require help with Special Educational Needs under the 'School Action' category (the lowest of three levels of need, in which schools make the identification independently) had been misdiagnosed. The assessment was intended to help inform debate over the government's green paper on special educational needs.

Problem: The Mail arrived at the number of 750,000 by halving the number of children who were eligible for School Action (915,850) but also half of the 555,000 children identified for 'School Action Plus' help (the second level, where outsiders are involved).

Ofsted had said nothing about School Action Plus children being misdiagnosed, so the figure was significantly inflated, from a maximum of 450,000 to 750,000 children.

Link:

http://fullfact.org/factchecks/how_many_special_needs_children_are_misdiagnose

d-1557

Headline: Shameless generation grows as seven million now live in households where no one works.

Date: 14 September 2010

Ref: DM7

Summary: The latest set of figures published by the Office for National Statistics showed a rise in the number of people living in households where no one works. The article claimed, apparently based on the official figures, that since 1998 ‘the number of workless households has soared by 22 per cent, with 700,000 families joining the total.’

Problem: The ONS bulletin from which the figures were drawn showed a much smaller rise of 212,000, or 5.6 per cent.

We contacted the author of the article and we were able to establish that he had compared two figures that were not comparable.

Link:

[http://fullfact.org/factchecks/workless_household_statistics_the_mail_gets_it_wron
g-1552](http://fullfact.org/factchecks/workless_household_statistics_the_mail_gets_it_wrong-1552)

[http://fullfact.org/blog/daily_mail_yet_to_amend_errors_on_workless_households-
2332](http://fullfact.org/blog/daily_mail_yet_to_amend_errors_on_workless_households-2332)

Headline: The great disability benefit free-for-all: Half of claimants are not asked to prove eligibility

Date: 3 February 2011

Ref: DM8

Summary: Half of Disability Living Allowance ('DLA') claimants were not asked to support their claim with evidence of their disability.

Problem: There was a conflation between cases which don't require the collection of additional medical evidence and cases where no evidence or eligibility checks were required. All claimants are required to prove their eligibility, be it with or without additional medical evidence.

Link: http://fullfact.org/blog/Disability_Living_Allowance_Mail_evidence-2482

[http://fullfact.org/blog/disability_living_allowance_dla_press_complaints_commissi
on-2724](http://fullfact.org/blog/disability_living_allowance_dla_press_complaints_commission-2724)

Headline: 1.8 million on sickness benefit 'are fit enough to work'

Date: 11 February 2011

Ref: DM9

Summary: The paper reported the latest figures for government reassessments of people on incapacity benefits. It stated: ‘Up to two million people who have been living on sickness benefits for years may be perfectly fit to work.’

This was arrived at by claiming that 70 per cent of those assessed had been found fit to work and applying this to the approximated 2.5 million people on the various forms of incapacity benefit.

Problem: The assessments only found that 29.6 per cent of people were ‘fit to work’ – a specific category in the assessment. The other 40 per cent reported by the paper as being ‘perfectly fit to work’ were people placed in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) category.

These are generally people deemed by assessors to be unable to work at present but their condition may improve and see them return to the labour market in the future.

At the time the article was published claimants were placed in the WRAG group – and thus were ‘fit to work’ in the Daily Mail’s terms – if they were:

- ‘Suffering from a life threatening disease in relation to which there is medical evidence that the disease is uncontrollable’
- ‘An in-patient in a hospital or similar institution’
- ‘[Receiving] regular weekly treatment by way of haemodialysis or chronic renal failure’
- ‘Receiving treatment by way of intravenous, intraperitoneal or intrathecal chemotherapy’

At the time of our original analysis 90,000 people had been in the WRAG for 6 months or more, further demonstrating that this isn't a group of people who could be fairly categorised as ‘fit to work’, let alone ‘perfectly fit to work’ as the Daily Mail stated.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/incapacity_benefit_fit_to_work-2494

Headline: Axing speed cameras has caused road deaths to FALL

Date: 5 February 2011

Ref: DM10

Summary: Road deaths dropped by 14% while speed cameras were switched off due to cost-saving. Experts claim that there is a correlation between the decrease in speed camera operation and road deaths.

Problem: The Daily Mail uses figures from a recent Department of Transport bulletin, which indicate a 14% decrease in deaths between the third quarters of 2009 and 2010. However, changes between different quarters were more variable; figures often fluctuate.

There has been a general trend for decreasing road deaths over the last decade, so the reduction could easily just be part of an ongoing trend for other factors, rather than due to cameras being switched off.

None of the above conclusively proves a correlation between a reduction in the use of speed cameras and a decrease in road deaths – particularly as the statistics are somewhat dubious and there is no attempt to compare areas where cameras were not in use and where the accidents were.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/speed_cameras_road_accidents_statistics-2482

Headline: ‘Future? What f*** future?’ The British estate where life expectancy is lower than Haiti.**

Date: 12 February 2011

Ref: DM11

Summary: The local health board has reported that life expectancy on the Gurnos Estate in Merthyr Tydfil is, at 58.8 years, lower than Haiti.

Problem: What the health board actually said was that ‘healthy’ life expectancy on the Gurnos estate was 58.8 years. Overall life expectancy for the estate was 70 according to Office for National Statistics data.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/merthyr_tydfil_life_expectancy_haiti-2497
http://fullfact.org/blog/life_expectancy_haiti_iraq_Mail_Mirror_correction-2579

Headline: Banks hit by 7,000 complaints EVERY day: Watchdog names and shames High Street’s worst offenders for poor service and advice

Date: 30 September 2010

Ref: DM12

Summary: More than 70 per cent of customers were found to have been given bad advice or poor service in some areas, such as mortgages.

Problem: The 70 per cent figure is nowhere to be found in the Financial Services Authority (FSA) report the article is based on. Full Fact contacted the journalists responsible for the Daily Mail article, who claimed to be referring to the proportion of complaints submitted to the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS). The FSA report indicated that 71 per cent of complaints received by RBS were upheld.

However, complaints upheld do not reliably indicate the number of customers (as opposed to complainants) given bad advice or poor service. To say that 70 per cent of customers were given bad advice or poor service does not follow from the figures in the FSA report.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/the_mails_mortgage_claims_misleading-1568

Headline: First class? Top level degrees up by 34% prompting fresh concerns over grade inflation

Date: 23 September 2011

Ref: DM13

Summary: The number of students graduating with a first-class degree has risen by a third over the past five years, prompting fresh concerns about grade inflation.

Problem: The article ignored the growth in student numbers of the period. The proportion of students getting a first increased from 11 per cent to 13 per cent over the period.

Likewise the reported 14 per cent rise in 2.i degrees simply represented a change of 43 per cent of students to 44 per cent of students.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/are_universities_suffering_from_grade_inflation-2995

Headline (front page): Foreign workers get 3 in 4 new jobs

Date: 14 July 2011

Ref: DM14

Summary: The main headline on the front page of the paper stated that 3 in 4 'new jobs' went to foreign workers.

Problem: The story is based on official figures that showed that, of the 411,000 net rise in employment between the previous quarter and the same quarter the year before, the net rise in employment of foreign born workers was 334,000 and the net rise in employment of those born in the UK was 77,000.

This does not mean that 3 in 4 new jobs went to foreign workers. For starters the figures refer to employment levels not the number of jobs, so just tell us how many people are working, not how many jobs – new or otherwise – are held by people of any nationality.

The Office for National Statistics Bulletin from which the report was drawn specifically states: 'The estimates relate to the number of people in employment rather than the number of jobs. These statistics have sometimes been incorrectly interpreted as indicating the proportion of new jobs that are taken by foreign migrants.'

By portraying it as a proportion of new jobs going to foreigners, the headline gives the impression that three quarters of jobs advertised will be filled by foreigners. In

fact statistics show that of people who have been with their current employer only three months, 80 per cent were born in the UK.

Link: http://fullfact.org/blog/daily_mail_foreign_worker_statistics_immigration-2819

See also: Daily Mail 17 March 2011

http://fullfact.org/blog/foreign_workers_daily_mail_employment-2571

Daily Mail 20 June 2011

http://fullfact.org/factchecks/frank_field_new_jobs_immigrants_welfare-2782

Headline: Immigration soars 20 per cent last year making a mockery of government pledge to bring it down

Date: 26 August 2011

Ref: DM15

Problem: The figures being described in the headline were for net migration – the balance of immigration and emigration – not solely immigration.

The ONS bulletin on which the story was based stated: ‘The provisional estimate of net long-term migration to the UK in the year to December 2010 was 239,000, an increase of 21 per cent on the estimate of 198,000 in the year to December 2009.’

However the bulletin noted that immigration had stayed largely unchanged since 2004. The rise in net migration had come from a reduction in emigration. The headline on the article suggests that there had been a surge in people coming to the country, when this had been broadly stable.

We did not pursue a complaint as the online headline seemed to have been changed. However the headline on the article at present is as it was.

Link: http://fullfact.org/blog/immigration_figures_headlines_net_migration-2942

Headline: Scam of the free BMWs for thousands as friends and relatives of the disabled use luxury ‘Motability’ cars.

Date: 20 June 2011

Ref: DM16

Summary: The article claimed that recipients of Disability Living Allowance were able to claim free cars – including BMWs – on the taxpayer.

Problem: These cars are not free but paid for out of the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance – money these people would be entitled to anyway. Furthermore the BMWs that are part of the Motability Scheme require extra payments from those using them.

Of all the BMWs listed in Motability's vehicle guide, all require an up-front payment of between £1,399 and £9,999.

The headline has now been changed on the online article to read: 'BMW's for thousands as friends and relatives of the disabled use luxury 'Motability' cars'

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/disability_allowance_mobility_BMW_Mail-2783

Headline (front page): UK doles out more aid than any other country

Date: 27 May 2011

Ref: DM17

Summary: A report from the G8 has shown that the UK spends the most on international aid as a proportion of GDP.

Problem: The UK does not spend more than any other country on international aid, either as a total figure or as a proportion of GDP.

What the paper had done was take a report that only made a comparison between G8 countries, and state that as the UK was the highest out of these nations in terms of GDP it gave more 'than any other country.' In fact, there are at least six countries that give out more aid as measured this way.

This claim was made both in the front page headline and the body of the article.

Link:

http://fullfact.org/factchecks/Daily_Mail_Express_Daily_Telegraph_international_aid_UK_most_generous_G8_OECD-2738

Headline: 1.6m benefits claimants have never had a job 'because it does not pay to work'

Date: 8 December 2011

Ref: DM18

Summary: Figures from the Department for Work and Pensions showed that there were 1.6 million people who had never had a job.

Problem: The figures did not say that all the people included had made a specific choice not to work. The bulletin in which the figures were published specifically said: 'Information is not available on the reasons why an individual has never worked. For example some of these individuals may have disabilities or caring responsibilities, or have partners who work. Likewise, some will be claiming state benefits and some will not.'

Far from being all to do with the level of benefit payments relative to wages, not all

of the 1.6 million would be claiming benefits, likewise some may not have much choice about working or not due to disabilities.

Link: http://fullfact.org/blog/number_unemployed_never_worked-2406

Headline: Number of 24 hour bars up by almost half in just two years

Date: 15 November 2010

Ref: DM19

Summary: An article reporting the rise in establishments with a license to sell alcohol 24 hours a day claimed that there had been a rise in alcohol related crime since the reform of licensing laws in 2004.

Problem: A closer look at the figures shows that the prevalence of alcohol in violent incidents has been on the rise for many years, increasing from 41 per cent in 1995 to a peak of 51 per cent in 2003/04, over a year before the legislation came into force.

Furthermore, an evaluation of the changes in alcohol licensing laws undertaken by the Home Office in 2008 found that ‘overall problems of crime and disorder did not increase’ in response to the new regulations. In fact, the report found, violent crime actually fell, although the extent to which this was statistically significant is unclear.

Link:

http://fullfact.org/blog/maills_alcoholrelated_crime_claims_on_unsteady_ground-2377

Headline: Britain’s most workshy estate: Community where this man is the only person has [sic] a job

Date: 10 January 2011

Ref: DM20

Summary: In an article reporting an area of Birmingham where statistics suggested 99 per cent of people did not have a job, the report claimed: ‘Official figures had previously shown that two million long-term sick-pay claimants were well enough to work as were almost eight in every ten of those applying for incapacity benefit.’

Problem: The two million figure was arrived at by mistakenly applying the proportion of people found fit to work when assessed for Employment Support Allowance – a different benefit which replaced Incapacity Benefit in 2008.

The two million figure was arrived at by applying statistics, which at the time showed that of the roughly one million people who, since 2008, had applied for ESA, about 760,000 (or 75 per cent) were found either fit to work by the assessments or withdrew their application prior to the assessments.

The problem is that the Mail statement applied this percentage to all the existing people on the old incapacity benefit, when there were no grounds for suggesting that the same proportions would be repeated as the government moved on to assessing those on the old benefit.

The 75 per cent proportion used by the Mail is only arrived at by including the 36 per cent of people who applied for ESA but withdrew their claim.

As such people are not assessed it is impossible to know how many of these people rather than 'trying it on' simply saw their condition improved.

While the complexity of the incapacity system means mistakes aren't surprising, as other examples will show, it is part of a broader theme of numbers about incapacity benefit being exaggerated by the newspapers.

Link:

http://fullfact.org/factchecks/two_million_incapacity_benefit_fit_to_work_express-2435

Headline: One third of 'brain surgeon' immigrants in unskilled jobs

Date: 24 October 2010

Ref: DM21

Summary: Home Office figures have shown that, despite controls being in place, one third of people coming to the country as 'highly skilled' migrants under the points based system have ended up taking unskilled jobs.

Problem: Though the figure was accurate, it neglected to mention that the Home Office study that was being quoted looked mostly at recent graduates who had come to this country on student visas, but had their stay extended as 'highly skilled' migrants as the rules permit them to.

