

## PRODUCERS' GUIDELINES THE BBC'S VALUES AND STANDARDS

Our audiences rightly expect the highest editorial and ethical standards from the BBC. These Guidelines are a public statement of those values and standards and how we expect our programme-makers to achieve them. They detail the BBC's approach to the most difficult editorial issues and provide guidance which programme makers at all levels need to be aware of and to follow.

This fourth edition of the Guidelines contains, for the first time, a succinct summary of the BBC's fundamental editorial values such as impartiality, accuracy, fairness, editorial independence and our commitment to appropriate standards of taste and decency. As the new world of digital media grows and fragments, the significance the BBC attaches to these values will become even more important as we continue to set the standard for broadcasting in all media.

This edition of the Guidelines has been substantially revised to reflect the challenges of the digital age as well as the BBC's increasing role in international television and the growing importance of online. It also contains new advice on ensuring the highest standards in research, on reflecting the diversity of the United Kingdom and on natural history programmes.

The worldwide reputation of the BBC has been established through the dedication to public service broadcasting of generations of programme makers. The Producers' Guidelines codify the good practice which they have helped to establish, and which we expect today's producers and editors, whether working in radio, television or online, to continue.

These Guidelines are a working document for programme teams to enable them to think their way through some of the more difficult dilemmas they may face. Risk-taking is and must remain an essential part of the creative process at the BBC. What the Guidelines can do is to help us to make sensible calculations about those risks by leaning on the experience of others who have been in similar situations.

Our staff, those freelancers working with us, and the independent producers we commission - all need to be familiar with these Guidelines and to apply their underlying principles. This is more than just a moral responsibility; it is also a contractual obligation for everyone who makes programmes for the BBC. Where there is any doubt about the right approach, programme makers must consult their editorial manager. The BBC's Controller of Editorial Policy must be consulted if any departure from the Guidelines, or their underlying principles, is contemplated.

We publish the Producers' Guidelines, firstly so that audiences can read for themselves the editorial standards that we aspire to, and secondly so that they can judge our performance accordingly.

**Greg Dyke**  
Director General

## Contents Page

Director General's Introduction	
1. Consultation and Referral	
<b>Values, Standards and Principles</b>	
2. Impartiality and Accuracy	
3. Fairness and Straight Dealing	
4. Privacy	
5. Surreptitious Recording	
6. Taste and Decency	
7. Violence	
8. Imitative and Anti Social Behaviour	
9. Portrayal	
10. Conflicts of Interest	
11. Global Broadcasting and New Media	
<b>Issues In Programmes</b>	
12. Reporting Suffering and Distress	
13. Interviewing	
14. Children And Programmes	
15. Crime	
16. Relations with the Police	
17. Confidentiality and Release of Programme Material	
18. Terrorism and National Security	
19. Reporting the United Kingdom	
20. Recording The Natural World	
21. ReUse and Reversioning of BBC Television Programmes	
22. Game Shows and Competitions	
23. Coverage of the National Lottery	
<b>Programme Funding and External Relationships</b>	
24. Commercial Relationships and Appropriate Programme Funding	
25. Product Prominence and Use of Free or Reduced Cost Facilities	
26. Material Supplied by Outside Organisations	
27. On Air References to BBC Products, Services and Publications	
28. Covering Outside Events	
29. Advertising, Promotional Activities and the BBC Brand	
30. Social Action Programming, Campaigning Groups and Charities	
31. Support Services and Support Material	
32. Phone Ins and Telephone Services in Programmes	
<b>Politics</b>	
33. Politics and Politicians	
34. Broadcasting During Elections	
35. Opinion Polls	
36. Party Broadcasts	
<b>Matters of law</b>	
37. General	

- 38. Defamation
- 39. Contempt
- 40. Copyright and other Intellectual Property Rights

**Accountability**

- 41. Relations with the Public and the Press
- 42. The Programme Complaints Unit
- 43. The Broadcasting Standards Commission

Appendix 1: Section 5.1 of the Agreement

**THE BBC'S EDITORIAL VALUES:**

**"We aim to be the world's most creative and trusted broadcaster and programme maker, seeking to satisfy all our audiences with services that inform, educate and entertain and enrich their lives in the ways that the market alone will not. We aim to be guided by our public purposes; to encourage the UK's most innovative talents; to act independently of all interests, and to aspire to the highest ethical standards:"**

**Impartiality...**

Due impartiality lies at the heart of the BBC. All BBC programmes and services should be open minded, fair and show a respect for truth. No significant strand of thought should go unreflected or under represented on the BBC (see Chapter 2).

**Accuracy...**

We must be accurate and must be prepared to check, cross-check and seek advice to ensure this. Wherever possible we should gather information first-hand by being there ourselves or, where that is not possible, by talking to those who were. But accuracy is often more than a question of getting the facts right. All relevant information should be weighed to get at the truth of what is reported or described (see Chapter 2).

**Fairness....**

BBC programmes should be based on fairness, openness and straight dealing. Contributors should be treated honestly and with respect. They have a right to know what a programme is about, what kind of contribution they are expected to make, whether it will be live or recorded and whether it is to be edited (see Chapter 3).

**Giving a Full and Fair View of People and Cultures....**

... in the United Kingdom and across the world. BBC programmes and services should reflect and draw on this diversity to reflect life as it is. By doing so we introduce new talent, perspectives, faces and voices enriching our programmes for our audiences. When portraying social groups, stereotypes should be avoided (see Chapter 9)

**Editorial Integrity and Independence...**

Audiences must be able to trust the integrity of BBC programmes. They should be confident that decisions are made only for good editorial reasons, not as a result of improper pressure, be it political, commercial or special interest (see Chapter 24). The outside activities of programme-makers must not improperly influence BBC programmes (see Chapter 10).

**Respect for Privacy...**

The BBC should respect the privacy of individuals, recognising that any intrusions have to be justified by serving a greater good. Private behaviour, correspondence and conversation should not be brought into the public domain unless there is a wider public interest (see Chapter 4).

**Respect for Standards of Taste and Decency...**

Programme makers should be aware of and respect their audiences' often diverse views on what will

and will not cause offence. The right to challenge audience expectations in creative and surprising ways must be safeguarded but audiences should not be needlessly offended by what we broadcast and publish. It is vital to consider the expectations that audiences' have of particular programmes, service and time slots.

BBC television schedules must respect the 9 p.m. Watershed (see Chapter 6).

**Avoiding the Imitation of Anti Social and Criminal Behaviour....**

Audiences are concerned about the possibility of people imitating behaviour they see or hear on television and radio. We should try to ensure that any life threatening, anti-social, or criminal behaviour portrayed in BBC programmes does not encourage copycat actions (see Chapter 8).

**Safeguarding the Welfare of Children...**

Programme makers must take care to safeguard the welfare of children who take part in programmes. They should consider carefully the impact of the programme on any child involved - both in the way it is made, and any possible impact it may have when broadcast (see Chapter 14).

**Fairness to Interviewees...**

BBC interviews should be well mannered and courteous. They may be searching, sharp, sceptical, informed and to the point - but not partial, discourteous or emotionally attached to one side of an argument. They should not be aggressive, hectoring or rude, whatever the provocation. Interviewees should be given a fair chance to set out their full response to the questions (see Chapter 13).

**Respect for our Diverse Audiences in the U.K....**

BBC programmes and services should be relevant and appropriate for all our audiences in all parts of the United Kingdom (see Chapter 19).

**Independence from Commercial Interests...**

BBC programmes must never give the impression that they are endorsing or promoting any product, service or company. References to all products and services should be editorially justifiable and there should be no element of plugging (see Chapter 25).

**A**

Abuse, of children, Chapter 6, Chapter 14, Chapter 37  
 Access agreements, Chapter 16  
 Access to untransmitted material, Chapter 17  
 Accidents and disasters, reporting, see Chapter 12  
 Accountability  
     .....Broadcasting Standards Commission, see Chapter 43  
     .....Programme Complaint Unit, see Chapter 42  
     .....relations with the public, see Chapter 41  
 Accuracy, Chapter 2  
     .....accurate language, Chapter 2  
     .....achieving accuracy, Chapter 2  
     .....checking recorded or repeated programmes, Chapter 2  
     .....correcting mistakes, Chapter 2  
     .....reconstruction, Chapter 2  
     .....reporting statistics, Chapter 2  
     .....staging and restaging events, Chapter 2  
     .....use of computer graphics, Chapter 2  
     .....use of library material, Chapter 2  
 Acquired programmes and violence, Chapter 6, Chapter 7  
 Advertising, Chapter 24  
     .....advertising boards, Chapter 28  
     .....advertisements on clothing, Chapter 28  
     .....advertising and promoting events, Chapter 28  
     .....and information services, Chapter 28  
     .....at events covered by the BBC, Chapter 28  
     .....at sports events, Chapter 28  
     .....for contributors, Chapter 3  
     .....party political, at outside events, Chapter 28  
     .....product placement, Chapter 25  
 Advice for programme makers, Chapter 1, see also Consultation and Referral  
 Air crashes, reporting, Chapter 12  
 Animals, filming, see Chapter 20  
     .....captive sequences, ethical and editorial considerations, Chapter 20  
     .....ethical considerations, Chapter 20  
     .....filming named animals, Chapter 20  
     .....legal constraints, Chapter 20, Chapter 37  
     .....life cycle portrayal, Chapter 20  
     .....locations, Chapter 20  
     .....reconstruction and simulation, Chapter 20  
     .....violence against, Chapter 7, Chapter 20  
 Anonymity, Chapter 3  
     .....and children, Chapter 14  
     .....and criminals, Chapter 3  
     .....identification of crime victims and witnesses, Chapter 37  
     .....identification of children in court cases, Chapter 14, Chapter 37  
     .....jigsaw identification, Chapter 37  
     .....in pictures, making it effective, Chapter 3  
     .....victims of sexual offences, Chapter 37  
 Anti-social behaviour, imitation of, Chapter 8  
 Appeals, charity, Chapter 30  
 Appeals Advisory Committee, Chapter 30  
 Appeals charter, Chapter 30  
 Archive material, see Re-use and Reversioning of BBC Television Programmes, see also library material  
 Articles and letters by BBC personnel, Chapter 41

Artists, promotional activities undertaken by, Chapter 29  
 Artists rights, in re-used or reversioned material, Chapter 21  
 Audience feedback and confidentiality, Chapter 31  
 Audience Lines, Chapter 31, Chapter 32, Chapter 41  
 Audiences, regional differences, Chapter 19  
 Awards ceremonies and sponsorship, Chapter 28

**B**

Balance during election campaigns Chapter 34, see also Chapter 35  
 Balance and impartiality, see Chapter 2  
 BBC brand, protecting integrity of, see Chapter 29  
 BBC branded products, appropriate use of, see Chapter 27  
 BBC characters in commercials and promotions, Chapter 29  
 BBC commercial channels, references to, Chapter 27  
 BBC Commercial Policy Guidelines, Chapter 24  
 BBC Corporate Press Office, Chapter 41  
 BBC fund-raising projects, Chapter 30  
 BBC Information Centres, Chapter 41  
 BBC Information Line, Chapter 41  
 BBC Knowledge, Chapter 24, Chapter 31  
 BBC magazines: online references, Chapter 27  
 BBC magazines: references on radio, Chapter 27  
 BBC magazines: references on television, Chapter 27  
 BBC merchandise and local radio campaigns, Chapter 27  
 BBC merchandise, on-air references to, Chapter 27  
 BBC On Air magazine, Chapter 19, Chapter 27  
 BBC ONLINE, see Online services and the internet  
 BBC orchestras, and commercial issues, Chapter 24  
 BBC organised events, Chapter 28  
 BBC presenters, use of in commercials, Chapter 10, Chapter 29  
 BBC products and publications, trails of Chapter 27  
 BBC publications and products, promotion of, see Chapter 27  
 BBC publicity departments, working with, Chapter 41  
 "Black", use of term, Chapter 9  
 Blasphemy, Chapter 6  
 Blind people, interviewing, Chapter 9  
 Books, mention of on-air, Chapter 25  
 Books, reviewed on-air, Chapter 25  
 Bomb hoaxes, Chapter 18  
 Bomb warnings, Chapter 18  
 Branded products or services,  
     .....appropriate use of, see Chapter 25  
     .....and competitions, Chapter 22  
 Breach of confidence, Chapter 40  
 "British", use of term, Chapter 19  
 British Board of Film Classification, Chapter 6  
 Broadcasting Act 1996, see Chapter 43  
 Broadcasting During Elections, see Chapter 34  
 Broadcasting Standards Commission, see Chapter 43  
 Broadcasting Support Services, Chapter 30  
 BSC Code of Practice on taste and decency, see Chapter 43  
 "Bugging", (unattended recording devices), Chapter 5  
 By-elections, Chapter 34

**C**

Call cut offs, Chapter 32  
 Campaigning groups, Chapter 30  
 Candidates  
     .....BBC people standing as, Chapter 10

- .....during elections, Chapter 34
- .....in European elections, Chapter 34
- .....in local elections, Chapter 34
- .....in overseas elections, Chapter 34
- .....in Scottish and Welsh elections, Chapter 34
- Cash prizes, Chapter 22
- CCTV footage, use of, Chapter 4, Chapter 26
- Ceefax, Chapter 25, Chapter 31, Chapter 32
  - .....commercial references on, guidelines, Chapter 27
- Central Office of Information, Chapter 26
- Charities and charity appeals, see Chapter 30
  - .....Appeals Advisory Committee, Chapter 30
  - .....Appeals Advisory Committees in the Nations, Chapter 30
  - .....Appeals Charter, Chapter 30
  - .....Charities Act (1992), Chapter 30, Chapter 32
  - .....Children in Need, Chapter 22, Chapter 27, Chapter 28, Chapter 30, Chapter 31
  - .....and conflicts of interest, Chapter 10
  - .....donations and premium rate telephone calls, Chapter 30, Chapter 32
  - .....donations to, Chapter 30
  - .....emergency appeals, Chapter 30
  - .....fact sheets and further information, Chapter 30
  - .....helplines, Chapter 31
  - .....joint initiatives, Chapter 30
    - .....and Local Radio Advisory Councils, Chapter 30
    - .....and Local radio stations, Chapter 30
  - .....on-air references to, Chapter 30
  - .....outside fund-raising events, Chapter 30
  - .....premium rate telephone lines, Chapter 30, Chapter 32
  - .....programme credits, Chapter 30
  - .....programmes and items about charitable work, Chapter 30
  - .....regional broadcasting, Chapter 30
  - .....regions, Chapter 30
  - .....United Kingdom Disasters Emergency Committee, Chapter 30
  - .....unsolicited donations to charity, Chapter 30
  - .....World Service and Worldwide Television and fact sheets and support materials, Chapter 30
- Checking recorded or repeated programmes, Chapter 2, see also Chapter 43
- Chief Political Adviser
  - .....mandatory referral, elections, Chapter 34
  - .....mandatory referral, opinion polls, Chapter 35
  - .....mandatory referral, party leaders, Chapter 33
- Children, see Chapter 14
  - .....and abuse, Chapter 6, Chapter 14, Chapter 37
  - .....and anonymity, Chapter 14, Chapter 37
  - .....Children Act (1989), Chapter 14
  - .....Children's Panel System, Chapter 14
  - .....and consent, Chapter 14
  - .....in court, identification of, Chapter 14, Chapter 37
  - ....."Custody", Chapter 14
  - .....dangerous or illegal activity among children, Chapter 8, Chapter 14
  - .....drama involving child performances, Chapter 14
  - .....and European Directive TV without Frontiers, Chapter 37
  - .....interests and welfare of child, Chapter 14
  - .....interviewing techniques, Chapter 14
  - .....laws affecting children, Chapter 14, Chapter 37
  - .....and phone-ins, Chapter 32
  - .....Protection of Children Act (1978), Chapter 6, Chapter 14
  - .....and sex, Chapter 6, Chapter 14
  - .....taste and decency issues, Chapter 6, Chapter 14

- .....trails during children's programmes, Chapter 6
- .....as victims of sexual offences, Chapter 14
- .....violence against, Chapter 7
- .....Youth court proceedings, Chapter 14
- Children In Need, Chapter 22, Chapter 27, Chapter 28, Chapter 30, Chapter 31
- Civil Trespass, Chapter 37
- Close Circuit Television, use of footage from, Chapter 4, Chapter 26
- Clothing, advertisements on, Chapter 28
- Co-funding, Chapter 24
  - .....editorial control, Chapter 24
  - .....and independent productions, Chapter 24
- Comedy, light entertainment and surreptitious recording, Chapter 5
- Comedy and entertainment, taste and decency issues in, Chapter 6
- Comic Relief, Chapter 27, Chapter 28, Chapter 30
- Commercial Policy Guidelines, Chapter 24, Chapter 25, Chapter 27, Chapter 28, Chapter 29, Chapter 31
  - .....Commercial references on Ceefax, guidelines, Chapter 27
- Commercial references Register, Chapter 24
- Commercials, television and radio, using extracts from, Chapter 25
- Commissioning Opinion Polls, Chapter 35
- Committal proceedings, reporting, Chapter 37
- Competitions, and prizes, see Chapter 22
  - .....and BBC Worldwide Television, Chapter 22
  - .....and branded products or services, Chapter 22
  - .....cash prizes, Chapter 22
  - .....and co-sponsored events, Chapter 22
  - .....donated prizes, Chapter 22
  - .....entry forms, Chapter 22
  - .....ITC restrictions, Chapter 22
  - .....legal considerations, Chapter 22
  - .....organisation of competitions, Chapter 22
  - .....and premium rate telephone calls, Chapter 22, Chapter 32
  - .....prizes in jointly organised competitions, Chapter 22
  - .....run in association with BBC magazines, Chapter 22
  - .....run by others, Chapter 22
- Complaints, dealing with, Chapter 41
- Complaints to the BSC, see Chapter 43
- Complaints to the Programme Complaints Unit, see Chapter 42
- Composers, payment of, Chapter 40
- Computer Credits in sports coverage, Chapter 26
- Computer graphics, Chapter 2
- Confidentiality, Chapter 17, Chapter 37, Chapter 40
  - .....Confidential sources, Chapter 17
  - .....need for referral, Chapter 1
- Conflicts of interest, see Chapter 10
  - .....business and financial interests, Chapter 10
  - .....campaigning bodies, Chapter 10
  - .....charitable work, Chapter 10
  - .....in consumer and lifestyle programmes, Chapter 10
  - .....directorships, and consultancy work, Chapter 10
  - .....experts and specialists, and promotional activities, Chapter 10
  - .....factual programme presenters in drama, Chapter 10
  - .....in financial journalism, Chapter 10
  - .....and free facilities, Chapter 10, Chapter 25
  - .....and free products, Chapter 25
  - .....involvement in music production, Chapter 10
  - .....and media training, Chapter 10
  - .....in News, Current Affairs, and Topical Programmes, Chapter 10

- .....people affected by, Chapter 10
- .....personal benefits, Chapter 10
- .....and political activities, Chapter 10
- .....presenters and personal view programmes, Chapter 2, Chapter 10
- .....promotional activities, Chapter 10
- .....public appearances and performances, Chapter 10
- .....rival organisations, work for, Chapter 10
- .....seeking approval, Chapter 10
- .....and standing for election, Chapter 10
- Consent, and children, Chapter 14
- Consent form for candidates in elections, Chapter 34
- Consultation and referral, see Chapter 1
  - .....and independent productions, Chapter 1
  - .....legal referral, Chapter 1
  - .....mandatory referrals, Chapter 1
- Consumer programmes
  - .....conflicts of interests in, Chapter 10
  - .....and use of free or reduced cost facilities, Chapter 25
- Consumer tests, see test products
- Contempt, see Chapter 39
  - .....'active' proceedings, Chapter 39
  - .....broadcasting an interview with a witness, Chapter 39
  - .....defences against, Chapter 39
  - .....risks of committing, Chapter 39
  - .....talking to a juror, Chapter 39
- Continuity announcements, Chapter 6
- Contracts with independent producers, Chapter 1, Chapter 24
- Contributors
  - .....advertising for, Chapter 3
  - .....anonymity, Chapter 3
  - .....dealing with, Chapter 3
  - .....fairness to, see Chapter 3
  - .....names and addresses, Chapter 17
- Controller Editorial Policy, referral to
  - .....confidentiality, Chapter 17
  - .....contact with escaped prisoners, Chapter 15
  - .....DA notices, Chapter 18
  - .....doorstepping, Chapter 4
  - .....interviewing criminals, Chapter 15
  - .....interviewing paedophiles, Chapter 15
  - .....interviewing prisoners, Chapter 15
  - .....interviewing terrorists, Chapter 15, Chapter 18
  - .....interviewing witnesses, Chapter 15
  - .....mandatory referrals, Chapter 1
  - .....Northern Ireland, Chapter 19
  - .....payment of criminals, Chapter 15
  - .....publishing details of sex offenders, Chapter 15
  - .....payment to witnesses, Chapter 15
  - .....recording telephone calls with prisoners, Chapter 15
  - .....staged events by terrorist groups, Chapter 18, Chapter 19
  - .....surreptitious recording, Chapter 5
  - .....untransmitted material, Chapter 17
- Controller Northern Ireland, referral to, Chapter 19
  - .....longer term programme proposals, Chapter 19
  - .....mandatory referrals, Chapter 1
- Controversial issues, in programmes
  - .....dealing with in relation to the press, Chapter 41
  - .....referral about, Chapter 1

- Copyright, see Chapter 40
  - .....advice about, Chapter 40
  - .....music, Chapter 40
  - .....use without permission, Chapter 40
  - .....video and film, Chapter 40
- Corporate Press Office, Chapter 41
- Correcting mistakes, Chapter 2
- Correspondence from viewers and listeners, dealing with, Chapter 41
- Co-sponsorship of BBC events, Chapter 28
  - .....approval for, Chapter 28
  - .....co-sponsored events and BBC premises, Chapter 28
  - .....co-sponsored events run as competitions, Chapter 22
  - .....co-sponsorship with commercial organisations, Chapter 28
  - .....co-sponsorship guidelines, Chapter 28
  - .....debates and forums, Chapter 28
- Councils, local, assistance from, Chapter 24
- Councils, local elections to, see local authority elections
- Court reporting, contempt, see Chapter 39
- Courtesy in interviews, Chapter 13
- Covering Outside Events, see Chapter 28
- Credits, references to charities in, Chapter 30
- Credits for co-funding, Chapter 24
- Credits for co-production partners, Chapter 24
- Credits for outside information, Chapter 25, Chapter 26
- Credits for sponsors of events, Chapter 28
- Credits for sports events, Chapter 28
- Crime, reporting of, see Chapter 15
  - .....contact with escaped prisoners or people wanted by the police, Chapter 15
  - .....general principles, Chapter 15
  - .....guidance for news programmes, Chapter 15
  - .....guilt by association, Chapter 15
  - .....library material of, Chapter 15
  - .....paedophiles and sexual crime, Chapter 15
  - .....Prevention of Terrorism Act, Chapter 15
  - .....prisons and prisoners, Chapter 15
  - .....putting crime in context, Chapter 15
  - .....re-use of material, Chapter 21
  - .....running stories, Chapter 15
  - .....use of statistics, Chapter 15
  - .....use of surreptitious recording, Chapter 5
  - .....victims of, Chapter 15
  - .....witnesses of, Chapter 1, Chapter 15, Chapter 37
  - .....witnessing of by programme makers, Chapter 15
- Crime reconstruction in current affairs programmes, Chapter 15
  - .....camera angles and point-of-view shots, Chapter 15
  - .....reconstructing detail (including dialogue), Chapter 15
  - .....reconstructing wounds, Chapter 15
  - .....use of incidental music or irrelevant sound effects, Chapter 15
- Crime reconstruction in news programmes, Chapter 15
- Crime and vandalism, imitation of, Chapter 8
- Crime victims, Chapter 15
- Crime victims and witnesses, identification of, Chapter 37
- Criminal Trespass, Chapter 37
- Criminals, dealing with, Chapter 15
  - .....families of, Chapter 15
  - .....interviews with, Chapter 15
  - .....overseas, definition of, Chapter 15
  - .....payments to, Chapter 15

"Custody", and children, Chapter 14

**D**

DA Notices (formerly D Notices), Chapter 18  
 Data Protection Act, Chapter 37  
 Dead, injured or missing, concern for next of kin, Chapter 12  
 Dead, reporting the, Chapter 12  
 Deafness, terminology of, Chapter 9  
 Dealing with Contributors, Chapter 3  
 Decency and taste, see Chapter 6  
 Deception in factual programmes, Chapter 3  
 Defamation see Chapter 38  
     .....and the BSC see Chapter 43  
     .....defences to libel, Chapter 38  
     .....libel, Chapter 38  
     .....Negative Checks, Chapter 38  
     .....pictorial, Chapter 38  
     .....registered trade marks, Chapter 38  
 Defence advisory notices (formerly D Notices), Chapter 18  
 Defences against contempt, Chapter 39  
 Demonstrations, coverage of, Chapter 16  
 "Dial and listen" information lines, Chapter 31  
 Digital text services, Chapter 25, Chapter 32  
 "Disturbance fee", Chapter 33  
 Disabilities, portrayal of, Chapter 9  
 Disability Discrimination Act, Chapter 9  
 Disasters, accidents, and tragic events reporting of, see Chapter 12  
 Disguising identities, Chapter 5  
 Donated prizes, Chapter 22  
 Donations to charity, Chapter 32  
 Donations, to charity, unsolicited, Chapter 30  
 Doorstepping, Chapter 4  
     .....recording telephone calls, Chapter 5  
 Drama, Chapter 2  
     .....drama-documentaries, Chapter 2  
     .....drama involving children, Chapter 14  
     .....history in drama, Chapter 2  
     .....portrayal of real people in, Chapter 2  
     .....portraying contemporary situations, Chapter 2  
 Drama, Arts, Music and Entertainment Programmes, Impartiality in, Chapter 2  
 Drugs, Chapter 8  
 Due impartiality, Chapter 2  
 Due impartiality within a factual programme, Chapter 2  
     .....and the series provision, Chapter 2  
     .....in social action programming, Chapter 30

**E**

Editing recorded interviews, Chapter 13  
 Editorial Policy Unit, Chapter 1  
 Elections, broadcasting during, see Chapter 34  
 Election campaigns, fairness in programmes during, Chapter 34  
 Elections  
     .....European Parliament, Chapter 34  
     .....local authority, Chapter 34  
     .....overseas, Chapter 34  
     .....Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly, Chapter 34  
 E-mails from viewers and listeners, Chapter 41  
 Embargoes, Chapter 3  
 Emergency appeals, Chapter 30

Emergency services, use of video from, Chapter 26  
 "English", use of term, Chapter 19  
 Entertainment, and surreptitious recording, Chapter 5  
 Entertainment, taste and decency issues in, Chapter 6  
 Entry forms, Chapter 22  
 Emergency announcements, Chapter 26  
 Emergency appeals, Chapter 30  
 Epilepsy, susceptibility to, Chapter 37  
 Escaped prisoners or people wanted by the police, contact with, Chapter 15  
 Ethnic minorities, portrayal of, Chapter 9  
 European Directive: Television without Frontiers, Chapter 6, Chapter 37  
 European Parliament, coverage of, Chapter 33  
 European Parliament election campaigns, Chapter 34  
 Evasion in interviews, dealing with, Chapter 13  
 Even handedness in Interviews, Chapter 13  
 Event information phone lines, Chapter 32  
 Events organised or sponsored by BBC magazines, Chapter 27, Chapter 28  
 Excerpts, re-use of, Chapter 21  
 Exhibitions, BBC organised, Chapter 28  
 Exit polls, Chapter 35  
 Explicit lyrics in songs, Chapter 6

**F**

Fact and fiction, mixing of, Chapter 2  
 Facts, accuracy of, Chapter 2  
 Factsheets and booklets, Chapter 30, Chapter 31  
 Fairness  
     .....and advertising for contributors, Chapter 3  
     .....and BSC, see Chapter 43  
     .....to Contributors, see Chapter 3  
     .....and editing interviews, Chapter 13  
     .....and independence, Chapter 3  
     .....to interviewees, Chapter 13  
     .....to people asked for help or advice in the preparation of programmes, Chapter 3  
     .....in programmes during Election Campaigns, Chapter 34  
     .....and research, Chapter 3  
     .....and refusals to take part, Chapter 3  
     .....and working abroad, Chapter 3  
 Fees, see payments  
 Films, taste and decency considerations, Chapter 6  
 Financial journalism and conflicts of interest, Chapter 10  
 "Fishing expeditions", Chapter 5  
 Flashing and flickering images, dangers of, Chapter 37  
 Focus groups, Chapter 35  
 Four letter, words, use of, Chapter 1, Chapter 6  
 Free or reduced cost facilities and products, Chapter 25  
     .....and consumer programmes, Chapter 25  
     .....and credits, Chapter 25  
     .....and editorial independence, Chapter 25  
     .....holiday and travel programmes, see Chapter 25  
     .....and media facility trips, Chapter 25  
 Funding  
     .....appropriate programme, see Chapter 24  
     .....for support services, Chapter 31  
 Fundraising events  
     .....BBC, Chapter 30  
     .....joint initiatives, Chapter 30  
     .....Outside, Chapter 30  
 Funerals, Chapter 12

**G**

Gambling, Chapter 22, Chapter 32  
 Game shows and people shows Chapter 6, see also Chapter 22  
     .....co-sponsored events, Chapter 22  
     .....fair treatment of contestants, Chapter 22  
     .....ITC restrictions, Chapter 22  
     .....prizes, Chapter 22  
     .....prizes in jointly organised competitions, Chapter 22  
     .....safety, Chapter 22  
     .....selecting contestants, Chapter 22  
 Gays and lesbians, stereotyping, of, Chapter 9  
 Global broadcasting, Chapter 11  
 Government information, Chapter 26  
 Governors' Complaints Appeals Committee, see Chapter 42  
 Grief and distress, reporting of, Chapter 5, see also Chapter 12  
 Grief and distress, surreptitious recording of, Chapter 5  
 Guilt by association, Chapter 15  
 Guns, see weapons

**H**

Hanging scenes, Chapter 8  
 Harassment, see media scrums  
 Health and safety, Chapter 37  
 Helplines, Chapter 31  
     .....and premium rate lines, Chapter 31, Chapter 32  
 Hidden microphones and cameras, see surreptitious filming  
 Hi-jacking, kidnapping, hostage taking and sieges, Chapter 16  
 History in drama, Chapter 2  
 Hoaxing, ("serial guests"), Chapter 3  
 Holiday and travel programmes, Chapter 25  
 Homosexuality, portrayal of, Chapter 6, Chapter 9  
     .....terminology, Chapter 9  
 Honesty, in dealing with contributors, Chapter 3  
 Hostage taking, Chapter 16  
 Hosted programmes, Chapter 24  
 Hypnotism, Chapter 8

**I**

Identification of children in court, Chapter 14, Chapter 37  
 Identification of Crime Victims and Witnesses, Chapter 37  
     .....courts sitting in private, Chapter 37  
     .....identifying victims of sexual offences, Chapter 37  
     ....."jigsaw" Identification, Chapter 37  
 Illegal activity, witnessing of by programme makers, Chapter 15  
 Imitative and Anti-Social Behaviour, see Chapter 8  
     .....and children, Chapter 8  
     .....crime and vandalism, Chapter 8  
     .....drugs, Chapter 8  
     .....hanging scenes, Chapter 8  
     .....hypnotism, Chapter 8  
     .....methods of inflicting pain and injury, Chapter 7, Chapter 8  
     .....religious sensitivities about smoking and drinking, Chapter 8  
     .....seat belts, Chapter 8  
     .....smoking and drinking in children's programmes, Chapter 8  
     .....social and anti-social behaviour, Chapter 8  
     .....suicide, Chapter 8  
 Impartiality, see Chapter 2  
     .....in drama, arts, music and entertainment programmes, Chapter 2

.....in drama portraying contemporary situations and drama-documentaries, Chapter 2  
     .....due impartiality, Chapter 2  
     .....due impartiality within a factual programme, Chapter 2  
     .....in election coverage, see Chapter 34  
     .....fact, fiction and labelling, Chapter 2  
     .....in factual programmes, Chapter 2  
     .....in factual programmes not dealing with matters of political or industrial controversy, Chapter 2  
     .....history in drama, Chapter 2  
     ....."major matters", Chapter 2  
     .....in news programmes, Chapter 2  
     .....in party political, party election, and ministerial broadcast, Chapter 2  
     .....in personal view programmes, Chapter 2  
     .....portrayal of real people in drama, Chapter 2  
     .....reporting in times of national emergency and military action, Chapter 2  
     .....right of reply, Chapter 2  
     .....sensitivity to offence, Chapter 2  
     .....in series provision, Chapter 2  
     .....in social action programming, Chapter 30  
 Impartiality and Accuracy Code, see Chapter 2  
 Indemnities, Chapter 16  
 Independent productions,  
     .....and commercial referral, Chapter 24  
     .....consultation and referral, Chapter 1  
     .....premium rate telephone lines, Chapter 32  
     .....taste and decency, Chapter 6  
     .....violence, Chapter 7  
 Information from outside sources, Chapter 26  
 Information lines, Chapter 31, Chapter 32  
 Information lines provided by event organisers, Chapter 32  
 Injunctions and Interdicts, Chapter 37  
 Innuendo, sexual, Chapter 6  
 Intellectual Property, see Chapter 40  
 Intellectual Property Department, Chapter 37, Chapter 40  
 Interactive voting, Chapter 35  
 Interdicts, Chapter 37  
 International Audience Correspondence Unit, Chapter 41  
 International services, Chapter 11  
 Internet, Chapter 6, Chapter 31  
 Interviewing, see Chapter 13  
     ....."as live", Chapter 13  
     .....BBC Correspondents, Chapter 13  
     .....blind people, Chapter 9  
     .....children, Chapter 14  
     .....courtesy in, Chapter 13  
     .....criminals, Chapter 15  
     .....dealing with interviewees, Chapter 13  
     .....editing a recorded interview, Chapter 13  
     .....evasion in, Chapter 13  
     .....even handedness in, Chapter 13  
     .....fairness to interviewees, Chapter 13  
     .....ordinary people, Chapter 13  
     .....people injured or grieving, Chapter 12  
     .....political, Chapter 33  
     .....preparation for, Chapter 13  
     .....purpose of, Chapter 13  
     .....tailoring to time, Chapter 13  
     .....tone and tactics, Chapter 13