Given the current jobs market and the difficulties faced by new graduates, it is not surprising that $\frac{1}{3}$ weren't in skilled jobs. More importantly, the findings were not based on a representative sample – questioning the validity of the conclusions drawn by the paper.

Given that the government was at the time keen to play up the flaws in the points based system they inherited, it is not surprising that the newspapers were not made aware of this point. Nevertheless, they failed to report it despite being clearly explained in the short research paper.

Link:

http://fullfact.org/factchecks/how_many_skilled_migrants_take_unskilled_jobs-2388

Headline: More than £1BILLION lost to disability benefit fraud and error – and that’s just the tip of the iceberg.	
Date: 24 August 2010	Ref: DM22
<p>Summary: Over a five year period more than a billion pounds had been lost through fraud or official error in payments for Disability Living Allowance (DLA).</p> <p>Problem: Error in the system also produces significant underpayments to claimants, to the extent that the net balance of overpayments and underpayments was in fact in credit in favour of the Treasury.</p>	
<p>Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/disability_benefit_how_much_does_fraud_and_error_cost-1544</p>	

Headline: Why death rates increased in 20mph zones...and getting rid of cameras reduced accidents	
Date: 4 October 2010	Ref: DM23
<p>Summary: A study commissioned by the Department of Transport showed that when Portsmouth introduced 20mph speed limits – reduced from 30mph – the rate of people killed or seriously injured rose from 18.7 to 19.9.</p> <p>Problem: The study was not a particularly robust one, and the Mail did not include, as the Daily Telegraph did, the following quote from Stephen Senn, Professor of Statistics at Glasgow University: ‘The design of the report is very bad. Various statistical terms are used incorrectly and they’ve probably used the wrong statistical test. They haven’t got a control group, which is pretty basic, and without which it is pretty naive to jump to conclusions.’</p>	
<p>Link: http://fullfact.org/blog/naive_conclusions_drawn_from_portsmouth_20mph_zones-2346</p>	

Headline: Bogus foreign students facing visa crackdown after shocking figures show a quarter flout the rules	
Date: 6 December 2010	Ref: DM24
<p>Summary: Ahead of the reform of the student visa system, the Mail reported figures published by the Home Office apparently showing that a quarter of students attending private further education colleges broke the rules of their visas.</p>	

Problem: The study was based on colleges that were subject to a roll-call check by the UK Border Agency because there were concerns over suspected abuse.

Since the study was based on colleges that were already suspicious, this will have influenced the figures. The Home Office report itself stated: 'These percentages should be considered the maximum potential estimate of non-compliance, as the coverage for those leaving the UK and the focus of roll-call investigations mean that the actual levels of non-compliance are likely to be lower.'

The Daily Mail article did not report that the figures were likely to be skewed.

The process was not helped by the fact that the information was given to the Daily Mail four days before it was publicly available. This meant neither in the initial press coverage nor in comments from ministers was one immediately aware of this important caveat to the figures.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/visa_abuse_figures_not_what_they_seem-2404

Headline: Make prisoners work and contribute wages to victims of crime, urges think tank

Date: 13 June 2011

Ref: DM25

Summary: A report by the think-tank Policy Exchange was reported as showing that 98 per cent of prisoners enjoyed special privileges.

Problem: Although the Policy Exchange report did in a sense show show this, there was an important caveat ignored by the Mail.

There are three levels of privilege for prisoners; basic, standard and advanced. The Ministry of Justice set out in a review of the scheme in 2006: 'On entering custody, all prisoners must be placed initially on the standard privilege level.'

This means that this is the de facto neutral privilege level, with better behaviour being rewarded with enhanced privileges and bad behaviour punished with demotion to a basic privilege level.

The bulk of prisoners were actually on standard privileges rather than enhanced.

Link:

http://fullfact.org/factchecks/Daily_Mail_prisoner_privileges_benefits_good_behaviour-2769

Headline: Ministers pledge to cut Whitehall waste by £10 billion but haven't we

heard all this before?	
Date: 4 June 2011	Ref: DM26
<p>Summary: The government has the target of saving £10 billion from procurement, and tackling inefficient purchasing such as, according to the Mail, when ‘Government departments and agencies paid between £350 and £2,000 for the same laptop’.</p> <p>Problem: The Mail seems not to have sufficiently interrogated this figure. Although we had to submit a Freedom of Information request to find out, we eventually learnt – as you might expect – that the two laptops in question were not the same, but in fact had very different specifications.</p> <p>The newspaper seems to have been far too credulous in accepting figures from the government.</p>	
<p>Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/public_sector_procurement_laptop_cost_cabinet_offi ce-2854</p>	

Headline: Those wicked Tory cuts – Women and children first	
Date: 15 February 2011	Ref: DM27
<p>Summary: A piece by columnist Richard Littlejohn arguing for the need to reduce spending by cutting ‘Mickey Mouse’ jobs at local councils, Mr Littlejohn cited the example of Haringey Council who ‘hired someone to give hopscotch lessons to Asian women’.</p> <p>Problem: We contacted Haringey Borough Council to ask about the mysterious job, who told us that they had ‘checked a number of databases and records and can find no evidence of funding this’.</p> <p>Though we were unable to establish where Mr Littlejohn got his information, one possible source of confusion was the existence of the Hopscotch Asian Women’s Centre, a well-respected voluntary organisation that deals with domestic violence, language and integration issues in Camden, which neighbours Haringey.</p>	
<p>Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/Littlejohn-local-council-non-jobs-hopscotch-2502</p>	

Headline: Overcrowding soars to record level in primary and secondary schools	
Date: 26 October 2010	Ref: DM28
<p>Summary: New figures purport to show that the number of schools that are over capacity has hit its highest ever record level.</p>	

Problem: The figures were only published for the first time at the time when this report was produced, and only contained two years of data. It is not simply that this rendered the ‘record’ overcrowding meaningless, but the data did not even necessarily show a rise from the earlier year to the current year’s data.

The exact total of 95,940 pupils recorded was actually down from the previous year’s 97,850 – overcrowding had very slightly worsened in primary schools, but eased in secondary schools.

Similarly, the number of overcrowded schools has fallen at secondary level while rising at primary level.

The only way of arriving at ‘record levels’ using figures reproduced in the Mail’s report is by comparing the proportions of schools where capacity has been reached or exceeded.

It does not seem obvious that this specific measure should be used to gauge comparative levels of overcrowding.

But even if it was a universally accepted standard for comparison, the 0.5 per cent rate is too low to be seriously regarded as a soaring increase.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/how_overcrowded_are_english_schools-1588

Headline: Failed asylum seeker who has dodged deportation for a decade told he can stay... because he goes to the GYM

Date: 24 October 2011

Ref: DM29

Summary: The report stated that Amir Beheshti, a failed asylum seeker who has challenged deportation from Britain, was told he could stay because he goes to the gym.

This honed in on one statement in the written decision by Lord Glennie, which stated: ‘He had integrated well within the Glasgow community, had a large network of friends, most of whom were Scottish, and socialised with those friends at the gymnasium, at five-a-side football, in coffee shops, at college, in the library and at their homes.’

Problem: This is indeed a verbatim quote from Lord Glennie’s written decision. It is also the only reference in the entire statement to a gym. It is not, however, presented in its full context by the Daily Mail. Lord Glennie is actually here himself referencing a letter sent by Mr Beheshti to the UK Border Agency as part of his appeal to be allowed to remain in the UK. This quote does not represent the opinion

or judgement of Lord Glennie, but is instead simply a summary of Mr Beheshti's claims in his letter.

Furthermore, Mr Beheshti's claims here certainly do not amount to the assertion that he believes that he has the right to stay in the UK because he goes to the gym (nor is there any indication that the judge might plausibly be persuaded by that line of argument). Instead the gym is referenced by Mr Beheshti in support of his claim that he has established a private life in the UK, and that this private life should be protected under the ECHR.

The last line of Lord Glennie's decision stated:

'I propose to grant decree of reduction to allow the petitioner's application by letter of 2 February 2010, as supplemented by the material presented on 12 March 2010, to be reconsidered by the Secretary of State'.

He made the judgement that Mr Beheshti's claims regarding his right to private and family life were not given by the Secretary of State the 'anxious scrutiny' they deserved. In other words, they were not given adequate consideration. On this ground he refers the case back to the Secretary of State so that the decision can be reviewed in this light.

Link:

http://fullfact.org/factcheck/did_an_immigrant_win_residence_by_going_to_gym-3057

Headline (front page): How £200 stealth charge is slipped onto your gas and electricity bill: Hidden Green tax in fuel bills

Date: 9 June 2011

Ref: DM30

Summary: The article reported figures from the Global Warming Policy Foundation (GWPF) claiming that climate change policies are adding 15-20 per cent on to households gas and energy bills. Taking the upper end of this estimate would mean about £200 in additional costs.

Problem: When we contacted the GWPF they told us this was sourced from official government estimates.

However the official estimates we were directed to actually suggested that the impact on an average will would be about £43, and that percentage increase on bills was significantly lower than the 15-20 per cent quoted by the papers.

The figures the newspapers sources had quoted did not stand up to scrutiny at a very basic level.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/energy_bills_prices_climate_change_taxes-2758

Headline: Ban on mixed-race adoptions must be lifted, says minister	
Date: 3 November 2010	Ref: DM31
<p>Summary: In an article reporting government plans to relax guidelines for the adoption of mixed race children, the newspaper also claimed: ‘The number of children in care adopted by parents has dropped by 30 per cent since Labour’s Sexual Orientation Regulations (SOR) brought homosexual equality rules into adoption law in 2007.’</p> <p>The article continued: ‘Ten years ago Tony Blair vowed to sweep away the petty rules but his 2002 Adoption Act, which introduced adoption by gay couples, failed to meet a target of 50 per cent more adoptions from care’.</p> <p>‘The 3,800 successful applications in 2004, the year the law went into force, fell to 3,300 in 2007 and 2,300 last year. The decline coincided with the SOR’.</p> <p>Problem: The fall from 3,800 to 2,300 was based on a false comparison, between the number of children adopted, and the number of placements for adoption. In fact the fall over the period was from 3,800 to 3,200 – a decline of 16 per cent.</p> <p>There was also a degree of confusion over which piece of legislation was being claimed to have had coincided with a 30% decline in adoptions.</p> <p>In one place it is implied that it is since the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations came into force in 2007, when in fact this there had only been a 3 per cent fall since then.</p> <p>In another it is implied that it is since the 2002 Adoption Act came into force in 2004. In this case, as explained above, the fall would still only be 16 per cent.</p>	
Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/are_adoption_levels_falling-1598	

Daily Express

Headline: House Prices Set to Surge	
Date: 18 January 2011	Ref: EXP1
<p>Summary: House prices are set for a spring bounce, according to leading experts in the field, and a survey from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).</p> <p>Problem: Firstly the report misrepresented the findings of the RICS survey, claiming it showed just 39 per cent of those asked had a negative outlook for the housing market for the coming months.</p> <p>What the survey actually found was that the balance of respondents who had positive or negative views was -39. That is, more people had a negative outlook than didn't.</p> <p>While this may seem to be an inadvertent error the article also selectively quoted two of the 'experts' mentioned in the piece.</p> <p>Howard Archer of IHS Global Insight was quoted as saying: 'Clearly, if the supply-demand balance in housing moves increasingly away from buyers towards sellers, it will provide significant support for house prices.'</p> <p>However the very next sentence of Mr Archer's full remarks which was not quoted in the article was much less positive: 'Even so, we still consider that the fundamentals remain largely unfavourable for the housing market. Thus we maintain the view that while house prices are unlikely to collapse, they will fall by around 10 per cent from their peak 2010 levels by the end of 2011. <i>Given that house prices have already fallen by some 3 per cent, we believe that they will fall by around 7 per cent in 2011.</i>'</p> <p>So rather than a surge, a fall of 10 per cent was forecast.</p> <p>Likewise Jeremy Leaf, of RICS, is quoted as saying 'Although bad weather hit the housing market during December, sales levels have remained stable and sentiment does appear more positive for the coming months.'</p> <p>His full remarks in the RICS press release were: 'Although bad weather hit the housing market during December sales levels have remained stable. While lack of supply, and more importantly demand continues to impact heavily, surveyor sentiment does appear more positive for the coming months.'</p> <p>'The key issue now is mortgage finance. However, with commentators suggesting lending constraints are unlikely to be eased, <i>it is hard to envisage a meaningful increase in sales levels in the near term.</i>'</p>	

Again the report appears to have selectively quoted an expert to project a positive picture of the outlook for the housing market.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/house_prices_outlook_2010_daily_express-2444

Headline: Benefits Clampdown on Harem Muslims

Date: 31 March 2011

Ref: EXP2

Summary: A government crackdown will end the ‘extra’ payments being given to the additional wives in polygamous marriages.

The paper quoted an estimate that such people were in receipt of benefits that overall would total £10 million, paid to up to 1,000 polygamous marriages.

Problem: The use of the £10 million figure quoted by the paper can only be arrived at if it is assumed that 1,000 men, with an average of four wives each, are all claiming the full amount of Income Support.

However DWP documentation not covered in the piece explains that ‘few of [these] are claiming a state benefit.’

Likewise it is a matter of public record, both from statements from ministers and in Parliament but also according to House of Commons Library research, that there is little financial benefit to be gained in terms of social security from polygamous marriages.

Polygamous marriages in this country are only recognised if the spouses were domiciled in a country in which the practice is legal, and have subsequently legally settled in the UK. As Lord West has told Parliament: ‘The Immigration Rules prevent a man from bringing in a second or subsequent wife with him to the UK if another woman has already been admitted to the UK as his wife and that marriage has not been dissolved. All those who seek leave to enter the United Kingdom for the purpose of settling as a spouse of a person resident in the UK or a British citizen must have a visa in this category for entry.’

In such circumstances, the wife would be eligible for a larger benefit award as an individual, and therefore does not do better financially from benefits as a consequence of being in a polygamous marriage.

Link:

http://fullfact.org/factchecks/muslim_immigration_polygamous_marriages_daily_express-2613

Headline: French Muslims use our cash to fight Burkha ban

Date: 10 June 2011	Ref: EXP3
<p>Summary: A French Muslim couple now based in Britain are challenging the French Burkha ban in the European Court of Human Rights, funding their effort through funds from British taxpayers.</p> <p>Problem: The article claims that the legal challenge was funded by the British taxpayer because the Immigration Advisory Service (IAS) receives £15 million a year in legal aid from the Legal Services Commission.</p> <p>However as the article acknowledged in a penultimate three paragraphs of the article that legal aid would not be paid to IAS to fight a case such as this, as funds are only given to fight British cases based on immigration issues.</p>	
<p>Link: http://fullfact.org/blog/express_muslim_immigrants_Europe_human_rights_burkha-2759</p>	

Headline: Migrants more likely to claim jobless benefit	
Date: 29 September 2011	Ref: EXP4
<p>Summary: A government study has shown that migrants to the UK are more likely to claim unemployment benefit than people from the UK.</p> <p>Problem: This is not what the research showed. The findings actually discussed what proportion of migrants who claimed benefits were claiming jobseeker's allowance, rather than the proportion of migrants overall who were on JSA.</p> <p>So rather than 5.7 per cent of migrants from Romania or Bulgaria being on unemployment benefit, the findings showed that 5.7 per cent of migrants from those countries who claimed benefits, claimed unemployment benefit.</p> <p>The error was particularly significant given that the findings clearly showed that as a proportion of the whole population, migrants claim less in benefits than the UK population, making the headline significantly inaccurate.</p>	
<p>Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/immigration_EU_jobs_unemployment_benefits-3006</p>	

Headline: End Hole in Wall Benefit Loans	
Date: 14 February 2011	Ref: EXP5
<p>Summary: Millions of pounds of money paid to hard up people in the form of emergency loans via the Social Fund, are being squandered on holidays and nights</p>	

out.

Problem: No figures actually exist for how much money paid out in such loans is used for such frivolous purposes.

An assessment by the Department for Work and Pensions had found that ‘there were a small number of customer comments about applicants who misused the Social Fund’ with some self-declarations from claimants reporting ‘partial use of local money to afford luxuries and entertainment that they could not normally afford’.

However despite a request to the Department to provide us with a figure for how much is spent they could not provide us with one.

So we had no way of finding out how much of the approximately £250 million lent out in crisis loans each year was squandered on holidays and nights, and nor would the Express have had no way of knowing whether the figure amounted to millions.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/social_fund_crisis_loan_benefit_daily_express-2499

Headline: Now Eurocrats says Time’s up for GMT

Date: 3 October 2011

Ref: EXP6

Summary: European scientists are calling for Britain to abandon the Greenwich Mean Time system, and change instead to a system based on the atomic clock.

Problem: Though the headline and second paragraph of the piece claimed that such calls were coming from ‘Eurocrats’, the article eventually explained that the organisation calling the change were the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM).

Though based in Paris, this organisation is not part of the European Union, but is an international body, whose membership also includes the United States, Iran and North Korea.

Link:

http://fullfact.org/blog/gmt_express_eurocrats_international_bureau_weights_measures-3013

Headline: How 2m Eastern Europeans signed to get European benefit

Date: 12 September 2011

Ref: EXP7

Summary: Since it was introduced an estimated 1.9 million Eastern Europeans have

come to the UK under the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS). The scheme entitles these workers to some UK social security benefits.

Problem: The article disregarded the possibility that, of this number who signed up for the WRS, some may have signed up twice, as people are required to do if they change their employer within a year.

Likewise the article ignored the point that only a small proportion of those who came under the WRS would need to claim benefits since employment rates for nationals of the Eastern European countries in question are higher than the level for British citizens.

Link: <http://www.express.co.uk/posts/view/270708/How-2m-east-Europeans-signed-to-get-UK-benefit>

Headline: Now a mere 37 per cent of doctors are White British

Date: 3 February 2011

Ref: EXP8

Summary: A survey from the General Medical Council has revealed that 37 per cent of the 240,000 people on the medical registered classed their ethnicity as ‘White British’.

Problem: The figure of 37 per cent is only arrived at by excluding those who did not state their ethnicity – some 60,000 responses. If these are ignored the proportion of doctors who class themselves as White British rose to approximately 50 per cent.

The article also referred to these figures as highlighting the ‘influx of foreign workers’ ignoring that of course, one can be British without being ‘White British’.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/doctor_ethnicity_statistics_express_gmc-2478

Headline: Immigration soars 20%

Date: 26 August 2011

Ref: EXP9

Summary: The headline of the article reported that immigration had risen by 20 per cent in just one year. The article itself stated: ‘THE number of foreigners coming into Britain surged by a massive 21 per cent last year,’ and continued: ‘Official figures yesterday showed the number of immigrants soared to 239,000 – up from 198,000 in 2009.’

Problem: The headline confused immigration with emigration. Immigration was at a level broadly unchanged since 2004. The 20 per cent rise in net migration was caused by a significant decline in the number of people emigrating from the UK,

The figures the report quoted as the ‘number of immigrants’ was in fact the net balance of migration.

The error either shows a undeveloped understanding of migration statistics, or a wilful attempt to portray the figures as showing something they do not.

Link: http://fullfact.org/blog/immigration_figures_headlines_net_migration-2942

Headline: Workshy estate where just one person has a job

Date: 10 January 2011

Ref: EXP10

Summary: In an article describing an estate in Birmingham where according to statistics just one person in employment, the article also stated: ‘Official figures had previously shown that two million long-term sick-pay claimants were well enough to work as were almost eight in every 10 of those applying for incapacity benefit.’

Problem: The two million figure was arrived at by mistakenly applying the proportion of people found fit to work when assessed for Employment Support Allowance – a different benefit which replaced Incapacity Benefit in 2008.

The two million figure was arrived at by applying statistics, which at the time showed that of the roughly 1 million people who, since 2008, had applied for ESA, about 760,000 (or 75 per cent) were found either fit to work by the assessments or withdrew their application prior to the assessments.

The problem is that the Express’ statement applied this percentage to all the existing people on the old incapacity benefit, when there were no grounds for suggesting that the same proportions would be repeated as the government moved on to assessing those on the old benefit.

The 75 per cent proportion used by the Express is only arrived at by including the 36 per cent of people who applied for ESA but withdrew their claim.

As such people are not assessed it impossible to know how may of these people rather than ‘trying it on’ simply saw their condition improved.

Link: http://fullfact.org/blog/express-errors-incapacity-benefit-fit-for-work_2460

Headline: How £80m cost of Nick Clegg’s poll is being met by councils

Date: 3 May 2011

Ref: EXP11

Summary: The article stated that ‘the £80million bill for Nick Clegg’s AV referendum

has had to be met by councils’

The article also claimed that this amounted to nearly 10 per cent of the average budget of a council.

Problem: In fact the cost of the referendum would on average amount to 10 per cent of the cuts being faced by councils.

But in addition the article ignored that councils would be reimbursed for the costs of this referendum by central government, making the statement that the cost is ‘met by councils’ clearly untrue.

Link:

http://fullfact.org/blog/AV_referendum_Yes_2_Fairer_Votes_No_2_AV_Express_Financial_Times_safe_seats_second_jobs_cost-2680

Headline: Blitz on benefits: 870,000 fiddlers exposed

Date: 28 April 2011

Ref: EXP12

Summary: New figures from the Department for Work and Pensions show that 75 per cent of people on incapacity benefit are fit to work.

Problem: The figures published by the DWP did show that of the 1,175,000 people who had applied for ESA, 75 per cent were found fit for work, or withdrew their claim.

The 870,000 ‘fiddlers’ would therefore also include people who subsequently had this decision overturned on appeal – with 36 per cent of decisions appealed and 39 per cent of these proving successful.

Likewise branding these people fiddlers ignores the strong possibility that at least some of those people withdrew their claim due to improved health. Given the time lag between applying for ESA and having a Work Capability Assessment, this situation is plausible. Indeed a review of the assessment for the government by Professor Malcolm Harrington stated that improved health was a ‘significant’ factor in withdrawal of claims.

Link:

http://fullfact.org/factchecks/employment_support_allowance_incapacity_benefit_fit_for_work-2677

Headline: How addicts pocket £435m Benefits Meant for disabled

Date: 28 March 2011

Ref: EXP13

Summary: Payments for Disability Living Allowance totalling £435 million are given to people with conditions, including 19,400 people with drug or alcohol problems, 30,900 people with asthma, and 128,300 with back pain.

Problem: Clearly as drug or alcohol problems only account for a small fraction of the group of benefit recipients being discussed here, they would not be responsible for pocketing all of the £435 million as the newspaper headline suggests.

Full Fact worked out that the amount claimed by those with drug or alcohol problems would actually be closer to a total of £19.1 million paid out through the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance – some 4.4 per cent of the figure used in the Express headline.

Link:

http://fullfact.org/factchecks/disability_living_allowance_mobility_sun_mail_express_DWP_alcohol_drugs-2602

Headline: It's madness to let drug dealers escape prison

Date: 30 March 2011

Ref: EXP14

Summary: A comment piece by the Express columnist Ross Clark stated: 'Yesterday the Sentencing Council published proposals to spare drug dealers from jail. In future, it said, only those who are proved to be big-time dealers should go to jail. Drugs mules, runners and small-time dealers caught with up to 50 grammes of heroin or cocaine should instead be given community sentences.'

Problem: The changes in guidelines only dealt with the issues of drug mules and the production of cannabis. The new guidelines did not appear to change very much about supply sentencing.

According to the Sentencing Council: 'In relation to supply offences, we aren't proposing changes to current sentencing practice, so it cannot be said that sentences will become more lenient as a result of our proposals. We do not anticipate either more or fewer people being sent to prison for these offences.'

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/drug_dealers_community_sentences-2601

Headline: Ban shopping bags says EU

Date: 20 May 2011

Ref: EXP15

Summary: The European Union is looking to ban the use of plastic shopping bags.

Problem: The European Commission launched a consultation, with the stated aim of:

‘asking the public how best to reduce the use of plastic carrier bags. It will ask if charging and taxation would be effective, or if other options such as an EU-level ban on plastic carrier bags would be better. Opinions will also be sought on increasing the visibility of biodegradable packaging products, and boosting the biodegradability requirements for packaging.’

The consultation document does not say that the EU wants to ban shopping bags, rather that the consultation will ask people for their views on a ban, as well as other options aimed at reducing plastic bag use.

Undoubtedly the headline of the piece gives readers an inaccurate impression of just how developed this policy is, since rather than advocating it they are simply consulting.

Link:

http://fullfact.org/blog/Express_Tabloid_Watch_EU_commission_plastic_bag_ban-2718

Headline: 70 per cent of Britons on ‘Incapacity Benefits’ found to be fit to work

Date: 11 February 2011

Ref: EXP16

Summary: Initial assessment of people on incapacity benefit in Burnley and Aberdeen have found that just over 30 per cent were deemed eligible to continue to claim benefits unconditionally.

Problem: The assessments only found that 29.6 per cent of people were ‘fit to work’ – a specific category in the assessment. The other 40 per cent reported by the paper as being ‘fit to work’ were people placed in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) category.

These are generally people deemed by assessors to be unable to work at present but who may see their condition improve and be able to return to the labour market in the future.

At the time the article was published claimants are placed in the WRAG group, and thus are according to the Express ‘fit to work’ if they are:

- ‘Suffering from a life threatening disease in relation to which there is medical evidence that the disease is uncontrollable’
- ‘An in-patient in a hospital or similar institution’
- ‘[Receiving] regular weekly treatment by way of haemodialysis or chronic renal failure’
- ‘Receiving treatment by way of intravenous, intraperitoneal or intrathecal chemotherapy’

At the time of our original analysis 90,000 people had been in the WRAG for 6 months or more, further demonstrating that this isn't a group of people who could be fairly categorised as 'fit to work'.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/incapacity_benefit_fit_to_work-2494

Headline: The £8.7bn benefits bill for piles, dizziness, headaches and 'malaise'

Date: 22 July 2011

Ref: EXP17

Summary: Incapacity Benefits are being paid out for people with conditions including piles, dizziness and headaches.

Problem: The headline implied that £8.7 billion was being paid out to people with the above conditions. However £8.7 billion, as the article eventually explains is the amount paid out for all types of conditions.

Our calculations suggested less than £100 million was spent on the conditions listed in the headline.

Link:

http://fullfact.org/factchecks/Mail_incapacity_benefit_piles_dizziness_sleeping_disorder-2845

Headline: 1.6 million Britons who have never worked

Date: 8 December 2010

Ref: EXP18

Summary: The article referenced figures from the Department for Work and Pensions showing that there were 1.6 million people who had never had a job. The article stated: 'it is now clear that generations have embraced a life of idleness funded by the taxpayer.'

Problem: The bulletin from which these figures were drawn states: 'Information is not available on the reasons why an individual has never worked. For example some of these individuals may have disabilities or caring responsibilities, or have partners who work. Likewise, some will be claiming state benefits and some will not.'