- .....unreasonable demands by interviewees, Chapter 13
- .....witnesses, Chapter 15
- .....witnesses, dangers of contempt, Chapter 39
- Inventions, Chapter 40
- ITC Code of Advertising Standards and Practice, Chapter 24
- ITC Code of Programme Sponsorship, Chapter 22, Chapter 24
- ITC Programme Code, Chapter 22, Chapter 24
- ITC Regulation, Chapter 24, Chapter 31
- ITC restrictions, on competitions, games shows and prizes, Chapter 22
- ITC Rules on Advertising Breaks, Chapter 24

**J**

- "jigsaw" Identification, Chapter 37
- Joint editorial initiatives, Chapter 24
- Joint initiatives in support material, Chapter 31
- Jurors, speaking to, Chapter 39

**K**

- Keeping programmes, Chapter 41
- Kidnaps, reporting of, Chapter 16
- Knives, Chapter 8

**L**

- Labelling
  - .....in programmes that mix fact and fiction, Chapter 2
  - .....reconstructions, Chapter 2
  - .....video and audio news releases, Chapter 26
- Language
  - .....accurate, Chapter 2
  - .....disability, Chapter 9
  - .....non sexist, use of, Chapter 9
  - .....in portrayal of ethnic minorities, Chapter 9
  - .....in portrayal of women, Chapter 9
  - .....phone-ins, Chapter 6
  - .....in relation to Regions, Chapter 19
  - .....religious sensitivities, Chapter 9
  - .....sexual orientation, Chapter 9
  - .....strong, Chapter 6
  - .....strong language, referral for, Chapter 1, Chapter 6
  - .....and taste and decency issues, Chapter 6
  - .....terrorism, Chapter 18
  - .....violence, Chapter 7

**Law**

- .....animals, Chapter 20, Chapter 37
- .....breach of confidence, Chapter 37
- .....children, Chapter 14, Chapter 37
- .....and confidential sources, Chapter 17
- .....contempt, see Chapter 39
- .....copyright, see Chapter 40
- .....courts sitting in private, Chapter 14, Chapter 37
- .....defamation, see Chapter 38
- .....health and safety, Chapter 37
- .....identification of witnesses, Chapter 37
- .....injunctions/interdicts, Chapter 37
- .....intellectual property, see Chapter 40
- .....jigsaw identification, Chapter 37
- .....legal referral, Chapter 1, Chapter 37
- .....Northern Ireland, Chapter 19
- .....Obscene Publications Act, Chapter 37

- .....Official Secrets Act, Chapter 18
- .....racial discrimination, Chapter 37
- .....reference books for, Chapter 37
- .....repeated programmes, Chapter 37
- .....reporting of committal proceedings, Chapter 37
- .....victims of sexual offences, Chapter 37
- Laws affecting children, Chapter 14, Chapter 37
- Laws in other parts of the world, respecting, Chapter 3
- Laws of privacy in other parts of the world, Chapter 4
- Leaders of political parties, interviews with, Chapter 33
- Learning difficulties, portrayal of people with, Chapter 9
- Legal Adviser's Division, Chapter 37
- Letters and articles for publication, by BBC personnel, Chapter 41
- Letters from viewers and listeners, Chapter 41
- Lesbians, portrayal of, Chapter 9
- Libel, Chapter 38
- Library material
  - .....accurate use of, Chapter 2
  - .....of crime, Chapter 15
  - .....outside, crediting, Chapter 26
  - .....re-use and reversioning of, see Chapter 21
- Library use of scenes of suffering, and violence, Chapter 7, Chapter 12
- Light entertainment and surreptitious recording, Chapter 5
- Litigation Department, Chapter 37
- Local authority elections, Chapter 34
- Local councils, Chapter 24
- Local council elections, see local authority elections
- Local law, observing, Chapter 3
- Local Radio Advisory Councils and charities, Chapter 30
- Local Radio Campaigns and BBC Merchandise, Chapter 27
- Local Radio and commercial issues, Chapter 24
- Local radio stations and charities, Chapter 30
- Long lenses, use of, Chapter 5
- Lotteries and Amusements Act, 1976, Chapter 22, Chapter 32
- Lottery, National, see National Lottery
- Lyrics, explicit, Chapter 6

**M**

- Magazines, BBC, Chapter 27
  - .....and competitions, Chapter 27
  - .....references to, online, Chapter 27
  - .....references to, on radio, Chapter 27
  - .....references to, on television, Chapter 27
  - .....and sponsorship, Chapter 28
- Mandatory referrals, Chapter 1
- Media facility trips, Chapter 25
- Media scrums, Chapter 4
- Media training, Chapter 10
- Members of Parliament, payment of, Chapter 33
- Methods of inflicting pain and injury, imitation of, Chapter 7, Chapter 8
- Military action, reporting in times of, Chapter 2
- Ministerial Broadcasts, see Chapter 36
- Missing People, rights of privacy, Chapter 4
- Mistakes, correcting, Chapter 2
- Mobile phones, Chapter 8
- Moral rights, in copyright, Chapter 40
- Music Copyright, Chapter 40
- Music Copyright section, Chapter 40
- Music production, Chapter 10



**N**

Names and addresses of contributors, Chapter 17  
 "National", use of word, Chapter 19  
 National Lottery, see Chapter 23  
     .....coverage a service not a promotion, Chapter 23  
     .....lottery tickets, Chapter 23  
     .....trails for, Chapter 23  
     .....use of library pictures of the lottery programme, Chapter 23  
 National Security, see Chapter 18  
     .....DA Notices, Chapter 18  
     .....mandatory referral, Chapter 1, Chapter 18  
     .....Official Secrets Act, Chapter 18  
     .....reporting in times of national emergency and military action, Chapter 2  
 Natural history filming, see Chapter 20  
     .....captivity sequences, ethical and editorial considerations, Chapter 20  
     .....ethical considerations, Chapter 20  
     .....filming named animals, Chapter 20  
     .....legal constraints, Chapter 20  
     .....life cycle portrayal, Chapter 20  
     .....locations, Chapter 20  
     .....reconstruction and simulation, Chapter 20  
 Negative checks, Chapter 38  
 New Media, Chapter 11  
 News black-out, requests for, Chapter 16  
 News coverage of sponsored sports events, Chapter 28  
 News presenters, conflict of interests of, Chapter 10  
 News presenters, in drama, Chapter 10  
 News programmes, impartiality in, Chapter 2  
 Non-BBC events, promotion of, Chapter 28  
 Non-sexist language, use of, Chapter 9  
 News releases by outside bodies, use of, Chapter 26  
 News reports of disasters and accidents, Chapter 12  
 Northern Ireland, Chapter 19  
     .....mandatory referrals, Chapter 1  
     .....Northern Ireland Assembly, reporting, Chapter 33, Chapter 34  
     .....Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Acts, Chapter 19  
     .....prevention of terrorism legislation, Chapter 19  
     .....reflecting reality, Chapter 19  
     .....special legal considerations, Chapter 19  
     .....staged events, Chapter 19

**O**

Obscene Publications Act, Chapter 37  
 Offence  
     .....interviewing people whose views might offend, Chapter 2  
     .....phone-ins, Chapter 6  
     .....taste and decency, see Chapter 6  
     .....sensitivity to offence and outrage, Chapter 2  
 Offensive language, Chapter 6  
 Off-air promotions with publications, Chapter 24  
 Official Secrets Act, Chapter 18  
 Older people, portrayal of, Chapter 9  
 On-air promotions, Chapter 24  
 On-air publicity for outside events, Chapter 28  
 On-air references to charities, Chapter 30  
 On-air references to products, services and publications, see Chapter 25  
     .....BBC characters in commercials and promotions, Chapter 29  
     .....BBC magazines: references on radio, Chapter 27

.....BBC magazines: references on television, Chapter 27  
     .....BBC presenters, use of in commercials Chapter 10, Chapter 29  
     .....BBC Publications and products, see Chapter 27  
     .....BBC Publications and products, promotion of, see Chapter 29  
     .....Books and other publications, Chapter 25, see also Chapter 27  
     .....Branded products and services, appropriate use of, see Chapter 27  
     .....Commercial recordings, Chapter 25  
     .....Competitions run in association with BBC magazines, Chapter 27  
     .....Credits for sponsors of events, Chapter 28  
     .....Events sponsored by BBC magazines, Chapter 28  
     .....On-air references to other BBC merchandise, Chapter 27  
     .....Presenters, use of in commercials, Chapter 10, Chapter 29  
     .....Product placement, Chapter 25  
     .....Products used as props, Chapter 25  
     .....Reviews of products or services, Chapter 25  
     .....Television and radio commercials, Chapter 25  
     .....Testing products, Chapter 25  
     .....Trails for BBC products or publications, Chapter 27  
 ONLINE Guidelines, Chapter 1, Chapter 6, Chapter 11, Chapter 25, Chapter 27, Chapter 31  
 Online services and the Internet, Chapter 11  
     .....commercially funded sites, Chapter 27  
     .....and overseas elections, Chapter 34  
     .....hot links, Chapter 25  
     .....interactive voting, Chapter 35  
     .....and Northern Ireland, Chapter 19  
     .....and overseas elections, Chapter 34  
     .....and product prominence, Chapter 25  
     .....references to BBC merchandise, Chapter 27  
     .....support services on, Chapter 31  
     .....taste and decency issues in, Chapter 1, Chapter 6  
     .....trailing products and services on, Chapter 27  
 Opinion Polls, see Chapter 35  
     .....commissioning opinion polls, Chapter 35  
     .....in election results programmes, Chapter 35  
     .....at election times, Chapter 35  
     .....exit polls, Chapter 35  
     .....online and interactive voting, Chapter 35  
     .....panels or focus groups, Chapter 35  
     .....phone-in polls, Chapter 32, Chapter 35  
     .....referral to Chief Political Adviser, Chapter 1, Chapter 35  
     .....sceptical approach to, Chapter 35  
     .....studio audiences, polling of, Chapter 35  
     .....and surveys, Chapter 35  
     .....validity of opinion poll methods, Chapter 35  
     .....voting intention polls, rules for reporting, Chapter 35  
 Orchestras, BBC and commercial issues, Chapter 24  
 Outside bodies, programmes provided by, Chapter 24  
 Outside events, covering, see covering outside events  
 Outside information, using, Chapter 26  
     .....varying sources, Chapter 26  
 Ownership of copyright, see Chapter 25

**P**

Paedophiles and sexual crime, Chapter 15  
 Panels or focus groups, Chapter 35  
 Parliament, broadcasting the proceedings of, Chapter 33  
 Parliament, conditions of use of pictures and sound from, Chapter 33  
     .....European, Chapter 33  
     .....National Assembly for Wales, Chapter 33

- .....Northern Ireland Assembly, Chapter 33
- .....Scottish Parliament, Chapter 33
- .....Westminster, Chapter 33
- Parliament, statements made in, Chapter 33
- Parliamentary broadcasting, legal aspects, Chapter 33
- Parliamentary Broadcasting Unit, Chapter 33
- Parliamentary committees, broadcasting of, Chapter 33
- Parliamentary material, use of, Chapter 33
- Parliamentary privilege, Chapter 33
- Party broadcasts, see Chapter 36
- Party Election Broadcasts, see Chapter 36
- Party Political Broadcasts, see Chapter 36
- Party Political, Party Election and ministerial broadcasts, impartiality in, Chapter 2
- "Passing off", Chapter 40
- Patents, Chapter 40
- Payment of composers/writers, Chapter 40
- Payment of criminals, Chapter 15
- Payment of criminals or former criminals mandatory referral, Chapter 1
- Payment of MPs, Chapter 33
- Payment of witnesses, Chapter 15
- People shows and game shows, see game shows and people shows
- Performers' Rights, Chapter 40
- Performing Animals (Regulation) Act, 1925, Chapter 37
- Personal view programmes, Chapter 2
- Personal view programmes and BBC presenters Chapter 2
- Phone-in polls, Chapter 32, Chapter 35
- Phone-in polls, and premium rate telephone lines, Chapter 32
- Phone-in polls, reporting the results of, Chapter 35
- Phone-ins, Chapter 6, Chapter 32
- Phonographic Performance Ltd, Chapter 40
- Pictorial defamation, Chapter 38
- Pixilation, Chapter 3
- Placard carrying the names of sponsors, Chapter 28
- Plugging products and services, Chapter 25, see also Chapter 26 and Chapter 27
- Police, relations with, see Chapter 16
  - .....coverage of public demonstrations, Chapter 16
  - .....making arrangements for programmes, Chapter 16
  - .....procedures during hi-jacking, hostage taking and sieges, Chapter 16
  - .....requests for untransmitted material see, Chapter 17
- Police "facilities", Chapter 16
- Police indemnities, Chapter 16
- Police messages and information, Chapter 16, Chapter 26
- Police raids, going on, Chapter 16
- Political activities and conflicts of interest, Chapter 10
- Political involvement of BBC staff, Chapter 10
  - .....levels of, Chapter 10
  - .....Political Research Unit, Chapter 33
  - .....standing for election, Chapter 10
- Politicians, refusals to take part in programmes by, Chapter 33
- Politicians appearing in News, Current Affairs and factual Programmes, Chapter 33
- Politics and politicians, see Chapter 33 and Chapter 34
- Portrayal, see Chapter 9
  - .....of disabilities, Chapter 9
  - .....of ethnic minorities, Chapter 9
  - .....hurtful or inaccurate stereotypes, Chapter 9
  - .....of older people, Chapter 9
  - .....of religious groups, Chapter 9
  - .....of sexual orientation, Chapter 9

- .....under-representation on-air, Chapter 9
- .....use of non-sexist language, Chapter 9
- .....of women, Chapter 9
- Portrayal of real people in drama, Chapter 2
- Premium rate telephone services, Chapter 32
  - .....call cut offs, Chapter 32
  - .....and charities, Chapter 30, Chapter 32
  - .....children's services, Chapter 32
  - .....and competitions, Chapter 32
  - .....and donations to charity and charity appeals, Chapter 30, Chapter 32
  - .....duration of calls, Chapter 32
  - .....financial arrangements, for, Chapter 32
  - .....guidelines concerning, Chapter 31, Chapter 32
  - .....and independent productions, Chapter 32
  - .....and non-BBC services, Chapter 32
  - .....paying for support material via, Chapter 31
  - .....and phone-in polls, Chapter 32
  - .....price message, Chapter 32
  - .....voting by, Chapter 32
- Preparation for interviews, Chapter 13
- Presentations of awards and sponsorship, Chapter 28
- Presenters
  - .....conflicts of interest, see conflicts of interest
  - .....and personal view programmes, Chapter 2, Chapter 10
  - .....and promotional activities, Chapter 10
  - .....use of in commercials, Chapter 10, Chapter 29
- Press, relations with, Chapter 41
- Prevention of Terrorism Act, Chapter 15
- Price messages and call cut offs, Chapter 32
- Prisoners and prisons, Chapter 15
- Privacy and the gathering of information, see Chapter 4 and Chapter 5
  - .....CCTV Footage, Chapter 4
  - .....comedy, light entertainment, Chapter 5
  - .....dead, injured and missing, Chapter 12
  - .....depicting trauma, Chapter 12
  - .....doorstepping, Chapter 4
  - ....."fishing expeditions", Chapter 5
  - .....funerals, Chapter 12
  - .....grief and distress, surreptitious recording of, Chapter 5
  - .....interviews with those injured or grieving, Chapter 12
  - .....laws of privacy in other parts of the world, Chapter 4
  - .....library use of scenes of suffering, Chapter 12
  - .....long lenses, use of, Chapter 5
  - .....media scrums, Chapter 4
  - .....and missing people, Chapter 4
  - .....open recording in public when the subject is on private property, Chapter 4
  - .....private property, operating on, Chapter 4
  - .....protecting by-standers, Chapter 5
  - .....public figures, Chapter 4
  - .....recording telephone calls, Chapter 5
  - .....reporting accidents and disasters, Chapter 12
  - .....re-visiting past events, Chapter 12
  - .....secret recordings made by others, Chapter 5
  - .....social research, Chapter 5
  - .....surreptitious recording, see Chapter 5
  - .....unwarranted infringement of privacy and BSC, see Chapter 43
- Prizes, Chapter 22
  - .....cash, Chapter 22

- .....donated, Chapter 22
- .....in jointly organised competitions, Chapter 22
- .....substantial, Chapter 22
- Product placement, Chapter 25
- Product prominence, Chapter 25
- Products used as props, Chapter 25
- Programme Complaints Unit, see Chapter 42
- Programme Legal Advice Department, Chapter 37
- Programme material, from outside sources, see Chapter 26
- Programme material, requests for, Chapter 17
- Programmes related events, Chapter 28
- Promotion of events, Chapter 28
- Promotional activities and conflicts of interest, Chapter 10
- Promotions, joint, Chapter 24
- Pronunciation of place names, Chapter 19
- Props
  - .....supply of, Chapter 25
  - .....use of products as, Chapter 25
- Protection of Children Act, Chapter 6, Chapter 14
- Public, relations with, Chapter 41
- Public appearances and conflicts of interest, Chapter 10
- Publications, mentions of on-air, Chapter 25
- Publications reviewed on-air, Chapter 25
- Publicity Departments, BBC, Chapter 41
- Publicity departments, working with, Chapter 41

**Q**

- Qualified privilege, of parliamentary proceedings, Chapter 33
- Quoting viewers and listeners letters on-air, Chapter 41
- Quiz shows, Chapter 6, and see Chapter 22
  - .....co-sponsored events, Chapter 22
  - .....fair treatment of contestants, Chapter 22
  - .....ITC restrictions, Chapter 22
  - .....legal considerations, Chapter 22
  - .....prizes, Chapter 22
  - .....prizes in jointly organised competitions, Chapter 22
  - .....safety, Chapter 22
  - .....selecting contestants, Chapter 22

**R**

- Race, see ethnic minorities
- Race Relations Act, 1976, Chapter 37
- Racial Discrimination, Chapter 37
- Racist abuse, terms of, Chapter 6
- Radio credits and sponsored sports events, Chapter 28
- Radio and taste and decency issues, Chapter 6
- Radio Times, Chapter 6, Chapter 19
- Raids, police, Chapter 16
- Reconstruction, Chapter 2
- Reconstructions, of crime, Chapter 15
- Record companies, copyright, Chapter 40
- Record companies, work for, see music production
- Recording telephone calls, Chapter 5
- Red Nose Appeal, Chapter 30
- Refusals to take part in programmes, Chapter 3
- Refusals to take part in programmes, by politicians, Chapter 33
- Referendums, Chapter 34
- Referral and consultation, see Chapter 1
- Referral

- .....anonymity, granting, Chapter 1
- .....animals, filming of, Chapter 20
- .....attending a crime, Chapter 1
- .....co-funding, Chapter 24
- .....commercial referrals, Chapter 1
- .....confidential sources, Chapter 1, Chapter 17
- .....conflicts of interest, Chapter 10
- .....co-productions, Chapter 24
- .....co-sponsored competitions, Chapter 22
- .....coverage of illegal activity, Chapter 15
- .....credits for sponsors of events, Chapter 28
- .....DA Notices, Chapter 18
- .....defamation, Chapter 38
- .....doorstepping, Chapter 1, Chapter 4
- .....election coverage, Chapter 34
- .....emergency appeals, Chapter 30
- .....events sponsored by BBC magazines, Chapter 28
- .....featuring real persons in drama without consent, Chapter 1
- .....interviewing children, Chapter 14
- .....interviews with criminals, Chapter 1, Chapter 15
- .....interviews with party leaders Chapter 1, Chapter 33
- .....interviews in prison, Chapter 1, Chapter 15
- .....interviews with terrorists, Chapter 1, Chapter 15, Chapter 18
- .....interviews with witnesses Chapter 1, Chapter 15
- .....legal referral, Chapter 37
- .....library material of scenes of suffering, Chapter 12
- .....mandatory referrals, Chapter 1
- .....national security Chapter 1, Chapter 18
- .....Northern Ireland, Chapter 1, and see also Chapter 19
- .....Official Secrets Act, Chapter 18
- .....opinion polls, Chapter 1, Chapter 35
- .....payment to criminals, Chapter 1, Chapter 15
- .....presenters involved in promotional activities, Chapter 10
- .....promotion of BBC merchandise, Chapter 27
- .....publishing the name of a sex offender, Chapter 1, Chapter 15
- .....recording a crime, Chapter 1, Chapter 5
- .....recording telephone calls, Chapter 5
- .....releasing untransmitted material, Chapter 1, Chapter 17
- .....re-used and reversioned material, Chapter 21
- .....staged events by terrorist groups, Chapter 18
- .....strong language, Chapter 1, Chapter 6
- .....surreptitious recording, Chapter 1, Chapter 5
- .....untransmitted material, Chapter 17
- .....violence in fiction, Chapter 7
- Refusal to take part in programmes, Chapter 3, Chapter 33
- Regional variations across the United Kingdom, Chapter 19
  - .....general, Chapter 19
  - .....language and style, Chapter 19
- Registered trade marks, Chapter 38, Chapter 40
- Relations with the Police, see Chapter 16
- Relations with the Press, Chapter 41
- Relations with the Public, Chapter 41
- Religion and comedy, Chapter 6
- Religion and taste and decency issues, Chapter 6
- Religious groups, portrayal of, Chapter 9
- Religious sensibilities and language, Chapter 6
- Religious sensitivities about smoking and drinking, Chapter 8
- Repeated programmes

- .....checking for accuracy, Chapter 2
- .....legal issues in, Chapter 37
- .....re-use and reversioning of, see Chapter 21
- Reporters, promotions undertaken by, Chapter 29
- Reporting
  - .....bomb warnings, Chapter 18
  - .....Committal Proceedings, Chapter 37
  - .....confidential sources, Chapter 17
  - .....crime, see Chapter 15
  - .....the dead, Chapter 12
  - .....dead injured or missing, naming of, Chapter 12
  - .....demonstrations, Chapter 16
  - .....disasters, tragic events and grief Chapter 4, and see Chapter 12
  - .....illegal activities, Chapter 15
  - .....in times of national emergency and military action, Chapter 2
  - .....naming individuals who are reported dead, injured or missing, Chapter 12
  - .....Northern Ireland, see Chapter 18
  - .....opinion polls, Chapter 35
  - .....quality of, objectivity, impartiality, Chapter 2
  - .....suffering and distress, Chapter 5
  - .....terrorism, see Chapter 18
  - .....the United Kingdom, see Chapter 19
  - .....violence, Chapter 7
- Representation of the People Act, Chapter 34
- Requests for Programme material, see Chapter 17
- .....transmitted, Chapter 17
- .....untransmitted, Chapter 17
- Research, fairness and accuracy of, Chapter 3
- Reuse and reversioning, see Chapter 21
  - .....accuracy, checking, Chapter 21
  - .....clearance for reuse, Chapter 21
  - .....of criminal activity, Chapter 21
  - .....legal considerations, Chapter 21
  - .....logging concerns, Chapter 21
  - .....rescheduling considerations, Chapter 21
  - .....responsibilities for, Chapter 21
  - .....sensitive material, Chapter 21
  - .....of surreptitious recording, Chapter 21
- Reviews of products or services, Chapter 25
- Right of reply, Chapter 2
- Rights, Chapter 40
- Rights, artists', Chapter 21, Chapter 40
- Rights Group, Chapter 40
- Risks to participants in game and people shows, Chapter 22
- Royal Family, interviews with, or exclusive appearances by, members of the, Chapter 1
- Royal Liaison Officer, Chapter 1
- Royalties, Chapter 40
- R.P.A. (Representation of the People Act), Chapter 34

**S**

- Safety, Chapter 22, Chapter 37
- Scheduling
  - .....of re-used material, Chapter 21
  - .....taste and decency issues in, Chapter 6, Chapter 7 (see also the Watershed)
  - .....on Worldwide Television, Chapter 6, Chapter 7
- School holidays, differences in, Chapter 6, Chapter 19
- School hours, filming during, Chapter 14
- School stories, national considerations, Chapter 19
- Scotland

- .....laws of trespass in, Chapter 37
- .....political parties in, Chapter 33
- .....referral on Scottish law, Chapter 37
- .....reporting of, see Chapter 19
- .....Scottish Parliament, reporting, Chapter 33, Chapter 34
- .....Scottish parliamentary elections, Chapter 34
- .....style and language, differences in, Chapter 19
- Seat belts, Chapter 8
- Secret recording, see surreptitious recording
- Sensationalism, avoiding, Chapter 6
- Sensitivity to offence and outrage, Chapter 2
- Series provision, the, Chapter 2
- Sex
  - .....and children, Chapter 6
  - .....in drama, Chapter 6
  - .....in factual programmes, Chapter 6
  - .....portrayal of, Chapter 6
  - .....on television, Chapter 6
  - .....sexual innuendo, Chapter 6
  - .....simulated, Chapter 6
- Sex offenders, naming, Chapter 1, Chapter 15
- Sexual crime, reporting, Chapter 15
- Sexual innuendo, Chapter 6
- Sexual orientation, portrayal of, Chapter 9
- Sexuality, acknowledging, Chapter 6, Chapter 9
- Shareholdings, Chapter 10
- Sieges, Chapter 16
- Signposts, Chapter 6
- Slander, see defamation
- Smoking and drinking portrayal of, Chapter 8
  - .....in children's programmes, Chapter 8
  - .....religious sensitivities about, Chapter 8
- Social action programming, see Chapter 30
  - .....campaigning groups, Chapter 30
  - .....impartiality, Chapter 30
  - .....and support services and material, see Chapter 31
- Social and anti-social behaviour, imitation of, Chapter 8
- Social research and surreptitious recording, Chapter 5
- Song lyrics, explicit, Chapter 6
- SOS messages, Chapter 26
- Sources
  - .....achieving accuracy, Chapter 2
  - .....reporting statistics, Chapter 2
  - .....reporting accidents and disasters, Chapter 12
- Sources, confidential, Chapter 17
- Sponsored events, Chapter 24, and see Chapter 28
- Sponsored events, titles of, Chapter 28
- Sponsored programmes, Chapter 24
- Sponsored sports events, news coverage of, Chapter 28
- Sponsored sports events, television coverage of, Chapter 28
- Sponsorship
  - .....of BBC events, Chapter 24, Chapter 28
  - .....by BBC magazines, Chapter 28
  - .....on BBC's international television channels, guidelines, Chapter 24
  - .....of presentations and awards, Chapter 28
  - .....of telephone support lines, Chapter 31
- Sports coverage, computer credits in, Chapter 26
- Staged events by terrorist groups, Chapter 18, Chapter 19

Staging and restaging events, Chapter 2  
 Statements made in Parliament, legal protection around reporting, Chapter 33  
 Statistics, accurate use of, Chapter 2  
 Statistics, use of in crime stories, Chapter 15  
 Stereotypes, Chapter 6  
 Stereotypes, hurtful or inaccurate, Chapter 9  
 Stereotypes, regional, Chapter 19  
 Stereotypes in Comedy, Chapter 6  
 Stereotyping, of gays and lesbians, Chapter 9  
 Still photographs, for reporting trauma, Chapter 12  
 Stills of tobacco sponsored sport, Chapter 28  
 Strobing, risks of, Chapter 37  
 Strong language, Chapter 6  
 Strong language referral procedure, Chapter 1  
 Studio polls, Chapter 35  
 Subliminal images, Chapter 37  
 Suffering and distress, Chapter 5, and see Chapter 12  
     .....reusing material, Chapter 21  
 Suicide, Chapter 7, Chapter 8  
 Support services, see Chapter 31  
     .....audience feedback, measuring, Chapter 31  
     .....and CD-Roms, Chapter 31  
     .....and Ceefax, Chapter 31  
     .....and Commercial Policy Guidelines, Chapter 31  
     .....Credits for, Chapter 31  
     ....."Dial and listen" Information lines, Chapter 31  
     .....Distribution of support material, Chapter 31  
     .....factsheets and booklets, Chapter 31  
     .....funding for support services, Chapter 31  
     .....helplines, Chapter 31  
     .....joint initiatives, Chapter 31  
     .....online services and the Internet, Chapter 31  
     .....paying for via premium rate number, Chapter 31  
     .....social action programmes, Chapter 30  
     .....social action programmes and support services and material, Chapter 30  
     .....support material, distribution of, Chapter 31  
     .....telephone helplines, Chapter 31  
     .....trails, Chapter 31  
 Surreptitious recording, Chapter 4, and see Chapter 5  
     .....approval of, Chapter 5  
     .....comedy and entertainment, Chapter 5  
     .....disguising identities, Chapter 5  
     ....."fishing expeditions", Chapter 5  
     .....general principles of, Chapter 5  
     .....Of grief and distress, Chapter 5  
     .....investigating crime, Chapter 5  
     .....long lenses, use of, Chapter 5  
     .....made by others, Chapter 5  
     .....mandatory referral, Chapter 1  
     .....of people in private, Chapter 5  
     .....in public places, Chapter 5  
     .....recording telephone calls, Chapter 5  
     .....re-use of, Chapter 21  
     .....social research, Chapter 5  
     .....unattended recording devices ("bugging"), Chapter 5  
     ....."unwarranted infringement of privacy", Chapter 43  
     .....video cameras, use of, Chapter 5, (see also secret recording)  
 Surveys, see opinion polls

T

Tag along raids, Chapter 16  
 Tailoring to time, in interviews, Chapter 13  
 Taste and decency, see Chapter 6  
     .....acquired programmes, Chapter 6  
     .....blasphemy, Chapter 6  
     .....and the BSC, see Chapter 43  
     .....children, Chapter 6  
     .....comedy and entertainment, Chapter 6  
     .....films, Chapter 6  
     .....four letter words, use of, Chapter 6  
     .....four letter words, referral procedure for, Chapter 1, Chapter 6  
     .....game and people shows, Chapter 6  
     .....and international broadcasting, Chapter 6  
     .....language, Chapter 6  
     .....online material, Chapter 6  
     .....phone-ins, Chapter 6  
     .....programme billings and signposting, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7  
     .....Protection of Children Act, 1978, Chapter 6  
     .....racist abuse, Chapter 6  
     .....radio and taste and decency issues, Chapter 6  
     .....religion and comedy, Chapter 6  
     .....religious sensibilities and language, Chapter 6  
     .....re-used material, Chapter 21  
     .....scheduling, Chapter 6, Chapter 7 (see also the Watershed)  
     .....scheduling considerations on radio, Chapter 6  
     .....sex, Chapter 6  
     .....sexual innuendo, Chapter 6  
     .....signposts, Chapter 6  
     .....songs which feature strong language or explicit content, Chapter 6  
     .....stereotypes in comedy, Chapter 6  
     .....strong language, Chapter 6  
     .....television: the Watershed, Chapter 6  
     .....tragic events Chapter 6, and see Chapter 12  
     .....trails on television and radio, Chapter 6  
     .....the Watershed, Chapter 6  
     .....the Watershed and Worldwide television, Chapter 6  
     .....World Service, scheduling considerations on, Chapter 6  
 Telephone calls  
     ....."dial and listen", Chapter 31  
     .....phone-in polls, Chapter 32, Chapter 35  
     .....phone-ins, Chapter 6, Chapter 32  
     .....premium rate, and charity, welfare etc. subjects, Chapter 30, Chapter 32  
     .....and premium rate telephone lines, Chapter 32  
     .....to and from prison, Chapter 15  
     .....recording, Chapter 5  
     .....reporting the results of, Chapter 35  
     .....from viewers and listeners, dealing with, Chapter 41  
 Telephone "doorstep", Chapter 5  
 Telephone helplines, Chapter 31, Chapter 32  
 Telephone voting, Chapter 32  
 Television coverage of sponsored sports events, Chapter 28  
 Television Credit Guidelines, Chapter 24  
 Television Programme Acquisition Department, Chapter 40  
 Television Without Frontiers, European Directive, Chapter 6, Chapter 37  
 Terrorism, see Chapter 18  
     .....bomb warnings, Chapter 18  
     .....individuals at risk, Chapter 18

- .....language and terminology, Chapter 18
- .....staged events, Chapter 18, Chapter 19
- Terrorists, interviews with, Chapter 18
- .....referral procedure for, Chapter 1, Chapter 18
- Tickets, Chapter 22, Chapter 23, Chapter 32
- Titles of sponsored events, Chapter 28
- Tobacco sponsored events, stills of, Chapter 28
- Tobacco sponsored non sporting events, Chapter 28
- Tobacco sponsorship, Chapter 28
- .....voluntary code for coverage of, Chapter 28
- Tone and Tactics, in interviews, Chapter 13
- Trade Marks, see Chapter 38, Chapter 40
- Tragic events, dealing with on Radio and Television, Chapter 6
- Tragic events and non factual programmes, Chapter 12
- Trails
  - .....during children's programmes, Chapter 6
  - .....and commercial channels, Chapter 27
  - .....and commercial products, Chapter 24
  - .....and support services, Chapter 31
  - .....and the Watershed, Chapter 6
  - .....and violence, Chapter 7
  - .....for BBC Products or Publications, Chapter 27
  - .....for the National Lottery, Chapter 23
- Transmitted Material, requests for, Chapter 17
- Trauma, depicting, Chapter 12
- .....in re-used material, Chapter 21
- Trespass, Chapter 5, Chapter 37
  - .....civil trespass, Chapter 37
  - .....criminal trespass, Chapter 37
  - .....in Scotland, Chapter 37

**U**

- Unattended recording devices ("bugging"), Chapter 5
- Undue prominence of branded products and services in programmes, Chapter 25
- Unjust or unfair treatment in a programme, see Chapter 43
- United Kingdom Disasters Emergency Committee, Chapter 30
- Unreasonable demands by interviewees, Chapter 13
- Unsolicited donations, to charity, Chapter 30
- Untransmitted material, requests for, Chapter 17
  - .....access to, Chapter 17
  - .....mandatory referral, Chapter 1
  - .....and police raids, Chapter 16
  - .....viewing of, Chapter 17
- "Unwarranted infringement of privacy" and the BSC, Chapter 43

**V**

- Vandalism, portrayal of, Chapter 8
- Verbal aggression, Chapter 7
- Victims of crime, Chapter 15
- Victims of crime, identification of, Chapter 37
- Victims of sexual offences, identification of, Chapter 37
- Video cameras use of, Chapter 5
- Video and film copyright, Chapter 40
- Video recording from outside sources, use of, Chapter 26
- Viewer and listener competitions, see Chapter 22
- Viewers and listeners correspondence, Chapter 41
- Violence, see Chapter 7
  - .....and acquired programmes, Chapter 7
  - .....and adult drama, Chapter 7

- .....involving animals, Chapter 7
- .....and the BSC, see Chapter 43
- .....against children, Chapter 7
- .....in factual programmes, Chapter 7
- .....in fiction, Chapter 7
- .....in the news, Chapter 7
- .....in programmes for children, Chapter 7, Chapter 8
- .....real life violence, Chapter 7
- .....scheduling, warnings and the Watershed, Chapter 7
- .....verbal aggression, Chapter 7
- .....and the Watershed, Chapter 7
- .....against women, Chapter 7
- Voice-overs, using, Chapter 3
- Voluntary code for coverage of tobacco sponsorship, Chapter 28
- Voting intention polls, Chapter 35
- Voting, interactive, Chapter 35
- Voting by phone, Chapter 32
- Vox pop Interviews, Chapter 35

**W**

- Wales
  - .....National Assembly for, reporting, Chapter 33, Chapter 34
  - .....reporting of, see Chapter 19
  - .....style and language, differences in, Chapter 19
  - .....Welsh Assembly elections, Chapter 34
- War, reporting in times of, Chapter 2
- Watershed, the, Chapter 6
  - .....and language, Chapter 6
  - .....and radio, Chapter 6
  - .....and scheduling, Chapter 6
  - .....and sex, Chapter 6
  - .....and trails, Chapter 6
  - .....and violence, Chapter 7
  - .....and Worldwide Television, Chapter 6, Chapter 7
- Weapons, Chapter 8
  - .....close ups of, in reconstructions of crime, Chapter 15
- Wheelchairs, people using, Chapter 9
- Wildlife filming, see animal filming
- Witnesses, dealing with, Chapter 15
  - .....identification of, Chapter 37
  - .....interviews with, Chapter 15
  - .....mandatory referral, Chapter 1, Chapter 15
  - .....payment of, Chapter 15
- Witnessing of illegal activity by programme makers, Chapter 15
- Women, portrayal of, Chapter 9
- Women, violence against, Chapter 7
- Working abroad, Chapter 3
- World Service and fact sheets and support materials, Chapter 30
- World Service and overseas elections, Chapter 34
- World Service, complaints about, see Chapter 42
- World Service, scheduling considerations on, Chapter 6
- Worldwide Legal Department, Chapter 37
- Worldwide Television and competitions, prizes and games shows, Chapter 22
- Worldwide Television and fact sheets and support materials, Chapter 30
- Worldwide Television and the Watershed, Chapter 6, Chapter 7

**XYZ**

- Youth court proceedings, Chapter 14

**CHAPTER I  
CONSULTATION AND REFERRAL**

- 1 GENERAL
- 2 INDEPENDENT PRODUCTIONS
- 3 WHEN TO REFER
- 4 WHERE TO REFER
- 5 MANDATORY REFERRALS
- 6 THE LAW
- 7 CONFIDENTIALITY
- 8 EDITORIAL POLICY UNIT

**1 GENERAL**

The Producers' Guidelines apply to all the BBC's broadcasting, programmes and services for both domestic and international audiences, whether they are television, radio or online, and whether made by a BBC department or by an independent company for the BBC.

The Guidelines help programme makers navigate their way through difficult editorial issues so that distinctive and sometimes controversial programmes can be made which maintain the highest ethical and editorial standards. The consultation and referral system is designed to help BBC people make, and share, decisions about especially difficult editorial issues.

Any proposal to step outside these guidelines needs to be discussed with someone at a senior level and should be referred to Controller, Editorial Policy.

**2 INDEPENDENT PRODUCTIONS**

Independent productions made for the BBC must observe the same standards as in-house productions and must conform to BBC programme-making policy. Ultimate responsibility for the methods and content of any material commissioned by the BBC rests with the BBC.

Independent producers are expected to observe the Producers' Guidelines and any difficult areas should be identified and discussed at the time of commissioning whenever possible.

**All contracts with an independent programme maker or re-broadcaster must include their obligation to observe all relevant sections of the Producers' Guidelines.** On certain independent commissions it may also be necessary to include an amendment to the standard contract so that the BBC has an influence in the recruitment of researchers as well as other key editorial staff.

The appropriate point of referral for Independent Producers is the relevant BBC Commissioning Executive.

**3 WHEN TO REFER**

The earlier a contentious programme can be referred the better. An early discussion can often enable a way to be found round tricky issues and enable a programme to be made without last minute debate and changes. Late referral benefits no one. If in doubt, refer early.

**4 WHERE TO REFER**

Programme departments carry the main responsibility in the referral system, so programme makers should refer first to their manager or editor. All producers, managers and editors should have a working knowledge of the in the Producers' Guidelines, particularly where they affect their specific programme areas. Individual departments should be able to deal with, and take responsibility for, most queries in the first instance.

The more important and contentious the issue, the higher up it should be referred. This may lead to the relevant Head Of Department, or Commissioning Executive. The first point of referral is always the Editor or Commissioning Executive. If Editorial Policy needs to be consulted the Editor or Executive should make the call.

Editorial Policy should **always** be consulted in the following cases:

- mandatory referrals to Controller, Editorial Policy and Chief Political Adviser, and Chief Adviser (see Section 5 below).
- queries over how to interpret the Producers' Guidelines
- any proposal to step outside the Producers' Guidelines

**5 MANDATORY REFERRALS**

The following controversial matters **must** be referred:

**All of the following must be referred to Controller, Editorial Policy. All should be referred to Heads of Department or Commissioning Executives first:**

- any proposal to interview those directly associated with terrorist acts in the United Kingdom. See Chapter 18
- national security matters, including anything that is the subject of a Defence Advisory Notice. See Chapter 18
- interviews with serious criminals and people sought by the police. See Chapter 16
- payment to criminals or former criminals. See Chapter 15
- any proposal to pay for an interview with a witness in a current or pending criminal trial. See Chapter 15
- any proposal to grant anonymity to anyone trying to evade the law in the United Kingdom. See Chapter 15
- any proposal to record or attend a specific crime. See Chapter 15
- any proposal to enter a prison to conduct an interview with a prisoner for broadcast without the permission from the prison authorities. See Chapter 15
- any proposal to publish the name of a released sex offender who has served their sentence, when that name has not been made public by the Police. See Chapter 15

- using an unattended recording device on private property. See Chapter 5
- broadcasting any surreptitious recording originally made for legal or note taking purposes see Chapter 5
- any proposal to show or feature people in a live broadcast for entertainment purposes using a hidden camera or microphone. See Chapter 5
- broadcasting a recording made secretly by anyone outside the BBC. See Chapter 5
- "doorstepping without prior approach"- confronting an interviewee whilst recording, when there has been no prior approach for an interview, and the interviewee has no expectation of being approached. See Chapter 4
- requests from outside the BBC to see or obtain untransmitted recorded materials. See Chapter 17
- any proposal to feature a real person in a drama where their permission, or the permission of their surviving relatives has not been secured. See Chapter 2

If any of the above have a connection with Northern Ireland they must also be referred to **Controller Northern Ireland** or in the case of News programmes **Head of News and Current Affairs Northern Ireland**.

**Both of the following must be referred to the Chief Political Advisor, Editorial Policy:**

- commissioning of opinion polls on any political issue or issue of public policy. See Chapter 35
- interviews with the leaders of any UK political party (short news interviews need not be referred). See Chapter 33

**Other important issues listed below must also be referred:**

- any long term programme intentions about **Northern Ireland**, whether factual or otherwise, should be discussed with Controller Northern Ireland or nominee. Proposals should be discussed at an early stage. Repeated consultations may be necessary with the BBC in Belfast during the making of the programme. See Chapter 19
- **Strong language** - the use of the most offensive four letter words must be approved by the relevant Channel Controller, in the case of the World Service language sections, the Head of Region, and for online services the Director of BBC ONLINE. See Chapter 6
- **Surreptitious recording** – all proposals must be referred to the head of programme department, National Controller, Commissioning Executive or in the World Service, the Head of Region with further reference to Controller Editorial Policy if necessary. See Chapter 5

- any request from programmes outside BBC News for interviews with, or exclusive appearances by, members of the Royal Family must be discussed with the BBC's Royal Liaison Officer
- any proposal to use a tourist visa to enter a country when the intention is to work for the BBC must be referred to the relevant Head of Department. See Chapter 3
- any proposed advertisement to recruit contributors for factual programmes must be referred via Department Heads, Commissioning Executives or their equivalent to the relevant Directorate representative. See Chapter 3

**The Controller of the relevant Nation (Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland) must be informed in advance in writing of:**

- plans by producers outside the nation to produce programme material which significantly deals with national issues or themes, or which is based in the relevant nation.
- in the case of Ireland, Controller Northern Ireland should also be alerted to all significant projects involving the Republic of Ireland as well as those about Northern Ireland.

**Chief Adviser Editorial Policy (Multimedia and Commercial) must be consulted in advance about:**

- Any proposal for outside sponsorship of a BBC event. See Chapter 28
- Any proposal for a BBC magazine to sponsor an established outside event mounted by a non-BBC organisation. See Chapter 28
- Any coverage of a BBC event mounted by BBC Worldwide in conjunction with BBC magazines. See Chapter 28
- Any proposal to mount coverage of a non Sports event sponsored by a tobacco related brand. See Chapter 28

## 6 THE LAW

Broadcasting is fraught with legal risks, such as defamation or contempt, which can affect any area of programming. Legal problems may arise not just with what we broadcast but with how we make programmes. The BBC has its own team of programme lawyers and they need to be consulted at the earliest possible stage about programmes which may run legal risks.

While lawyers can offer legal advice, the final decision remains an editorial one. If programme makers wish to continue with a programme despite legal advice they must refer upwards to Head of Department, National Controller, or Commissioning Executive (see also Matters Of Law, chapters 37-40 of these guidelines).

## 7 CONFIDENTIALITY



The protection of confidential sources is a serious matter for any journalist or programme maker and has potential consequences for the Corporation as a whole. In circumstances where legal action might be taken to try and discover a source it will normally be appropriate to refer to a high level before agreeing to maintain confidentiality (see also Chapter 17: Confidentiality and Release of Programme Material).

#### 8 EDITORIAL POLICY UNIT

The Editorial Policy Unit offers advice on specific problems and issues that programme makers may have and how the BBC's editorial policies apply. Heads of Department and Commissioning Executives who need advice about difficult editorial issues can consult the Unit, which offers a 24 hour service.

The Unit draws up and reviews the Producers' Guidelines, and other editorial policy, and can offer advice on interpreting the Guidelines.

The Producers' Guidelines are also available on the Editorial Policy website on the BBC's Gateway intranet. The site also contains other relevant guidelines (e.g. BBC ONLINE Guidelines), and urgent advice on specific editorial policy issues.

### CHAPTER 2 IMPARTIALITY & ACCURACY

#### CHAPTER 2:

#### IMPARTIALITY & ACCURACY

##### PART ONE:

#### 1 OUR JOURNALISTIC VALUES

#### 2 IMPARTIALITY IN GENERAL

#### 3 FACTUAL PROGRAMMES

#### 4 NON-FACTUAL & ARTS PROGRAMMES

#### 5 PARTY POLITICAL, PARTY ELECTION, AND MINISTERIAL BROADCASTS

##### PART TWO:

#### 1 ACHIEVING ACCURACY

#### 2 CORRECTING MISTAKES

#### 3 ACCURATE LANGUAGE

#### 4 REPORTING STATISTICS

#### 5 RECONSTRUCTION

#### 6 STAGING AND RE-STAGING EVENTS

#### 7 USE OF COMPUTER GRAPHICS

#### 8 USE OF LIBRARY FOOTAGE

#### 9 CHECKING RECORDED OR REPEATED PROGRAMMES

##### PART ONE

#### 1 OUR JOURNALISTIC VALUES

Accurate, robust, independent, and impartial, journalism is the DNA of the BBC. Audiences should always feel they can trust our words and our deeds. If we live in a more diverse and fragmented society, the BBC must continue to stand out as a place where people feel they are being told openly and honestly about what is happening in the world; where they can rely on unbiased and impartial reporting and analysis to help them make sense of events; and where a debate can take place in which relevant and significant voices are heard, including those who have uncomfortable questions to ask.

The BBC's journalistic promise is rooted in five basic editorial values set out in the Neil Report (June 2004) on which there can be no compromise. They are:

- Truth and Accuracy
- Serving the Public Interest
- Impartiality and Diversity of Opinion
- Independence
- Accountability

##### Truth and Accuracy

We will always strive to establish the truth of what has happened as best we can.

We aim for the highest possible levels of accuracy and precision of language. Our journalism will be well sourced, based on sound evidence, and thoroughly tested. It will rely on fact rather than opinion, and be set in context. We will be honest and open about what we don't know and avoid unfounded speculation.

##### Serving the Public Interest

We seek to report stories of significance, striving to make them interesting and relevant to all our audiences. We will be vigorous in trying to drive to the heart of the story, and well informed when explaining it. Our specialist expertise will bring authority and understanding to the complex world in which we live. We will be robust, but fair and open-minded, in asking searching questions of those who hold public office and in reporting that which it is in the public interest to reveal. Our news and current affairs journalism will never campaign, but pursue journalistically valid issues and stories, without giving undue prominence to any one agenda. We will provide a comprehensive forum for public debate at all levels.

##### Impartiality and Diversity of Opinion

We report the facts first. Understand and explain their context. Provide professional judgements where appropriate, but never promote our own personal opinions. Openness

and independence of mind is at the heart of practising accuracy and impartiality. We will strive to be fair and open minded by reflecting all significant strands of opinion, and by exploring the range and conflict of views. Testing a wide range of views with the evidence is essential if we are to give our audiences the greatest possible opportunity to decide for themselves on the issues of the day.

#### Independence

The BBC is independent of both state and partisan interest and will strive to be an independent monitor of powerful institutions and individuals. We will make our journalistic judgments for sound editorial reasons, not as the result of improper political or commercial pressure, or personal prejudice. We will always resist undue pressure from all vested interests, and will jealously protect the independence of our editorial judgments on behalf of our audiences. Whatever groups or individuals may wish us to say or do, we will make all decisions based on the BBC's editorial values.

#### Accountability

Our first loyalty is to the BBC's audiences to whom we are accountable. Their continuing trust in the BBC's journalism is a crucial part of our contract with them as licence payers. We will act in good faith at all times, by dealing fairly and openly with the audience and contributors to our output. We will be open in admitting mistakes when they are made, unambiguous about apologising for them, and encourage a culture of willingness to learn from them.

These values are the code of conduct for every person who practises journalism in the BBC at whatever level. But editors have a special responsibility as the day-to-day custodians of BBC values. Senior commissioning and programme editors must take an important role of leadership in ensuring that all BBC presenters and journalists embrace these values. The scale of BBC journalism carries risk. An important leadership role of any editor is to realise at what point it is necessary to take senior editorial or legal advice.

## 2 IMPARTIALITY IN GENERAL

Due impartiality lies at the heart of the BBC. It is a core value and no area of programming is exempt from it. All BBC programmes and services should show open-mindedness, fairness and a respect for truth.

The BBC is committed to providing programmes of great diversity which reflect the full range of audiences' interests, beliefs and perspectives. Representing the whole spectrum is a requirement on all programme genres from arts to news & current affairs, from sport to drama, from comedy to documentaries, from entertainment to education and religion. No significant strand of thought should go unreflected or under represented on the BBC.

In order to achieve that range, the BBC is free to make programmes about any subject it chooses, and to make programmes which explore, or are presented from, a particular point of view.

The BBC applies due impartiality to all its broadcasting and services, both to domestic and international audiences.

In achieving due impartiality the term "due" is to be interpreted as meaning adequate or appropriate to the nature of the subject and the type of programme. There are generally more than two sides to any issue and impartiality in factual programmes may not be achieved simply by mathematical balance in which each view is complemented by an equal and opposing one.

The Agreement accompanying the BBC's Charter specifies that the Corporation should treat controversial subjects with due accuracy and impartiality both in news programmes and other programmes that deal with matters of public policy or of political or industrial controversy. It states that due impartiality does not require absolute neutrality on every issue or detachment from fundamental democratic principles. The BBC is explicitly forbidden from broadcasting its own opinions on current affairs or matters of public policy, except broadcasting issues.

Special considerations, both legal and editorial, may apply during the campaign periods for elections (see Chapter 34: Broadcasting During Elections).

□ This Chapter of the Producers' Guidelines constitutes the BBC's code as required by section 5.3 of the Agreement associated with the BBC's Charter, and gives guidance as to the rules to be observed under section 5.1 (c) of the Agreement. The relevant sections of the Agreement appear as an appendix to these Guidelines.

## 3 FACTUAL PROGRAMMES

### 3.1 Due impartiality within a programme

A factual programme dealing with controversial public policy or matters of political or industrial controversy will meet its commitment to due impartiality if it is fair, accurate and maintains a proper respect for truth. A programme may choose to explore any subject, at any point on the spectrum of debate, as long as there are good editorial reasons for doing so. It may choose to test or report one side of a particular argument. However, it must do so with fairness and integrity. It should ensure that opposing views are not misrepresented.

There will be times where a wide range of views is appropriate, and times when a narrow range is acceptable. The key is for programme makers to be fair to their subject matter, and to ensure that right of reply obligations are met (see below).

Sometimes it will be necessary to ensure that all main viewpoints are reflected in a programme or in linked programmes, for example, when the issues involved are highly controversial and a defining or decisive moment in the controversy is imminent.

### 3.2 News programmes

The Agreement specifies that news should be presented with due accuracy and impartiality.

Reporting should be dispassionate, wide-ranging and well-informed. In reporting matters of industrial or political controversy the main differing views should be given due weight in the period during which the controversy is active. News judgements will take account of events as well as arguments, and editorial discretion must determine whether it is appropriate for a range of views to be included within a single programme or item.

News programmes should offer viewers and listeners an intelligent and informed account of issues that enables them to form their own views. A reporter may express a professional, journalistic judgement but not a personal opinion. Judgement must be recognised as perceptive and fair. Audiences should not be able to gauge from BBC programmes the personal views of presenters and reporters on controversial issues of public policy.

### 3.3 Presenters

Presenters are the public face and voice of the BBC's journalism. The tone and approach that they take to stories has a significant impact on the perceptions of the BBC's impartiality. Their presentation needs at all time to embody the core editorial values of the BBC.

#### 3.4 Where a BBC programme or the BBC is the story

On occasions when a programme broadcast by the BBC, or the BBC itself, becomes the story, we need to ensure that we do not put ourselves in a position where our impartiality is put into question or presenters or reporters are placed in a potential conflict of interest. Our reporting must remain accurate, impartial and fair even where the BBC is the story. It will be inappropriate to refer to either the BBC or the programme as "we". There should also be clear editorial separation between those reporting the story and those responsible for presenting the BBC's case.

If the programme itself, or an interview by the programme's presenter or presenters is the centre of controversy, consideration should be given by senior editorial figures to whether any follow up interviews on that programme should be undertaken by different presenters. Editorial Policy advice should be sought.

#### 3.5 The series provision

The Agreement provides that in observing due impartiality a series of programmes may be considered as a whole. For this purpose there are two types of series:

- *a number of programmes where each programme is clearly linked to the other(s) and which deal with the same or related issues.*

Programmes may achieve impartiality over an entire series, or over a number of programmes within a series. The intention to achieve impartiality across a number of programmes should be planned in advance and normally made clear to audiences.

- *a number of programmes broadcast under the same title, where widely disparate issues are tackled from one edition to the next.*

In this type of series due impartiality should normally be exercised within each individual programme.

Special considerations apply to "personal view" and "authored" programmes (see below).

Sometimes it may be appropriate, in order to achieve due impartiality, to link a programme or a series with a follow-up discussion programme which looks at the issues raised and allows other views to be put. Audiences should normally be informed of the follow-up programme when the first programme is broadcast. The follow-up programme should

closely follow the original programme or be within a reasonable period of time after it having regard to the length of the series.

### 3.6 Personal view programmes

The BBC has a long tradition of series which allow open access to the airwaves for a wide range of individuals or groups to offer a personal view or advance a contentious argument. These can add significantly to public understanding, especially when they bring forward unusual and rarely heard perspectives on topics that are well-known from orthodox viewpoints. They have a valuable position in the schedules. However, personal view programmes which deal with matters of public policy, or of political or industrial controversy entail special obligations:

- The nature of a personal view programme should be signalled clearly to audiences in advance
- Editors should ensure that these programmes do not seriously misrepresent opposing viewpoints. There should be proper respect for factual accuracy.
- It may be appropriate to provide an opportunity to respond to a programme, for example in a right to reply programme or in a pre-arranged discussion programme.
- It is not appropriate for BBC staff, or for regular BBC presenters or reporters normally associated with news or public policy related programmes, to present personal view programmes on controversial matters.

While a series of personal view programmes which is a long-running fixture in the schedules has no need to give equal time to every relevant point of view on each subject covered, there must be a sufficiently broad range of views from a wide variety of perspectives within a series.

For an occasional series of personal view programmes dealing with different aspects of the same subject matter it will normally be necessary to achieve impartiality within the series.

### 3.7 Series that present a particular perspective

When a series is "authored" by an individual or a group representing a body of thought, it should maintain a proper respect for facts and truth and should not ignore opposing points of view. Special care is needed if a series takes a particular approach to a controversial issue. This might reflect an original body of thought or research which may not be readily balanced, or the analysis of a respected specialist in a particular field.

In the case of such "authored" series that take a particular approach to matters of political or industrial controversy, care should be taken to ensure that during the year preceding or the year following the series a sufficiently broad range of views and perspectives has been included in a similar type of series or in programming of similar weight.

### 3.8 "Major matters"

Due impartiality is required in relation to all matters of public policy or industrial controversy. But due impartiality is of special importance in relation to what paragraph 5.4 of the Agreement refers to as "major matters". For networks these would be issues of significance for the whole of the United Kingdom, such as a UK-wide public sector strike, or highly contentious new legislation on the eve of a crucial Commons vote. In the nations and regions, major matters would be issues of comparative importance having considerable impact on the nation or region.

In dealing with major matters of controversy editors should ensure that a full range of significant views and perspectives are heard during the period in which the controversy is active.

### 3.9 Right of reply

Where a programme reveals evidence of iniquity or incompetence, or where a strong, damaging critique of an individual or institution is laid out, there is a presumption that those criticised be given a fair opportunity to respond. There may be occasions when this is inappropriate (usually for legal or overriding ethical reasons) in which case the Head of Department should be consulted. It may then be appropriate to consider whether an alternative opportunity should be offered for reply at a subsequent date.

### 3.10 Reporting in times of National Emergency and Military Action

In times of emergency or when a military action is under way, journalism may be constrained by questions of national security. Such times are particularly testing for journalists, as for others. Matters involving risk to, and loss of, life need handling with the utmost sensitivity to national mood and feeling.

The public has, at the same time, a particular need for fast, trustworthy news and measured assessment. Good journalism will be based on all available facts. The concept of impartiality still applies. All views should be reflected in due proportion to mirror the depth and spread of opinion in the United Kingdom.

### 3.11 Factual Programmes Not Dealing with Matters of Political or Industrial Controversy

Documentaries, magazine and feature programmes of various kinds often properly concentrate on a narrow area or give an opportunity, for example in an interview, for a single view to be expressed.

Overall, such output seeks to represent reality. There remains an obligation to ensure that a proper range of views and perspectives is aired over a reasonable time. This calls for systematic review and continuing discussion so that the output builds into a complete mosaic.

### 3.12 Sensitivity to Offence and Outrage

In aiming to record all pertinent opinions programmes will sometimes need to report on or interview people whose views will cause serious offence to many. In such cases programme

editors must be convinced, after referral where necessary, that there is a material public interest to be served which outweighs the offence.

Questioning should not be hectoring, but when we interview people whose behaviour or views cause real outrage we need to be sensitive to the opinions of the audience. Questioning must be unmistakably firm, and answers should be challenged robustly and repeatedly if necessary. It would be inappropriate for an interviewer to express personal offence or indignation, but the questioning should recognise the public mood.

On occasion, particular events will greatly raise the level of emotion and it will be harder for an audience to accept an impartial programme. Programme makers should not shy away from tackling difficult issues in such circumstances, but careful consideration should be given to the timing and the tone of the programme.

## 4. NON FACTUAL AND ARTS PROGRAMMES

### 4.1 Drama, Arts, Music and Entertainment Programmes

All these areas need to offer artists, writers and entertainers generous scope for individual expression.

Programme executives in drama, arts and entertainment have a responsibility to ensure that the BBC reflects the widest possible range of talent and perspective internationally, nationally and regionally. This is a matter for regular review in the programme areas.

### 4.2 Drama Portraying Contemporary Situations & Drama-Documentaries

When drama realistically portrays living people or contemporary situations in a controversial fashion, it has an obligation to be accurate - to do justice to the main facts. If the drama strives for a fair, impartial and rounded view of events, no problem arises. If it is an accurate but, nonetheless, partisan and partial portrayal of a controversial issue, the commissioning executive should proceed only if convinced that the insight and excellence of the work justify the platform offered; and that it will be judged honest, thoughtful and stimulating.

A clear distinction should be drawn between plays based broadly on fact or real characters and dramatised documentaries which seek to reconstruct actual events. Audiences should be clear as to whether they are watching fact or fiction.

Any dramatised reconstruction of a controversial current event should observe the standards of fairness which apply to factual programmes dealing with such issues. It is inevitable that the creative realisation of some elements, such as characterisation, dialogue and atmosphere, will introduce a fictional dimension, but this should not be allowed to distort the known facts. (see also section 7: Reconstruction in Part Two of this chapter).

### 4.3 Portrayal of Real People in Drama

Whenever appropriate, persons portrayed in a drama or their surviving near relatives should be notified in advance and, where possible, their co-operation secured. Where their co-operation or approval is withheld on reasonable grounds the portrayal should not proceed.

However, there may be occasions where the BBC will decide to proceed with such a portrayal without the approval of the individual, where it can be shown that the programme serves a substantial public interest and that the portrayal is fair. In deciding whether such a portrayal should proceed, it will be necessary to take into account the extent to which the portrayal can be shown to be based on a substantial and verifiable body of evidence.

In such instances where it is being proposed that the portrayal should proceed without the approval of the individual portrayed, or their surviving near relatives the matter must be referred to Controller Editorial Policy for approval before a commitment is made to the production (see also Chapter 38, Matters of Law: Defamation).

#### 4.4 History in Drama

Questions of accuracy, impartiality and fairness also arise in historical drama. Drama should normally aim to give a fair account of historical events. But there are differing views about history and producers should be aware of the likely critical reaction when they diverge from received opinion. Portrayals of recent history may be particularly sensitive and controversy often arises when drama questions the British role in an historical event.

If a drama of artistic merit is written from an obviously partial standpoint, the producer must consider how to label and publicise it in order to make its nature clear. When a powerful drama of this kind is likely to prove particularly controversial, the BBC will need to consider whether to offer an alternative viewpoint in other types of programmes.

Problems can arise when drama combines fictional characters with historical figures. Producers should be certain that they are clearly aware of what is established fact and what is fiction and that the public is not confused by the mixture.

#### 4.5 Fact, Fiction and Labelling

Great care must be taken in continuity announcements, trailers and promotional material to ensure that the audience is aware of the nature of the drama. Where fact and fiction are mixed the public should be made aware of this. It must be made clear that the drama is only an interpretation of a current or historical situation.

#### 5 PARTY POLITICAL, PARTY ELECTION, and MINISTERIAL BROADCASTS

The content of party political broadcasts, party election broadcasts, and Ministerial broadcasts (together with Opposition replies) is primarily a matter for the originating party or the government and therefore is not required to achieve impartiality. The BBC remains responsible for the broadcasts as publisher, however, and requires the parties to observe proper standards of legality, taste and decency.

All such broadcasts must be clearly labelled, and audiences must be in no doubt that they are hearing the views of a particular party.

The BBC seeks to achieve impartiality in the allocation of such broadcasts (see Chapter 36: Party Broadcasts).

## PART TWO: ACCURACY

### I ACHIEVING ACCURACY

The BBC must be accurate. Research for all programmes must be thorough. We must be prepared to check, cross-check and seek advice, to ensure this. Wherever possible we should gather information first-hand by being there ourselves or, where that is not possible, by talking to those who were. Accuracy can be difficult to achieve. It is important to distinguish between first and second-hand sources. An error in one report is often recycled in another. Material already broadcast and newspaper cuttings can get out-of-date quickly or simply be wrong.

**Note taking:** Accurate and reliable note taking is essential. Failure to take good notes, and keep them safe, can lead to inaccuracy and expensive and lost law suits. Wherever practicable, interviews with sources should be recorded on tape. In circumstances where recording might inhibit the source, full shorthand or longhand notes are the best alternative. Journalists should not rely on memory but refer back to their notes or tape. Writing up a fuller version of an interview from memory afterwards is less reliable than "live" notes. Any key points not found in the notes should be explicitly checked with the source before use.

With serious and major allegations, a full and accurate note of conversations is an essential element in the BBC being confident about the broadcast. If notes give rise to any doubts whatsoever about what was said, then the journalist must check their accuracy with the source before broadcast. In any event, the editor as publisher should be satisfied as to the fullness and accuracy of the note.

**Sources:** Programmes should be reluctant to rely on a single source. Where an unnamed single source is relied upon, the story itself should be of significant public interest, and the source of proven credibility and reliability, as well as in a position to have sufficient knowledge of the events featured in the story. Granting anonymity to a source should never be done casually or automatically. When the BBC uses an unnamed source we are asking our audiences to trust us even more with the information we are broadcasting. A named on the record source is always to be preferred.

**Anonymous sources:** However, the BBC will continue to report stories based on a single source where the story is one of significant public interest and the correct procedures have been followed. With an anonymous source, especially a source making serious allegations, the audience should be told why the source is anonymous and, in the BBC's view, credible. If the source of an allegation has to remain anonymous, we must give the audience as much accurate information as is compatible with protecting the identity of the source. We should explain why the source is anonymous, why the programme is confident about using this person as the source, and why we believe that source to be credible.

We should never mislead the audience about the nature of an anonymous source; it is better to explain that we cannot give any information rather than offer speculation. Protection of confidential sources is a fundamental principle of journalism.

We must never exaggerate the importance of an anonymous single source. The credibility of an anonymous single source must be evaluated by the programme editor as the publisher. They must be in a position to establish in detail the pedigree and provenance of the source.

Fair dealing requires that when a source of information demands to remain anonymous as a condition of giving the information, the BBC must agree precisely with that source the way he or she is to be described on air. There is a need to balance a source's desire for

confidentiality with the need to ensure that editors are able to reach informed judgements about whether a story should be broadcast.

As a general principle, whenever a story involves an anonymous source, the relevant editor has the right to be told the name of that source. However the editor has the discretion not to exercise that right. The seniority and track record of the correspondent is a relevant consideration. In extreme cases involving serious allegations, the head of the division should also have the right to know the name of a source. Some sources may insist that a reporter does not reveal their identity to any other BBC person. We should resist this. If this happens, the reporter should make clear that information so obtained may not be broadcast

The story itself should be discussed thoroughly within the editorial chain before broadcast.

**Anonymous sources and allegations:** Where it is proposed to broadcast serious allegations made by an anonymous source or sources about an individual or an organisation, it should be referred first to the relevant editor and then on to his or her output Head. The referral is to establish whether the story meets a public interest test; to probe, as far as is practicable, its accuracy, the credibility of the source, their possible motivation or level of knowledge, and their reliability; what legal issues may arise, and whether the allegations have yet been put to the subject of the story. (See later Fairness section.) Accuracy is more important than speed.

**Scripting and two-ways:** The report will need to be carefully scripted to flag the nature of the allegation that is being made and be followed carefully. It will normally be appropriate to attribute clearly when the allegation comes from an anonymous source, indicate whether there has been independent corroboration, and make it clear that the allegation is being made by the source not the BBC.

Live, unscripted two-way exchanges should normally not be used to report allegations of serious wrong doing. The editor must decide whether a live two-way is the appropriate and safest way to break the story. The seniority and track record of the correspondent is a relevant consideration.