Link: http://fullfact.org/blog/number_unemployed_never_worked-2406

The Sun

Headline: Quarter of Serial Crooks beat jail	
Date: 19 October 2011	Ref: SU1
<p>Summary: The article included calls to give tougher sentences to those under 18 who are convicted of knife crime.</p> <p>The article stated: ‘Any over-18s convicted of a new offence of using a knife to threaten or endanger life will get a mandatory six-month term. But juveniles are exempt – despite statistics showing they are involved in more than 40 per cent of knife crime.’</p> <p>Problem: The 40 per cent figure was simply an estimate given by the head of Enfield police as to what the figure might be for his area.</p> <p>National Statistics from the Ministry of Justice showed that in fact the correct figure for the country as a whole is 19 per cent of knife crimes committed by under 18s.</p> <p>Nevertheless the 40 per cent figure was still quoted by MPs calling for the government to introduce mandatory jail terms for all knife criminals during a session of Prime Ministers Questions.</p>	
Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/knife_crime_youth_sentencing_PMQs-3050	

Headline: Fit as a Fiddler: ‘Sick’ spongers could start work right now	
Date: 11 February 2011	Ref: SU2
<p>Summary: The article claimed that ‘a shocking 1.8 million people claiming incapacity benefit are FIT to work, figures reveal today.’</p> <p>This was based on two pilot schemes where those on incapacity benefit were reassessed on their ability to work.</p> <p>Problem: The assessments put people into three categories. Fit to Work, for those deemed capable of starting work immediately; the Work Related Activity Group, for those deemed unable to work but potentially able to work in the future; and the Support Group, for those deemed unable to work, and as such entitled to unconditional benefits.</p> <p>The paper reported that because just over 30 per cent of those assessed were placed in the support group, this meant the other 70 per cent were fit to work or fit to ‘work within a few weeks with help’.</p>	

The 1.8 million figure worked on the assumption that the 70 per cent figure would apply across the board to the 2.6 million people on the various incapacity benefits.

The problem with this is that it portrays those assessed as being in the Work Related Activity Group as being 'fit to work'.

At the time the article was published claimants are placed in the WRAG group, and thus are according to the Sun 'fit to work' if they are:

- 'Suffering from a life threatening disease in relation to which there is medical evidence that the disease is uncontrollable'
- 'An in-patient in a hospital or similar institution'
- 'Receiving regular weekly treatment by way of haemodialysis or chronic renal failure'
- 'Receiving treatment by way of intravenous, intraperitoneal or intrathecal chemotherapy'

These are not all people who are fit to work, even within a few weeks.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/incapacity_benefit_fit_to_work-2494

Headline: Referend... erm: JUST one in five Brits bothered to vote in the AV referendum yesterday

Date: 6 May 2011

Ref: SU3

Summary: The Sun claimed that only 1 in 5 people voted in the AV Referendum.

Problem: The actual percentage of people who voted was around 42 per cent, significantly more than The Sun claimed. The article was published before the provisional turnout figures were released, making their source neither accurate or official. The story was not updated when official figures were available.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/sun_times_av_referendum_turnout_claims-2687

Headline: Migrant a Minute

Date: 22 February 2011

Ref: SU4

Summary: The Sun claimed that over 3 million immigrants came into Britain under Labour, and that this equalled around one immigrant a minute:
'MORE than three million immigrants came to Britain under Labour – a rate of one a minute'

Problem: For a migrant to come to Britain every minute, around there would have

had to be around 6.8 million arriving. The ‘one a minute’ statistic actually refers to the gross inflow of all nationalities (including British) from 1997–2009, which was around 6.6 million. Net immigration of foreign nationals over the period was 3 million.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/immigration_one_migrant_every_minute-2514

Headline: Nine in ten claiming sick benefit are fit to work

Date: 27 July 2010

Ref: SU5

Summary: The Department of Work and Pensions released the results of its set of Work Capability Assessments which the government will use to determine eligibility for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). The Sun claimed that this report showed that 90 per cent of those on Incapacity Benefit were fit to work. ‘TOUGH new checks on Incapacity Benefit show more than nine in ten trying to claim it CAN work, it emerged yesterday’, the article said.

Problem: The report puts the actual number of people fit to work at 39 per cent. The Sun focuses on new applicants who were placed in the Support Group of ESA, ignoring the 27 per cent placed in the Work Related Activity Group (the distinction is explained in SU2).

Link: http://fullfact.org/blog/incapacity_benefits_welfare_ESA_fit_for_work_DWP-2853

Headline: Laws is cleared on expenses

Date: 12 May 2011

Ref: SU6

Summary: David Laws was found to be paying rent to his partner using House of Commons expenses. He resigned and referred himself to the Parliamentary Commission for Standards for investigation. The Sun claimed that that the Commission’s report ‘cleared’ him of wrongdoing.

Problem: This does not give the whole picture. The report did conclude that Laws had acted as he did without intention to benefit either himself or his partner, and that his primary motivation was that of privacy. However, the report went on to say that whatever his motive, and however well he behaved after his discretion was revealed he was ‘guilty of a series of serious breaches of the rules, over a considerable time.’

Link: http://fullfact.org/blog/Sun_clears_David_Laws_expenses-2697

Headline: David Cameron: £7.5 million a year will help give every child a chance	
Date: 10 December 2010	Ref: SU7
<p>Summary: The Sun claimed that divorce rates in Britain were ‘soaring’. ‘SOARING divorce rates mean the traditional family unit is under threat with one in three of today’s kids experiencing the break-up of their parents’ relationship’.</p> <p>Problem: Divorce rates in Britain in 2008 (the most recent survey at the time the article was written) were at their lowest level since 1979, with 11.2 divorcing people per 1,000 of the married population.</p>	
Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/divorce_rates_family_breakdown_the_sun	

Headline: Outrage at £435m paid to junkies	
Date: 28 March 2011	Ref: SU8
<p>Summary: The newspaper claimed that £435m worth of the mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is given to people with alcohol and drug addictions every year.</p> <p>Problem: For reasons that remain unclear, as well as looking at those with alcohol and drug problems the total includes those with asthma and back pain.</p> <p>Although the article mentions this later on, the headline is misleading. Those with alcohol and drug problems only make up 10 per cent of the people claiming this £435 million and the actual amount being paid to them is £19.1 million.</p>	
<p>Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/disability_living_allowance_mobility_sun_mail_express_DWP_alcohol_drugs-2602</p>	

Headline: 900,000 caught in fit to work check	
Date: 28 April 2011	Ref: SU9
<p>Summary: The Sun claimed that 900,000 people, approximately 75 per cent of those who took the Work Capability Assessment (WCA), were found fit to work.</p> <p>Problem: Of the 887,300 due to be assessed, 458,500 were found fit to work and 428,800 withdrew their application before they underwent assessment. However, that they withdrew does not mean that this group are fit to work. Although the Department for Work and Pensions does not keep information on the subject, applicants withdraw for a variety of reasons, including recovering and going to hospital. That is why the DWP excludes those who withdraw from their analysis of</p>	

how many are fit to work.

Moreover, of those who were found fit to work 36 per cent appealed, and of those 39 per cent had their original assessment overturned. This means that 48,000 labelled as 'fit to work' by The Sun were later found not to be so.

This puts the total number of people found fit to work at 57 per cent.

Note: due to a calculating error the figures released by DWP have since been amended

Link:

http://fullfact.org/factchecks/employment_support_allowance_incapacity_benefit_fit_for_work-2677

Headline: Sun says

Date: 3 March 2011

Ref: SU10

Summary: The Sun claimed that Air Passenger Duty (APD), which was introduced in 1994, has risen 2,600 per cent.

'The Air Passenger Duty has gone sky-high – rising by a staggering 2,600 per cent since it was introduced in 1994'.

Problem: In 1994 APD for a long haul economy flight of 6,000 miles would cost £10, today the same flight would incur a cost, in nominal terms, of £85. This is an increase of 750 per cent, significantly less than that suggested by The Sun.

It would seem that The Sun has confused actual increase of APD costs with the overall increase in revenue taken by the government from this duty.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/air_passenger_duty_tax_campaign-2534

Headline: Crooks register 500 names at one flat to con £1m in benefits

Date: 25 February 2011

Ref: SU11

Summary: A story about benefit fraud based around a flat in Peckham claimed that the total annual cost of benefit fraud to the taxpayer was £5.2 billion.

'Benefit fraud costs the country £5.2 billion a year,' the report claimed.

Problem: This is the figure for fraud and error. Much of the error is on the government's side and only about £1.5 billion is accounted for by actual fraud in

benefits and tax credits.

Link: http://fullfact.org/blog/benefit_fraud_error_the_sun-2536

Headline: Lifestyle takes Shocking toll: Life expectancy Post-war Iraq 68.8, Life Expectancy Merthyr Tydfil (Gurnos Estate) 58.8

Date: 12 February 2011

Ref: SU12

Summary: The newspaper reported that ‘MEN on a desolate estate in Wales have a life expectancy ten years lower than those in postwar Iraq, shocking figures have revealed’.

Problem: This misreported research from a local health board which actually found that 58.8 was the number of years of healthy life expectancy men living on the Gurnos estate could expect.

According to Office for National Statistics data, the overall life expectancy was 70.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/merthyr_tydfil_life_expectancy_haiti-2497

Daily Mirror

Headline: Fury as Tory-led coalition axes 200 police stations while promising to get tough on gangs	
Date: 17 August 2011	Ref: MR1
<p>Summary: The article stated that at least 158 stations have closed or will close in England and Wales – and a further 23 could follow under current proposals.</p> <p>Problem: Because it was based on Freedom of Information requests, the information behind this figure was not published by the Mirror. This poses difficulties because when we submitted our own requests there were forces that had opened as many stations as they had closed.</p> <p>This suggested that the figure used by the Mirror may have been a gross closure figure, rather than the net change in police stations. Were this the case the article could be extremely misleading.</p>	
Link: http://fullfact.org/blog/police_station_closures_cuts_Mirror-2988	

Headline: George Osborne admits Budget hits poor hardest	
Date: 6 October 2010	Ref: MR2
<p>Summary: The paper claimed that the Chancellor had admitted that government spending cuts would hit the poor harder than rich at a ratio of 11:1.</p> <p>Problem: In an email to party members, George Osborne actually noted that ‘it is very difficult to justify taxing people on lower incomes to pay £1 billion benefits to households that contain higher rate taxpayers. In the Budget I made £11 billion of savings from other parts of the system, many of which affected people on lower incomes.’</p> <p>The recognition by the Chancellor that, of the £11 billion of savings measures announced in the budget, ‘many... affected people on lower incomes’ clearly does not mean that it exclusively hits these groups.</p> <p>Nor should it be inferred that the £1 billion that would hypothetically pay for child benefits for higher rate taxpayers would have been sourced entirely from poorer households. The Chancellor merely indicates that these groups contribute taxes to the public purse, just as other socio-economic groups do.</p> <p>It is not even necessarily fair to compare the savings made through a single measure - child benefit - with the entire savings package announced in the Budget.</p>	

Link: http://fullfact.org/blog/holding_a_mirror_to_the_mirrors_budget_claims-2353

Headline: Get out of jail card for violent burglars

Date: 12 May 2011

Ref: MR3

Summary: The Mirror claimed that ‘senior judges will provoke fury today by unveiling new rules to let violent burglars dodge jail. The sentencing shake-up could mean a raider who threatens or attacks someone in their home will walk out of court with a community sentence.’

Problem: The Sentencing Council explained that the coverage in the Daily Mirror was based on a simplistic reading of the guidelines.

In response the Sentencing Council said: ‘Here, one factor has been selected without reference to any other aspect of an offence. A violent attack on a householder would indicate high harm, thus it would be at least a category two offence (before one even considers other factors of the offence).

‘The starting point for a category two offence is 1 year’s custody and it is expected that the vast majority of cases that fall into category two will result in a custodial sentence. Whilst it is possible that a category two offence could lead to a community sentence there would need to be significant mitigating circumstances.

‘However, the scenarios cited take one element of an offence in isolation and a judge would be taking into account the full details of any case, with there likely to be other aggravating factors that could make an offence more serious and push it higher within the category two range or to a category one, so such simplistic hypotheses are misleading.

‘It is also misleading to suggest that it is these new rules that let violent burglars avoid jail sentences – we are reflecting current sentencing practice, so it is not a new system for sentencing that is more lenient or that makes less use of custody.

Link:

http://fullfact.org/factchecks/Daily_Mail_Mirror_BBC_Guardian_Telegraph_Sentencing_Council_guidelines_burglary_prison-2700

Headline: Home burgled every 43 seconds

Date: 15 July 2011

Ref: MR4

Summary: Reporting the latest crime figures, the paper reported that Britain is in the grip of a recession crime surge with 85 homes broken into every hour: ‘Alarming figures show 745,000 properties were targeted last year – one every 43 seconds – up 14%.’

Problem: The Mirror’s claim that a home is burgled every 43 seconds is based on the 745,000 figure, which includes attempted burglaries. However, calculating the number of homes actually burgled (i.e. burglaries with entry) shows that 0.86 homes are entered every minute – or one every 70 seconds.

The 745,000 figure does not refer to ‘break-ins’ but rather the combined total of attempted as well as successful burglaries, and even then not every case involved items being stolen.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/burglary_home_entry_attempted_loss.2826

Headline: Yobs rule OK! Awful truth of streets blighted by louts

Date: 23 September 2010

Ref: MR5

Summary: The report claimed figures from Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary showed there were 26 incidents of anti-social behaviour every minute.

Problem: The calculations from HMIC were pretty dubious. The British Crime Survey showed that reporting rates for a small number of types of anti-social behaviour had a reporting rate of 28 per cent and with 3.5 million ASB incidents reported the paper worked backwards from here.

The problem is that the HMIC claim that only 28 per cent of anti-social behaviour gets reported is extremely flawed. The figure came from a survey asking people whether they would report a select number of types of ASB or not.

The survey did not ask about reporting just to the police, but also reporting to neighbours, local authorities or the people themselves.

This is clearly no basis on which to try and work out how many ASB incidents go unreported to the police, but the newspapers chose to multiply the figures without seemingly giving them the small amount of scrutiny that would have made this clear.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/can_we_trust_antisocial_behaviour_statistics-1563

Headline: Life expectancy here is LOWER than earthquake-hit Haiti or war-torn Iraq

Date: 12 February 2011

Ref: MR6

Summary: The local health board has reported that life expectancy on the Gurnos Estate in Merthyr Tydfil is, at 58.8 years, lower than Haiti.

Problem: What the health board actually said was that ‘healthy’ life expectancy on

the Gurnos estate was 58.8 years. Overall life expectancy for the estate was 70 according to Office for National Statistics data.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/merthyr_tydfil_life_expectancy_haiti-2497

Headline: Benefits cheats costing the economy £22 billion a year

Date: 3 November 2011

Ref: MR7

Summary: The article reported findings from the BBC Panorama programme – due to be aired that evening – that benefit fraud cost the taxpayer £22 billion.

Problem: £22 billion was actually an estimate of the total cost to the public sector of all kinds of fraud and error. The correct figure for benefit fraud alone (inclusive of tax credit fraud and council housing fraud) was estimated to be £4 billion. This figure was not mentioned anywhere in the article.

Link: http://fullfact.org/blog/benefit_fraud_error_Mirror_Panorama_welfare-3092

Mail on Sunday

Headline: Parent of a child with ADHD? Have a free car under £1.5bn taxpayer-funded scheme	
Date: 11 October 2011	Ref: MOS1
<p>Summary: More than 3,000 people with ADHD are entitled to ‘free’ cars from the taxpayer under a Motability scheme, based around payments for Disability Living Allowance.</p> <p>Problem: The motability cars are paid for out of the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance. So the cars are funded out of benefit payments that claimants would be entitled to anyway, and it is a choice for them whether this money goes towards a motability car.</p> <p>In addition only about 100 people currently receive higher rate mobility DLA whose main disabling condition is ADHD, so only 100 would be entitled to use this payment for Motability. The 3,200 figure is only reached by including the 3,100 classed by the Department for Work and Pensions as having other behavioural conditions.</p> <p>Portraying all 3,200 as having ADHD-related conditions is extremely misleading.</p>	
Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/disability_benefits_motability_ADHD_Mail-3025	

Headline: BBC turns its back on year of Our Lord: 2,000 years of Christianity jettisoned for politically correct ‘Common Era’	
Date: 25 September 2011	Ref: MOS2
<p>Summary: The BBC is dropping the use of the BC/AD terms to report dates, and switching to the more secular BCE/CE (Before Common Era/Common Era), ‘in case [BC/AD] offend non-Christians’.</p> <p>Problem: The BBC’s editorial guidelines do not mandate the use of BCE/CE. The BBC’s response was included in the last two paragraphs of the report and said: ‘The BBC has not issued editorial guidance on the date systems. Both AD and BC, and CE and BCE are widely accepted date systems and the decision on which term to use lies with individual production and editorial teams.’</p> <p>The Mail on Sunday still decided to print the report, despite it being manifestly inaccurate.</p>	
Link: http://fullfact.org/blog/bbc_date_mail_on_sunday_press_complaints_commission-2998	

Daily Telegraph

Headline: Life expectancy on British estate is lower than Haiti or Iraq	
Date: 11 February 2011	Ref: DT1
<p>Summary: Men living on the Gurnos estate in Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales have a life expectancy of 58.8 years. This is three years lower than that of people in Haiti and 8 years lower than that of people in Iraq.</p> <p>Problem: The 58.8 figure comes from a presentation given in conjunction with the annual report of the Cwm Taf Health Board. It is correctly understood as referring to male healthy life expectancy; the average period for which a man can expect to retain his good health. ONS figures for the ward in which Gurnos is in, show that male life expectancy there is 70 years, higher than both Haiti and Iraq.</p>	
Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/merthyr_tydfil_life_expectancy_haiti-2497	

Headline: Councillors given veto over executive pay packages	
Date: 16 February 2011	Ref: DT2
<p>Summary: The amount spent on pay packages for senior local authority executives has risen by 78 per cent since 2002. Eric Pickles, the Local Government Secretary, is quoted calling for council chief executives to take pay cuts.</p> <p>Problem: The source of this claim, made also by Eric Pickles, seems to be a 2008 report from the Audit Commission: 'Tougher at the Top'. However, in this report, the 78 per cent figure refers to the pay rise experienced by FTSE 250 Chief Executives and not council chief executives. The Department for Communities and Local Government, when contacted, claimed another report from the Bureau of Investigative Journalism as the source. But this report referred to total council expenditure on employees over a decade, and did not make the claim that both the Telegraph and Mr Pickles made in reference to council chief executives over a shorter time span. The DCLG subsequently corrected the record.</p> <p>The Department's Press release was corrected, but the Telegraph did not correct the story, despite attempts to contact the journalist who wrote the story.</p>	
Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/eric_pickles_council_pay_salary-2503	

Headline: Children to be banned from blowing up balloons, under EU safety rules	
Date: 09 October 2011	Ref: DT3

Summary: A new EU directive is going to prevent children from ‘taking part in traditional Christmas games’. Toys such as whistle blowers and magnetic fishing games are to be banned because of the risk associated with their small parts or chemical composition, while latex balloons will have to carry a warning.

Problem: The EU directive does not ban toys from being used at home, but instead specifies certain requirements for a product to be put on the market. So, for example, it is required that whistle blowers that are sold are a certain minimum size. As stated in the article itself, contradicting its own headline, children are not banned from blowing up balloons, it is just that these balloons must carry a warning. Furthermore the directive does not impose new restrictions. It just reiterates regulations that have been in force since 1988.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/EU_Europe_children_balloons_Telegraph-3026

Headline: Fitness tests show millions on benefit are fit to work

Date: 11 February 2011

Ref: DT4

Summary: Analysis of new tough disability benefit eligibility tests, being piloted in Aberdeen and Burnley, has shown that ‘more than two thirds of those currently claiming incapacity benefit are fit for work’.

Problem: This figure is reached by adding the proportion of those found ‘fit to work’ (29.6 per cent) to that of those placed in the Work Related Activity Group (39 percent). According to the DWP press release being put in this group means ‘with the right help and support they can start the journey back to work’.

It can include hospital in-patients and those with life-threatening diseases that may be uncontrollable. It is inaccurate and unfair to categorise all the members of this group as ‘fit to work’.

Fit to work is a specific and separate category to the Work Related Activity group, and there is no reason to portray both groups as completely comprising people who are ‘fit to work’.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/incapacity_benefit_fit_to_work-2494

Headline: Ofsted: schools exaggerating special needs to hide poor teaching

Date: 14 September 2010

Ref: DT5

Summary: An Ofsted report has said that up to half of those with special educational needs wouldn’t be labelled as such if schools focused on improving teaching and learning for all. This means that almost 750,000 children have been wrongly labelled

as having special needs.

Problem: The 750,000 figure comes from halving the number of all those children in either the School Action or higher-needs School Action Plus programme. However, the Ofsted report is intended to refer only to those children in the School Action programme. If we halve the number of children in just this programme we get the smaller figure of 457,925.

Link:

http://fullfact.org/factchecks/how_many_special_needs_children_are_misdiagnosed-1557

Headline: One in ten police to go – and crime could rise, watchdog warns

Date: 21 July 2011

Ref: DT6

Summary: A new report by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate Of Constabulary has claimed that ‘a 10 per cent cut in police numbers could fuel a 3 per cent rise in crime’.

Problem: The report actually only made this estimate in relation to property crime and not all crime as suggested in the Telegraph. Meanwhile the report also notes that the link between violent crime and police numbers is ‘weaker and sometimes contradictory’.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/police_numbers_rise_crime_hmic-2840

Headline: Nine out of 10 sickness benefit claimants are judged fit to work

Date: 27 July 2011

Ref: DT7

Summary: Of those who applied for the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), fewer than one in ten ‘has been signed off work completely’. Figures from the Department for Work and Pension’s Work Capability Assessments (WCA) are used to arrive at this result. It is found by combining the percentage of those who applied for ESA and were either judged fit for work (39 per cent), withdrew their claim before the assessment was completed (36 per cent), or were found capable of carrying out some work eventually if given support under the Work Related Activity Group (17 per cent).

Problem: 37 per cent of those who were judged fit for work appealed the judgement, and 39 per cent of these were successful in their claim. Those who withdrew their claim are likely to include those who were genuinely ill when they applied but had recovered enough to work by the time the assessment had come around, as assessments can take place up to 12 weeks after the initial claim. It could also those who were too ill to complete the assessment. A DWP study found

that a quarter of those who withdrew their claims still maintained that their poor health was a barrier to seeking work 6 – 10 months later.

Those assigned to the Work Related Activity Group includes those currently incapable of work who receive ESA payments while attending interviews designed to help them back into work once they are capable of taking it.

Portraying these people as having been judged fit to work is extremely misleading.

Link: http://fullfact.org/blog/incapacity_benefits_welfare_ESA_fit_for_work_DWP-2853

Headline: 3 out of 4 benefits claimants are fit for work

Date: 27 April 2011

Ref: DT8

Summary: Refers to those applying for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). Gets to the headline figure by adding those who were judged fit to work (4 out of 10) and those who withdrew their application before the assessment was completed (36 per cent)

Problem: Of those judged fit to work, 36 per cent appealed the judgement, with 39 per cent of these appeals being upheld. As well as this the judgement, made by the Telegraph, that all those who withdrew their assessment are fit to work cannot be proved. People in this group may, for example, include those who had to withdraw their application because they have recovered or because they were going to hospital. The DWP itself, in its own release, excludes this group from its analysis.

Link:

http://fullfact.org/factchecks/employment_support_allowance_incapacity_benefit_fit_for_work-2677

Headline: Middle classes were hardest hit by budget, tax experts find

Date: 3 May 2011

Ref: DT9

Summary: The middle classes and stay at home mothers have been hardest hit by 'unfair' tax changes, experts have told Parliament. The changes to tax credits and child benefit payments will have a disproportionate effect on those with an income between £40,000 and £50,000.

Problem: None of the reports delivered to parliament by three accountancy professional bodies explicitly mention the 'middle class'. The only time any of them describe something as 'unfair' is in reference to a cap on tax relief for oil companies.

There are only 2 paragraphs in the entirety of the 3 reports, in that of the Chartered Institute of Taxation, that deal with the changes to child benefits. These do say that 'single-earner households where the earner is a higher-rate taxpayer' are the main losers from the new child benefit restrictions. However, no figures are provided for the numbers affected.

Link:

http://fullfact.org/factchecks/budget_2011_middle_class_families_hit_hardest-2679

Headline: For every new 'green' job, nearly four are lost

Date: 12 March 2011

Ref: DT10

Summary: A new study has shown that 'diverting £330 million into renewable energy destroyed 3.7 British jobs last year for every one created'.

Problem: The claim refers to a study published by the consultants, Verso Economics. However this study only refers to the effect of subsidies granted to the Scottish renewables sector in 2009/10. It does not apply to Britain in general.

Furthermore, the study concludes that 1,100 jobs have been directly created by subsidies in this sector, but makes no attempt to calculate indirect job gains caused by investment in this sector. In contrast, it attempts to estimate the overall macroeconomic impact of the £330 million of subsidies to make its conclusions about job losses.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/green_jobs_telegraph_environment_growth-2555

Headline: Warning over foreign workers in UK illegally

Date: 15 March 2011

Ref: DT11

Summary: According to figures from the National Audit Office (NAO), at least 181,000 foreign workers could be in the country illegally.

Problem: The NAO clearly states in their report that there may be "up to 181,000 migrants in total in the UK whose permission to remain has expired since 2008". This is clearly intended as an upper limit and not a lower limit, as the Telegraph implies.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/illegal_worker_migrant_visa_immigration-2559

Headline: More people power on pub opening times

Date: 28 July 2010

Ref: DT12

Summary: Reports on planned changes to licensing laws which will include making councils pay more attention to community concerns and objections by local people to the opening of new pubs and clubs in the area. In support of the argument for these changes, the Home Secretary is quoted claiming that since the introduction of 24 hour licensing law ‘we have seen an increase in the number of alcohol related incidents and drink-fuelled crime and disorder’.

Problem: The British Crime Survey does release data that was used by the Home Office to calculate the number of violent incidents attributed to offenders perceived to have been under the influence of alcohol. This data shows that this figure actually went down between 2006 (the 24 hour licensing laws were applied in November 2005) and 2009, from 1,023,000 to 986,000. The Telegraph, however, entirely uncritically, passes on the Home Secretary’s claims.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/home_office_retracts_alcohol_crime_claim-1525

Headline: Police give up the fight as yobs take over

Date: 23 September 2010

Ref: DT13

Summary: The article estimated that 14 million incidents of anti-social behaviour take place each year. It based this on a report by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary, which estimates about 28 per cent of crimes are reported to the police, and that even this low rate led to 3.5 million calls to the police.

Problem: The claim of 3.5 million calls to the police over anti-social behaviour checks out, however, the 28 per cent figure is more dubious.

It seems to be an attempt to summarize data from the 2007/2008 British Crime Survey. However, our use of the same figures puts the result at 25 per cent. On top of this, it should be understood as referring to reporting of only certain categories of anti-social behaviour (which do not correspond to police categories), and reporting not just to the police (to whom only a minority of the complaints were made), but also to people such as parents, landlords and the perpetrators themselves.

This figure cannot be appropriately used to estimate total incidence of anti-social behaviour, which could be significantly higher or lower than 14 million.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/can_we_trust_antisocial_behaviour_statistics-1563

The Guardian

Headline: Libya campaign may cost UK £260m	
Date: 23 June 2011	Ref: GU1
<p>Summary: The Guardian quoted that the cost of the operation in Libya ‘has run to £260m’.</p> <p>Problem: The figure was an estimate by the Ministry of Defence about how much the campaign was likely to cost over the six months from the start of the war in March to September, including the cost of operations and munitions. The Guardian was wrong to claim it had already run to £260m.</p>	
Link: http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2011/jun/23/libya-campaign-has-cost-uk-260m	

Headline: Half of special needs children misdiagnosed	
Date: 14 September 2010	Ref: GU2
<p>Summary: Half of children identified as having special needs were misdiagnosed.</p> <p>Problem: The Ofsted report actually referred to half of all pupils identified for School Action (the lowest of three categories of need) who did not necessarily need to be identified as having special educational needs if schools focused on improving teaching and learning for all and if schools had goals for individual improvement. The 50 per cent figure only corresponded to those in School Action, which was in fact 27 per cent of the total number of children with SEN.</p>	
<p>Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/how_many_special_needs_children_are_misdiagnosed-1557 http://fullfact.org/blog/special_educational_needs_green_paper_correctly_reported_thanks_full_fact-2541</p>	

Headline: Police see tackling antisocial behaviour as beneath them	
Date: 23 September 2010	Ref: GU3
<p>Summary: The Guardian claimed there were 14 million incidents of anti-social behaviour in the last year. The HMIC report claimed that the public only report approx 28 per cent of incidents of antisocial behaviour to the police. The paper used this percentage and the quoted figure of 3.5 million calls made to police reporting anti-social behaviour to calculate the total number of incidents. Not only were the</p>	

calculations exaggerated but the data the figures were based on had numerous problems.