When later programmes follow up on the original story, the editors should ensure that they understand the terms in which the allegations are to be reported.

**Agency reports:** The reliability of news agency reports, especially from overseas, varies according to the agency, the bureau and the reporter. It is good practice not to run a story from one agency unless it can be substantiated by a BBC correspondent or another agency. The World Service newsroom and language services can often advise on agency and bureau reliability, as well as providing context for foreign news stories and advice on pronunciation and geography.

**Weighing the facts:** Accuracy is often more than a question of getting the facts right. All the relevant facts and information should be weighed to get at the truth of what is reported or described. If an issue is controversial, relevant opinions as well as facts may need to be considered. If an item is legally contentious, its accuracy must be capable of withstanding scrutiny in a court of law.

## 2 CORRECTING MISTAKES

When a serious factual error does occur it is important to admit it clearly and frankly. Saying what was wrong as well as putting it right can be an important element in making an effective correction.

Inaccuracy may lead to a complaint of unfairness. Where an error is acknowledged, a timely correction may dissuade the aggrieved party from complaining.

Where we may have broadcast a defamatory inaccuracy BBC lawyers should be consulted about the wording of a correction. An appropriate correction may help in our defence of a court action: an inappropriate one could exacerbate the defamation.

## 3 ACCURATE LANGUAGE

It is not sufficient that we get our facts right. We must use language fairly. That means avoiding exaggeration. We must not use language inadvertently so as to suggest value judgements, commitment or lack of objectivity.

## 4 REPORTING STATISTICS

Statistics should be used or reported carefully and in context. It is extremely difficult to convey the context of statistical evidence in a few words, so programmes may need to find time to explain perspectives. With regularly published sets of statistics this may mean giving the trend of the figures over a relevant period. Even then statistical evidence should not be accorded more weight than could stand scrutiny. Sources should always be indicated so the audience can form a judgement about the status of the evidence.

## 5 RECONSTRUCTION

The reconstruction or re-staging of events in factual programmes can be a great help in explaining an issue. It must always be done truthfully with an awareness of what is reliably known. Nothing significant which is not known should be invented without acknowledgement. Reconstructions should not over dramatise events in a misleading or sensationalistic way.

Reconstructions should be identified clearly so that no-one is misled. Repeated labelling may be necessary to achieve this.

When a programme invents a realistic scene based on real cases but without reconstructing any one case this needs to be made clear.

News programmes should not normally stage reconstructions of current events. The risk of confusing the viewer is too high. But reconstructions staged by others (perhaps by the police investigating a crime) may of course be reported in the usual way.

## 6 STAGING AND RE-STAGING EVENTS

Factual programmes should always present a fair and accurate picture of the situations they portray. Audiences should never be misled by what they see or hear in a programme. However, there are few factual films which do not involve some intervention from the director, even those which are commonly described as "fly on the wall" or observational documentaries.

The use of reconstruction, (see Section 7: Reconstruction), where all events are quite explicitly re-staged for the camera or microphone and where the programme team was never present when the events first happened, is a separate technique and must be labelled as such.

However production methods, especially in television with single camera location shooting, sometimes mean that it is impossible to record all events exactly as they happen. Many of the techniques that are used to overcome this have long been part of the accepted grammar of programme-making. The conventional skills employed to edit sound and picture together are widely understood and accepted by audiences.

Such techniques may sometimes involve a departure from the strict chronology of events. Additional bridging shots known as cut-aways may be edited in to shorten a sequence. Directors may wish to capture a variety of shots from a variety of angles to cover a sequence imaginatively. So long as editing, changes in shot order and, indeed, new juxtapositions of shots do not distort the story told and so mislead viewers, this is part of the normal grammar of film production.

Factual programme-makers may sometimes legitimately ask contributors to do things for the camera twice or to repeat routine things, which they do regularly, but on this particular occasion are doing for the camera. (e.g. the set-up shot for an interview). But all such interventions require carefully balanced judgements. We should never be so embarrassed by the techniques that we use that we cannot share them with our audience.

Commentary must always respect the truth and should never be used to give the audience a dishonest impression of events.

Some types of documentary film are deliberately stylised and the set-up is totally clear to the viewer. For example, in a stylised documentary about front gardens, it would not be misleading to the audience to ask the owners to stand in front of their garden and stare fixedly at the camera lens.

In judging what is acceptable and unacceptable practice in factual programmes, programme-makers must ensure that:

- programmes truthfully and fairly depict what has happened
- programmes never do anything to mislead audiences
- while it may, on occasions, be legitimate to re-shoot something that is a routine and insignificant action, it is not legitimate to stage or re-stage action which is *significant to the development of the action or narrative, without clearly signalling this to the audience*
- contributors should *not* be asked to re-enact *significant* events, without this being made clear in the film. (This does not preclude programme-makers arranging to record sequences at a particular time to fit in with the timetable of a shoot)
- if significant events have been arranged for the cameras (including the recruitment of contributors) that would not have taken place *at all* without the intervention of the programme-makers, then this must be made clear to the audience

- shots and sequences should never be inter-cut to suggest that they were happening at the same time if the resulting juxtaposition of material leads to a distorted and misleading impression of events

## 7 USE OF COMPUTER GRAPHICS

Computerised graphics give programmes great scope for the creation of arresting and informative images to aid story-telling, but there are ethical dangers. Viewers must not be misled into believing that they are seeing something which is a "real" document, event or subject when in fact it is a creation of a graphic artist.

Programmes must not lay themselves open to a charge of deception. When composite images are created it should be clear that the graphic is not a simple photographic image. On occasion it may be appropriate to signal, verbally or visually, that what is being depicted is an illustration.

## 8 USE OF LIBRARY MATERIAL

Library material used to illustrate a current issue or event must be clearly labelled if there is any danger of confusion. Audiences must never be misled about what they are seeing or hearing. It is important not to use library material of one event to illustrate another in such a way as to suggest the audience is witnessing something it is not.

Beware of causing pain or offence through use of inappropriate or outdated material. Try to avoid identifiable shots of people who are incidental to the subject: they may have died since the pictures were taken. Avoid repeated use of the same incident to illustrate a general theme: the same driver being breathalysed repeatedly is unfair and may be defamatory.

Avoid needless repetition of traumatic library material, especially if it features identifiable people. Use of material depicting pain, suffering, violence, grief or death becomes less defensible as the original event passes into history. It should not be used as wallpaper or to illustrate a general theme and should not normally be used in headline sequences. Library pictures of identifiable grieving or distressed people must be used only after referral to a senior level in the programme department.

Avoid inadvertently perpetuating racial, sexual or other stereotypes by careless use of library pictures.

When non-news programmes want to use news material they should always check with the relevant news library to make sure there are no special considerations.

## 9 CHECKING RECORDED OR REPEATED PROGRAMMES

Programmes recorded some time before transmission or being repeated must be checked to make sure they have not been overtaken by events, for example the death of a contributor or the charging of an offender. In some cases, a preceding announcement may be appropriate. In others, the alteration or removal of some material may be required. Programme makers know their own material best and are most likely to be sensitive to an event with implications for a programme they have been involved with. It is important for them to inform Heads of Department and not rely on others to make the connection (see

also Chapter 21: Re-Use and Reversioning of Television Programmes)

### CHAPTER 3:

#### FAIRNESS AND STRAIGHT DEALING

##### 1 GENERAL

##### 2 FAIR DEALING

##### 3 RESEARCH

##### 4 ADVERTISING FOR CONTRIBUTORS

##### 5 REFUSALS TO TAKE PART

##### 6 FAIRNESS AND INDEPENDENCE

##### 7 EMBARGOES

##### 8 ANONYMITY

##### 9 OBSERVING LOCAL LAW

#### 1 GENERAL

The BBC's commitment to robust, original journalism means that there are times when the BBC will make allegations as a result of conducting its own investigations. But it is a guiding principle of BBC journalism that we are fair to all – fair to those against whom allegations are being made, fair to the audience, and fair to contributors.

The principles outlined in these guidelines should be observed regardless of location. Wherever in the world the BBC operates contributors should be treated with fairness and respect. Producers and reporters working overseas should bear in mind that items they prepare for broadcast in Britain may be broadcast back to the country concerned as well.

#### 2 FAIR DEALING

Programmes should be based on fairness, openness and straight dealing. This is important to everyone involved. It reflects concern for the interests of the programme, the interests of the people who appear in it and the interests of the audience. All these interests are important, although none of them is automatically more important than the others.

From the start, programme makers should be as clear as they can be about the nature of the programme and its purpose. Unless there are special and legitimate considerations of confidentiality they should be open about their plans, and honest with anyone taking part in a programme.

**Fairness to contributors:** Contributors may be unfamiliar with broadcasting. Processes and assumptions that a professional may regard as obvious may not be shared by a layperson.

Whether they are public figures or ordinary citizens contributors ought to be able to assume that they will be dealt with in a fair way. They should not feel misled, deceived or

misrepresented before, during or after the programme, unless there is a clear public interest, when dealing with criminal or anti social activity. Contributors have a right to know:

- what a programme is about
- what kind of contribution they are expected to make - an interview or a part in a discussion, for example. If invited to take part in a debate or a discussion they should be told in advance about the range of views being represented, and wherever possible, who the other participants will be
- whether their contribution will be live or recorded and whether it will be edited. They should not be given a guarantee that their contribution will be broadcast, but nor should we normally record a substantial contribution unless we expect to use it.

The need for fairness applies equally to people asked for help or advice in the preparation of programmes. They should be told why they were contacted and what the programme is about.

***In news and factual programmes, there may be very rare occasions when it is acceptable for programme makers not to reveal the full purpose of the programme to a contributor where there is an overriding public interest such as exposing crime or significant anti social behaviour, exposing misleading claims which could impact on the health, safety, well-being or security of others, revealing incompetence in office, or exposing corruption or injustice.***

The deception should be the minimum necessary in proportion to the subject matter. In such rare cases, referral to the departmental head and Controller Editorial Policy is mandatory.

**Fairness to those accused:** Where serious allegations of wrong doing are to be made, those allegations should normally be put to the persons or organisations concerned by the programme (See also 3.9 Right of Reply under Impartiality) in time for a considered response before transmission. Where a number of individuals, or different organisations, or parts of an organisation are involved, care should be taken to ensure that all key parties have been contacted. The approach should be honest, clear and specific about what is being alleged and open-minded as to the response. It is the responsibility of whoever makes the approach to make and keep a clear record of the contact, logging the time, the name of the person spoken to and the key elements of the exchange.

Legally and ethically, it is essential that the Editor ensures that the nature of the allegation is described in sufficient detail to enable a response and that the approach is properly noted or logged. The weight and strength of any response should be taken into account in deciding how to report the story. It should be broadcast as part of the first transmission of the story.

***However, when the BBC wishes to broadcast an allegation in the public interest which it believes to be true, it may be permissible not to make the approach in order to get the report into the public domain. In these very rare cases, referral to the departmental head and the Controller Editorial Policy is mandatory.***



**Fairness to the audience:** We should give audiences as much information as possible to enable them to form their own view of a story. We should never mislead but explain when we cannot give information rather than offer speculation. Openness and honesty are of the essence.

Contributors to both factual and entertainment programmes should not be patronised or exploited, nor should we be seen to humiliate them (see also Chapter 22: Game Shows and Competitions).

There are separate guidelines covering issues of deception in comedy and light entertainment programmes (see section 9 of Chapter 5: Surreptitious Recording).

Contributors should feel they have been treated decently by the BBC in all our dealings with them, throughout the production process. In programmes that deal with personal trauma or distress continuing contact with contributors may be appropriate to offer them help and reassurance up to the point of transmission and beyond.

Some contributors may ask to see a copy of the finished programme before it is broadcast. The BBC does not usually agree to this, for legal reasons and to maintain editorial independence. However, there may be circumstances under which it is appropriate to allow previews without surrendering editorial control. When we agree to give previews it should be made clear on what terms such a preview will be offered. It is best to do this in writing in advance. Editorial Policy can advise on individual cases. (see also Chapter 17: Confidentiality and Release of Programme Material).

In return for dealing with contributors in a fair way we should expect them to be honest and truthful with the BBC. Our own research should be rigorous and accurate enough to screen out contributors who may be less than honest (see also Section 3 Research). It may also be appropriate to remind contributors of the importance of straightforward and truthful contributions, both verbally, through studio announcements, and in any contractual arrangements. But a contractual commitment cannot be a substitute for thorough research.

### 3 RESEARCH

Research for all programmes must be thorough and accurate. Facts must be checked and crosschecked. Particularly when dealing with members of the public, contributors' credentials may need to be checked and corroborated several times. Documentary evidence may be needed to validate both stories and contributors identities. It will usually be appropriate to seek corroboration from sources other than those suggested by the contributor.

It is helpful if clear and contemporaneous notes are made of all conversations and other relevant details. Members of the public who make a significant contribution should usually be spoken to, and checked, by more than one member of the programme team before their participation.

Researchers should not rely on outside bodies to do programme research about contributors. When finding contributors news agencies and other specialist agencies can sometimes be a useful source. But any information or contact supplied must be carefully

crosschecked and verified. Agencies who deal with actors and performers should not be used to find people to talk about experiences outside their specific profession. When agencies are used to recruit specialist contributors all appropriate checks should still be made.

### 4 ADVERTISING FOR CONTRIBUTORS

On occasion, advertising for contributors to factual programmes can be an appropriate way of finding contributors or information that cannot be obtained in any other way. But adverts must be used sparingly, and very much as a last resort.

Any advertising for contributors must be based on solid prior research. It should come at the end of the research process not at the beginning. Any social trends or developments which the programme highlights must be based on prior research not just on the fact that sufficient participants have answered an advert.

We should be aware of the dangers of recruiting contributors through advertisements and on air appeals. These can encourage exaggeration and "serial guests". Anyone recruited through an advert should be checked extremely thoroughly.

The wording of any advert must be carefully phrased. Any advert must not bring the BBC into disrepute.

It may be appropriate for entertainment programmes to advertise for contestants and audiences. Even then all appropriate checks should be made to screen out unsuitable or untruthful contributors.

**All proposed advertisements and their wording should be referred via Department Heads, Commissioning Executives or their equivalent to the relevant Directorate representative. In Broadcast these are the Controllers of Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the English Regions, and the Head of the Independent Commissioning Group, in Production the Head of Editorial Compliance, in News, the Deputy Chief Executive, in the World Service the Director of English Programmes, and in Worldwide the Head of Programming, International Networks.**

### 5 REFUSALS TO TAKE PART

The refusal of an organisation or an individual to take part in a programme should not be allowed to act as a veto. It may have that effect in a few cases i.e. candidates during election periods (see Chapter 34: Broadcasting During Elections), but there are usually ways of overcoming it (see Chapter 33: Politics, and Politicians).

Anyone has a right to refuse, but when the audience might otherwise wonder why a contributor or organisation is missing the reasons for their absence should be explained. This should be done in terms that are fair to the absentee. The programme editor should consider whether it is possible to give a good idea of the views of the missing contributor based on what is already known. It is rarely acceptable to exclude the missing view altogether.

### 6 FAIRNESS AND INDEPENDENCE

Some interviewees, often public figures, may try to intimidate programme-makers before or after making a contribution. Programme makers who have been fair are justified in giving a tough response - and they will be supported by the BBC. No one who has willingly taken part in a programme or recording has the right to prevent the contribution being used, but we should always listen carefully to anyone who raises reasonable objections.

#### 7 EMBARGOES

When programmes accept material under embargo, BBC policy is to observe it. Sometimes it may be possible to persuade an organisation to lift or vary its embargo. If embargoes are broken by other media or by the originator of the embargo the BBC may be justified in doing so as well. This will depend on the extent of the breach: the more widespread the breach, the more unreasonable it is for the BBC to be bound by the original embargo.

#### 8 ANONYMITY

There is no absolute obligation to name all programme contributors, though in most cases both contributors and audiences would expect it, if their contribution is significant. However, a deliberate decision to withhold or disguise the identity of a significant contributor raises difficult issues.

The authority of programmes can be undermined by the use of anonymous contributors whose status the audience cannot judge. But there are times when anonymity is appropriate, for example:

- for reasons of safety
- to avoid undue embarrassment
- for legal reasons

Anonymity should not normally be granted to anyone trying to evade the law in the United Kingdom. There may be some exceptional cases, but Controller Editorial Policy must be consulted, in advance.

Where contributors make anonymity a condition of taking part in a programme, it is important to establish the degree of anonymity sought. It may be sufficient simply to ensure that contributors are not readily recognisable to the general public, or it may be necessary to ensure that they cannot be identified even by friends or family. Such matters should be resolved in advance.

Where anonymity is necessary producers must make it effective. Both picture and voice may need to be disguised. A "voice-over" by another person is usually better than technically induced distortion which can be reversed. In such cases, audiences must be told what they are hearing.

Great care needs to be taken over pictures. Blurring rather than "pixilation" (which can be reversed) is the best way of ensuring anonymity in pictures. If absolute anonymity is essential, programme makers must ensure there is no evidence of the contributors' identity even on the original recording or in any documentation. Editorial Policy can offer advice on this.

Our international services often rebroadcast material originally recorded for the BBC's domestic services. If this material might compromise the safety of contributors when it is rebroadcast, it may be appropriate to disguise the identity of those concerned.

Producers should check with the contributor when anonymity is being discussed whether there are any additional factors that need to be taken into account with international transmission.

For guidance on confidentiality see section 1 of Chapter 17: Confidentiality and Release of Programme Material.

#### 9 OBSERVING LOCAL LAW

When working abroad local laws should be observed. If an aspect of local law appears inimical to fundamental freedoms or democratic principles or represents a serious impediment to responsible programme-making, the relevant Head of Department or Commissioning Executive must be consulted about the appropriate way to proceed. Heads of Department or Commissioning Executives should consult Controller, Editorial Policy, if necessary.

If there is any proposal to act in a way which is contrary to local law it will always be necessary to consider the possible impact on individuals - including BBC people not involved in the programme concerned - and on the BBC's wider reputation.

When entering countries to work for the BBC people should normally be open about their purposes. **Any proposal to use a tourist visa in a way which would avoid visa restrictions, when the intention is to carry out work for the BBC should be referred to Heads of Department or Commissioning Executive who may also consult Controller, Editorial Policy.** When such a proposal is approved, the News Editor in Newsgathering should also be informed.

Where our coverage has been distorted or censored by local laws, this must be made clear to audiences.

### CHAPTER 4 PRIVACY

- 1 BASIC PRINCIPLES
- 2 PRIVATE LIVES AND PUBLIC ISSUES
- 3 OPERATING ON PRIVATE PROPERTY
- 4 DOORSTEPPING
- 5 MEDIA SCRUMS
- 6 CCTV FOOTAGE
- 7 MISSING PEOPLE

#### 1 BASIC PRINCIPLES

The BBC should respect the privacy of individuals, recognising that any intrusions have to be justified by serving a greater good. The right to privacy is qualified by:

- **The Public Interest**  
People are less entitled to privacy when protection of privacy means concealing matters which are against the public interest
- **Behaviour**  
People are less entitled to privacy where their behaviour is criminal or seriously anti social.
- **Location**  
The right to privacy is clearly much greater in a place such as a private home than it is in public places

Private behaviour, correspondence and conversation should not be brought into the public domain unless there is a clear public interest. It is essential that we operate within a framework which respects people's right to privacy, treats them fairly, yet allows us to investigate and establish matters which it is in the public interest to know about.

We should respect people's privacy wherever in the world we are operating. While there is no law of privacy as such in the United Kingdom, the Government has enacted the European Convention on Human Rights which includes the right to privacy as well as the right to freedom of expression. Privacy laws do exist in other parts of the world including continental Europe and should be respected. In countries where exposing corruption, injustice or other matters of public concern may bring the BBC into conflict with local laws, we should not proceed without consultation with heads of department, lawyers and, if necessary, Controller, Editorial Policy.

The BBC's guidelines on use of hidden microphones and cameras are contained in Chapter 5: *Surreptitious Recording*.

## 2 PRIVATE LIVES AND PUBLIC ISSUES

Public figures are in a special position, but they retain their rights to a private life. The public should be given the facts that bear upon the ability or the suitability of public figures to attain or hold office or to perform their duties, but there is no general entitlement to know about their private behaviour provided that it is legal and does not raise important wider issues.

As a general principle, BBC programmes should not report the private legal behaviour of public figures unless broader public issues are raised either by the behaviour itself or by the consequences of its becoming widely known. The mere fact that other parts of the media have reported private behaviour, and that in that sense it is "in the public domain" (i.e. that someone else has reported it), is not of itself sufficient to justify the BBC reporting it too. As a result, where there are no broader public interest issues and the behaviour itself is within the law, there may be occasions where the BBC does not report stories which are being covered by the rest of the media

Even when the personal affairs of public figures become the proper subject of enquiry they do not forfeit all rights to privacy. BBC programmes should confine themselves to relevant facts and avoid gossip. The information we broadcast should be important as well as true. It is not enough to say that it is interesting. Having established the relevant facts, programmes

should concentrate on any publicly important issues arising. If a person's private life is the proper subject of a running story we should report it when there are significant developments and ignore it when there are not.

## 3 OPERATING ON PRIVATE PROPERTY

On most occasions programme makers will seek permission before operating on private property. But there will be instances when it is acceptable for programme makers to operate on private property without seeking permission. For example it may be acceptable to film or record in a public shopping precinct or a railway station, places where the public has general access. Or it may be acceptable in more restricted places where serious criminal or antisocial activity is being exposed.

Sometimes going onto private land without authority can constitute a civil offence (in which the police have no jurisdiction). Sometimes, however, there is a risk of committing criminal trespass. It is important for programme makers to understand the laws of trespass in detail (see section 5 of Chapter 37: *Matters of Law: General*) and to seek advice if they are in doubt about how to proceed

When we are on private property and are asked by the legal occupier to leave, we should normally do so promptly.

## 4 DOORSTEPPING

This is the term used in broadcasting to mean occasions on which a reporter confronts and records a potential interviewee without prior arrangement, either in public or sometimes on private property.

People who are currently in the news must expect to be questioned and recorded by the media. Questions asked by reporters as public figures come and go from buildings are usually part of legitimate newsgathering, even if the questions are sometimes unwelcome, and the rules on doorstepping are not intended to prevent this.

In all other cases doorstepping should generally be a last resort. **It needs to be approved in advance by the Head of Department who should do so only if:**

- **the investigation involves crime or serious anti-social behaviour, and**
- **the subject of the doorstep has failed to respond to a repeated request to be interviewed, refused an interview on unreasonable grounds, or if they have a history of such failure or refusal**

Doorstepping should not be used merely to add drama to a factual report.

**Controller, Editorial Policy must approve in advance any proposal to doorstep where there has been no prior approach to the interviewee. CEP will usually grant permission only if there is clear evidence of crime or significant wrongdoing, and if there is reason to suspect that a prior approach will result in the individual evading questioning altogether.**

## 5 MEDIA SCRUMS

When a person suddenly features in a news event it may be proper for representatives of many media organisations to go to a private home to try to secure pictures or interviews. This can result in large numbers of media people gathered in the street outside.

In such cases, it is important that the combined effect of legitimate newsgathering by a number of organisations does not become intimidating or unreasonably intrusive. We must not harass people unfairly with repeated telephone calls, or repeated knocks at the door, or by obstructing them as they come and go (this could amount to a criminal offence of aggravated trespass if it takes place on private property). It may be possible or appropriate for pooling arrangements to be reached, or for the BBC to withdraw altogether if it is clear that the subject does not intend to appear. BBC teams on the spot who are asked by the subject to leave should refer to editors for guidance. The appropriate decision will depend upon the precise circumstances, but considerations to bear in mind are:

- is the subject a private citizen or a public figure?
- is the subject victim, villain, or merely interested party?
- has the subject expressed a clear intention or wish not to appear or give interviews?

There will be cases when the BBC judges it proper to withdraw and we therefore miss material which other organisations gather and publish.

Prominent public figures must expect media attention when they become the subject of news stories, but the open use of cameras or other equipment on public property aimed at recording them on private property must be appropriate to the importance of the story. Any use of such equipment must respect the rights of public figures to a proper level of privacy.

## 6 CCTV FOOTAGE

When dealing with Close Circuit Television (CCTV) video or recordings provided by the emergency services or other bodies or individuals, special care must be taken over issues such as privacy, anonymity and defamation. Our ignorance of the circumstances surrounding the recording increases the risk in using it, and we must apply the same ethical, editorial considerations we would to material we record ourselves. The principles in this chapter and Chapter 5: Surreptitious Recording should apply. If illegal or anti-social activity is shown there may be real risks of defamation or contempt. If in doubt seek legal advice.

## 7 MISSING PEOPLE

BBC programmes sometimes broadcast details of missing people sent in by relatives and friends. While helping to trace people may be a useful public service, care must be exercised when deciding what details to broadcast for fear of causing embarrassment or distress to the person who is the subject of the message. Programme makers should bear in mind the fact that not all missing people wish to be traced and should exercise caution in accepting everything the family or friends say at face value. Before broadcasting, programme makers should consider whether to hold back information the missing person might regard as being personal and private and which they might wish to keep secret.

## CHAPTER 5 SURREPTITIOUS RECORDING

- 1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES
- 2 APPROVAL OF SURREPTITIOUS RECORDING
- 3 SURREPTITIOUS RECORDING IN PUBLIC PLACES
- 4 GRIEF AND DISTRESS
- 5 INVESTIGATING CRIME AND ANTI SOCIAL ACTIVITY
  - 5.1 "Fishing expeditions" and "bugging"
  - 5.2 Disguising identities
- 6 SOCIAL RESEARCH
- 7 RECORDING TELEPHONE CALLS
- 8 SECRET RECORDINGS MADE BY OTHERS
- 9 COMEDY AND ENTERTAINMENT

### 1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The BBC's use of hidden cameras and microphones are governed by the principles set out in Chapter 4: Privacy. We should operate within a framework which respects people's right to privacy, treats them fairly, yet allows us to investigate and establish matters which it is in the public interest to know about.

Surreptitious recording should not be used as a routine production tool, nor should it be used simply to add drama to a report.

The BBC will normally only allow the use of surreptitious recording for broadcasting for one of the following purposes;

- As an investigative tool to explore matters which raise issues of serious anti social or criminal behaviour, where there is reasonable prior evidence of such behaviour (see Section 5 below)
- To gather material, which could not be gathered openly, in countries where the local law appears inimical to fundamental freedoms or democratic principles or represents a serious impediment to responsible programme-making (see section 9, Observing Local Law, in Chapter 3 Fairness and Straight Dealing)
- As a method of social research where no other methods could reasonably capture the behaviour under scrutiny. In such cases it will be usual practice to disguise the identities of the individuals concerned (see Section 6 below)
- For purely entertainment purposes where the secret recording and any deception involved are an intrinsic part of the entertainment. In these cases it will always be necessary to obtain the consent of the individual recorded afterwards (see Section 9 below)

The use of long lenses can be a legitimate technique which may sometimes have the effect of recording people who do not know the camera is present. The deliberate use of such lenses, or of small video cameras, to conceal the camera from targeted individuals being photographed counts as surreptitious recording and is subject to these guidelines.

Many ordinary people now carry video cameras (or DVCs). Where the BBC uses people or equipment, including DVCs, to give the impression of recording for purposes other than broadcasting, that recording is regarded as being carried out surreptitiously, and is subject to these guidelines.

Occasionally recording for broadcasting can be performed openly but without declaring its end purpose. This may be preferable to recording which is entirely concealed. This qualifies as surreptitious recording and is subject to these guidelines.

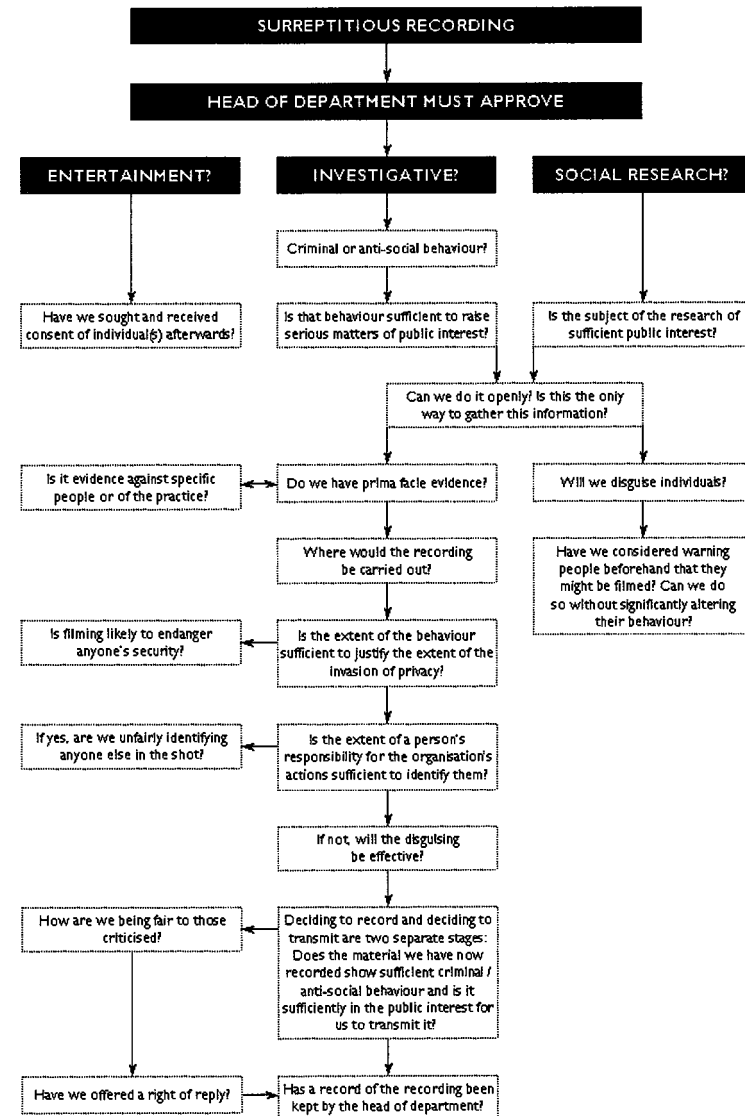
2 APPROVAL OF SURREPTITIOUS RECORDING

**Whenever surreptitious recording is carried out by BBC programme makers it must be approved in advance by the relevant Head of Department, National or Commissioning Executive or in the World Service, head of Region. Where necessary Controller, Editorial Policy should be consulted.**

On each occasion secret recording is carried out, whatever the purpose, the department concerned must keep a full record of how the recording satisfied the requirements of this Chapter, who authorised it, and brief details of who and what was recorded. This record must be made regardless of whether the material gathered is broadcast. Each directorate is responsible for maintaining these records to enable the BBC to monitor and review the use of such techniques throughout its output.

**Wherever approval is required from Head of Department or from CEP for surreptitious recording of any sort, it may be decided to consider the proposal in two separate stages, first for recording and subsequently for transmission.**

**The diagram below illustrates some of the questions which should be considered by programme makers when they propose to use surreptitious recording.**



### 3 SURREPTITIOUS RECORDING IN PUBLIC PLACES

People in a public place cannot expect the same degree of privacy as in their own homes. They can be seen by anyone, and that means they may be spotted by cameras or recorded by microphones. In general, we should operate openly in public where we can see and be seen. But sometimes it will be necessary for the safety of our staff or for the style or content of the programme that we record surreptitiously in public places.

Programmes intending to do so must get approval in advance from the relevant Head of Department, National Controller, or Commissioning Executive, who can refer particularly sensitive situations to Controller Editorial Policy.

Although we cannot guarantee that the broadcasting of recordings made in public will not cause individuals embarrassment, we should not intend this unless they are engaged in clearly anti-social activity.

Some "public" places like railways stations, public transport or shops are actually private property to which the public has ready access. When considering secret recording in such places programme makers should be aware of the laws regarding trespass (see also section 3 "Operating on Private Property" in Chapter 4: Privacy, and section 5 "Trespass" in Chapter 37: Matters of Law: General).

### 4 GRIEF AND DISTRESS

Surreptitious recording of identifiable people in grief or under extremes of stress (for instance in hospitals) requires further special consideration. Use of such material will usually be justified only if permission has been granted by the individuals concerned or by someone acting on their behalf. Heads of Department must be consulted. (see also Chapter 12: Reporting Suffering and Distress).

### 5 INVESTIGATING CRIME AND ANTI SOCIAL ACTIVITY

In investigating the above, the BBC will generally use hidden cameras or microphones on private property only where

- prime facie evidence exists of crime or of significant anti-social behaviour by those to be recorded
- the programme maker can show why an open approach would be unlikely to succeed

If the recording is to take place in a private place, where the public do not have access, the justification for any surreptitious recording will have to be greater.

Programme makers will need to show why the material is necessary in programme terms and the public interest in showing such material. Each case must be approved in advance by Heads of Department or equivalent who may refer to Controller Editorial Policy as necessary.

There may be occasions where there is prime facie evidence against a group of people but not necessarily against known individuals in that group - for instance, the overcharging of

foreigners by some people in tourist service industries, or the exploitation of old people by some home repair workers, where surreptitious recording may be justified. Where surreptitious recording is carried out in this way the results should be represented fairly so as not to give a distorted picture of the incidence of certain activity.

Deciding to record and to transmit are two separate stages. Once the material has been obtained the Heads of Department or equivalent must be satisfied it still meets the criteria for secret recording before transmission.

#### 5.1 "Fishing expeditions" and "bugging"

BBC journalists and programme makers will not go on what are known as "fishing expeditions". That is, we will not record secretly on private property in search of crime or anti social behaviour by identifiable individuals or group if there is no prime facie evidence against them. This also applies when secret recording takes place on public property but is directed towards subjects who are on private property.

The BBC will never plant an unattended recording device on private property (otherwise known as "bugging") without permission of the owner, occupier, or their agent **unless** for the purpose of gaining evidence of serious crime. **Controller Editorial Policy must always agree in advance and will require clear evidence that the crime has been committed by those who are to be the subject of the recording.**

#### 5.2 Disguising identities

There will be circumstances where a programme may legitimately secretly record anti social or criminal behaviour but decide the individuals are not sufficiently culpable or responsible for their actions to be individually identified. In such cases where we are seeking to expose the practice but not the individuals to disguise the identity of the individuals. In all cases where innocent but clearly recognisable bystanders are caught on camera, whether in a public or private place, they should be disguised.

### 6 SOCIAL RESEARCH

There may be a legitimate case for the use of surreptitious recording in a narrow range of cases where there is no prime facie evidence of wrong-doing by the people concerned. Such cases are limited to social research items where it is in the essence of the programme to capture attitudes or behaviour which would not be captured naturally if the subject were aware of their being recorded - for instance how people react when passing a beggar in the street. As in all instances of surreptitious recording, there needs to be a public interest in showing such behaviour.

Programme proposals in this category must be approved in advance by Heads of Department. If approved, any individual who is clearly identifiable in the recording - unless merely incidental to it - must give permission for use of the material, and if permission is denied the individual's identity must be effectively obscured. Any proposal for an exception should be referred by Heads of Department to Controller Editorial Policy.

Where surreptitious recording is carried out in this way the results should be represented fairly so as not to give a distorted picture of the incidence of certain activity.

## 7 RECORDING TELEPHONE CALLS

The BBC never records telephone conversations for broadcasting purposes without the permission of at least one of the parties involved in the call. This is illegal in the United Kingdom.

If BBC people wish to record a telephone call they make or receive for possible broadcasting, they should normally seek the permission of the other party in advance. **If they wish to record a telephone call without doing so they must consult their Head of Department who should consult Controller, Editorial Policy. Recording will be authorised only if:**

- there is prime facie evidence of crime or serious wrong doing
- the programme maker can show why an open approach would be unlikely to succeed

If, during a phone call, programme makers take someone by surprise by saying, without warning, that they are recording a call for broadcasting purposes, or broadcasting the call live this is the equivalent of "doorstepping". Heads of department must approve this approach in advance and may do so only if:

- the investigation involves crime or serious anti-social behaviour, and
- the subject has failed to respond to a repeated request to be interviewed, has refused an interview on unreasonable grounds, or has a history of such failure or refusal

**Controller, Editorial Policy must approve in advance any proposal to conduct a telephone "doorstep" where there has been no prior approach to the interviewee.**

It is permissible without prior referral for programme makers to record their own telephone conversations for note-taking purposes, or to gather evidence to defend the BBC against possible legal action. **Such recordings should not be broadcast. Only Controller Editorial Policy can give retrospective permission to broadcast material recorded in this way, and permission will be given only in exceptional circumstances.**

Note that different rules apply when programmes intend to make and record phone calls for the purposes of light entertainment or comedy. In such cases the permission of the individual must be obtained before broadcast. See also section 9 of this chapter.

## 8 SECRET RECORDINGS MADE BY OTHERS

When the BBC is offered material secretly recorded by others the test is whether, under similar circumstances, the BBC would have felt it appropriate to conduct the recording.

If the material appears to have been obtained in a way which was not consistent with BBC guidelines, it will normally be appropriate to reject it, or to report the content of the material without actually broadcasting the material itself. **If there is a strong public interest in broadcasting the material irrespective of how it was obtained, programmes should refer to the relevant Head of Department who should consult Controller, Editorial Policy.**

For guidance on use of Close Circuit Television material see Section 6 of Chapter 4: Privacy.

## 9 COMEDY AND ENTERTAINMENT

The specific guidelines prohibiting the planting of unattended recording devices and the illegal recording of telephone conversations, also apply to comedy and light entertainment programmes. However the other guidelines on secret recording are not intended to prevent recording for purposes of comedy or light-entertainment. Here, different principles apply:

- People who feature prominently in the recordings should be asked to give their permission before the material is broadcast
- The purpose should not be to expose people to hurtful ridicule or to exploit them
- We should respect the wishes of individuals who become aware of the recording and ask for it to stop
- We should give assurances about the destruction of any material recorded if asked for them
- If permission has been obtained we must disguise any other recognisable bystanders caught on camera whose permission has not been obtained, and if the broadcasting of the recording might cause embarrassment

**Any proposal to show or feature people live without them being aware they are being broadcast for entertainment purposes must be referred via Head of Department to Controller Editorial Policy.**

## CHAPTER 6 TASTE AND DECENCY

- 1 GENERAL
- 2 TELEVISION: The Watershed
- 3 RADIO
- 4 SIGNPOSTS
- 4.1 Trails on television and radio
- 5 INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES
- 6 ONLINE
- 7 DEALING WITH TRAGIC EVENTS
- 8 LANGUAGE
- 9 RELIGIOUS SENSIBILITIES
- 10 SEX
- 10.1 Sexual innuendo
- 10.2 Children
- 11 COMEDY AND ENTERTAINMENT

11.1 Stereotypes  
11.2 Religion  
11.3 Light Entertainment and Game shows,  
12 ACQUIRED PROGRAMMES

## I GENERAL

The BBC is required in the Agreement associated with its Charter not to broadcast programmes which "include anything which offends against good taste or decency or is likely to encourage or incite to crime or lead to disorder, or be offensive to public feeling". The BBC seeks to apply this requirement to all its broadcasting, programmes and services, whether for domestic or international audiences.

The BBC's responsibility is to remain in touch with the views of its diverse audiences. These views will differ both domestically and internationally. People of different ages, convictions and cultures may have sharply differing expectations.

The right to challenge audience expectations in surprising and innovative ways, when circumstances justify, must also be safeguarded. Comedy, drama, and the arts will sometimes seek to question existing assumptions about taste. Programmes which question these assumptions should seek to tell the truth about the human experience, including its darker side, but should not set out to demean, brutalise or celebrate cruelty.

The same principles of taste and decency apply to the BBC's international broadcasting. As domestically, the key test will always be avoiding needless offence to the audience. Programme makers should not offend thoughtlessly or through ignorance, the different sensibilities that operate in different parts of the world.

But avoiding offence to audiences in different parts of the world should not be confused with compromising or altering other key BBC values, such as impartiality, accuracy and respect for the truth, which the BBC will seek to apply equally to all parts of the world (see Section 5 International Audiences and Section 9 Religious Sensibilities).

In the United Kingdom, research suggests that while people have become more relaxed in recent years about the portrayal of sex and sexual humour they remain concerned about the depiction of violence (see Chapter 7: Violence). The use of strong language also divides audiences and can be a particular source of offence on the internet.

Parents with children in the home are likely to be particularly concerned about what appears on television. This applies especially when families are watching before the Watershed. Most people expect to be given clear signals about what they will see and hear, especially when new series or formats appear.

An item which might be interpreted by some viewers or listeners as being in bad taste should only be broadcast after careful consideration, not carelessly or by mistake. It must be justified by its purpose, and by the overall quality of the programme.

Context is everything: scheduling can be vital to audiences accepting difficult material. It is vital to consider the expectations that audiences have of particular programmes and timeslots.

The widespread availability of material in other media, or on other broadcasters is not reason enough to judge it acceptable. What is commonplace in cinema, video, computer programs or on the Internet will not necessarily be appropriate for BBC television, radio, or online services.

Programme makers should remember they are a minority, but one with considerable influence; they should be aware of and respect their audiences' diverse views on what causes offence

## 2 TELEVISION: The Watershed

The BBC has a well-established policy of making 9pm the pivotal point of the evening's television, a Watershed before which, except in exceptional circumstances, all programmes on our domestic channels should be suitable for a general audience including children. The earlier in the evening a programme is placed, the more suitable it is likely to be for children to watch on their own.

However, the BBC expects parents to share the responsibility for assessing whether or not individual programmes should be seen by younger viewers. The Watershed reminds broadcasters that particular care should be taken over inclusion of explicit scenes of sex and violence, and the use of strong language.

However, seventy per cent of homes do not contain children and many viewers expect a full range of subject matter throughout the day. On the other hand, many children may still be watching after 9pm, particularly at holiday times or weekends or if a programme of special appeal to young people has been scheduled. This is particularly true at Christmas, when family audiences may be watching after the Watershed. Producers should be aware that dates of school holidays differ across the United Kingdom.

Particular care should be taken in the period immediately after the Watershed. There should be a gradual transition towards more adult material and sudden changes in tone should be avoided but, where unavoidable, they must be clearly signposted. Adult material should never be positioned close to the Watershed simply to attract audiences in a sensationalist way. Material which is particularly adult in tone should be scheduled at an appropriate time, where necessary sometime after the Watershed. The post Watershed period runs from 9.00pm until 5.30am the following morning.

The Watershed is a commonly held convention in British television, and all BBC public service and commercial television services aimed primarily at the United Kingdom should observe it. Although the Watershed is a British convention it is an important element in the BBC's approach to services aimed at international audiences. International television services broadcasting to specific regions of the world should aim to apply a Watershed policy as fully as possible but these services may serve many different time zones and so a flexible interpretation of the Watershed may be needed. All international television services should observe Guidelines on the use of distressing, violent or sexual images and schedule appropriately. We should not cause offence by using images gratuitously or casually, or through ignorance of the sensitivities of different audiences (see also Chapter 21: Re-Use and Reversioning of Television Programmes).



Scheduling can be vital to public acceptance of challenging material. Whether or not scenes of violence, sex, great distress or strong language cause offence to an audience can depend not just on editorial or dramatic context, but on sensitive scheduling decisions. A good rule of thumb is to avoid taking the audience by surprise. Announcements and warnings can play an important part in this.

Material within programmes has to be judged in relation to its place in the schedule and the likely expectation of the audience at that time of day or night. Producers who feel that a programme is wrongly placed or labelled should consult their Head of Department. Trails are subject to the same judgements.

At the point of commissioning programme makers should be informed by commissioning executives whether their programme will be scheduled before or after the Watershed, so that judgements can be made about the appropriateness of content.

### 3 RADIO

Radio is used differently from television. Children listen, and sometimes in considerable numbers, to Radio 1 and sport on Radio 5 Live. But they are less in evidence elsewhere in radio and therefore a general Watershed is inappropriate.

However, scheduling considerations do apply as do considerations of taste and decency. These should be relevant to the expectations of each network's audience. As with television, warnings and announcements before programmes can help to prevent audiences being taken by surprise.

All BBC Radio output is characterised by the broadcasting of a large number of "live" programmes and producers must be aware of the possibility of contributors, phone-in guests and sometimes presenters themselves causing offence in matters of taste, decency or language or even breaking the law. To minimise the risk producers should anticipate any potential problems and brief participants before they go on air. Presenters of live programmes should be aware of how best to deal with a difficult situation and producers should inform the press office of any particularly sensitive problems that occur during a live broadcast (see also Chapter 32: Phone-Ins and Telephone Services in Programmes).

On Radio 1, the daytime is mainstream and for a wide audience. At breakfast time and until schools have begun, children are likely to be listening to the network in family groups. Programme material which may meet with approval from younger adults can be inappropriate for the youngest in the listening audience. DJs share with parents a special responsibility when live broadcasting is listened to by audiences with a high proportion of young people or children.

Daring and lively music and speech are part of the mix, but songs which feature strong language or explicit content dealing with drugs, violence and sex will normally be inappropriate. If a radio version exists we will play it, and where appropriate, make clear it is a radio version. We will also edit to create our own version for radio.

DJs are expected to use wit but take care over innuendo and the choice of subject and language. They will also be expected to respect their listeners and not take advantage of their power to lead people where they might not otherwise have gone.

At night and in specialist music programmes, an audience can be assumed to be capable of making informed choices about its listening, supported by adequate sign posting. Here the full versions of records may find their place if they pass the quality test and are a genuine expression of popular culture. Even so, the most offensive language will not normally be acceptable.

On speech services such as Radio 4, Radio 5 Live and national and local stations, various programme strands scheduled during the day have established a reputation with their audience for dealing frankly with adult topics. Given the great predominance of adults in these audiences, Radio operates with more latitude than Television.

Other programmes on Radio have a lighter or less challenging tone. However, discretion and care need to be exercised during school holidays over what topics are tackled when, including the timing of repeats of evening transmissions. Producers should be aware that dates of school holidays differ across the United Kingdom.

These considerations also apply to national regional and local radio, who should be aware of the sensitivities of their audiences. World Service will also take them into account in its programme making and scheduling. As within Television, Controllers and Heads rely on programme editors and Presentation teams to give warnings about sensitive material to ensure correct scheduling and signposting.

### 4 SIGNPOSTS

The BBC has a responsibility to ensure that audiences have enough information on which to judge if a programme is likely to be one they want to watch or listen to, or if it is suitable for their children to watch and see. The Watershed is one clear and widely understood indicator for Television, but there are instances when additional information is necessary.

Whenever a programme contains material that might be offensive to significant numbers of viewers or listeners, consideration should be given to specific signposting for the material or broadcasting a warning. Such presentation announcements are often useful and sometimes vital. Such signposts should be clear and factual, not an instruction to turn off. On television, the content should not be inappropriately graphic.

Signposts of this type should not usually be required for most pre-watershed programmes. However, when there is a risk that the audience may be taken by surprise, they should be alerted - for example, about a particularly graphic news report. Advice can be sought from the relevant Presentation Department. Programme billings in *Radio Times*, Ceefax and other publicity material are useful as an additional means of signposting.

Channel Controllers and departments responsible for scheduling or presentation need to be kept informed about potentially sensitive programmes to ensure they are correctly scheduled and signposted.

The European Council Television Without Frontiers Directive 1997 Article 22.1, Protection of Minors, requires Broadcasters in Member States to take “appropriate measures to ensure that television broadcasts ... do not include any programmes which might seriously impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors, in particular programmes that involve pornography or gratuitous violence”. The BBC must comply with the terms of the Directive.

The Directive also requires Broadcasters to use “acoustic” or visual warnings to alert viewers to any programmes “which are likely to impair the physical mental or moral development of minors”. The BBC’s policy is that an “acoustic warning” in the form of a presentation announcement is the absolute minimum requirement. **It should be clear from the Producers Guidelines that it is inconceivable that the BBC would wish to broadcast a programme that might impair, seriously or otherwise, the physical, mental or moral development of minors.** Any programme maker who is in any doubt at all about whether material they are dealing with might do this should seek urgent advice from their line management, who must consult Editorial Policy.

See also section 8 of Chapter 37: Matters of Law: General.

#### 4.1 Trails on television and radio

The Guidelines also apply to trails on both media. Care should be taken over scheduling trails of programmes that are unsuitable for children. For example, television programmes may be appropriately scheduled after the Watershed; the related trails, on the other hand, may well be broadcast earlier, when children may be watching. In such circumstances the content of the trail should be appropriate for children or family-viewing. However, such a trail should clearly signpost the nature of the programme.

No trail for a post- Watershed programme should be scheduled next to a programme specifically targeted at children.

#### 5 INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES

The BBC’s international services, in particular the World Service, have extensive experience of dealing sensitively with different expectations of taste that operate in cultures across the world. As the BBC’s role as a global broadcaster grows, particularly on television, this will become increasingly important for all BBC programme makers. We should not offend thoughtlessly or through ignorance, the different sensibilities, and sometimes different taboos, that operate in different parts of the world on matters of taste and decency.

Religion, culture, politics and the law are bound together in different ways across the world. Programme makers should make every effort to understand how the inherent philosophy of a country’s people dictates their way of life. Particular care may need to be taken when dealing with religious beliefs which form a central part of a society’s culture or its political or legal system. Producers should be aware of the distinction that exists between the cultural interpretation of religious beliefs, often through local customs, and the beliefs themselves (see also section 9 Religious Sensibilities and Chapter 21: Re-Use and Reversioning of Television Programmes).

When programmes originally made for a domestic audience are rebroadcast on international channels it is important to consider whether any material might offend the sensibilities of the

international audience. But sensitivity to such issues should not compromise or alter programme making in a way that damages core BBC values such as impartiality and accuracy. Although audiences overseas may not share the same knowledge, assumptions or values as those in the UK this should not prevent the expression of contentious views. Sometimes additional context, explanation or opportunities for foreign viewers or listeners to discuss the views set out in a particular programme may be needed. Producers may consider using an additional introduction from a presenter or a phone-in or a discussion following the programme’s broadcast to give extra context.

#### 6 ONLINE

The BBC should never put anything on the Internet which it would not be prepared to broadcast.

Web producers should be aware of what may offend the likely audience of any Web site or its associated programme, and respect those views.

Pages carrying material linked to any broadcast programme must be appropriate to the programme and its likely audience; no Web site linked to a specific programme should contain material considered unsuitable for broadcasting in the associated programme

Those planning Web pages should be clear about whether they are likely to appeal to a high proportion of children or young people and choose material accordingly

We should not hotlink from a site whose ‘parent’ radio or television programme is designed to attract a child audience to one whose ‘parent’ radio or television programme contains material which is clearly unsuitable for children.

Strong language can give rise to widespread offence. The use of certain, mainly four letter, words in text on the Internet may be more offensive than using them on radio or television. Such words may be used only in the most exceptional circumstances and express approval must be obtained. **Any proposal to use such a word on online services must be referred in advance to the Director of BBC ONLINE. For BBC News Online express prior approval must be obtained from the Project Director, Continuous News Multimedia.**

Some web pages are specifically designed for an international audience, and careful thought should be given as to whether pages linked to our domestic services are particularly likely to attract a significant number of visitors from other countries. Producers of pages should be aware that cultural sensitivities vary and that audiences in other parts of the world may take great offence at something which would be unexceptional to a domestic audience. Advice on the sensitivities of international audiences may be obtained from the relevant Heads of Region, BBC World Service and from the Head of Online, World Service

Particular care should be taken when putting material on the Web which has been gathered for radio or television programmes but not broadcast. Careful judgements may need to be made about legal, contractual and other editorial issues, for example anonymity.

Programme makers should also refer to the BBC ONLINE Guidelines.

#### 7 DEALING WITH TRAGIC EVENTS

The aftermath of a tragic event calls for considerable sensitivity and may require scheduling changes. Every effort must be made to ensure that nothing broadcast on radio and television, or posted online that might cause widespread offence goes unscrutinised. This includes acquired programmes such as feature films, repeated programmes and individual episodes of series and serials as well as new programmes. Pre-recorded programmes should always be checked before first or repeat transmission, in case the content has been affected by intervening events. This includes comedy shows where a joke or situation may have become tasteless due to some subsequent development. Web pages may need to be removed or altered. Anniversaries of tragic events may also raise similar considerations.

The more direct the impact of a tragedy, the greater the sensitivity needed in taking decisions of this kind; it is better to err on the side of caution than to compound distress through insensitivity (see also Chapter 12: Reporting Suffering and Distress).

#### 8 LANGUAGE

Strong language is a subject of deep concern to many people and is one of the most frequent causes of complaint. Offence is more likely to be caused if audiences are taken by surprise when strong language occurs without warning, is contrary to the expectations of the programme's audience or feels gratuitous. In the right context strong language may cause little offence and in some situations it may be wholly justified in the interests of authenticity.

It is more difficult to make judgements about the use of strong language in a pre-Watershed family serial or soap opera, seen or heard by large audiences composed of people from different ages and backgrounds. Strong language might sometimes be used, for example when characters are experiencing great stress. This must be justified by the expectations created for both individual characters and the series as a whole.

Common sense should enable producers to identify which words are questionable and when the use of them might be warranted. Programme makers should be aware that terms of racist abuse are now considered to be offensive by all sections of the audience. Sexual swearwords and abusive names relating to disabilities can also cause great offence. They should ask themselves constantly whether the use of strong language will simply alienate a large part of the audience.

Offence is often caused by the casual use of names considered holy by believers, for example the use of 'Jesus Christ' or 'God', or of the names held holy by other faiths. In particular, the use of these names as expletives in drama or light entertainment causes distress far beyond their dramatic or humorous value. While there is a wide range of attitudes to the use of these words, it is important for programme makers to be satisfied that their inclusion can be justified despite the distress that may be caused.

The inclusion of strong language is a matter for judgement by individual producers, in consultation with Heads of Department or Commissioning Executives when necessary. The

most offensive language should not be used on television before 9pm, and if used thereafter it should be only after due consideration.

The practice on radio is different. The speech channels, overwhelmingly the preserve of adult audiences, include challenging drama, comedy and factual programmes throughout the day. The inclusion of sensitive topics and strong language depend less on time of day than on editorial merits and clear signposting of programme contents. On the music networks - and elsewhere - when substantial numbers of young people and families are listening, care is needed with language and topic matter.

**Certain, mainly four-letter, words must not be used on television, radio or online without advance reference to and approval from Channel and Network Controllers of the domestic services, in the World Service the relevant Regional Head, or in Worldwide Television, the Director of Broadcasting. On online services referral must be made to the Director of BBC ONLINE. For BBC News Online pages prior approval must be obtained from the Project Director, Continuous News Multimedia.**

#### 9 RELIGIOUS SENSIBILITIES

Programme makers dealing with religious themes should be aware of what may cause offence. Programme makers and schedulers of international services should consider carefully the varying sensitivities of audiences in different parts of the world. What may be unexceptional in a U.K. programme may raise strong feelings elsewhere. Advice can often be given by the departments dealing with religious programmes in both domestic and international services, or by the relevant World Service language sections.

Deep offence will also be caused by profane references or disrespect, whether verbal or visual, directed at deities, scriptures, holy days and rituals which are at the heart of various religions - for example, the Crucifixion, the Gospels, the Koran and the Jewish Sabbath. It is against the Muslim religion to represent the Prophet Mohammed in any shape or form. Language must be used sensitively and accurately and be consistent in our description of different religions. Use of a term such as "Islamic Fundamentalist" has to pass the test of whether we would talk about Christian or Hindu Fundamentalism.

Particular care should be taken with programmes to be broadcast on the principal holy days of the main religions to ensure that unnecessary offence is not caused by material that might be more acceptable at other times.

What constitutes blasphemy and how seriously it is viewed, varies within and between different religions and cultures. Blasphemy is a criminal offence in the UK and advice should be sought, through Heads of Department or Commissioning Executives, from Editorial Policy and lawyers in any instance where the possibility of blasphemy may arise.

#### 10 SEX

The portrayal and depiction of sex will always be a part of both drama and factual programmes because of the important part it plays in most people's emotions and experience. In this, as in most areas of taste, public attitudes have shifted over time. Broadly, audiences in the United Kingdom have become more liberal in their acceptance of sexually

explicit material while attitudes around the world are mixed. Even so programme-makers broadcasting to diverse audiences in their homes, are not as free as film-makers, theatre dramatists and novelists whose audiences are self-selected.

Adults who accept frank portrayal of sex and sexuality in other formats or on television in the later evening often demand different standards at other times. Those watching with children before 9pm expect programme makers to observe the Watershed by exercising appropriate restraint. Context, the intention of the production, the expectations of the audience, the Watershed and signposting are all vital.

When sexual subjects feature in news, documentaries and discussion programmes, programme makers must observe the need for careful scheduling, labelling and signposting. Sensitive handling can help prevent the most delicate of subjects from causing widespread offence. Sensationalism should be avoided and extremes of sexual behaviour should not be presented as though they are the norm.

Some drama series, factual and discussion programmes have shown that they are able to deal with difficult material and adult storylines in a way that is acceptable to a pre Watershed audience. However, sensationalism in choice of subject and explicitness in the treatment of sexual themes should be avoided.

We use the Watershed to try to ensure that adults view what is intended for adults. Sexual activity is linked to moral decisions, therefore its portrayal should not be separated from an acknowledgement of the moral process.

Drama and factual programmes have a part to play in illuminating the darker side of human nature. Sometimes themes and images are explored which may shock. The tests to apply are intention, (are we illuminating?), and judgement (does our portrayal demean or degrade?). We must draw the line well short of anything that might be labelled obscene or pornographic. For example, real, as opposed to simulated, sexual intercourse should not be shown.

We try to operate by certain basic rules that apply to all programmes that deal with sexual activity:

- **programmes should be adequately and clearly signposted**
- **scenes should have a clear and legitimate editorial purpose and not be gratuitous**
- **sexually explicit material will not appear before the Watershed, nor at inappropriate times too close to the Watershed**
- **there are limits to explicit portrayal at any time**
- **material involving sexual violence or sadism will be treated with particular care and circumspection.**

Sexual scenes that will disturb or shock should occur only for good dramatic reasons. In particular, viewers remain concerned about the depiction of sexual violence against women and sadistic sexual material. Such material demands careful consultation within departments and with Channel Controllers or, at their request, Chief Adviser Editorial Policy.

Care should also be taken not to reflect in an unthinking way stereotypes of either male or female behaviour or apply different standards to male or female nudity. Sexuality is a universal human attribute: depiction of sex should not be linked solely or inevitably to the physical attractiveness of the characters involved.

Attitudes to homosexuality differ both domestically and internationally. Research suggests that in Britain audiences are becoming more tolerant of the portrayal and discussion of homosexuality, and while some international audiences are more liberal, some are more conservative. Nevertheless programme makers should be mindful that a significant part of the audience is critical of any depiction of homosexual acts.

#### *10.1 Sexual innuendo*

Sexual innuendo can be verbal or visual. Although what is said or acted out is implied rather than explicit, the producer's obligation to make judgements about taste and decency remain. Material should be appropriate to the programme's place in the schedule and judgements should be sensitive to the listening or viewing audience.

#### *10.2 Children*

Explicit sexual conduct between adults and children should not be depicted. The Protection of Children Act 1978 makes it an offence to take an indecent photograph of a child under the age of sixteen or to involve a child below that age in a photograph which is itself indecent even if the child's role is not.

## II COMEDY AND ENTERTAINMENT

Comedy enjoys special licence. It flourishes on departures from the norm, and exploiting people's misfortunes. Even so it must be well judged, not gratuitous, unnecessarily cruel or designed to harm or humiliate a person or group. General relaxation about sexual matters does not justify crudity.

When jokes are made about physical or mental disability, there is a danger of causing great distress to some and offence to a wider audience. Even where no malice is intended, this type of joke may seem like using humiliation as a form of entertainment. Remember too that jokes about real-life tragedy may be extremely painful for people close to the event and might offend a wider audience.

#### *11.1 Stereotypes*

There is also a need for sensitivity over jokes based upon race, religion, age, disability or sex. Remember that groups of people who are the targets of such jokes might be hurt by them. Stereotyping needs judging with care. Irish jokes and Jewish jokes, for example, have the potential to injure as well as upset when told by an outsider. When told by an Irish or Jewish

person they can reveal insight and affection as well as an awareness of the weaknesses and strengths of the community in question. It's a matter of tone and context.

If comedy conveys a sense of superiority or prejudice it has gone too far. Minorities are by definition vulnerable. The raw power of words can sometimes be more harmful than many people realise.

#### 11.2 Religion

The issues raised in section 9 (Religious Sensibilities) apply with full force in comedy.

On religious sensibilities, Editorial Policy should be consulted if clarification is needed. Producers in the international services should be aware of attitudes in the countries and regions to which their programmes are broadcast.

#### 11.3 Light Entertainment and Game shows,

Game shows, people shows and light entertainment can be both popular and enjoyable without breaching standards on taste and decency. Crudeness is unacceptable; language and sexual innuendo have to be judged according to the scheduling and the likely audience at home. Be careful not to promote sexual, racial or other stereotypes.

Game shows and People shows are the points where the BBC most evidently comes into contact with its mass audience. It is important that these programmes set the standard for the way the BBC treats people. We must not patronise them or exploit them, nor be seen to humiliate them (see also Chapter 22: Game Shows and Competitions).

#### 12 ACQUIRED PROGRAMMES

The principles of this chapter and of Chapter 7: Violence apply equally to acquired programmes. The content of films or drama not originally commissioned by the BBC cannot be controlled in the same way, but nonetheless it must conform to BBC editorial standards.

Some feature films, whether made in Britain or abroad, are suitable only for adult audiences. The British Board of Film Classification categorises every film for cinema or video release in the UK. While these classifications offer some guidance to their suitability for showing on BBC Television, they cannot be accepted without question. Tastes change and films once regarded as wholly unsuitable may become acceptable; but some films may never be acceptable on television. Special care must be taken over the acquisition of films which have an '18' certificate.

Acquired programmes need to be double checked in detail prior to transmission to identify any need to edit, to place the programme after the Watershed, or to issue a warning in the billings, and/or on air.

Some viewers object strongly to any editing of feature films. The BBC will try to ensure that any editing interferes as little as possible with the original intentions of the film maker. In addition, after the Watershed on BBC TWO, films which have received a certification for showing in cinemas or on home video will normally be shown unedited.

**Programme makers who need further advice on taste and decency issues should consult their Head of Department or Commissioning Executive, who can seek further guidance and support from Chief Adviser, Editorial Policy.**

## CHAPTER 7 VIOLENCE

- 1 GENERAL
- 2 REAL-LIFE VIOLENCE
  - 2.1 Violence in the News
  - 2.2 Violence in Factual Programmes
  - 2.3 Violence Involving Animals
- 3 VIOLENCE IN FICTION
  - 3.1 Adult Drama
  - 3.2 Acquired Programmes
  - 3.3 Children and Violence
  - 3.4 Violence Against Women
- 4 SCHEDULING, WARNINGS AND THE WATERSHED

### 1 GENERAL

It is clear that screen violence does upset many people and, in excess, it can be accused of desensitising viewers. Audiences remain concerned about the portrayal of violence, especially violence they perceive as realistic and therefore true to life or violence that is close to their own experience.

Most audiences expect any violent scenes in news, factual programmes and television drama to serve a moral or a social point. In feature films and occasionally in comedy, there is some acceptance that certain types of stylised screen violence can be entertaining.

Consideration should be given to the time of day when any violent sequences are shown. Particular care must be taken to ensure the suitability of scenes of violence shown before the 9.00 p.m. Watershed and excessive violence should be avoided altogether. Trails shown before the Watershed should not include unsuitable material. See also section 2 of Chapter 6: Taste and Decency.

Editors and producers can become very involved in the material they work with and it is always necessary to step back and think about its impact. It is important, for example, to consider:

- whether a violent incident is appropriate within its context
- the impact of violent episodes on the viewer at home seeing them for the first time
- the cumulative effect if programmes containing violence are scheduled close together, or the programme is to be repeated frequently.

### 2 REAL-LIFE VIOLENCE

#### 2.1 Violence in the News

Television's ability to show events throughout the world almost instantaneously brings responsibilities. The volume of harrowing and distressing material now available to newsrooms could dominate news programmes if not well handled. A bulletin needs to be considered as a whole, for its total impact on the audience, and not simply as a series of isolated stories.

There is a balance to be struck between the demands of truth and the danger of desensitising people. With some news stories a sense of shock is part of a full understanding of what has happened. However, the more often viewers are shocked, the more it will take to shock them. Some of this material will involve images of the aftermath of violent acts, rather than the act itself (see section 2 "Depicting Trauma" in Chapter 12: Reporting Suffering and Distress).

In reporting real life events involving violence, the use of earlier recordings of similar incidents, (as, for instance, in reporting the latest outrage by a terrorist group), or as "wallpaper", should be considered with great caution and must always be strictly relevant.

Particular care needs to be exercised in the editing of pictures for bulletins likely to be seen by vulnerable groups such as children. Care should also be applied to decisions about the frequency with which scenes of violence are repeated in succeeding bulletins, particularly in daytime hours, when children could be watching.

### 2.2 Violence in Factual Programmes

Most of the principles applying to violence in the news apply to other factual programmes. The same considerations about transmission times apply. When using library material, producers should avoid routine use of images that have become stereotypes. Scenes containing excessive violence may only cause revulsion and diminish the overall effectiveness of a sequence.

### 2.3 Violence Involving Animals

Audiences may be sensitive to violence involving animals. Such violent scenes must have a justified editorial purpose.

However, there is a distinction in the animal world between aggressive behaviour among the same species and predatory attacks, by one species on a different species. Both types of violence are fundamental to animal behaviour. The evidence is that audiences have less objection to displays of aggression between animals of the same species, such as conflicts between males for dominance. Scenes of predatory behaviour that are likely to cause distress need to be handled with care and without unnecessary detail.

Particular care must be taken in dealing with scenes in which humans appear to inflict violence on animals. It may sometimes be helpful to consider an on air announcement to make it clear that no harm was done.

The law governs the use of animals in programmes. In the United Kingdom, bull-fighting, dog-fighting and cock-fighting are illegal. Broadcasting such scenes, whether recorded here

or overseas, will rarely be justified and must be referred to the head of department (see also Chapter 20: Recording The Natural World)

When broadcasting for an international audience we should also be aware of the religious importance of some animals, and that offence can be caused by appearing to ridicule or otherwise demean them.

## 3 VIOLENCE IN FICTION

### 3.1 Adult Drama

Drama must be able to explore important issues truthfully, and violence is part of both nature and society. However, where a theme is likely to involve scenes of strong violence, they should be identified in advance by the producer and director so that potential problems can be resolved at the script stage. There should be consultations within departments, and if necessary with channel Controllers or, at their request, Chief Adviser Editorial Policy.

Programme makers should ask whether the violent incident and the detail shown are essential to the story or whether it has been included simply for its own sake. The use of violence should never be gratuitous.