Problem: The data the report referred to was in the 2007/8 British Crime Survey but the percentage actually averaged out at 25 per cent rather than 28%. Only a minority of the complaints had been made to the police (others included talking to parents, landlords, or perpetrators). On this basis, the percentage of complaints made to police would be lower and therefore the total number of anti-social incidents much higher. Furthermore, the categories of anti-social behaviour mentioned in the survey were different to those used by police that the 3.5 million calls referred to.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/can_we_trust_antisocial_behaviour_statistics-1563

Headline: Britain’s drugs hypocrisy is a giant self-inflicted wound

Date: 2 November 2010

Ref: GU4

Summary: Simon Jenkins’ column referred to a report by the Independent Scientific Committee on Drugs, authored by Professor Nutt, which claimed that alcohol causes more harm to society than Class A drugs. The newspaper uses it to support claim of previous government’s failings in this policy area, by allowing duty on alcohol to fall, increasing the affordability of alcohol in household budgets and easing pub licensing hours.

Problems: The rising trend of alcohol related deaths began before the Labour administration. Convictions for drunkenness and drunkenness with aggravation actually halved over Labour’s first two terms – contradicting the article’s claim that imprisonment for alcohol had increased. His claim that the number of individuals caught for drink driving is increasing is also incorrect. Home Office research proved the number of positive breath tests fell for the third year in a row in 2008. Furthermore, Ministry of Justice figures found that although the proportion of drink driving offences in all motoring convictions had risen since 1996, the actual number had stayed the same and decreased by some measures.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/are_alcoholrelated_problems_on_the_rise-1594

Headline: Spending review: Ya-boo won’t work. Labour’s response must be forensic

Date: 19 October 2010

Ref: GU5

Summary: Polly Toynbee argued that measures in the June budget will impact on the poor the hardest, because the budget changes only cut councils funded by an area based grant, rather than a per-capita basis, with none of the former being

Conservative led councils. She claims this area based grant is designed to target deprived areas, and therefore cutting it impacts only on the poorest areas. To prove this she contrasted the Local Authority budget in Liverpool with those in Tory heartlands like Oxfordshire and Surrey.

Problem: Information from the Department for Communities and Local Government showed that Surrey (Michael Gove MP) faces the 14th greatest reduction of 426 Local Authorities in its Area Based Grant, and Oxfordshire (David Cameron MP) was 41st. Birmingham was the worst affected, which had no overall control. Many Tory heartland areas were actually some of the worst affected by budget changes.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/do_cuts_to_council_budgets_dodge_tory_areas-1580

Headline: Cameron’s immigration speech designed to emphasise coalition differences

Date: 14 April 2011

Ref: GU6

Summary: In the newspaper’s commentary on a recent speech by the Prime Minister regarding immigration, the paper criticised Mr Cameron’s portrayal of the issue.

It said: ‘Cameron is trying to portray this as Labour presiding over a period of mass immigration. But if he looked a little further back in the long-term migration figures, he would see that the turning point was 1991, not 1997.

The period from 1991 – when John Major was in No 10 – to 1997 saw total net migration of 2.5 million. Looking further back, you would see that the 1970s and 1980s were decades when more people left Britain than came here.’

Problem: There is no obvious trend to increased net UK migration from 1992; and the ONS figures show that from 1991 to 1997 there was net total migration of 286,000. Gross migration into the UK over the same period was 2.13 million, still short of the Guardian’s 2.5 million figure.

Link:
http://fullfact.org/factchecks/net_immigration_UK_Daily_Telegraph_Guardian_Office_for_National_Statistics-2659

The Independent

Headline: Time to calm the rhetoric and forge a compromise	
Date: 1 September 2011	Ref: ID1
<p>Summary: An editorial article discusses the Dale Farm situation and, more generally, calls for a pragmatic approach to accommodating travellers. It claims that, with an estimated 3,600 illegal traveller sites across the country, travellers should not be 'indiscriminately waved through'.</p> <p>Problem: It is unclear where the 3,600 figure is from. The Department of Community and Local Government's 'Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Count' found a total of 3,109 caravans in unauthorised sites in January 2011. It seems unlikely that there are as many as 3,600 illegal Traveller sites when the report found only 3,109 caravans in unauthorised sites.</p> <p>Full Fact contacted the DCLG, which confirmed that there is no information available on the number of illegal Traveller sites. It is possible that the Independent was referring to the January 2010 edition of the 'Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Count', which found 3,614 caravans in unauthorised sites, but it is still highly unlikely that there are as many as 3,600 separate unauthorised sites.</p>	
Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/illegal_traveller_sites_uk_england_dale_farm-2949	

Headline: Call for action as cycling road deaths rise again	
Date: 8 August 2011	Ref: ID2
<p>Summary: Department of Transport figures publicised by the Bicycle Helmet Initiative Trust show that a six-year high of 3,370 cyclists were killed or injured in the first quarter of 2011.</p> <p>Problem: The actual number used was 3,730 and not 3,370. This was clearly a simple typo so we were surprised by the paper's resistance to printing a correction.</p>	
Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/dramatic_rise_cyclist_injuries_road_casualty_figures-2909	

Headline: At least 700,000 pupils wrongly classed as having 'special needs'	
Date: 14 September 2010	Ref: ID3

Summary: Of the 1.7 million children in England identified as having special educational needs, between 700,000 and 750,000 would not need extra help if they had better teachers, according to a report by Ofsted.

Problem: The statement in the Ofsted report which the Independent relied on concerned up to (not 'at least') half of the 915,180 children identified for School Action, the lowest of three tiers of need. The Independent also mistakenly included the number of children identified for School Action Plus which, if halved, suggests a figure of 735,450.

The only number to be halved should have been the 915,180 children identified for School Action, which brings the figure to up to 457,925 children potentially not needing extra help rather than the figure used by the Independent.

Link:

http://fullfact.org/factchecks/how_many_special_needs_children_are_misdiagnosed-1557

The Times

Headline: Labour big beasts maul Ed Miliband	
Date: 12 June 2011	Ref: TM1
<p>Summary: An article quoted John Prescott as saying that Ed Miliband ‘picked up what Gordon [Brown] did, which was write off the first 10 years of the Labour government, which were the good years. It is only early days, but it has not been a great start.’</p> <p>Problem: John Prescott disputed the quote. The Times accepted that Mr. Prescott had been misquoted ‘due to a production error’, attributing the first sentence of the quote to ‘another former Labour cabinet minister’ and leaving the second sentence attributed to Mr. Prescott.</p>	
Link: http://fullfact.org/blog/PCC_investigate_sunday_times_john_prescott_quote-2766	

Headline: University reforms are sinking by degrees	
Date: 21 April 2011	Ref: TM2
<p>Summary: Two fifths of all students admitted into British universities had achieved less than two Es at A level, or their equivalent, according to a comment article by Camilla Cavendish.</p> <p>Problem: This had previously been claimed by Conservative backbencher Margot James in the Times. Full Fact had previously investigated this claim.</p> <p>Two fifths of students had indeed entered university with less than 80 UCAS points, which is equivalent to two Es at A level. However, for most of these cases, no data was actually held on the student’s academic achievement. This means that mature students, foreign-educated students whose qualifications had no UCAS tariff equivalent or simply students for whom information could not be found were presumed to be educational low-achievers. The cited statistic was inaccurate.</p> <p>According to UCAS, approximately 5 per cent of students achieved between 1 and 80 UCAS points.</p>	
<p>Link: http://fullfact.org/blog/times_university_admissions_entry_ucas_education-2754 http://fullfact.org/factchecks/third_students_35_percent_university_places_two_Es_alevel-2651 http://fullfact.org/node/2878</p>	

Headline: Deficit Disorder	
Date: 5 January 2011	Ref: TM3
<p>Summary: A leader article claimed that the 4 January rise in VAT will ‘cost the average family £600 a year’.</p> <p>Problem: It appears that the article was influenced by a Times article published the day before, the headline of which claimed that ‘Families [will] pay £600 more after rise in VAT’. It was acknowledged that the figure only applies to the ‘average well-to-do family’ later on in the article, defined as Britain’s wealthiest 10 per cent (around 2.6 million households). The precise cost would also only be £561 rather than £600.</p> <p>While the leader article being influenced by the article published on 3 January is speculation, the claim that the rise will cost £600 to the ‘average family’ remains misleading in both articles.</p>	
Link: http://fullfact.org/blog/times_cost_of_VAT_average_family_600-2431	

Headline: The Force of Election	
Date: 2 December 2010	Ref: TM4
<p>Summary: A Times leader claimed that recorded crime was 57 times higher at the end of the 20th century than it was at the start; allowing for population growth, it was 29 times higher.</p> <p>Problem: Methodological changes in the recording of crime account for the startling statistic used by the Times. In 1998, such changes resulted in the total increasing by half a million. The methodological changes were such as to make a direct comparison meaningless even over much shorter time scales, as pointed out by the Home Office themselves.</p>	
Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/crime_of_the_century-2398	

The Evening Standard

Headline: A City of Children Who Can't Read	
Date: 31 May 2011	Ref: ES1
<p>Summary: As part of the campaign the paper launched to get London reading it repeatedly used in the edition of this day, and many, many more in the weeks that following, a claim that 1 in 4 children leaving primary school in London cannot read to the required standard.</p> <p>The claim was used in other instances as the figure for children who were unable to read and write to the sufficient level.</p> <p>This is based on Department for Education figures which show how many primary school children reach Level Four at Key Stage 2.</p> <p>Problem: In the case of reading, the figures clearly show that only about 1 in 6 children fail to reach the required standards. For reading and writing combined it is about 1 in 5 – still lower than the figure used by the Standard.</p> <p>Despite repeated requests the Standard have been unable to provide us with an official source that shows the figure to be 1 in 4.</p> <p>All that has been provided is an unsourced report from a thinktank which used the figure in passing – hardly a strong enough source when compared to official National Statistics, and certainly not strong enough to cite day after day as part of an award winning campaign.</p> <p>By using this figure so heavily, seemingly incorrect information has been impressed on the minds of many Londoners about school standards in the capital.</p> <p>Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/illiteracy_statistics_london_evening_standard-2746</p>	

Headline: No win, no fee system faces reform: Ken Clarke says Ambulance-chasers drain NHS	
Date: 29 March 2011	Ref: ES2
<p>Summary: Reporting plans to reform legal aid amid claims from the Government government that the legal costs incurred by the NHS in compensation cases were actually larger than the payouts to claimants.</p> <p>The paper reported remarks of Justice Secretary Ken Clarke which stated that in</p>	

2008/9, the NHS paid out £312 million in damages and £456 million in lawyers' fees.

Problem: The figures were wrong, and had come about through quite a basic error. Checking the original source of the claim showed £456 million is the cost for damages (£312m) plus defence legal costs (£40m) plus claimant legal costs (£104m). Ministers have since corrected the claim.

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/nhs_compensation_no_win_no_fee-2610

Headline: Buying plan to cut Whitehall spend

Date: 3 June 2011

Ref: ES3

Summary: The gGovernment has the target of saving £10 billion from procurement, and tackling inefficient purchasing. According to the Standard: 'The move aims to halt poor-value contracts where gGovernment departments and agencies paid between £350 and £2,000 for the same laptop and between £85 and £240 for the same printer cartridge from the same supplier.'

Problem: The Standard seems not to have sufficiently interrogated this figure. Although we had to submit a freedom of information request to find out, we eventually learnt that the two laptops in question were very different.

The newspaper seems to have been far too credulous in accepting figures from the gGovernment.

Link:

http://fullfact.org/factchecks/public_sector_procurement_laptop_cost_cabinet_office-2854

The Financial Times

Headline: Migration Mess	
Date: 27 June 2010	Ref: FT1
<p>Summary: In an article questioning the impact the government's proposed cap on migrant workers would have on limiting overall immigration a leader in the paper claimed; 'Mrs May's cap is fiddling at the edges. Non-EU workers account for just 5 per cent of total migration'.</p> <p>Problem: Non-EU workers at the time accounted for about 12 per cent of inward migration. The five per cent figure is the number of people who would have been affected by the proposed cap.</p>	
<p>Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/immigration_cap_the_home_secretary_vs_the_ft-1502</p>	

Headline: Cameron's costly migration policy	
Date: 6 February 2011	Ref: FT2
<p>Summary: The newspaper criticised government plans to limit the number of students coming from outside the EU to enrol on sub-degree courses, claiming that half of students on such courses go on to degree level courses.</p> <p>Problem: The figure cited was from UniversitiesUK, and had been cited the wrong way round. They actually found that between 30 and 50 per cent of students from outside the EU enrolled at UK institutions to study a degree had taken preparatory courses before they started their course.</p>	
<p>Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/foreign_students_non_degree_courses_ft-2484</p>	

Headline: Police face 34,000 job cuts over four years	
Date: July 21 2011	Ref: FT3
<p>Summary: The report covered the findings of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary which dealt with the relationship between police numbers and crime rates.</p> <p>Problem: The paper suggested the HMIC report claimed that a 10 per cent reduction in police officer numbers would mean a 3 per cent rise in crime. The report was only referring to property crime.</p>	

Link: http://fullfact.org/factchecks/police_numbers_rise_crime_hmic-2840

Section 2: Complaints Mechanisms and Regulation

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Story: Special needs children have been misdiagnosed	
Date: 14 September 2010	Newspapers: Daily Mail, Independent, the Guardian and Daily Telegraph
<p>About: Articles overstated the estimated for the number of children potentially misdiagnosed as having Special Educational Needs by some 300,000 pupils.</p> <p>We originally complained directly to all four newspapers on 15 September 2010 regarding our concerns.</p> <p>When we wrote to the Guardian’s education editor, Jeevan Vasagar, he responded the same day, and forwarded on to the papers Readers’ Editor. The correction was made on the same day, and a note recording the amendments is included in the online version of the article.</p> <p>The other three newspapers explained that the figures they had used were derived from information given by Ofsted.</p> <p>Despite us informing them that Ofsted did not accept their figures, they refused to take action unless Ofsted contacted them directly. Unfortunately the Schools Regulator was unwilling to do this.</p> <p>After a question was tabled in Parliament on this very issue, an answer was given from the Chief Inspector of Ofsted confirming that the figure used in all three reports was incorrect. We made the papers aware of this question but again our request for a correction were turned down.</p> <p>-10 November 2010 we submitted complaints to the Press Complaints Commission about the coverage in the Daily Mail, Independent and Daily Telegraph.</p> <p>- 15 December 2010 were informed that the both the Independent and Daily Telegraph had agreed to amend the online version of their articles, but that the Daily Mail had refused.</p> <p>The Mail’s response argued that the errors in the report had stemmed from confusing briefing on the issue from Ofsted so did not necessitate a correction. Of course this is a bad argument: the Code rightly obliges newspapers to correction significant errors however caused.</p> <p>- 19 January The Daily Telegraph published a printed correction.</p> <p>- 20 January the Independent printed a correction.</p> <p>-15 February notified by the PCC that the Daily Mail intended to publish a correction alongside a report the next time the paper covered the issue.</p>	

We agreed to this so long as the correction was clearly marked as such.

- 10 March, the Daily Mail unilaterally decided to run the correction as part of another report on the issue rather than as a stand alone correction as agreed.

- 25 March, the correction was published in the paper, over 6 months after the original article. The correction was not labelled specifically as a correction, coming under the heading 'Special needs children' and appearing like a news article.

Ref: DM6, DT5, GU2, ID3

Story: Fall in adoption level

Date: 8 November 2010

Newspaper: Daily Mail

About: Paper reported figures suggesting a 30 per cent (from 3,800 to 2,300) fall in children in care being adopted since the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) regulations in 2007. The fall was only 3 per cent since 2007, and 16 per cent since 2004.

- 8 November we contacted the journalist, Steve Doughty, setting out the various problems with the report on adoptions.

Having received no response we tried to contact Mr Doughty by phone. He was unwilling to engage with any of the points made in our email inviting us only to contact the editor about this.

- 12 November we contacted the Managing Editor.

-18 November we received a response accepting one of the errors we pointed out. The figure of 2,300 for 2009 was changed to 3,200). However this small change did not even take account of the fact that as a result the percentage fall would be 16 per cent rather than 30 per cent as reported.

- 19 November, we responded explaining that inaccuracies were still contained in the piece.

-On 21 December, we received a response accepting the need for some of the further corrections we had identified. The article was never corrected in print.

Ref: DM31

Story: Workshy estate where just one person has a job

Date: 10 January 2011

Newspaper: Daily Express

About: Article incorrectly claimed test for people had found 2 million people on incapacity benefit fit for work.

- 27 January, after difficulties establishing a point of contact at the Express, we were able to make contact with the News Editor of Express.

Despite our concerns that the lack of PCC regulation would make it extremely difficult for us to obtain a correction the newspaper did agree to remove the section of the online article that we complained about.

However the co-operation ended there. The Express ignored our request for a printed correction.

- 3 February, a matter of days after our original complaint was acted upon, the newspaper made an almost identical error in another article, raising doubts about how thorough the corrections process really was.

Ref: EXP10

Story: 400,000 'were trying it on' to get sickness benefits: 94 per cent of incapacity benefits can work

Date: 26 January 2011

Newspaper: Daily Mail

About: Portrayed a significant number of people who were actually deemed unfit for work and eligible for benefit payments as fit for work.

Contacted journalist who stood by the article, but not the headline. She claimed that the headline had not been written by her.

Our request for the headline to be corrected went unheeded, which again illustrates why there need to be explicit standards and lines of responsibility for headline accuracy and non-distortion.

Ref: DM5

Story: The great disability benefit free-for-all: Half of claimants are not asked to prove eligibility

Date: 3 February 2011

Newspaper: Daily Mail

Full Fact did not complain about this particular story because a complaint had already been made.

Following that complaint to the PCC, a letter written by Neil Coyle of the Disability

Alliance and representatives of other charitable bodies was published at the end of the online edition of the article. However, the main body of the article was left unchanged, and the Daily Mail neither directly corrected nor apologised for the article's inaccuracies.

Had we complained we would have insisted on the original article being amended, so readers can be clear that the newspaper is admitting an error, rather than just publishing the opinion of someone who is claiming they are wrong.

When offered space to include a letter from Full Fact to the newspaper in question as a remedy we have always rejected it. Typically it takes several more letters (and weeks) after that for the newspaper to offer an appropriately worded, duly prominent correction.

Ref: DM8

Story: Proportion of foreign students at University who took sub-degree courses in UK

Date: 7 February 2011

Newspaper: Financial Times

About: Article incorrectly claimed that 50 per cent of people doing sub-degree courses at private Further Education colleges went on to do degrees in this country.

- 7 February, contacted corrections@ft.com to raise the problem with the figures used in the editorial regarding student visas.

- 8 February, received a response from the leader writer in question acknowledging the error and agreeing to correct the error both in print and online, as per the FT correction policy.

- 9 February, an online correction was published correcting the figure.

Ref: FT2

Story: Up to two million people who have been living on sickness benefits for years may be perfectly fit to work, official test results show

Date: 11 February 2011

Newspaper: The Sun, Daily Mail, Daily Telegraph and Daily Express

About: Articles described people placed in the 'Work Related Activity Group', (thus eligible to receive the Employment and Support Allowance benefit and not fit for work), as fit to work, in spite of the government's own press release dividing people into the Support Group, the WRAG and – the third and separate group – fit for work.

This significantly inflated the proportion of benefit claimants deemed able to work.

Because of the inaccuracies in the story we contacted the newspapers directly. Little was achieved however by this method.

For example the Sun stated: ‘The article makes clear some can start work immediately, while others can with appropriate help and support. I therefore do not think the article needs to be “amended”’.

- 17 February Full Fact submitted complaints about the coverage of this issue in The Sun, Daily Mail and Daily Telegraph newspapers.

We argued that the portrayal of people on Incapacity Benefit deemed currently unable to work as ‘fit to work’ breached the code.

- 16 March, initial response from all three papers was that their articles were not misleading as all had eventually made the point that those in the WRAG might need more time to return to work.

Our response pointed out that despite making this distinction later in the article, headline and opening lines grouped together those deemed immediately fit for work and those deemed as having the potential to work in the future.

- 14 April we were notified by the PCC that the newspapers had agreed to publish the corrections.

- 12 May, the Daily Mail published a correction.

- 17 May, the Daily Telegraph published correction.

- 30 May, the Sun published a correction. This was however the second time the corrections had been published. It had also been published almost two weeks prior to this, but had not been published on the same page as the original story. The PCC noticed this and ensured a second correction was published on the corrections page.

Ref: DM9, EXP16, SU2, DT4

Story: Life expectancy in Merthyr Tydfil is lower than Haiti

Date: 12 February 2011

Newspaper: The Daily Mail, The Sun and Daily Telegraph

About: Articles based on content from a particular wire service confused ‘healthy’ life expectancy with overall life expectancy (they are more than a decade different) to make a misleading comparison between life on an estate in Merthyr Tydfil and Haiti.

- 12 February, We submitted complaints about all these stories.
- 1 March, notified that the PCC would be taking our complaint forward.
- 3 March, the Daily Telegraph responded informing us that the online version of the article had been taken down and that a correction would be published.

However, the suggested wording of the correction did not sufficiently explain what had gone wrong with the original article:
'Our article (12 February) stated that life expectancy on the Gurnos estate in Merthyr Tydfil was 58.8 years. In fact, that is the average age of healthy life expectancy'.

Clearly this fails to explain the flawed nature of the original article's comparison between the Gurnos estate and Haiti or Iraq. It also glosses over the inaccurate claim that life expectancy in Gurnos was 20 years below the national average. This was a story with no redeeming factual content at all.

- 15 March we received responses from the Daily Mail, The Sun, and Daily Mirror. The Mail and Mirror offered corrections which were largely similar to that offered by the Daily Telegraph, meaning we responded in a similar way.

The Sun informed us that they had removed the article, and since they had made reference to the correct figure in a subsequent article would not be publishing a correction.

- 18 March, notified that the Daily Mail and Daily Mirror would publishing corrections based on our suggested wording. The Daily Mirror correction was published.

-21 March, the Daily Mirror published correction.

- 30 March, informed that the Daily Telegraph would be following suit.

The Sun was still unwilling to publish a correction, offering instead the opportunity to have a short letter published explaining the error.

Given that this would mean the newspaper would not be acknowledging the error itself, and not indicating this to its readers we refused.

- 11 April, notified that the Sun had agreed to publish the correction along the lines we agreed by the other papers, almost exactly two months after the original article.

Ref: DM11, SU12, DT1

Story: Cameron's immigration speech designed to emphasise coalition differences

Date: 14 April 2011

Newspaper: The Guardian

About: Incorrect claim that the recent trend of increased immigration levels had begun in 1991.

- 3 June, having received no response from the journalist, we contacted the paper's Readers' Editor. We did not receive a response for more than three weeks, although when we did it was explained that the Readers' Editor had been away.

- 4 July we received a substantive response suggesting a correction to the article making the point that one of the figures had been wrong and that 1991 had not been a turning point in immigration trends.

We felt the correction could have gone into more detail and made this clear to the paper.

- 18 July, the fuller version of the correction was published in the Guardian, and is also still included on the online version of the original article.

Ref: GU6

Story: Two fifths of all students admitted into British universities had achieved less than two Es at A level

Date: 21 April 2011

Newspaper: The Times

-21 April, we attempted to contact the Times shortly after the original article was published. Unable to find a relevant contact for corrections we tried sending the message to comments@thetimes.co.uk.

- 6 May, having had no response, we tried the Feedback Editor on the suggestion of a Complaints Officer at the Press Complaints Commission.

- 10 May we received an extremely dismissive response which rejected the points we had made as opinion rather than fact.

In a response to our reply, the paper again stood by the suggestion that any foreign student applying to a UK university with qualifications not recognised by UCAS in effect had grades worth less than 2 Es. The paper claimed this simply presents it in a way that British newspaper readers can understand.

To our point that failure to correct would leave us no other option but to go to the Press Complaints Commission the Feedback Editor actively encouraged us to complain, directing us to the PCC website.

- 26 May, the newspaper responded by rejecting our request for a correction, based on arguments almost identical to the ones used when we had contacted the paper director. We set out our arguments again.

- 7 June we were notified that the Times were willing to publish a correction.

This is a good example of a Readers' Editor either not understanding or not applying the Code.

Ref: TM2

Story: UK doles out more aid than any other country

Date: 27 May 2011

Newspaper: Daily Mail

About: Incorrectly claimed in a front page splash that the UK was the largest donor of international aid as a proportion of GDP

- 7 June, submitted a complaint about this report to the PCC.

- 16 June, received an initial response from the paper. It was argued that as it was mentioned elsewhere in the article that the figures came from a G8 report that readers would understand that 'any other country' in fact meant 'any country in the G8'. The newspaper amended the online version of the article anyway.

Since the article had at no point acknowledged that there were countries which have a larger slice of national income as aid, we did not deem this action sufficient, and requested a correction also be printed in the newspaper. Therefore we did not accept that the matter was resolved.

- 11 July newspaper responded with an offer of a printed correction, but simply alongside the paper's next coverage of the issue.

We did not accept this constituted due prominence for an error that was the main front page headline of the paper.

- 22 July, the paper upgraded the offer to a correction within the first twelve pages of the newspaper.

We still did not accept this constituted due prominence.

- 9 August the paper responded with the offer that the correction could be published within the first 6 pages of the paper. At this stage we were advised by the Complaints Officer that despite the prominence of the original article, publication of a correction along these lines 'may well meet the Code's criteria for "due prominence".'

Despite this, we were keen to pursue the principle that a sufficient prominent and seriously front page error should command a front page correction, and asked that the Commission adjudicate what constituted due prominence.

- 22 August the paper put forward what it unilaterally referred to as a ‘final offer’ of a page two correction.

We again asked the Commission to judge whether the correction needed to be published on page two.

- The Commission was due to meet to decide on this complaint on 19 October 2011.

- 14 October, a Friday shortly before 6pm, the PCC contacted Full Fact to let us know that they had just been informed of the Mail’s intention to publish the correction in its recently initiated ‘Corrections and Clarifications’ column on Monday 17 October.

It was unclear why the paper chose to seek to undercut the adjudication process by printing the correction in a way we had already deemed unacceptable but it is a pattern we have seen several times now. We think the move, and the way they notified us, is evidence of bad faith on the part of the newspaper. It leaves us with little confidence that when the spotlight is off they will not return to their old tricks. We asked the PCC to censure the paper for this behaviour but no action was taken.

- 19 October, the Commission reached its decision, and allowed the correction to be published on page 2 of the newspaper. Despite finding that the article was ‘sloppy journalism’ they imposed no sanction for the paper’s failure to ‘take care’ under clause 1 of the Code.

Ref: DM17

Story: A City of Children Who Can’t Read

Date: 31 May 2011

Newspaper: Evening Standard

About: The paper’s campaign on illiteracy in the capital frequently cited a statistic that 1 in 4 children leave primary school unable to read (sometimes cited as read or write) to the required level.