The degree and type of violence, and the detail that can be shown, depends upon context. Audiences are sometimes willing to view disturbing material so long as it has a clear moral context. This is not because they enjoy it but because they recognise it as being true to life. For example, serious drama demands more of audiences; they in turn respect the challenge of a violent or distressing scene if they are convinced of its dramatic purpose.

However, audiences may enjoy a good deal of violence in action-packed thrillers, but expect its nature and style to be as far removed from reality as the story. Similarly in comedy, audiences may enjoy stylised violence (e.g. slapstick) as long as the humorous context is clear.

When programme makers are required to make judgements about the portrayal of violence they should be aware that viewers judge the strength of screen violence on the basis of a variety of factors. When one or more of these factors are combined the scene will be perceived as being more violent.

Programme makers should take particular care when violence involves one or more of the following:

- situations close to the audiences own experience, or which they perceive as being true to life
- domestic and sexual violence
- scenes where women and children are portrayed as victims
- scenes of extreme or sustained violence of any sort

- the context appearing to encourage approval of violence
- suicide or attempted suicide.

Programme makers should be aware of the sophisticated understanding viewers have of different production techniques used in the portrayal of screen violence. When graphic close ups, strong language, sound effects atmospheric music, and reactions from onlookers are used together the cumulative effect should be considered carefully.

The *consequences* of violent acts should not be overlooked, otherwise there is danger of seeming to sanitise them. For example, a blow to the head must not, in a realistic setting, be seen as a trivial matter without serious consequences.

It is important to take particular care when dealing with weapons that might encourage imitation, especially the use of easily accessible weapons such as knives, hammers or pokers, or methods that might suggest how violence can be made more effective (see also Chapter 8: Imitative and Anti Social Behaviour).

Violence is not always physical. Verbal aggression can be profoundly disturbing, particularly when the words used have sexual power. Care must be taken to ensure suitability for the intended time of transmission, particularly if audiences are likely to include children.

### 3.2 Acquired Programmes

Many of the general points made about BBC drama apply to acquired programmes. The content of films or drama not originally commissioned by the BBC cannot be controlled in the same way, but nonetheless it must conform to BBC editorial standards. For detailed guidance see section 12 "Acquired Programmes" in Chapter 6: Taste and Decency.

### 3.3 Children and Violence

There is evidence that violence in circumstances resembling real life is more upsetting than violence in a fantasy setting. Children may feel particularly distressed when violence occurs in a familiar setting or between familiar figures. For instance, violence in the home between characters resembling their parents, or towards characters or pets, with which the child can sympathise, should be avoided. Children can also be particularly distressed by violence involving animals.

The dangers of imitation are particularly real among children. Extra care should be taken, for example, over karate chops or the use of weapons that are easily accessible such as ropes or knives or bottles. Criminal acts, if shown, should not become lessons in "how to do it ". It is also important not to conceal the consequences of real-life violence.

### 3.4 Violence Against Women

Violence against women in drama should not encourage the notion that women are to be exploited or degraded through violence or are, other than exceptionally, willing victims of violence. Rape is nothing but a tragedy for its victim and it would be wrong to suggest otherwise.

Violence against women should not be portrayed as an erotic experience. Where in rare cases, a link between violence and sexual gratification is explored as a serious theme in drama, any depiction must be justified by its context and not simply designed to arouse.

Similar sensitivities apply to violence against children.

### 4 SCHEDULING, WARNINGS AND THE WATERSHED

When factual programmes or drama are to include violent scenes, consider issuing warnings to prevent the audience from being taken unawares. This is a key to avoiding widespread offence. Remember that the nature of the programme may be signposted through trails, publicity, promotional material and listings. These are not however, a substitute for clear and unambiguous on-air warnings. If a programme is tough to watch, viewers should be told. Programme departments should alert the channel controllers and presentation departments in advance when they judge a warning is required so that the overall amount of violence in the schedule can be kept under review.

On television, the Watershed is the pivotal point in the evening schedule. Particular care should therefore be given to avoid the depiction of unsuitable violence in the early evening including trails for post Watershed programmes.

Programme makers should also refer to the section 2: Television : The Watershed, in Chapter 6 Taste and Decency and to Chapter 12: Reporting Suffering and Distress.

International services should aim to apply a Watershed policy as fully as possible but these services may serve many different time zones and so a flexible interpretation of the Watershed may be needed. Programmes should observe the general principles the BBC maintains on the use of distressing and violent images.

**Chief Advisor Editorial Policy is available to offer advice to Heads of Department and Commissioning Executives on the portrayal of violence.**

## CHAPTER 8 IMITATIVE AND ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

- 1 GENERAL
- 2 CRIME AND VANDALISM
- 3 IMITATION AND CHILDREN
- 4 SUICIDE
- 5 DRUGS
- 6 SOCIAL AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR
- 7 SEAT BELTS
- 8 HYPNOTISM

### 1 GENERAL

Audiences are concerned about the possibility of people imitating behaviour they see or hear on television and radio. We should try to ensure that any life threatening, anti-social, or criminal behaviour portrayed in BBC programmes does not encourage copycat actions.

### 2 CRIME AND VANDALISM

Particular care should be taken when dealing with vandalism, the use of weapons or criminal techniques. It is important to avoid revealing too much detail or ways in which such activity can be made more effective.

### 3 IMITATION AND CHILDREN

Children's play is often influenced by what they see on television. In programmes made for children or likely to be popular with them, we need to avoid showing actions or techniques which could lead to dangerous imitation.

Smoking and drinking in children's programmes should generally be avoided. It is advisable to discourage smoking and drinking by pop stars, actors and others who are admired by children when they appear in interviews for television.

Hanging scenes are not suitable for children's output. Any decision to show a hanging scene before the Watershed should be referred to the Department Head. Care should also be taken about the amount of detail shown in any hanging scene, even if it is to be shown later in the evening.

Inventive and unusual methods of inflicting pain and injury, particularly when capable of easy imitation with objects readily available in the home, such as knives or hammers, should not appear in children's programmes. Also, remember the danger of suffocation from plastic bags.

Where hazardous activities such as climbing or motorcycling are portrayed in programmes aimed at children, warnings should be given of the dangers of imitation without expert supervision.

### 4 SUICIDE

In drama, unnecessary concentration on suicide methods should be avoided. Particular care should be taken in making editorial judgements about any drama that seems to exploit or glorify suicidal behaviour and actions or to overemphasise the "positive" results of a person's suicide.

Suicide is a legitimate subject for news reporting but the factual reporting of suicides may encourage others. Reports should avoid glamorising the story, providing simplistic explanations, or imposing on the grief of those affected. They should also usually avoid graphic or technical details of a suicide method particularly when the method is unusual. Sensitive use of language is also important. Suicide was decriminalised in 1961 and since then the use of the term "commit suicide" is considered offensive by some people. "Take one's life" or "die by suicide" are preferable alternatives.

When suicide features as a subject in factual programmes it should be treated in an informed and sensitive way.

It may be the case that both factual and drama programmes that feature suicide have a profound effect on the audience. In this case, programme makers should think about providing a helpline or some other form of support material (see also Chapter 32: Phone Ins and Telephone Services in Programmes and Chapter 31: Support Services and Support Material).

The Chief Executive of the Samaritans is happy to be consulted by producers who want advice on the depiction of suicide.

### 5 DRUGS

Attitudes to drug use vary within the UK and internationally. Factual programmes wishing to investigate the use of drugs will often need to address issues of anonymity, the protection of children and how the drug use is portrayed. It may be necessary to make clear the legal and social context for a full understanding of the story. It should be remembered that filming contributors using illegal substances e.g. smoking cannabis could result in a criminal investigation.

### 6 SOCIAL AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The acceptability of common forms of social behaviour like smoking or drinking tends to alter over time. There is a difficult balance to be struck by programme makers between the danger of encouraging potentially damaging habits, particularly amongst the young, and the need to reflect the range of public attitudes and behaviour realistically.

In both drama and factual programmes there are cases where smoking is essential to a character or story. But in general programmes, such as a studio debate, smoking is likely to be objectionable. Contributors can be reminded of such issues before recording begins.

Similar judgements have to be made about the portrayal of drinking. Factual programmes should deal accurately and fully with all aspects of the issues involved. Fiction should offer a realistic reflection of the place of alcohol in social life. Producers must be sensitive to the anti-social aspects of excessive consumption.

Producers may need to be aware of religious sensitivities about smoking and drinking, particularly when making a programme for international broadcast. For example, associating a person who may be perceived to be a Muslim with tobacco or alcohol, may take on added significance for the audience.

### 7 SEAT BELTS

The law normally requires drivers and passengers, in the front and back seats, to wear seat belts. We should show the law being observed unless there are good reasons for not doing so. Similar considerations apply to the use of mobile phones while driving.

### 8 HYPNOTISM

The main danger to be avoided is doing any harm to people at home. Demonstrations of hypnotism for public entertainment are regulated by the Hypnotism Act 1952. The Act requires such demonstrations to be licensed and prohibits their being carried out on anyone under the age of 18. The provisions of the Act are relevant to any televised demonstration of hypnotism at, or in connection with, an entertainment to which the public are admitted.

Any producer considering a demonstration of hypnosis should consult the Head of Department. Hypnotism acts in variety shows should be treated with care. Even those designed to ridicule the subject could conceivably harm people at home, quite apart from



the questions of taste involved. Any risk of hypnosis being induced in susceptible viewers should be minimised. In particular, a hypnotist should not be shown performing straight to camera.

**Chief Advisor, Editorial Policy is available to offer advice to Heads of Department and Commissioning Executives on issues involving imitative and anti-social behaviour.**

## CHAPTER 9 PORTRAYAL

- 1 GENERAL
- 2 COMMON CONCERNS
  - 2.1 Under-representation on air
  - 2.2 Hurtful or inaccurate stereotypes
- 3 WOMEN
- 4 ETHNIC MINORITIES
  - 4.1 Terminology
  - 4.2 Misleading images
- 5 DISABILITIES
  - 5.1 Terminology
  - 5.2 Common concerns
  - 5.3 Interviewing people who are blind or visually impaired
- 6 PORTRAYAL OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS
- 7 SEXUAL ORIENTATION
  - 7.1 Stereotyping
  - 7.2 Acknowledging sexuality
  - 7.3 Terminology
- 8 OLDER PEOPLE

### 1 GENERAL

The BBC has a responsibility to serve all sections of society in the United Kingdom. Its domestic services should aim to reflect and represent the composition of the nation. Globally we should apply the principles of fair portrayal to all our international services, which should strive to present balanced pictures of the people and countries covered.

We should try and give a full and fair view of people and culture in the United Kingdom and across the world. BBC programmes and services should reflect and draw on this diversity to reflect life as it is. By doing so we introduce new talent, perspectives, faces and voices enriching our programmes for our audiences.

When portraying social groups, stereotypes should be avoided. But we must also beware the danger of depicting a society that does not exist. The BBC is not in the business of social engineering. Where prejudice and disadvantage exist we need to report and reflect them in our programmes. But we should do nothing to perpetuate them.

When describing different groups a good rule of thumb is to ask how people describe themselves: there have to be good reasons for calling them something different.

For further advice on portrayal of the different nations that make up the United Kingdom see Chapter 19: Reporting The United Kingdom.

## 2 COMMON CONCERNS

Some concerns are common to all groups who feel under represented and inadequately portrayed in programmes.

### 2.1 Under-representation on air

People from all groups should be represented in the full range of our programmes. Programmes should draw their participants or casts from a broad range, and not concentrate unreasonably on able-bodied white men. The BBC has specialist programmes, programme departments and the BBC Diversity Database on which programme makers can draw to widen the range of people represented. The Broadcast Equality Unit can be consulted for further advice.

### 2.2 Hurtful or inaccurate stereotypes

People should appear in the full range of roles that reflect reality. BBC programmes should not categorise black people as criminals, women as housewives, disabled people as victims, gay people as ineffectual, old people as incapable, or people of any particular profession, vocation or walk of life as inevitable figures of fun.

## 3 WOMEN

Women form the majority of the population in the UK. In spite of laws and changing attitudes women are still discriminated against in some respects and are often under-represented in programmes. Older women are particularly under-represented in programmes and their portrayal is often limited.

Use of non-sexist language is one way to avoid perpetuating the impression that certain activities are the preserve of one sex only.

For many words which refer to a time when women were barred from many types of work (firemen, policemen, taxmen, newsmen, manning) there are comfortable alternatives which are not sexist (firefighters, police officers, tax inspectors, journalists, staffing).

Some people are uncomfortable at the use of some non-sexist terms. It is always possible to re-write a sentence to avoid both sexism and political correctness. However, we should respect people's wishes about how we refer to them. If someone calls himself or herself the "Chair" of an organisation it is not for us to make them Chairman or Chairwoman or vice versa.

## 4 ETHNIC MINORITIES

It is narrow-minded to identify people only by ethnic origin or colour when they have a host of other characteristics. Colour should be mentioned only when it is relevant. Ask yourself each time: would you say "white" in similar circumstances?

### 4.1 Terminology

The phrase "ethnic minority" is not a universal shorthand for "black". White people can also be ethnic minorities

Geographic or ethnic origin is often more relevant than colour of skin... 'Bangladeshi', 'Jamaican', 'West Indian', 'Nigerian' and so on

'Black' should not normally be used to include Asians. Refer to 'black and Asian people' or 'Asian, African and Caribbean people'. Just as we do not say 'Non-blacks' we avoid 'Non-whites'.

Many people in Britain of African and Caribbean origin prefer to be called "black British". Use the term 'black people' rather than 'blacks'.

A good rule of thumb is to ask how people describe themselves: there have to be good reasons for calling them something different.

#### 4.2 Misleading images

Most ethnic minority people living in Britain are British nationals. A large and growing proportion was born here. They are an integral part of British society.

Black and Asian people suffer considerably from negative stereotyping. Programmes must not allow offensive assumptions or generalisations in scripted material, and interviewees who express them need to be challenged wherever possible.

### 5 DISABILITIES

Consideration of the representation and portrayal of people with disabilities is a complex subject not least because what constitutes a disability is extremely wide. 1 in 4 of the UK population either has a disability or is related to or cares for a disabled person. Disability is even more prevalent in the developing world. People with disabilities are consistently under represented in programmes.

Programmes can be sensitive to the rights and dignities of disabled people without losing editorial integrity or strength. People with disabilities should not be patronised. Stereotyped thinking that characterises people with disabilities as either 'brave heroes' or 'pitiable victims' often causes offence.

Programme makers should be aware of BBC policies on subtitling, guidelines for visually impaired television viewers and any other relevant BBC guidance that deals with the BBC's obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

#### 5.1 Terminology

Euphemisms are not necessary. Plain, matter-of-fact language is appreciated.

- 'The disabled' can be perceived as offensive. It defines people as a problem group and denies individuality. 'Disabled people' is acceptable to some, but others prefer 'people with disabilities'. BBC programmes use both
- Never refer to 'the handicapped'. Words like 'invalid', 'spastic', 'retarded' or 'defective' cause widespread offence

- Terms such as 'the blind' or 'the deaf' are often disliked. 'Crippled with', 'victim of', 'suffering from', 'afflicted by' should be avoided. 'People who have' or 'a person with' will usually be clear, factual, and inoffensive
- However some people with disabilities will describe themselves bluntly as 'blind', 'deaf' or 'crippled'. We should respect their right to call themselves what they wish, while trying to avoid offence
- People with an intellectual disability are now normally described as 'people with learning difficulties'. 'Mental handicap' is acceptable to some people, but others dislike it because they believe it carries a stigma
- 'Learning difficulties' should not be confused with 'mental illness'
- Try to be precise about deafness. Use 'deaf/partially deaf/deafened/hard of hearing'. 'Deaf and dumb' is not acceptable
- Some people who use wheelchairs often dislike the terms 'confined to a wheelchair' or 'wheelchair-bound' on the grounds that wheelchairs provide mobility, not confinement. A person who 'uses a wheelchair' or 'is in a wheelchair' is preferable.

#### 5.2 Common concerns

Disability is an everyday phenomenon, though it may not always be apparent. The BBC should reflect that in its fictional and factual output. People with disabilities should be able to take part in entertainment programmes without, of course, our needing to make reference to the fact on air. People should be described in terms of their disability only when it is relevant.

#### 5.3 Interviewing people who are blind or visually impaired

During interviews, be sensitive to the difficulties that may be experienced by people who are blind or have very poor vision. In television, help visually impaired interviewees to present themselves as they would wish. Explain where any items of equipment are that could be a safety hazard.

### 6 PORTRAYAL OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS

People and countries should not be defined by their religions unless it is strictly relevant. Particular religious groups or factions should not be portrayed as speaking for their faith as a whole. Thoughtless portrayal can be offensive, especially if it implies that a particular faith is hostile or alien to all outside it. For example, footage of chanting crowds of Islamic activists should not be used to illustrate the whole Muslim world.

Words such as "fundamentalist", and "militant" should be used with great care. What may be a fair description of one group may not be true of all similar groups. Use of a term such as "Islamic Fundamentalist" has to pass the test of whether we would talk about Christian or Hindu Fundamentalism (see also section 5 International Audiences and section 9 Religious Sensibilities of Chapter 6: Taste and Decency).

### 7 SEXUAL ORIENTATION

BBC programmes must not be vehicles for prejudice. Lesbians and gay men can be particularly subject to thoughtless and offensive stereotyping.

Gay and lesbian people, and those who are bi-sexual, make up a significant minority entitled to be served and treated fairly by the BBC. Programme makers should remember that homosexuals play a full range of roles in society. They have the same right as others to see that range truthfully portrayed.

#### 7.1 Stereotyping

Stereotyping is a particular danger if the gay characters we portray are present only because of their sexuality or if their sexuality is their main distinguishing characteristic. Remember that sexual orientation may be an incidental characteristic. We must not confuse homosexuality with transvestism or trans-sexualism, neither of which relates specifically to a person's sexuality.

Programmes must not allow offensive assumptions or generalisations in scripted material, and interviewees who express them need to be challenged with vigour.

#### 7.2 Acknowledging sexuality

When relevant, there should be straightforward reference to the publicly- acknowledged homosexuality of well-known people and their acknowledged partners. This might occur, for example, in profiles, obituaries and other contexts where it is strictly relevant or where heterosexual relationships would be considered similarly relevant. However, it is not for the BBC to force matters of sexuality into the open. We have a strong regard for privacy in this as in other matters.

#### 7.3 Terminology

Be sensitive to the effect of language. 'Homosexual' has wide currency. 'Gay and lesbian' is often preferred and is certainly acceptable. There is no place in factual programmes for our use of words like 'queer', 'dyke', 'fairy' or 'poof': when contributors use them in a pejorative way they should be challenged wherever possible.

When they are used by characters in drama programmes they are just as sensitive as racial abuse and should be considered accordingly.

#### 8 OLDER PEOPLE

Many old people lead vigorous and fulfilling lives. Images that concentrate on them as living on the margin, dependent, frail, sexually inactive and passive, ignore the reality that people past the usual age of paid employment and family-rearing are often busy, active and useful.

Reference to age does not necessarily tell us anything about ability, interests, state of mind or health. It should be included only when it is relevant. The BBC places no general upper age limit on participation in programmes, whether in the audience or as contestants, competitors or artistes. The only criterion should be ability to do what is required.

**Chief Adviser, Editorial Policy is available to offer advice and support to Heads of Department and Commissioning Executives on the whole range of issues involved in portrayal.**

#### CONFLICTS OF INTEREST (Revised 20th January 2004)

- 1 GENERAL
- 2 MAINTAINING IMPARTIALITY
- 3 ACCEPTABILITY OF OUTSIDE COMMITMENTS
- 4 POLITICAL ACTIVITIES
- 5 COMMERCIAL, BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL INTERESTS
- 6 PERSONAL BENEFITS
- 7 ON-AIR TALENT AND COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING
- 8 TALENT/AGENT OWNED INDEPENDENT PRODUCTION COMPANIES

##### 1 GENERAL

The BBC's reputation for impartiality and objectivity is crucial. The public must be able to trust the integrity of BBC programmes and services. Our audiences need to be confident that the outside activities of our programme makers or presenters do not undermine the BBC's impartiality and that editorial decisions are not influenced by any commercial or personal interests.

Conflicts of interest can arise for anyone who appears on air or has responsibility for the content of a programme or service or associated activity. Presenters, reporters, producers, editors and researchers are all affected. There may be particular sensitivities concerning on-air talent. For editorial staff the greater the level of responsibility the greater the need to avoid any possible conflict of interest. Each programme department or team will need to identify its area of vulnerability.

The BBC should be satisfied that everyone involved in editorial decisions and programme making is free from inappropriate outside commitments. The principles apply equally to freelancers or staff. It is also important that independent producers should not have any interests which could undermine the integrity and impartiality of the programmes or websites which they produce for the BBC.

It may also be appropriate to consider whether the position of families and close personal contacts presents a likely conflict of interest.

When drawing up contracts for presenters, freelancers and production staff, the provisions of these guidelines should be taken into account.

BBC production and editorial staff are required to declare any personal interest which may affect their work with the BBC. These interests will be registered with Human Resources and copied to the relevant manager or Head of Department. Interests should be declared on a Declaration of Personal Interest Form. The staff handbook "Conflict of Interest" available on gateway or from Human Resources Departments gives further details. Production and editorial staff will be asked to update their declarations on a regular basis.

Freelance presenters, reporters, producers and researchers will be required to declare any personal interests which may affect their work with the BBC.

## 2 MAINTAINING IMPARTIALITY

### 2.1 News and Current Affairs

News, and current affairs programmes may deal with any issue, cause, organisation or individual. People who work on these programmes should have no outside interests or commitments which could damage the BBC's reputation for impartiality, fairness and integrity.

#### Presenters and reporters primarily associated with the BBC

Those known to the public primarily as presenters of, or reporters on, BBC news programmes or programmes about current affairs, must be seen to be impartial. It is important that no off-air activity, including writing, the giving of interviews or the making of speeches, leads to any doubt about their objectivity on-air. If such presenters or reporters publicly express personal views off-air on controversial issues, then their on-air role may be severely compromised. It is crucial that in both their BBC work and in non BBC activities such as writing, speaking or giving interviews, they do not:-

- state how they vote or express support for any political party
- express views for or against any policy which is a matter of current party political debate
- advocate any particular position on an issue of current public controversy or debate
- exhort a change in high profile public policy.

If, in an exceptional case, such a presenter or reporter writes or speaks off-air in favour of one position on an issue of current public controversy, this could give rise to concerns about impartiality. The relevant Director or Head of Department should give very careful consideration as to whether there is an actual conflict of interest and whether they should declare their interest on-air or not present items or conduct interviews on the issue.

Permission must be sought from the relevant Director, Head of Department or their nominee before outside writing or speaking commitments are undertaken about current affairs or matters of current public controversy or debate. (See section 3 below).

When making judgements about what off-air activities are acceptable, the Director or Head of Department should take into account the degree to which a news or current affairs reporter or presenter is directly identified with the BBC and therefore how far their views are likely to be construed to be the views of the BBC. There may be particular constraints on those who bear titles such as "BBC...Editor" or "BBC...correspondent".

#### Occasional presenters whose primary identity is not the presentation of News and Current affairs programmes

In some cases, the BBC may employ as presenters people whose primary occupation or identity is not the presentation of broadcast news or current affairs. These presenters may be newspaper editors, newspaper correspondents, columnists, writers or academics and in some cases they will be known to hold specific views on current topics. Use of such freelance presenters should not undermine the BBC's reputation for impartiality and it may be advisable in some cases to state on air what their main occupation is or the position

which they hold. If relevant it should be made clear that they hold partial views on a particular topic. Such presenters should not be used to present news bulletins, nor would they normally be used as presenters of major daily current affairs programmes.

#### Editors, producers and researchers

These concerns and restraints about off-air activities also apply to editors, producers and researchers on news and current affairs programmes. It is important that they do not make public statements or write articles about public policy issues in a way that could undermine the perceived impartiality of their role or the programmes they produce. They must seek the permission of their Head of Department or Director before undertaking any non-BBC activity of this kind.

### 2.2 Serious factual programmes

In general the same constraints apply as for news and current affairs. The objectivity of the programme, programme maker or presenter must not be undermined by any outside commitment or activity. However, if a programme maker, editor or reporter only works in one area, such as science, then it may be acceptable for them to express an opinion publicly on a totally unrelated area such as the arts. Heads of Department must judge what is appropriate.

### 2.3 Consumer and Lifestyle Programmes

People working on these programmes, either as presenters or producers, must have no commercial or other links which could appear to influence their attitude towards any product, service or company. (see section 5 below Commercial Interests.) Any non-BBC activity undertaken by presenters, such as writing or advertising should not undermine their integrity, in particular they should not promote or advertise any product they might review on air (see section 7 below on Commercial Advertising.)

### 2.4 Other programming

In all other areas it is essential that programme makers and on-air talent do not undermine their own integrity and the integrity of their programmes by off-air involvement in inappropriate activities or commercial interests.

### 2.5 Presenters of Factual Programmes Appearing in Drama

Presenters of factual programmes should be aware that simulating their normal role in drama or comedy might carry risks for their own credibility and the credibility of the programmes in which they usually appear. Any proposal to use a current BBC news presenter to present a fictional bulletin must be approved by the head of the relevant news department who should also specifically read and clear the script. It is important that there is no danger of the audience confusing fiction with reality.

## 3 ACCEPTABILITY OF OUTSIDE COMMITMENTS

### 3.1 Writing Commitments

Programme makers, editorial staff, reporters and presenters may all wish to undertake journalistic work or write books. Any such activity should not bring the BBC into disrepute or undermine the integrity or impartiality of BBC programmes or presenters.

#### Programme makers and editorial staff

No BBC staff journalist can write a regular newspaper or magazine column dealing with current affairs or matters of current public policy debate or political or industrial controversy. The only circumstances in which BBC staff journalists may write such an article will be in the context of BBC marketing for one of its programmes, or in support of the BBC or its interests, where the article has been submitted in good time to a divisional manager responsible for vetting such articles, and sent in for publication by the BBC Press Office or syndication after publication by BBC News Online.

Non-controversial columns, covering such matters as restaurant or cultural reviews may be agreed, subject to the vetting procedure set out above.

#### Presenters and freelance reporters

The same rules apply to news and current affairs freelance presenters and reporters in News, Global News and Nations and Regions, except where the relevant divisional Director has agreed in advance and that the individual does not derive their main external status from their work for the BBC.

In other programme areas, the relevant Director or Head of Department should normally ask to see articles about subject matter which could give rise to a conflict of interest.

In some cases, with permission from the relevant Director or Head of Department, presenters or reporters may write a book about a current topic provided it is not likely to compromise the integrity or impartiality of the BBC. In such cases, if the viewpoint expressed turns out to be controversial or one-sided, editors should consider whether to allow the presenter to cover on-air the issue which they have written about. If there is any possibility of a conflict of interest, the relevant Director or Head of Department should give very careful consideration as to whether there is an actual conflict and whether they should declare that interest on air or not present items or conduct interviews on the issue.

#### Letters to the press

Programme makers, editorial staff, reporters and presenters primarily associated with the BBC should also clear with Heads of Department any letters to the press if they deal with the subject matter of the programmes, any political, public policy or controversial issue, or relate to the BBC or broadcasting. Even presenters who only occasionally present programmes for the BBC should normally clear letters relevant to the subject matter of their programmes if they are to be published around the time of transmission.

#### **3.2 Public speaking and other public appearances**

Programme makers, those with editorial responsibility and any other BBC employees should seek permission from their Head of Department before undertaking outside public appearances or public speaking commitments. It is important that no such commitment should be seen to undermine the objectivity or integrity of the BBC or its programmes.

Public appearances which are promotional for a particular commercial concern are unlikely to be acceptable.

#### Presenters

Presenters of BBC programmes may well gain a significant proportion of their income from off-air public appearances. However, presenters in all genres must guard against appearances which undermine their on-air role. Promotional appearances have to be considered very carefully and must not imply BBC endorsement. Presenters should consult the relevant Heads of Department about any appearance connected with the subject matter of their programme.

#### Presenters of News and Current Affairs programmes

In the case of those known to the public primarily as presenters of, or reporters on, BBC news programmes and programmes about current affairs, there is a greater possibility of conflict of interest. Care must be taken to ensure that they remain impartial when speaking publicly (see section 2.1 above) and do not promote any political party, campaigning organisation or lobby group which may jeopardise their status as an impartial broadcaster. The chairing of conferences may well be acceptable, but it is essential that the conference is not a promotional exercise or one-sided on an issue of public controversy. They should consult the relevant Head of Department about the suitability of public appearances and conference work. The onus is on the presenters and reporters to inform the relevant Head of Department about the range of public appearances which they undertake.

#### **3.3 References to the BBC**

BBC people, freelancers or presenters clearly associated with BBC programmes should not speak or write publicly about the BBC without specific, prior approval from the relevant Head of Department or Director. BBC people should also clear any references to the broadcasting industry.

As well as concerns about bringing the BBC into disrepute, it should be borne in mind that the BBC cannot be seen to endorse outside organisations and it is essential that no promotional use is made of the BBC's name or brand.

#### **3.4 Media Training**

It may be appropriate for BBC presenters, editorial people or programme makers to speak publicly at conferences or to interested bodies about broadcasting.

However, there are considerable dangers of a conflict of interest if BBC people train individuals or organisations in how to present themselves on television, radio or online. Producers, editors and journalistic staff must obtain permission from their manager before undertaking any outside training work. Presenters, producers and editors should not train people they are likely to interview or who are likely to appear on the programmes for which they are responsible. We should ask freelance presenters about their commitments in this area to ensure there is no conflict of interest.

Presenters involved in News, Current Affairs, topical programmes or consumer programmes should not interview anyone they have trained and it is very unlikely that it will be acceptable for producers or editorial people in these areas to undertake any outside coaching on how to appear on air.

### 3.5 Charities and campaigning organisations

Any work undertaken for a charity should not imply BBC endorsement for a particular cause, or endorsement of one charity over another. There are particular difficulties if the charity deals with matters of controversial public policy and is a campaigning organisation. Programme people in all areas should be careful of involving themselves in lobbying campaigns.

Presenters and editorial people in news, current affairs, topical and consumer programmes should take particular care and they should not normally associate themselves with any campaigning body, particularly if it backs one viewpoint in a controversial area of policy. It is unlikely to be appropriate for a news presenter to front a campaign for a charity or campaigning body as this could undermine the BBC's reputation for impartiality.

Heads of Department should be consulted about any work for charities and campaigning groups and advice may be sought from Editorial Policy. For further guidance see Chapter 30: Social Action Programming, Campaigning Groups and Charities. There are separate guidelines for the BBC Children in Need Appeal.

## 4 POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Some individuals wish to become involved in political activity and they will be free to do so when it is consistent with the nature of their work for the BBC and the BBC's public service obligations. Political activity is not acceptable if it is likely to compromise the BBC's impartiality or undermine public confidence in the BBC. Judgements about what is acceptable will reflect individual circumstances and advance discussion with managers is vital.

Staff should declare any active political involvement on the Declaration of Personal Interest form. In some cases it will also be appropriate to declare the political activities of close family members.

The Chief Political Adviser is responsible for providing advice to individuals and to Divisions in order to ensure fairness and consistency in dealing with these matters.

### 4.1 Levels of Political Involvement

Anyone is entitled to be a member of a political party or organisation.

However, active political involvement and commitments can give rise to conflicts of interest for people who are involved in programme making or have any editorial responsibilities in any BBC service, particularly if they deal with political or public policy issues.

Active political involvement can give rise to questions about the impartiality of the individual, the impartiality of the area in which they work and the impartiality of the BBC.

Individuals should inform their manager about any political involvement so that it can be fully considered in the light of the guidance below. If individuals or managers have any doubts they can seek advice from the Chief Political Adviser.

There are three general considerations:

- the level of political involvement
- the nature and level of the individual's job
- the extent of involvement in editorial decisions, programme making and/or BBC policy

In any individual case it will be necessary to consider:

- whether they are known to the public or whether their contribution is acknowledged on-air or on-line during the course of a programme or through beginning or end credits
- the level of the individual's political involvement at national or local level:
  - being publicly identified as a candidate or prospective candidate for a parliamentary assembly or local authority election; no matter that the date of the election is not confirmed;
  - holding office in a party political organisation which impacts on party politics as it affects elected bodies;
  - speaking in public on matters of political controversy and matters of controversial public policy;
  - expressing views on matters of political controversy and matters of controversial public policy in books, articles, leaflets and letters in the press;
  - canvassing on behalf of a political party or candidate for election
  - promoting a partisan view on an issue put to local or national referendum
- The nature and level of their work. In some cases, if they wish to maintain their level of political activity, it may be necessary to move them to a less sensitive position
- The type of programme. News and current affairs programmes for international, national, regional and local output are subject to the most stringent tests of impartiality. For more general output considerations will be less stringent but the managers will consider the implications for those in more senior editorial roles, those involved in presentation and those who are or might become known to the public.

### 4.2 Elections

Anyone who intends to seek nomination as a candidate for election at national or local level should notify their manager at the earliest opportunity so that the implications can be discussed. They may not be able to undertake high level or high profile programme responsibilities whilst seeking nomination as a candidate.

When an individual has been selected to stand for election at national or local level and becomes a prospective candidate, he or she may not engage in programme work which could be linked to political issues, even if the date for the election has not been confirmed. Prospective candidates campaign actively to obtain support, and as such become the focus of public attention.

An individual who has been selected as a candidate must notify their manager, who will inform the Chief Political Adviser. A list of all BBC prospective candidates will be maintained. Individuals who currently hold an elected position in Local Government at any

level must ensure that their manager is notified. The manager will inform the Chief Political Adviser.

When BBC employees stand for election for the European Parliament, the UK Parliament, the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly or the Northern Ireland Assembly unpaid leave of up to six weeks is granted for the period to the election date. The leave is unpaid in order to avoid any suggestion that the BBC is subsidising the individuals' election campaign.

Individuals may stand for local government elections provided there is not a conflict of interest with their programme duties. They will be expected to conduct their campaign activity in their own time and ensure that there is no conflict with their BBC duties. Polling day itself should be taken as unpaid leave.

Presenters and regular contributors who are candidates for elections should not appear in any programmes in their normal programme roles during election campaigns or when elections they are involved in are imminent. This avoids unfair publicity for them at a critical time. They may of course appear as candidates under the usual election rules (see The BBC Election Guidelines which are available on gateway.)

Outside election periods, the BBC will not discriminate against politically active people on the grounds that they gain publicity from working for the BBC. The appropriateness of a role will be dependent solely on whether there is a conflict of interest with programme making or policy making responsibilities. When an individual is seeking nomination or has been selected as a candidate, but prior to the election campaign, it may be necessary to transfer the person immediately to less sensitive activities. In these circumstances the individual must be placed in gainful employment and not sent home on paid leave. In addition it will be the responsibility of the Director of the relevant Division or their nominee to ensure a suitable alternative substantive job is found within four weeks of the individual being moved to less sensitive work.

If individuals are unsuccessful in seeking nomination or decide not to pursue their candidacy, they may return to their original substantive job. However if an individual's actions in pursuing nomination as a candidate have been such that the BBC's reputation for impartiality could be undermined should they return to their original job, they would continue in a suitable alternative job.

If an individual is elected to the European Parliament, UK Parliament, the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly or Northern Ireland Assembly he / she will be required to resign from the BBC immediately.

If an individual is not elected he/she may return to work immediately but there may have to be an appropriate gap in time before resuming the original substantive job. However if the actions of the individual in seeking election have been such that the BBC's reputation for impartiality could be undermined should they return to their original substantive job, the person may be placed in a less sensitive job (at the same grade and salary). In the event of such a decision becoming necessary there will be full discussion of the issues with the individual concerned and the advice of the Chief Political Adviser will be sought to ensure consistency.

If a family member or close personal contact is standing for election, it is acceptable for an individual to express personal support, but there should be no use of the BBC's name and where support extends to political support the considerations outlined above apply.

#### 4.3 Non-political voluntary public office

This may be acceptable even for editorial people in news programmes. This includes school governorships and being a magistrate. Programme people should be very careful about involving themselves in controversial matters of public policy related to organisations which campaign on political or public policy issues.

#### 5 COMMERCIAL, BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL INTERESTS

It is essential that the integrity of BBC programmes or other editorial output is not undermined by the commercial, business or financial interests of any programme makers, journalists, or presenters. There must never be any suggestion that commercial or financial interests have influenced BBC coverage or the subject matter of programmes or the choice of items.

**The onus is on the journalist, programme maker or presenter to let the BBC know if they have any interests which could be perceived as a conflict of interest.**

BBC production and editorial staff are required to declare any personal interest which may affect their employment with the BBC. These interests should be declared on a Declaration of Personal Interest Form (see section 1) and further advice is given in the staff handbook "Conflicts of Interest".

Declarations should include

- any directorships or any consultancy work for outside organisations
- any significant shareholdings, loans (other than private mortgages) or financial interests which they, their partners or dependant relatives have and which may in any way constitute a conflict of interest or affect the impartiality or perceived impartiality of their work
- any holding whatsoever of shares, debentures or securities held for investment purposes when the holding exceeds 5% of the company
- any shareholding, securities or debentures in media related companies Very senior BBC people (for instance those at Controller level and above) may be required to sell any financial interest in other broadcasting or related organisations.

Freelances, are also asked to declare any commercial interests which may impinge on their work with the BBC. Independent producers should make a declaration at the time of commissioning.

Significant shareholdings should be declared by all programme people if they are in any way connected with the area in which they work or the subject matter which they cover. Some people working in news, current affairs and factual programming may be involved in investigations about a wide range of topics and may be required to declare any significant holding in any organisation. Managers will give specific advice about the detail and range of the declarations required for those working in their area.

The area of most sensitivity is financial journalism where additional rules apply. Anyone who is working on an edition of a current affairs programme or factual programme which is dealing with finance or business is in effect involved in financial journalism and should follow the specific guidance in section 5.3 below. On no account must early information acquired in the course of BBC programme work be used to trade ahead of the markets. It is illegal and unethical.

Heads of Department will be aware of other particular sensitivities in their areas and will ask for particular detailed information concerning some financial or commercial interests (see section 5.2 below on music production).

Although efforts should be made to declare any interests well in advance, in some cases people will be asked to work on stories or programmes at relatively short notice and may find that they have some financial connection with the area to be covered. It is essential that presenters, reporters and production teams should have no significant connection with products, businesses or companies featured in the programmes they make or the stories they are covering. If they have any financial, commercial or business interest which might involve a conflict of interest or might be perceived to involve a conflict of interest they must inform their editor or Head of Department as soon as possible. If the editor or Head of Department considers that there could be a real or perceived conflict of interest, they should deploy another journalist or programme maker.

### 5.1 Presenters

In some cases the commercial activities or interests of presenters could lead to a conflict of interest. To avoid this, when contracts are negotiated, presenters should be asked to declare any commercial interests which may impinge on their on-air role or which are connected with the subject matter of the programme they present. Such information is kept entirely confidential by the BBC. In some cases, particularly for presenters of journalistic or factual programmes, commercial interests may be deemed incompatible with their on-air role.

### 5.2 Popular Music

In popular music programming, some key presenters have links with the record industry and particular care needs to be taken with regard to commercial interests. A range of safeguards are in place in BBC Radio music networks and in BBC Television and Online to ensure that those working in these areas declare all relevant outside interests, and do not allow those interests to influence their choice of music. In BBC Radio 1 tracks with which a DJ has any commercial connection are clearly highlighted in advance to the Editor of Music Policy.

### 5.3 Financial Journalism

There are additional constraints on financial journalists. People working in financial programmes for the BBC should register all their shareholdings and other financial interests or dealings. Clear advice on this is given in the BBC Guidelines for Financial Journalism which are on gateway (see BBC Guidelines for Financial Journalism) and available from the Editor, Economics and Business Centre.

These additional guidelines for financial journalists protect the integrity of the BBC's output in this area. It is also important to remember that there are particular legal constraints which affect financial journalism. As stated earlier, it is illegal to use financial information acquired in advance to trade ahead of the markets.

It is also illegal to promote financial services without proper authorisation from the relevant regulatory authorities. It is vital that no BBC financial journalist ever calls their integrity into question by appearing to promote any financial product or investment, especially if they or members of their immediate family have a financial interest in that product or investment.

### 6 PERSONAL BENEFITS

Individuals must not accept personal benefits or benefits for themselves, their family or close personal relations from organisations or people with whom they might have dealings on the BBC's behalf. Unacceptable personal benefits would include goods, discounts, services, cash, loans, gratuities, or entertainment outside the normal scope of business hospitality. Accepting significant hospitality from individuals or organisations outside the BBC could lead to a conflict of interest. Anyone working for the BBC should consult their Head of Department before accepting such hospitality.

Strict rules apply to the acceptance of free or reduced cost facilities by programmes: see Chapter 25: Product Prominence and the Use of Free and Reduced Cost Facilities.

### 7 ON-AIR TALENT AND COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING

Increasingly advertisers and manufacturers are seeking to employ presenters to endorse products. Although the BBC does not seek to place unnecessary constraints on talent, it is essential that promotional activities do not constitute a conflict of interest and do not undermine the editorial integrity of presenters or the programmes they present.

This section outlines what outside promotional work may be undertaken by those who "front", "anchor" or present BBC radio or television programmes in any genre. It applies to the whole range of presenters from news presenters to those who host entertainment programmes, but the nature of the presenter's on-air role will affect what is appropriate and section 7.2 below outlines what is acceptable for presenters in each genre.

Any presenter who appears on-air in a journalistic capacity will have considerable restrictions on what, if any, promotional activities they may undertake. There will be fewer restrictions on entertainment presenters or lifestyle presenters providing their integrity and the integrity of the programme they present is not undermined.

#### □ Contractual arrangements

The guidance in this section should be reflected in contractual arrangements for regular presenters or presenters of a series of programmes. On-air talent should be made aware of these guidelines and presenters who work for the BBC other than on an occasional basis should be required to consult the BBC before undertaking any outside advertising work. Some existing contracts may not reflect the principles of these guidelines, but renewed contractual arrangements should conform to them.



**7.1 Basic Principles for non-BBC Promotional Work by Presenters in all Genres**

- No advertising campaign or advertisement should give the public reason to doubt the objectivity of BBC presenters
- there should be no conflict of interest between the presenter's on-air activities and the promotion of a particular product or service
- the product or service they promote must not be shown, featured, reviewed or discussed in the programmes they present
- no presenter should replicate their on-air role to endorse a product or service either in traditional advertising or on any personal or third party website
- no promotional activity should undermine the values of the BBC brand
- some key presenters who are on long term contract or who have long standing associations with the BBC may be subject to particular restrictions on their promotional activities. There may be fewer restrictions on a presenter who is seen as an independent outsider, who presents a few programmes or a one-off series, but who is not considered in the main as a BBC presenter
- presenters in all genres will often be permitted to undertake some promotional activities for a book they have written, whether or not it is published by the BBC. However, such promotions must not undermine the programme they present or jeopardise the presenter's reputation for objectivity or impartiality
- the BBC may need to be more cautious in allowing presenters to undertake television or radio advertising than advertising in newspapers or on billboards as television or radio adverts will more clearly replicate their role in a BBC programme.

**7.2 Presenters' outside promotional activities – guidance for specific genres**

- **News, current affairs and business programmes**  
Presenters and reporters on news, current affairs and business programmes are not permitted to take part in any promotions, endorsements or advertisements for third parties.
- **Serious factual programmes outside news and current affairs**  
Presenters or reporters who appear in serious factual programmes which consider controversial public policy or matters of political or industrial controversy would not normally be permitted to take part in any advertisements for third parties. The degree to which they are regarded as an objective journalist in their on-air role will affect decisions as to whether any outside promotional work is permissible at all. It would not be appropriate for presenters or reporters who are involved in investigative programmes to undertake any outside promotional work. In other cases the key consideration must be that presenters or reporters should not be allowed to undertake promotions for any product or service related to the subject matter of the programme they present. If their on-air role is restricted to a particular subject area they might be permitted to advertise something entirely unrelated.
- **General consumer programmes**  
Presenters and reporters on consumer programmes which cover a wide range of topics, such as Watchdog, may not undertake any promotional work for third parties as there is no product or service outside the remit of the programme.
- **Consumer programmes about specific topics**

These are programmes which provide serious journalistic analysis on a particular topic or which undertake consumer reviews in a specific area. Presenters of such programmes may only be permitted to undertake promotions for products entirely unassociated with the subject matter of the programme.

□ **Lifestyle programmes**

These are non journalistic programmes which do not undertake specific reviews. Areas of lifestyle programming include makeovers, gardening programmes and cookery.

Presenters of lifestyle programmes

Sometimes lifestyle programmes give a degree of consumer advice and this will affect the presenter's ability to undertake promotional activities. Lifestyle presenters who give advice on what branded products to buy or use should not undertake any advertising in any medium for products or retailers associated with the subject matter of their programmes. Presenters who give clear objective advice on how to solve problems should not advertise products or services which aim to solve these specific problems.

Presenters of lifestyle programmes, such as makeovers, which refer to specific branded products should not advertise any products which might be featured. For example, some makeovers give details in astons of which paint or other materials are used. In these cases the presenters should not advertise brands of paint or other materials used.

No lifestyle presenter should undertake radio or television advertising for a product or retailer associated with the subject matter of their programmes. Nor should they undertake any off-air advertising for products related to the subject matter of their programmes. However, in some cases, lifestyle presenters who do not give consumer advice may undertake off-air adverts for retailers who sell products covered in their programmes. Such adverts for retailers should not feature any particular branded or own brand product directly related to the subject matter of the programme they present. (See also section below on advertising presenters' own products).

Chefs and Cookery Presenters

Television cooks or chefs should not undertake any radio or television advertising for any product or retailer associated with the subject matter of their programmes. They should also not undertake any off-air advertising for specific branded food products. However, if chefs do not give consumer advice on air, they may undertake some off-air advertising in this area as long as it does not compromise their on-air role. Television chefs who do not give consumer advice may undertake off air adverts for a food retailer, provided the advert does not feature any particular branded or own brand food product. The advertisements should not replicate their programmes in any way and should not use recipes from their programmes. Producers should ensure that the retailer's products are not used, shown or referred to in their programmes.

Lifestyle presenters, including chefs, may undertake advertisements in any medium for products which are not associated with the subject matter of their programmes. However,

these advertisements must not replicate their on-air role or imitate the programme in any way.

## Presenter's Own Products

Increasingly lifestyle presenters are developing their own products associated with their on-air role and in some cases are distributing these products through their own websites, as well as by more traditional means. Presenters can develop their own products, but care needs to be taken to ensure that such products do not give rise to a conflict of interest. Presenters on long term contract should be asked to inform the BBC about any products they are developing. In no circumstances, however, should presenters' own products be shown or referred to in any of their programmes.

## Advertising of presenters' own products

Any promotion of such products needs to be treated with great care to ensure that the presenter's objective role is not undermined. The BBC would not agree to presenters advertising their own products on television or radio as such adverts would tend to replicate the presenter's on-air role.

However lifestyle presenters who do not give consumer advice may be able to advertise their products in newspapers, magazines, on billboards or online, providing they do not use these products or ones closely resembling them in their programmes.

If lifestyle presenters give advice on specific problem solving, in order to preserve their reputation for objectivity, they should not undertake any on-air or off-air adverts for products aimed to solve the specific problems about which they give on-air advice.

Where both on-air and off-air advertising is ruled out, point of sale promotions and promotions on the presenter's own website are usually acceptable. However any promotions on their websites must not be used to exploit their BBC connections - no material from their BBC programmes may be used and they should not sell products on their websites when they are featured on their programmes.

## □ **Sport**

The suitability of any commercial activities undertaken by sports presenters will depend on the nature of their on-air role, the nature of the programme and whether they are perceived primarily as a sports journalist, a sports entertainment presenter or a sportsman/woman who also presents programmes. Careful judgements need to be made about the acceptability of any advert which is related to sport in any way. Presenters who are clearly undertaking sports journalism should not advertise sports products, such as sports kit, or do adverts for sports sponsors. However, they may advertise products not directly associated with sport or sports sponsorship.

## □ **Children's Programmes**

Presenters of children's programmes should not promote products directly connected to the subject matter of the programmes they present. They also should not undertake any

advertisements for products specifically aimed at children or products likely to be harmful to children such as alcohol.

## □ **Entertainment**

Entertainment presenters should not appear in adverts which are closely associated with the subject matter of any programme they present or which mimic the style of the programme. (See section 7.7 below concerning style of permitted advertisements.)

## **7.3 Advertising Commitments and the Editorial Agenda**

As is made clear in section 7.2 above, it is essential that products or services which a presenter promotes should not be shown or featured in a programme they present. When engaging talent, consideration should be given as to whether their existing advertising commitments will undermine the programme's editorial agenda. There are dangers to the editorial integrity of a programme if a presenter's promotional activities distort the agenda of a programme by forcing the programme to omit items or change what it covers.

## Entertainment programmes

In exceptional circumstances producers of an entertainment programme may think that it is editorially justifiable to make a joke about a presenter's outside promotional activities, or a guest on a programme may make such a joke. On the whole it is advisable to avoid such jokes as it may be difficult to ensure that they are non-promotional for the product or service advertised.

## **7.4 Unsuitable Products or Services**

Even when there is no obvious conflict of interest with the presenter's on-air role, there are some products or services which the BBC would not wish its presenters to promote as the association might be damaging to the BBC's reputation. This prohibition would include tobacco or tobacco products, escort agencies and sex chat lines.

## **7.5 Timing of Advertisements**

Some presenters are only contracted to the BBC for specific time periods to coincide with series of programmes which they present. However, as far as possible, contractual safeguards concerning advertisements should also cover the periods when programmes are repeated.

## **7.6 Guidance for Contributors to programmes**

Consideration also needs to be given to promotional work undertaken by contributors who appear in programmes regularly, but who are not engaged as presenters. The BBC is not in a position to restrict the advertising activities of these outside contributors and in many cases it would be unreasonable to do so. However, the BBC should not use contributors who undertake promotional work which could give rise to doubts about their objectivity. In particular expert contributors who give specific advice about what to buy should not endorse products or services in the areas on which they give advice.

Some contributors, who are not main presenters, may play a significant role in every programme in a series. In such cases the BBC may decide that they need to be subject to the same restrictions as presenters in that genre.

### 7.7 Style of Advertisements

Any adverts in which BBC presenters appear should not copy or make play of BBC programmes as it is important that no impression is given that the BBC is endorsing any commercial product or service. It is also important that the style of the advert does not bring the BBC into disrepute.

The following key points should be observed

- No advert should replicate, imitate or pass off BBC programmes, titles or logos
- No adverts should replicate or pass off the role the presenter plays in the programme
- Adverts should not replicate editorial elements of a programme e.g. BBC television chefs should not feature recipes from their programmes in any adverts
- No music or graphics associated with the programme should be used
- Adverts should not replicate the look of the programme. There should be no use or direct imitation of BBC programme sets or the key venues used in the presenter's programme
- No adverts should refer to the BBC or any of its services or programmes
- There should be no use of more than one BBC presenter from the same programme in any advert for an outside product. It is also unlikely to be acceptable for several presenters from different BBC programmes to appear in the same advert
- The overall style of the advert should not be tasteless and should not bring the BBC into disrepute.

### 7.8 Actors and artists who perform in programmes

Actors should not appear in television adverts in a way which directly replicates their on air role in BBC programmes. For detailed advice on this issue see section 3.3. of [Chapter 29 Advertising, Promotional Activities and the BBC Brand](#).

For advice on advertising by artists who own rights to characters and formats which are used for BBC programmes see Chapter 29, section 3.4.

### 7.9 Who decides what is appropriate?

An assessment of whether advertising or promoting third parties is acceptable will be made by the Controller responsible for the relevant output in consultation, where necessary, with Editorial Policy and Controller, Talent Management.

## 8 TALENT/AGENT OWNED INDEPENDENT PRODUCTION COMPANIES

Potential conflicts of interest can also arise where an independent production company is owned by an on screen presenter or performer or their agent. To avoid such potential conflicts:

- Agents or their production companies should not be commissioned to produce factual programmes about the talent they represent unless there is clear editorial justification.

- In very exceptional circumstances, where the programme and its subject are of such importance and cannot be commissioned unless it is produced with the associated agent or talent-owned independent, the issue should be referred to the Controller, Editorial Policy. If the commission is agreed, the commissioning team should ensure objectivity is achieved by means of thorough executive production on behalf of the BBC. An active BBC role in all stages of the programme's production, from research to the final edit, will be required.
- When commissioning teams receive proposals for factual programmes concerning talent from another genre (for example, a factual commission about a sports personality), they should seek advice on any connections between the independent producer and talent that could provide an editorial conflict of interest.
- Commissioning teams should actively review guests and their associated products featured on agent-owned independent productions, ensuring:
  - Guests from associated talent agencies are always editorially justified
  - Records are kept of all guests on programmes produced by agents and checked with their client-list to avoid a cumulative promotional effect
- Access to talent should never be accepted if it is directly connected to product promotion by the agent's production company, unless there is clear editorial justification.

## CHAPTER 11 GLOBAL BROADCASTING AND NEW MEDIA

- 1 GLOBAL BROADCASTING
- 2 ONLINE AND NEW MEDIA

### 1 GLOBAL BROADCASTING

The BBC's reputation as a broadcaster is based on adherence to the highest editorial and ethical standards, for its international services as well as its domestic ones. Over many years the World Service has applied key BBC principles, such as impartiality, accuracy and avoiding offence on matters of taste, to radio broadcasting for international audiences.

More recently the BBC has developed international television services bringing news, documentaries, drama and entertainment to a wide variety of audiences across the world. As the BBC's role as a global broadcaster grows, upholding the principles of the Producers' Guidelines internationally has become a responsibility for BBC programme makers in many programme genres.

The principles of the Producers' Guidelines apply to all of the BBC's output. Much of the detailed guidance is universal, but where appropriate, specific guidance is offered for programme makers serving international audiences, for example section 9: "Observing Local Law", of Chapter 3: Fairness and Straight Dealing, and section 5: "International Audiences", of Chapter 6: Taste and Decency.

When television programmes are re-edited or reversioned for transmission on the BBC's international channels or on the new domestic television channels programme makers should consult Chapter 21: Re Use and Reversioning of BBC Television Programmes.

The BBC's international television services are commercially funded. The BBC is also involved in commercial joint venture television services in the UK. For guidance on those issues which apply specifically to commercially funded television channels see Chapter 24: Commercial Relationships and Appropriate Programme Funding.

## 2 ONLINE AND NEW MEDIA

Many innovative new forms of media are currently being developed, including interactive television, and more will emerge in the future. The BBC will apply the values and principles embodied in the Producers' Guidelines to all its new media activity. Both the Producers' Guidelines and the BBC ONLINE Guidelines apply to the BBC's Online Services. Producers should refer to section 6 "Online" in Chapter 6 for guidance on taste and decency issues on the Internet, and to Section 9: "Online and New Media" in Chapter 35: Opinion Polls, as well as to the BBC ONLINE Guidelines.

## CHAPTER 12 REPORTING SUFFERING AND DISTRESS

- 1 REPORTING ACCIDENTS AND DISASTERS
- 2 DEPICTING TRAUMA
- 3 INTERVIEWS WITH THOSE INJURED OR GRIEVING
- 4 LIBRARY USE OF SCENES OF SUFFERING
- 5 DEAD INJURED AND MISSING
- 6 REVISITING PAST EVENTS
- 7 TRAGIC EVENTS AND NON FACTUAL PROGRAMMES
- 8 FUNERALS

### 1 REPORTING ACCIDENTS AND DISASTERS

In covering accidents, disasters and disturbances BBC journalists need to balance full, accurate reporting against the obligation to avoid causing unnecessary distress or anxiety. Emphasis should be placed on providing, swiftly and accurately, basic factual material, such as times, location, route or flight number etc.

In the early stages of reporting a disaster it is especially important to source information. First estimates of casualty figures often turn out to be inaccurate. If different sources give different estimates we should either report the range or go for the source which carries the greatest authority and attribute the estimate accordingly. If our earlier reports prove to have been pessimistic, corrections should be prompt and prominent without any attempt to conceal the mistake.

### 2 DEPICTING TRAUMA

Long experience of reporting major disasters and all kinds of tragic events has emphasised the importance of compassionate coverage in such circumstances. Coverage should not add needlessly to the distress of people who already know of their loss, either in the UK or elsewhere.

News programmes should follow some basic principles:

- The dead should be treated with respect and not shown unless there are compelling reasons for doing so
- Close-ups of faces or serious injuries should be used very sparingly
- Do not concentrate unduly on the bloody consequences of an accident or terrorist attack
- Avoid using violent material simply because it is available
- The same value should be placed on human life and suffering whether it occurs in the UK or internationally
- The time of day of transmission, whether it is pre or post Watershed, and the rest of the schedule should be taken into account.

Deaths reported in the news are real. The best way to reflect this reality is by taking obvious care to respect the privacy of those involved. There are almost no circumstances in which it is justified to show executions or other scenes in which people are being killed.

Still photographs can sometimes convey the horrific reality of a situation, without shocking to the same degree as moving pictures. The natural sounds whether on radio or television can be as disturbing as pictures, and should also be treated with care. Editing out the bloodiest scenes need not result in a sanitised version of events. A good script is vital in conveying the reality of tragedy.

Editors on continuous news channels need to consider carefully the cumulative effect of the multiple use of such images.

Reporting should show sensitivity and care while remaining objective, and should not lapse into inappropriate sentimentality, or false compassion.

### 3 INTERVIEWS WITH THOSE INJURED OR GRIEVING

People in a state of distress must not be put under any pressure to provide interviews against their wishes. Approaches are often best made through friends, relatives or advisers. Just because bereaved people may be offered for interview by the police or other authorities does not justify use of material which is voyeuristic or profoundly distressing: an important purpose must be served by broadcasting it. Thoughtless questions cause distress and do damage. When such a question has been asked by others it may be possible to remove it without harming the sense of the interview.

Filming or recording of people who are extremely distressed must not be carried out in such a way as to increase their suffering. Editors must be satisfied that use of pictures or sound is genuinely important in helping audiences understand the impact of the event.

Audiences are sometimes upset and angered over scenes of suffering even when victims have co-operated willingly or have asked for coverage. The public may not know the circumstances: a few words of explanation when introducing the scene would prevent misunderstanding.

#### 4 LIBRARY USE OF SCENES OF SUFFERING

Avoid needless or repeated use of traumatic library material, especially if it features identifiable people. It should not be used as "wallpaper" or to illustrate a general theme. Library pictures of identifiable grieving or distressed people must be used only after referral to a senior level in the programme department.

#### 5 DEAD INJURED AND MISSING

Concern for next-of-kin calls for special care over reports that people have been killed or injured or are missing. The BBC has adopted a strong general rule that, as far as reasonably possible, next-of-kin should not learn this bad news from a programme.

There may be exceptions for prominent public figures or because of some other special circumstances but otherwise names should be left out unless we are satisfied that next-of-kin have been told.

News programmes need to be particularly careful over reports from abroad involving British people. Names are often released by authorities overseas and carried by news agencies before any information has reached next-of-kin, whereas in the UK official sources usually withhold names until families have been notified.

The BBC recognises that when names are not given in our broadcast reports, the news may cause needless concern among people with close relatives who might have been involved. In the choice between difficult options, we believe this is not as bad as the shock caused when names are received, for the first time, by way of radio or television.

But we also need to reduce needless anxiety by narrowing the area of concern as quickly as we can without identifying individual victims. So we should include details such as airline, flight number, place of departure, and destination as early as possible, so that even larger numbers of people are not alarmed.

#### 6 REVISITING PAST EVENTS

Programmes intending to examine past events involving trauma to individuals (including, but not limited to, crime) must think through ways of minimising the distress that might be caused to surviving victims or to surviving relatives in re-telling the story. So far as is reasonably practicable, surviving victims or the immediate families of the dead people who are to feature in the programme should be informed of the BBC's plans. Failure to do this may be deemed a breach of privacy, even if the events or material to be used were once in the public domain. The programme should proceed against the objections of those concerned only if there is a clear public interest.

#### 7 TRAGIC EVENTS AND NON FACTUAL PROGRAMMES

The aftermath of a tragic event calls for considerable sensitivity by broadcasters. Scheduling changes may be required to ensure that nothing that might cause widespread offence is

broadcast inadvertently (see section 7 "Dealing With Tragic Events" in Chapter 6: Taste and Decency).

#### 8 FUNERALS

Normally, programmes should cover funerals only with the permission of the family. Good reasons are needed if the wishes of the family are to be ignored. We should ensure that funerals are covered sensitively, and should avoid intrusive conduct, such as close camera shots of people who are grieving

### CHAPTER 13 INTERVIEWING

#### 1 GENERAL

#### 2 PURPOSE OF INTERVIEWS

#### 3 EVEN-HANDEDNESS

#### 4 FAIR DEALING WITH INTERVIEWEES

#### 5 TONE AND TACTICS

#### 6 FAIRNESS TO THE INTERVIEWEE AND DEALING WITH EVASION

#### 7 INTERVIEWING OUR CORRESPONDENTS

#### 8 EDITING A RECORDED INTERVIEW

#### 1 GENERAL

Interviews are a vital tool of journalism and programme making.

Where interviewees are to be questioned or tested on matters of controversy it is important for editors, researchers and interviewers to think through the editorial issues and structure the interview accordingly.

BBC interviews should be well mannered and courteous. They may be searching, sharp, sceptical, informed and to the point - but not partial, discourteous or emotionally attached to one side of an argument. Interviewees should be given a fair chance to set out their full response to the questions.

#### 2 PURPOSE OF INTERVIEWS

An interview should have a clear purpose. It should be particular to a given interviewee and to a point in time. Beware of inviting people to appear simply because they are major players in a running news story, without a clear and cogent idea of what we want to find out from them.

Our interviewing should be well informed. Careful preparation by the production team - not just the interviewer - is called for. An interview is more likely to break new ground if the present position is summarised, and the interviewee discouraged from repeating well known positions. We should usually be looking for new information.

Not all interviews will be challenging. Some are designed to inform, explain or entertain. The techniques appropriate to this purpose are different. People interviewed as eye-witnesses or as experts may need to be encouraged rather than challenged.

The purposes of a live interview must be realisable in the time available. We should try not to leave the audience suspended and frustrated in mid-argument, or irritated by references to running out of time. A good interview comes to an orderly conclusion.

### 3 EVEN-HANDEDNESS

Anyone expressing contentious views during an interview must be rigorously tested. People in power and those seeking it, or those who advocate or criticise policies must be approached with a broad consistency of tone. When a testing interview becomes charged, the emotion should come from the interviewee, not from the interviewer. BBC interviewers should avoid impressions of bias through tone and inflexion or through careless wording. The BBC should be known for a dispassionate approach to contentious issues.

Those planning and conducting interviews need to be alert to the range of opposition to particular ideas and policies. A politician, for example, may be usefully tested from all political viewpoints.

Academics and journalists from other organisations should not automatically be assumed to be impartial. It should be made clear to the audience if they are associated with a particular standpoint.

### 4 FAIR DEALING WITH INTERVIEWEES

It is important that interviewees understand why they are being invited for interview, what subjects they are going to be asked about, the context of the programme, and the sort of part they will play in it. It will not usually be proper to submit details of actual questions in advance, nor to give any undertaking about the precise form of questions.

In the event that an interviewee refuses to give an interview unless questions are rigidly agreed in advance or unless certain subjects are avoided, programme-makers must consider carefully whether it is appropriate to proceed at all. If they decide to do so they should make clear on air the conditions under which the interview was obtained.

Interviewees will sometimes make unreasonable demands. They may try to change the terms on which an interview was suggested - perhaps to exclude a pertinent line of questioning. They may manoeuvre to vary the circumstances of an interview - perhaps by delaying the start of a live interview in order to reduce the time available for follow-up questions. In such circumstances, editors and producers should stand their ground, and if necessary withdraw or vary the invitation to participate. They will be supported by the BBC (see also Chapter 3: Fairness and Straight Dealing).

### 5 TONE AND TACTICS

Interviews should be searching and to the point, well-mannered and courteous. They may be challenging but not aggressive, hectoring or rude, whatever the provocation. In a well-conducted interview, listeners and viewers regard the interviewer as working on their behalf

When interviewing ordinary people, the tone and approach has to be appropriate. They are not likely to be experienced in broadcasting. We need to make sure they are not talked

down to, nor intimidated by brusque questioning.

### 6 FAIRNESS TO THE INTERVIEWEE AND DEALING WITH EVASION

Interviewees should be given a fair chance to set out their full response to the questions. However, interviewers have to contend increasingly with interviewees who are skilled at filibustering, using an interview as a platform and avoiding its proper purpose.

Interruption may be justified but it needs to be well timed and not too frequent. It is less likely to discomfort the audience if it comes naturally and after the interviewee has made his or her main point - or has manifestly failed to make it.

Evasion should be exposed. This should be done coolly and politely - if necessary by repeating the question and explaining to the interviewee and to the audience why the previous answer did not address it.

### 7 INTERVIEWING OUR CORRESPONDENTS

It is entirely right to call upon BBC correspondents to express their judgement based on their knowledge of a subject, but entirely inappropriate to ask them about things of which they cannot be sure, or on which they can only speculate. Producers should establish in advance exactly how much a correspondent will be able to move a story on or clarify it.

### 8 EDITING A RECORDED INTERVIEW

When an interview is recorded for later editing, interviewees should be dealt with fairly. This includes telling them that their contribution will be edited.

An interviewee who is being asked to reply to detailed criticism, should be given an opportunity to respond to each of the main points aired in the programme. Care should be taken to reflect in the edited programme the points of substance made by the interviewee in the full recording. Choosing only the weaker responses of an interviewee in preference to effective rebuttal is unfair. Overall, a reasonable person, seeing or hearing an interview both in full and in edited form, should conclude that it has been edited fairly.

Programmes should be wary of agreeing to treat "as live" an interview which is to be recorded. Circumstances may well change before transmission which would make it inappropriate for the recording to be used in its entirety. If an agreement is entered into, both parties must be clear about what has been agreed and the extent to which editing may be appropriate before transmission.

Recorded interviews should be well focused. Where possible they should be of a length appropriate to the likely amount of material to be included in the finished programme. Using only brief extracts from long and unfocused interviews can cause justified ill-feeling.

## CHAPTER 14 CHILDREN AND PROGRAMMES

- 1 GENERAL
- 2 CONSENT
- 3 IMPACT
- 4 ANONYMITY

5 INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES

6 LAWS AFFECTING CHILDREN

6.1 The Identification of Children Involved in Legal Cases

6.2 The Protection of Children Act

1 GENERAL

Children can be involved in programmes in a number of ways; as actors, interviewees, participants in or subjects of a programme and even, occasionally, as programme makers themselves. The use of children in programmes often requires handling with great care: it can be difficult for programme makers to strike a balance between competing interests - of the child, of the parent, and of the audience as a whole.

In the UK and internationally there are various laws designed to protect children. Wherever in the world the BBC operates, programme makers must have due regard for the welfare of children who take part in their programmes.