This would require 75 per cent of pupils in London to fail to get to level four or above in Key Stage 2 assessments. The most recent figures show that 85 per cent of pupils passed reading tests at Level 4 and 82 per cent passed reading and writing combined.

- 1 June, emailed author of the initial report asking for the source of the claim that 1 in 4 London pupils leave primary school unable to read (or read and write as it was elsewhere). Response received the same day explaining it was sourced from a thinktank report from the previous year.

- 9 June, having obtained confirmation from the Department for Education statistics team that the figures we were quoting (85 per cent obtaining Level 4 or above in

reading 82 per cent for reading and writing combined) were the correct ones, we requested a correction from the Evening Standard. This was passed on to the Managing Editor at the paper.

- 17 June, response received from the newspaper's Managing Editor, rejecting the request for a correction. In addition to the previously cited think tank report it was pointed out it had been cited by London Mayor Boris Johnson. However Mr Johnson wrote the foreword for the report in question, so in our view hardly counted as corroborative.

It was also argued that 'reports from secondary schools' suggested the figure could be even higher than one in four in some places.

Again we did not agree that any of this served sufficient basis to contradict figures designated as National Statistics and therefore quality assured in line with the provisions of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

- 22 June, responded to the Managing Editor asking for sources behind the one in four figure other than the think tank report and Boris Johnson. No response was received.

- 19 July, submitted complaint to the Press Complaints Commission.

- 26 July, response from the PCC requesting copies of prior correspondence with the Evening Standard before complaint could be handled. These were duly forwarded.

- 2 August, response from PCC explaining that as the Evening Standard's Managing Editor was taking annual leave until 15 August we would not receive a response before then.

- 8 September, provided with the Evening Standard's response to our complaint. We were informed that the paper did not view the figure as inaccurate. In addition to previous correspondence the paper now argued that 'all the experts' accepted that 1 in 4 was the correct figure, without naming any more experts.

It was stated that even the Department for Education did not accept its own figures were accurate, and that a Department spokesman (presumably a press officer) had said that the figures were not representative due to boycotts of Sats in 2010.

The response also stated that Full Fact's complaint had been the only one they had received on the issue.

- 20 September, Full Fact responded to these points at some length. We stated that although boycotts of the Sats could have affected the figures, the commentary on the figures by the Head of Statistics at the Department for Education had said that where the figures were deemed to be unrepresentative because of the boycotts they had

not been published. As the figures for London had been published, we did not feel there was any reason not to accept the figure as representative.

We also highlighted that figures for previous years, when boycotts were not an issue, still did not back up the Evening Standard's numbers.

- 5 October, response to our email from the Evening Standard. It said: 'We are confident that our figures have been supported by research and indeed have been accepted by educationalists and others in public life'.

At this stage the only educationalist so far cited was the author of the think tank report.

Full Fact was offered the opportunity of a published letter in the Evening Standard explaining our points.

- 17 October, Full Fact responded to this refusing the offer of a printed letter on the grounds that it was not sufficient given the time that had elapsed, the prominence and repetition of the original figure and the lack of prominence of the letter.

We stated that this last response from the Evening Standard had failed to deal with the substance of our complaint and requested a more thorough response.

- 2 November, response from the newspaper again maintaining the figure was accurate. It was agreed by all sides that the matter should be settled by the Commission itself. As of the time of writing the matter has not been discussed by the Commission.

Ref: ES1

Story: Green Stealth Taxes

Date: 9 June 2011

Newspaper: Daily Mail

About: Article claimed that green taxes were adding £200 (15-20%) on to energy bills, far higher than the official estimate, or any other work on it.

This complaint was submitted by Mr Christian Hunt, Editor of the Carbon Brief, but all correspondence was provided to Full Fact by Mr Hunt, as the complaint sprang from one of our factchecks.

-16 June, Daily Mail contacted to make them aware of the error. No response received. Complaint sent to the Press Complaints Commission

- 28 June, Initial response from the Press Complaints Commission

- 20 July, Initial response from the Daily Mail, noting that there are a range of estimates for the impact of 'stealth green taxes' on energy bills. The paper said that the points raised in the complaint had been marked for cuttings.

- 25 July, Response provided to PCC explaining that the response did not prove that the original figure was correct. Neither the report from the thinktank Civitas, cited in the Mail's response, nor any analysis from the Department for Energy and Climate Change supported it.

- 8 August, Second response from the newspaper offering to publish a correction and suggesting a wording of that correction, within the first 10 pages.

- 9 August, Response from Carbon Brief suggesting amendments to the wording of the correction:

'Articles on June 9 and subsequently including a Daily Mail editorial reported comments from Benny Peiser, Director of the Global Warming Policy Foundation, which suggested that 'green stealth taxes' add 15 to 20 per cent to energy bills. According to Ofgem, the correct figure for environmental costs in domestic bills is around 8%. We are happy to clarify this.'

- 25 August, Third response to the newspaper accepting some but not all of the wording of the changes, and improving the prominence of the correction to within the first 4 pages.

Articles on June 9 reported comments from Benny Peiser, Director of the Global Warming Policy Foundation, which suggested that 'green stealth taxes' add 15 to 20 per cent energy bills. According to Ofgem, the correct figure for environmental costs in domestic bills is no more than 9%. We are happy to clarify this.

- 5 September, Suggestions agreed to. Publication set for 7 September.

- 6 September, Mail suggests another change to minor change to the wording of the correction, on the night before the correction was due to run. This is a problem with which we are familiar.

'Articles on June 9 reported comments from Benny Peiser, Director of the Global Warming Policy Foundation, which suggested that 'green stealth taxes' add 15 to 20 per cent to energy bills. According to Ofgem, the correct figure for environmental costs in domestic bills is currently no more than 9%. We are happy to clarify this.'

We understand this latest response then prompted a series of phone calls to resolve a dispute. In response to the addition of 'currently' Mr Hunt proposed that the word currently should also be included before 'green stealth taxes'.

- This was not agreed to and the Daily Mail ran the correction in the above form on 7 September.

Ref: DM30

Story: Labour big beasts maul Ed Miliband	
Date: 13 June 2011	Newspaper: Sunday Times
<p>About: A Sunday Times front page incorrectly attributed a quote criticising the Labour leader to John Prescott.</p> <p>Full Fact wrote to the PCC asking it to investigate what kind of production error could have led to such a quote being wrongly attributed, and whether – now the quote has become anonymous – it was ever actually real in the first place.</p> <p>We argued that: ‘The change from naming Mr Prescott to naming nobody in our view raises enough doubt over its credibility that we now believe the burden is on the paper to justify to the PCC that the use of the quote itself is not a significant inaccuracy.’</p> <p>We saw this as a test of whether the PCC is prepared to enforce the duty to ‘take care’ not to publish inaccurate information from clause 1 in itself, or whether in fact the PCC sees its remit as ending when a correction has been obtained (the other facet of clause 1). We also hope to clarify where the burden of proof lies in such cases.</p> <p>The PCC believed it had to wait until the direct dispute was settled between Mr Prescott and the Sunday Times (despite our request only relating to the now-anonymous quote). That took four months.</p> <p>We have now (two months later) asked them to revive our request, and apparently the Commission will need to decide whether to waive the third-party rule in this case before a substantive investigation can take place. Because the correct quote was anonymous, we do not believe the third-party rule applies so we hope the Commission will decide to pursue the matter.</p>	
Ref: TM1	

Story: Teachers will be allowed to use force on unruly pupils as ministers lift no touching ban after classroom violence doubled in a year	
Date: 11 July 2011	Newspaper: Daily Mail
<p>About: Front page article claimed school violence had doubled, when figures showed it had fallen year on year.</p> <p>Though we made our complaint to the PCC shortly after the article was published on 11 July, the newspaper did not respond until 29 July.</p>	

The paper acknowledged the error, but maintained that the problem with the numbers had not been pointed out when put to the Special Advisor to the Education Secretary.

The newspaper at this stage offered to print a correction on page four. This was where the continuation of the article had been.

The erroneous claim had been published shortly after the headline, on the front page. In our view given the prominence of the claim, a front page correction was in order if the correction was to be given due prominence.

We made this point to the Commission and on 18 August we received a response from the Daily Mail, offering to print the correction on Page 2.

We did not view this as much of an improvement, so requested that the matter be adjudicated by the Commission, which was due to meet for this purpose on 19 October 2011.

On 14 October, a Friday shortly before 6pm, the PCC contacted Full Fact to let us know that they had just been informed of the Mail's intention to publish the correction in its recently initiated 'Corrections and Clarifications' column on Monday 17 October.

It was unclear why the paper chose to seek to undercut the adjudication process by printing the correction in a way we had already deemed unacceptable but it is a pattern we have seen several times now. We think the move, and the way they notified us, is evidence of bad faith on the part of the newspaper. It leaves us with little confidence that when the spotlight is off they will not return to their old tricks. We asked the PCC to censure the paper for this behaviour but no action was taken.

The Commission reached its decision on 19 Nov, and allowed the correction to be published on page 2 of the newspaper. Despite finding that the article was 'sloppy journalism' they imposed no sanction for the paper's failure to 'take care' under clause 1 of the Code.

Ref: DM3

Story: Foreigners get three in four new jobs

Date: 14 July 2011

Newspaper: Daily Mail

About: Front page article ignored Office for National Statistics guidelines on how to use the figures, resulting in a misleading headline.

Our complaint through the PCC is still being resolved, even though the original publication date for the article is July.

There are several reasons for this delay. First, the reluctance of the newspaper to accept that a correction was necessary. Second, the difficulty of agreeing an appropriately worded correction that actually informed readers what was wrong with the original headline.

Given that we had proved the Mail's headline was incorrect, we simply asked that the newspaper agree not to present the statistics this way in future. This was refused.

The unwillingness of the paper to agree on this compromise meant going back to square one of showing why the headline was misleading. The headline is however close to resolution, three months after the original complaint.

It should be noted that some of the delay in this process is down to Full Fact consulting with statisticians about the limitations of the data, so the length of time should not be solely attributed to the Commission or the Daily Mail.

Ref: DM14

Story: Police Numbers and Crime	
Date: 21 July 2011	Newspaper: Financial Times
<p>About: Newspaper claimed research showed 10 per cent cut in police numbers would lead to 3 per cent rise in crime. In fact this only applied to property crime.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 22 July, contacted the Financial Times. - 27 July, informed that the article had been corrected. <p>However after consultation with the Readers' Editor the journalist in question refused our request to publish a printed correction to accompany the online amendment.</p> <p>We were not given a reason behind this decision, but given the relatively minor nature of the error, chose not to pursue a printed correction with the Press Complaints Commission.</p>	
Ref: FT3	

Story: Call for action as cycling road deaths rise again	
Date: 8 August 2011	Newspaper: Independent
<p>About: The newspaper cited Department for Transport figures showing 3,370 cyclists</p>	

were killed or injured in the first quarter of 2011. The correct number was 3,730.

This is an obvious typo (the press release from which the article was derived was correct), and a good example of how something can be significantly wrong with no fault involved. Correcting such mistakes builds trust at no cost. Nevertheless, the newspaper was depressingly resistant to correcting it in line with the Code.

- 9 August, emailed the article author's @independent.co.uk. He turned out not to have an email address there.

- 9 August, re-sent correction request to the News Editor. No response.

- 25 August, emailed a contact provided by the PCC, who arranged for the article to be amended online the same day. However, the correction, which amounts to almost 400 deaths more or less, has not appeared either on the online corrections column or in print as far as we know.

The PCC would have arranged a printed correction had we made a complaint but in this case we chose not to.

Ref: ID2

Story: Shameless generation grows as seven million now live in households where no one works

Date: 9 September 2011

Newspaper: Daily Mail

About: Article claimed number of workless households had risen by 22 per cent since 1997. The rise was actually 5.6 per cent.

Full Fact complained directly to the journalist, Jason Groves. As the error was clear cut, Mr Groves accepted our point and arranged for the online version of the article to be amended.

Rather than having gone up by more than 20 per cent, the article now stated that the number of workless households had 'soared by 5.6 per cent.'

The 22 per cent figure was repeated in another article the following day, but the online version of this has also been amended.

Even though the original appeared in print, to our knowledge, a printed correction was not published.

The journalist also explained that another inaccuracy in the piece was the work of sub editors. The article claimed a fifth of Britons lived in workless households but in fact, while a fifth of households were workless, this only represented 13 per cent of

the population.

This error is still included in the online version of the original report.

Ref: DM7

Story: BBC to abandon the use of BC and AD when referring to dates

Date: 25 September 2011

Newspaper: Mail on Sunday

A complaint was submitted by Full Fact on 27 September, two days after publication of the article. The following day we received notification from the PCC that ‘before we consider the concerns you have raised, we will seek to ascertain whether the BBC wishes to make a complaint about the story, in line with our general procedures.’

On 24 October the Commission informed us that the BBC did not wish to make a complaint, and the Commission would then make a decision on whether they would allow the complaint to be taken forward as a third party complaint.

As of 8 November we had not been made aware of the Commission’s decision. We consider this to be a point of general accuracy which the Commission should take up without further delay.

Ref: MOS2

Story: 40% knife crime committed by under 18s

Date: 19 October 2011

Newspaper: The Sun

About: Article wrongly claimed that 40% of knife crime is committed by under 18s, when this is twice the correct figure.

- 24 October, complained via email to The Sun’s newsdesk.
- 3 November, having received no response, we submitted a complaint to the Press Complaints Commission.
- 9 November, the paper agreed to print a correction.
- 11 November, the correction was published.

Ref: SU1

Story: £22 billion lost to benefit fraud

Date: 3 November 2011	Newspaper: Daily Mirror
<p>About: Article claimed that research showed benefit fraud cost the economy £22 billion each year, when the figure given in the research was actually £4 billion</p> <p>A complaint was submitted directly to the newspaper on 4 November. We received a response the same day accepting the points raised in the complaint.</p> <p>We were told that a correction would be published on 7 November. The correction was published on 11 November.</p>	
Ref: MR7	