We should respect the interests of children as viewers and listeners of BBC programmes too, whether these programmes are aimed specifically at them, or at a general audience. Consult the Taste And Decency, Violence, and Imitative And Anti Social Behaviour chapters of these guidelines, for advice on the BBC's policies on children's viewing and listening. Advice on the European Directive on the Protection of Minors can be found in section 8 of Chapter 37: Matters of Law: General.

2 CONSENT

It will normally be appropriate to seek the consent of parents or legal guardians before interviewing children, or otherwise involving them in programmes, and the younger or more vulnerable the child, and the more sensitive the subject matter, the more likely it is that consent will be essential. If children are to take part in programme making during school hours it will normally be necessary to seek the consent of the school in loco parentis. No financial inducement should ever be given to parents or guardians with the purpose of affecting their decision whether to give consent, although the legitimate payment of expenses is acceptable.

A child's own consent should always be sought about being interviewed or involved in programmes and the child's refusal to take part should not be overridden. Explanation to children should be in a language and terms that they can understand. In deciding when a child can give consent, the stage of development and degree of understanding as well as chronological age should be taken into account. Most children over the age of fourteen and some over the age of seven will have the necessary understanding. The consent of minors should be confirmed by the parent or guardian.

Programme makers may wish to consult an appropriate professional or an adult who knows the child to help them make such judgements.

Where parental consent has been refused, reference should be made to Head of Department before taking any decision to go ahead. This can normally be justified only if the item is of sufficient public importance and the child's appearance is absolutely necessary.

In the case of drama involving child performances, if the child is required during school hours the consent of the child's school is required. In law, Local Education Authorities license all child performances during school hours. Some education authorities make a very broad definition of what constitutes a performance.

3 IMPACT

Journalists and other programme makers should consider carefully the impact of the programme on a child involved in it - both in the way it is made, and any possible impact it may have when broadcast. This applies whether or not we have secured parental consent. Children are often eager to help programme makers but may lack judgement about their own long term interests.

Programme makers are advised to consult professionals and experts when dealing with children and sensitive subjects. BBC Children's Programmes have developed considerable expertise and support systems to protect children before, during and after the programme process and can offer advice in this area.

When dealing with dangerous or illegal activity among children, such as drug-taking or prostitution, it is often advisable for programme teams to be accompanied by an independent agency throughout their contact with the children.

In the course of their research, programme makers may come across situations where they believe the welfare of a child is being endangered by others. In such cases the child's interests and safety must take priority and programme makers should, in consultation with their Head of Department and Editorial Policy, consider reporting what they have found to the relevant authority.

4 ANONYMITY

When factual programmes feature children involved in illegal or anti-social activity identification may raise difficult ethical issues. There may be a public interest in identifying the children concerned, but the longer term interests of the child may argue for anonymity. Programme makers should refer up where they are in doubt about the balance of interest. Parental consent may not be a sufficient reason to identify a child if the child's long term future would be better served by anonymity.

When recording anti-social or criminal practices carried out by children with the intention of highlighting the practice rather than the individuals the general rule is that individual children will not be identified.

When interviewing adults about their own illegal or anti-social behaviour, programme makers should think carefully before involving, showing or identifying their children. They should consider the impact it might have on them and only proceed if doing so is editorially justifiable and the welfare of the child would not be harmed.

5 INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES

Interviews with children need particular care. Children can be easily led in questioning and are often open to suggestion. Young children in particular may have difficulty in distinguishing between reality and fantasy and teenagers do not always have the skills to distinguish truth

from hearsay and gossip. Programme makers should be careful about prompting children and should allow them to speak for themselves. Children should not be talked down to or patronised. Where teenagers have been involved in criminal or anti-social behaviour, programme makers should be aware they sometimes exaggerate for effect. Criminal or anti social behaviour should not go unchallenged.

On extremely sensitive subjects, such as abuse or family breakdown, programme makers should consider consulting a professional with experience of interviewing and counselling children about the best way of approaching interviews and minimising distress.

## 6 LAWS AFFECTING CHILDREN

### 6.1 *The Identification of Children Involved in Legal Cases*

There are special laws designed to protect children involved in legal cases.

- **Youth court proceedings**

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland Youth courts deal with people accused of committing offences while under 18. Any matters leading to the identification in youth court proceedings of a witness, defendant or other party in those proceedings who is under 18 may not be revealed. The restrictions include the naming of schools and of addresses. No picture of a person under 18 can be broadcast. Even a picture which doesn't show the child's face is prohibited. A child involved in criminal proceedings as a defendant ( known as the " accused " ), a victim or a witness cannot be identified unless the court makes an order allowing identification.

In Scotland there are no youth courts - children are dealt with by the Children's Panel System. Any child involved in a hearing before the Children's Panel or an associated referral hearing before a Sheriff cannot be identified. A child is defined as someone under the age of 16, or someone under the age of 18 who is subject to a supervision order. The restrictions outlined in the previous paragraph also apply to Children's Panel/Referral cases.

In contrast, in civil proceedings in Scotland, a child can be identified unless the court makes an order preventing identification. Although identification may be legally permissible in such civil cases, there may be other ethical or editorial considerations pointing towards preserving the child's anonymity.

- **Other proceedings involving children**

These may be heard in Magistrates' Courts, County Courts, or the High Court and deal with care proceedings, adoption, guardianship and similar concerns. Restrictions may apply preventing the identification of persons under eighteen, who are concerned in such proceedings.

It is open to the court to decide whether to ban the identification of a child involved in any other proceedings.

- **Children As Victims of Sexual Offences**

The law also prevents the identification of child victims of sexual offences. Refer to section 4.3 " Victims of Sexual Offences " in Chapter 37: Matters Of Law: General for further details.

- **Courts Sitting in Private**

It is a usually a contempt to broadcast detailed accounts of proceedings in any court sitting in private. This will include proceedings involving wardship, adoption or guardianship of an infant. In wardship cases it is not a contempt to report the court's order or an accurate summary of it, unless the court expressly forbids this.

- **"Custody "**

Note that since the Children Act (1989) the term "custody" has not been a legal concept and should not normally be used. Custody has been replaced by contact orders, prohibited steps orders, residence orders and specific issue orders.

### 6.2 *The Protection of Children Act*

The Protection of Children Act (1978) covers cases of children filmed or otherwise displayed for pornographic purposes. It is an offence under the act to take an indecent photograph of a child under the age of sixteen or to involve a child under that age in a photograph that is itself indecent even if the child's role is not. Explicit sexual contact between adults and children should not be depicted in any BBC programme.

**Programme makers should consult the BBC's legal advice department if they have any queries about the law as it affects children.**

## CHAPTER 15 CRIME

### I GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 1.1 Guidance for news programmes
- 1.2 Context
- 1.3 Crime reconstruction in news programmes
- 1.4 Crime reconstruction in current affairs programmes
- 1.5 Paedophiles and Sexual Crime
- 1.6 Witnessing illegal activity
- 1.7 Library material of crime
- 1.8 Running stories

### 2 DEALING WITH CRIMINALS

- 2.1 Interviews
- 2.2 Payments
- 2.3 Prisoners and prisons
- 2.4 Prevention of Terrorism Act
- 2.5 Guilt by Association
- 2.6 Victims Of Crime

### 3 DEALING WITH WITNESSES

- 3.1 Interviews
- 3.2 Payments

### I GENERAL PRINCIPLES

As in any other factual area, we need to report crime in a way which not only gives our audiences details of significant events but which also throws light on the issues. We should try to increase understanding of crime, with the aim of enabling viewers and listeners to make informed decisions about public policy and about their personal circumstances.



Television and radio may add to people's *fear* of becoming victims of crime even when, statistically, they are very unlikely to be so. It is against this background that we need to judge our reporting of crime.

That does not mean we should "explain crime away". But we do need to keep our crime coverage in proportion.

Over time, all our principal news & current affairs programmes, both network and regional, must ensure they report the whole picture: the relevant trends as well as the individual events that lie behind, and sometimes contradict, the trends.

When a programme concerns a real crime, some of those involved (either offenders, suspects, witnesses or relatives) may have changed their names or addresses in order to re-establish their lives. Careful consideration should be given to the extent to which we identify them or their whereabouts (see also section 1 "Confidentiality" in Chapter 17: Confidentiality and Release of Programme Material).

#### 1.1 Guidance for news programmes

Violent crime may be a tiny proportion of total crime but it occupies a greater proportion of our crime coverage. We need to be sensitive to the fears that this might create. When we handle crime stories we need to think carefully about why and how we are reporting them, and their context.

- be alert to the overall proportion of time spent on covering crime, in particular violent crime, and to the possible cumulative effect of that coverage
- be aware of audience sensitivities when covering crimes that involve violence (see section 2 "Real-Life Violence" in Chapter 6: Violence for more guidance)
- when selecting a crime story be sure the criteria used are legitimate. Do not suggest trends where none exist. For example, do not report one stabbing just because it comes after another more newsworthy one. Resist language that falsely implies a link between crimes ("*tonight's attack comes just two days after.....*").
- be particularly careful in breakfast bulletins when handling crime stories which have already been reported the previous day. Unless there is a development overnight, consider whether the story really merits inclusion again
- in placing a crime story in a running order judge its significance and scale. Be wary of "ringing the changes" in regular summaries by the inclusion of crime stories which, though fresh, fail these editorial tests
- think carefully about the accuracy and suitability of language when reporting crimes. Crime is dramatic enough when it is described factually. Avoid colourful language, clichés and unnecessary adjectives

- be particularly scrupulous when dealing with criminals, both active and convicted. Any programme proposing to interview a criminal active in or wanted in the UK must consult Controller Editorial Policy in advance (see section 2.1 of "Dealing with Criminals")
- interviewing witnesses or potential witnesses also needs to be handled carefully. Witnesses must not be paid for interviews without prior approval of both the relevant Director or Chief Executive and Controller Editorial Policy (see section 3.2 "Dealing with Witnesses")
- in real life, crime is not glamorous. We must not make it so.

#### 1.2 Context

While news programmes will often report crimes as events, over time we must offer our audiences understanding of the issues and trends so that they can appreciate where events are exceptional.

- we can achieve this by putting crime in general, and some crimes in particular, regularly into context
- putting crime in context does not mean explaining it away. It means helping audiences recognise the wider picture
- this takes expertise. Do not rely on any one statistic. People use statistics in ways which are partisan. There is no foolproof method of measuring the actual incidence of crime. The British Crime Survey published by the Home Office is widely recognised as a non-partisan source, but people quote from its findings selectively
- make use of our own specialist advice. Ask our correspondents who have experience of the complex picture revealed (or sometimes obscured) by crime statistics and of the arguments that go with them
- be cautious when using experts. Satisfy yourself of their credentials and recognise there may be others with equal expertise who interpret the facts differently.

#### 1.3 Crime reconstruction in news programmes

- BBC News programmes, network or regional, must not commission reconstructions of crime in their on-the-day reporting. They may feature coverage of those staged by the police for the purpose of gathering evidence
- revisiting the scene of crime does not constitute reconstructing it, nor does an interview with a victim or witness, but news programmes must draw the line at portraying the events themselves. Borderline cases must be referred to senior editorial staff.

#### 1.4 Crime reconstruction in current affairs programmes

BBC current affairs programmes, network or regional, must have regard to the following principles:

- programmes which sometimes use reconstruction as a dramatic story-telling device need to apply stricter criteria when it comes to reconstructing crime. Current affairs programmes should not use crime reconstructions simply to attract or to entertain audiences: the prime purpose of conveying factual information needs to be clear in each case
- we should not reconstruct detail (including dialogue) which we do not have reason to believe occurred (unless for clear and specific editorial reasons). We should not use an actor's portrayal of a character to create dramatic details or an overall tone for which we have no verifiable evidence
- we should not use incidental music or irrelevant sound effects
- camera angles need careful consideration, and so do point-of-view shots. We should not frighten audiences with shots that make them feel they themselves are the victim, though sometimes it will be necessary to show a scene from the victim's viewpoint. The camera will usually appear as an observer of events rather than as a participant
- we should reconstruct wounds being inflicted or shots of blood only if they are editorially essential. We should avoid unnecessary close-ups of weapons
- we should not use slow-motion or other photographic post-production techniques which have no clear editorial purpose other than to dramatise
- we should not reveal detail that could be used to make a criminal activity more effective (see Chapter 8: Imitative and Anti Social Activity)
- all reconstructions must be clearly signalled. Audiences must be in no doubt where the reconstruction begins and ends
- ways should be thought through of minimising the distress any reconstruction might cause to victims of crime or their surviving relatives (see also section 2.6 "Victims Of Crime").

#### 1.5 Paedophiles and Sexual Crime

When paedophiles and other sex offenders have served their sentences and been released back into society, strong passions can be aroused in the communities they live in. The BBC has a responsibility to report such matters where there is a clear public interest while at the same avoiding possible incitement and unjustified infringement of privacy.

**The BBC will normally only consider publishing the names or photographs of paedophiles or sex offenders who have served their sentences and been released where the police have decided to release these details to the general public. The fact of publication by other media will not be considered a sufficient justification in itself. Any BBC programme or outlet wishing to name an individual in exceptional circumstances, when that name has not been made publicly available by the police, should consult Editorial Policy in advance.**

If it becomes editorially relevant to report on the release of a sex offender, then it will be perfectly reasonable to name the town or city where he or she is living. But we should avoid giving addresses or details as this may provoke vigilante action.

Where offenders have become very well known, their pictures may be used. Otherwise again photographs can lead to attacks on individuals.

Any programmes planning to approach sex offenders for interview in prison, who have been convicted of serious offences, should approach Controller, Editorial Policy through their Head of Department first – whether the interview is to be undertaken in prison or upon their release from prison.

Interviews with paedophiles will be justified only occasionally and will need strong editorial justification. As with any criminal, programme makers should think through ways of minimising the distress any interview may cause victims of the crime and their surviving relatives. See also section 4 Identification of Crime Victims and Witnesses of Chapter 37: Matters of Law: General.

#### 1.6 Witnessing illegal activity

When investigating criminal activity programme makers may, on rare occasions, want to record a specific crime. When that might raise questions of the relationship between the programme maker and the criminal, or might entail the programme maker witnessing serious criminal activity, it must first be referred to the relevant Editor, Head of Department or Commissioning Executive in advance, and to the BBC's programme advice lawyers. Controller Editorial Policy must also be consulted. Permission to record or be present at illegal activity will be given only if it is clearly in the public interest.

The principles we should follow are:

- programme makers must not be involved in commissioning, aiding or encouraging a crime
- if we witness or record a crime being committed we must not direct the activity in any way
- if sources have been given a guarantee of confidentiality, steps may be required from the very start of the production process to ensure that the undertaking is maintained. Seek advice from a BBC lawyer at the earliest possible stage (see also Chapter 17: Confidentiality and Release of Programme Material)
- neither our research nor our production must constitute an obstruction to the administration of justice against the criminals concerned
- programmes which have investigated and exposed serious crime will normally wish to give proper co-operation to the authorities (even where no legal obligation to do so exists) in order to aid a subsequent police enquiry

- BBC lawyers must be consulted over any material that may risk prejudicing future criminal proceedings. This material may constitute a contempt particularly if broadcast close to the date of the trial.

#### *1.7 Library material of crime*

We need to take care in repeating library material relating to crimes or to victims. Every use of such material needs a separate decision requiring judgement and taste.

- do not use library material of one identifiable crime to illustrate another
- it will rarely be appropriate to use pictures of the scene of crime to preview a forthcoming inquest or trial
- if court proceedings are in progress, use of library material of the crime must be checked with a BBC lawyer.

#### *1.8 Running stories*

Some major crime stories are properly reported over a number of days. However, we need to think carefully before reporting them on days when there are no newsworthy developments. The fact that we have deployed journalists or resources on the story is never a sufficient reason in itself for reporting it.

## 2 DEALING WITH CRIMINALS

### *2.1 Interviews*

Interviews with serious criminals who are active or wanted in the UK are justified only occasionally. We must be sensitive to the impact they may have on our audience. Programmes must be satisfied that they are likely to give the public important information or insight. Controller Editorial Policy should be consulted.

The same principles apply when wanted people have fled to countries safe from extradition to Britain – and in addition they should not be allowed to celebrate the flouting of justice. Remember that wanted people not yet tried are innocent until a court finds them guilty; programme makers must be careful to take legal advice if it is proposed to suggest otherwise.

When criminals or former criminals are interviewed they should not be allowed to glamorise their wrong-doing nor give details of crimes that could be copied.

**Contact with escaped prisoners or people wanted by the police may in some circumstances constitute a criminal offence. Any such contact should be referred to Controller Editorial Policy.**

Internationally, definitions of what constitutes a criminal vary widely. As far as those motivated by personal gain are concerned, we apply the same considerations about likely audience reaction and the same conditions would apply in interviews. Interviewing political dissidents and activists is an important part of providing a full understanding of events. Proposals to interview people who use or encourage the use of violence should be referred to a senior editor in the department, and if further advice is necessary, to Controller

Editorial Policy.

### *2.2 Payments*

Programmes should not make payments to criminals, nor generally to former criminals who are simply talking about their crimes. In general, the same should apply to families or relatives of criminals or former criminals.

We should also not pay people who may not have committed a crime or been convicted of a criminal offence but whose behaviour is either clearly antisocial or whose activities have attracted such notoriety that any payment would be inappropriate.

**Any case for an exception must be referred through the Head of Department to Controller Editorial Policy. Payment of a fee will be approved only for a contribution of remarkable importance with a clear public interest which could not be obtained without payment.**

### *2.3 Prisoners and prisons*

Programme makers wishing to enter a prison to conduct an interview with a prisoner for broadcast will usually seek permission from the prison authorities. Exceptional proposals should be discussed by Head of Department with Controller Editorial Policy.

Many prisoners now have access to public telephones, though their use may be restricted by prison rules. Programmes which intend to invite a prisoner to initiate a call for broadcast purposes must refer to head of department who may consult Controller Editorial Policy.

If a programme receives an unsolicited call from a prisoner for broadcast purposes it should not be used live unless there has been time for proper consideration of the nature and context of the contribution, and, if necessary, editorial referral. In the case of prisoners convicted of serious crimes, particularly crimes of violence, due consideration must be given to ways of minimising the possible distress that an interview might cause to a victim or victim's family.

Where an unsolicited call is pre-recorded before referral can take place, the referral must take place before transmission.

### *2.4 Prevention of Terrorism Act*

In addition to the above, any contacts with criminals who are directly linked to terrorist acts in the United Kingdom, may lead to proceedings under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Any proposal to interview such individuals, or representatives of their organisations must be referred to Controller, Editorial Policy and time allowed for full consideration of the issues involved.

### *2.5 Guilt by Association*

Programmes reporting crime should remember that the families of criminals are regarded as innocent unless a court deems otherwise. In some senses they may be seen as victims themselves. We must not imply guilt by association. Although full reporting of the facts

surrounding notorious criminals may properly entail reporting of their family circumstances we should always try not to cause unnecessary distress to the innocent.

Care should be taken over using library shots of prisoners to illustrate a specific crime or type of crime. Individuals should not be clearly identifiable if they were not involved in the crime in question.

### 2.6 Victims Of Crime

When interviewing criminals programme makers must think through ways of minimising the distress any interview may cause to victims of the crime and their surviving relatives. See also section 6 "Revisiting Past Events" in Chapter 12: Reporting Suffering and Distress.

## 3 DEALING WITH WITNESSES

### 3.1 Interviews

When interviewing witnesses or potential witnesses in a forthcoming trial is essential that our conduct in no way interferes with the course of justice. When conducting news interviews with people who have recently witnessed a crime programme makers should be aware of the possibility that such witnesses might commit contempt.

No interviews with witnesses in a trial about any aspect of their evidence should be conducted once a trial is under way. Any proposal to interview a witness before the end of a trial should be referred by Heads of Department to Programme Legal Advice Department and Editorial Policy.

Sometimes a witness may claim to have been coached by a journalist and we may need to be able to protect ourselves against any unfair accusation. During any recorded interview with a likely witness for use in a post-trial programme, producers are advised to make and retain a complete recording of the whole interview period, with the knowledge of the interviewee, including any pauses in the interview, interruptions, prompting, repeat questions, or re-takes.

### 3.2 Payments

3.2.1. To protect both the integrity of the judicial process and the BBC's reputation while criminal proceedings are active, no programme may pay or promise to pay, directly or indirectly, any witness or person who may reasonably be expected to be called as a witness for their story. Nor should any payment be suggested or made dependent on the outcome of the trial.

**Any proposal to step outside this rule must be referred to Controller Editorial Policy.**

3.2.2. Where criminal proceedings are likely and foreseeable, payments should not be made to people who might reasonably be expected to be witnesses unless there is a clear public interest, such as investigating crime or serious wrong doing, and the payment is necessary to

elicit the information. Where such a payment is made, it will normally be appropriate to disclose the payment to both defence and prosecution if the person becomes a witness in any subsequent trial.

3.2.3 In exceptional cases, only actual expenditure or loss of earnings necessarily incurred during the making of a programme contribution may be reimbursed, and then only after prior scrutiny and approval by the relevant head of department and Controller, Editorial Policy.

## CHAPTER 16 RELATIONS WITH THE POLICE

- 1 MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR PROGRAMMES
- 2 POLICE MESSAGES AND INFORMATION
- 3 "FACILITIES" AND TAG ALONG RAIDS
- 4 INDEMNITIES AND ACCESS AGREEMENTS
- 5 HI-JACKING, KIDNAPPING, HOSTAGE TAKING AND SIEGES
- 6 COVERAGE OF PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS

### 1 MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR PROGRAMMES

Where programmes are visiting places away from base, advice on the appropriate points of contact may be sought from the Regions and Nations, local BBC stations or the World Service where appropriate. These contacts are often the result of procedures agreed with the local police and unnecessary breaches can harm relations for a long time afterwards. Where possible, approaches should be made to the local police in good time to get agreement, for example, for siting equipment or for obtaining security passes for production teams. Local police should be informed if recording in the street is likely to cause an obstruction.

### 2 POLICE MESSAGES AND INFORMATION

The BBC helps the public by broadcasting police messages or warnings of traffic problems or emergencies. News programmes, especially at regional and local level, will usually carry police appeals for information about serious crime. Practical considerations such as time may limit what is broadcast.

### 3 "FACILITIES" AND TAG ALONG RAIDS

Some police forces, Customs and Excise officers and other public authorities permit groups of journalists to accompany them on particular operational duties such as drugs raids. Programmes must consider the pros and cons of accepting these invitations. There is a clear public benefit in seeing the operations carried out, but there are risks too. The event may be aimed principally at gaining favourable publicity; it may offer only partial access to a wider operation; and coverage may risk making the media appear part of the operation itself. Programme makers should only go on such a raid if they are sure there is a clear public interest involved and should think through issues of consent and trespass in advance.

Authorities may try to secure access to untransmitted material recorded during any investigation. Programmes need to consider the issues this may raise before they go on any operation.

When a considered decision has been taken to accompany police or customs officers or other public authorities on raids on private property, especially when going into people's homes, the following should be observed:

- Verbal or written consent should be sought from the legal owner or tenant of the property, except in exceptional circumstances – either before filming or as soon as convenient during filming or immediately thereafter.
- Do not rely on others to gain consent. Programme makers should say they are filming for the BBC and why, and consent should be recorded on tape whenever possible.
- Should consent be refused it is appropriate in most circumstances to withdraw immediately. Filming should only continue where there is a strong public interest, such as reasonable evidence of criminal activity
- Innocent parties should be disguised when identification would imply some form of wrongdoing. Programme makers should strongly consider disguising people whose consent to be filmed under such circumstances is questionable e.g. minors or people with learning difficulties.
- There may also be circumstances where we should take steps to ensure that a location cannot be recognised, if innocent parties could be identified from that location
- It may be necessary to disguise people for legal reasons e.g. possible contempt of court. There may also be issues of defamation. Normally it would be necessary to seek legal advice about such footage.
- Always consider giving a person an opportunity to reply to allegations. This may not be relevant if the subject has been prosecuted and convicted of an offence.

Programme makers should also be aware of the laws of trespass (see Section 5 Chapter 37; Matters of Law: General).

#### 4 INDEMNITIES AND ACCESS AGREEMENTS

Police forces often ask the media to sign written agreements before joining a police operation. These agreements usually take the form of legal documents known as "indemnities". The BBC has agreed a standard form of indemnity. Providing that the wording of any agreement is precisely that of the indemnity agreed by the BBC and the Association of Chief Police Officers programme makers may sign it. Copies of this standard form of indemnity can be obtained from the Editorial Policy Unit.

Increasingly other organisations as well as police forces are presenting programme makers with access or production agreements. These agreements may cover anything from viewing programmes in advance, insurance indemnities, limits on access to people and places, rights,

re-use and facility fees. It is important that such agreements are referred to TV Locations, Production, which will consult with relevant departments about the appropriateness of any proposed conditions, including Editorial Policy. Under no circumstances should any BBC programme agree to any conditions which surrender editorial control of a programme.

If unacceptable conditions are imposed we will forego the opportunity to cover the event in the manner offered, or withdraw from filming completely

#### 5 HI-JACKING, KIDNAPPING, HOSTAGE TAKING AND SIEGES

Cases of kidnapping in England and Wales are covered by an agreement between the news organisations and the Association of Chief Police Officers. The BBC will apply its provisions throughout the United Kingdom. When human life is at stake as a result of a kidnapping the police force dealing with the matter can ask for a complete news black-out. The procedure for such requests is carefully laid down and all editors of BBC news programmes should keep a copy of the document that describes the procedure.

In protracted incidents, and where hostages are involved, broadcasters must be aware of the danger that anything they say on air may be overheard by the perpetrators. Our reporting must be truthful and strictly factual. We must not speculate about what has happened or what may happen. We must listen to advice from the police and other authorities about anything which, if reported, could exacerbate the situation. Occasionally they will ask broadcasting organisations to withhold or even to include some item of information. We would normally comply with a reasonable request, but we would never knowingly broadcast something that was untrue.

#### 6 COVERAGE OF PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS

Comprehensive coverage of demonstrations is an important part of the BBC's news coverage. There are pitfalls people should be aware of.

The presence of cameras may influence the way people behave. It is important for BBC people on the spot to make a judgement about whether apparently spontaneous activity is being staged for the benefit of the cameras. Footage of staged activity in these circumstances should not normally be broadcast. If reporting such activity becomes necessary, then reference should be made to how it occurred. BBC people who suspect that their presence is inflaming a section of the crowd should withdraw at once.

News coverage of a demonstration should offer a comprehensive and impartial view. Estimates of attendance need to be treated with due scepticism, and wide disparities reflected. It may be helpful to name the source of any estimates. Camera coverage should avoid appearing to be on one side or the other, though for purely practical and safety reasons this may sometimes be unavoidable. It may be particularly difficult for reporters stuck on one side of a confrontation to form a clear overall view, and editors in the newsroom may need to ensure that material is put into a wider context.

When covering demonstrations live editors must be constantly vigilant for signs of any of the above problems. If violence or disorder becomes graphic or distressing we must be ready to cut away, recording material for possible use in an edited report.

**CHAPTER 17  
CONFIDENTIALITY AND RELEASE OF PROGRAMME MATERIAL**

1 CONFIDENTIALITY  
2 REQUESTS FOR UNTRANSMITTED MATERIAL  
2.1 Access to untransmitted material  
3 REQUESTS FOR TRANSMITTED MATERIAL

1 CONFIDENTIALITY

Promises of confidentiality given to a source or contributor must be honoured. The BBC's journalism will suffer if people who give us information on condition that they remain anonymous are subsequently identified.

The law affords some recognition to the importance of journalistic confidence, but it gives precedence to the interests of justice. In the event of a conflict between the two, the Courts may order journalists to divulge the source and may hold in Contempt anyone who refuses to do so.

In the end, the decision to reveal a confidence or defy a court and take the consequences must be a personal matter for a journalist. The consequences can be extremely serious, and may include a term in prison.

It is therefore essential for the BBC and for individual journalists that they do not enter into undertakings of confidentiality lightly or without considering the possible consequences. Journalists working on stories which may result in criminal prosecutions must be aware from the outset that they may be called as witnesses. At the earliest stages of research advice should be sought, through the relevant Head of Department or Commissioning Executive, from programme lawyers or Controller Editorial Policy. There are various practical ways of dealing with confidential sources:

- it may be possible to agree with contributors not to reveal their identities unless and until ordered by a Court. This is always a preferable option
- it may be possible to establish a source's authenticity without ever becoming aware of his or her identity or information that would lead to it
- no document, computer file or other record kept by the journalist or by the BBC should identify a source whose identity cannot ever be revealed. This includes notebooks and administrative paperwork of all sorts as well as video or audio tapes
- there is no legal obligation upon journalists to keep documents or records made during the preparation of a programme unless and until they are the subject of a formal request from the police or the Courts
- notes made in connection with a confidential source should never be made alongside or in the same notebook or file as other material which is to be retained

- information about a confidential source should not be shared unnecessarily with others on the production team who might be ordered to reveal it.

**Note that anyone who discovers information which could prevent a terrorist act in the UK or lead to the arrest of a terrorist wanted in the United Kingdom is obliged by law to reveal it at the earliest opportunity.**

Details of contributors', such as telephone numbers and addresses should be confidential to the BBC and should not be handed on to third parties without the consent of the contributor or referral to Editorial Policy.

For further guidance on anonymity see section 8 "Anonymity" of Chapter 3: Fairness and Straight Dealing.

2 REQUESTS FOR UNTRANSMITTED MATERIAL

BBC policy on requests for access to untransmitted material has been developed over a long period.

**The BBC will not voluntarily allow access to untransmitted material when to do so would endanger people who work for the BBC or when it would make it more difficult to gather such material in the future. When approached for access to such material, programme makers must always refer requests to BBC lawyers and CEP.**

This policy is based on two main considerations: the proper protection of BBC staff, and the BBC's continuing ability to record in dangerous situations (civil disorder, riots, wars and other conflicts) in the public interest.

In many such situations the media can operate only by virtue of being neutral observers. All these situations may involve danger for BBC people. The danger may increase if those being recorded regard the programme makers as agents of authority who will automatically surrender any material they have recorded. The BBC is not above the law, but it is important that in such situations that it is, and is seen to be, independent of it.

There is a longer term danger that the BBC will be prevented from recording some events, so reducing the information given to the public.

In addition there are wider considerations of the BBC's editorial integrity. This could be damaged if other organisations and individuals are allowed access to untransmitted material for their own use. For example, untransmitted material should not normally be released to organisations for training and public relations purposes.

2.1 Access to untransmitted material

When asked for any untransmitted material, we must be alert to the possibility that it might contain information that could point to the identity of a confidential source. Any request for access to such material will be refused.

"Access to" involves two separate acts:

- allowing the material to be viewed
- allowing it to be taken away for further use, e.g. as evidence

Most requests for untransmitted material come from the police.

In England and Wales the Police use PACE Orders (under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984) to require the release of material for use as evidence in court. In Scotland a warrant for material may be granted by a Sheriff, or the Lord Advocate can seek to recover such material by petition or order.

Sometimes the BBC allows a viewing by arrangement but requires a legal order for the same material to be taken away or used in court. The decision will depend on the nature of the BBC interest. Sometimes the BBC will refuse both a viewing and the taking away without a legal order because the BBC interest is so delicate or the risks so great. The BBC will usually resist requests for untransmitted material when these are merely "fishing" for evidence.

Occasionally the BBC will allow a viewing or a taking away without any legal order because of a clear public interest which poses no danger to the BBC, its staff, or its future ability to operate freely.

Anyone given a viewing will be told that other people or organisations involved in the case will be allowed the same facility.

Sometimes it is appropriate to accede immediately to a legal order. At other times, it is necessary to contest such an order and to appeal to higher courts.

Investigating authorities may be interested in untransmitted information in a notebook or in a person's memory. Here, the issue of confidentiality may arise (see section 1 "Confidentiality": of this chapter).

### 3 REQUESTS FOR TRANSMITTED MATERIAL

These are usually simpler because the material is already in the public domain. However, in difficult cases it may be in the BBC's interest not to relinquish even transmitted material.

When requests are made for copies of transmitted material in connection with litigation, programme makers should bear three points in mind:

- they should inform BBC litigation lawyers, who will consult with CEP where appropriate
- if the scope of the request is too extensive, they should ask for it to be reduced, and make clear that, if it is not, the request might be refused
- they should charge a fee or payment which realistically reflects the cost of providing the material.

Sometimes listeners, viewers, contributors and others ask for copies of transmitted programmes for their own private use. Programme makers should consider each request on its merits, bearing in mind the practical difficulties, expense, copyright, legal, and broader editorial implications of providing any material. It may be necessary to require a written agreement that the material will only be used for private, and not for commercial, purposes.

## CHAPTER 18 TERRORISM AND NATIONAL SECURITY

- 1 TERRORISM ISSUES
- 2 LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY
- 3 BOMB WARNINGS
- 4 INDIVIDUALS AT RISK
- 5 INTERVIEWS WITH TERRORISTS
- 6 STAGED EVENTS
- 7 NATIONAL SECURITY ISSUES
- 8 THE OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT (1989)
- 9 DEFENCE ADVISORY NOTICES (formerly D-Notices)

### 1 TERRORISM ISSUES

When reporting terrorism the BBC's role is to tell the truth - quickly, accurately, fully, responsibly and avoiding speculation. If people are to trust our reporting we must be seen to be independent as well as well-informed.

The provisions in this section apply to our reporting of *all* terrorism. Our reporting of Northern Ireland is subject to the same standards, but it sometimes involves additional internal referral (see section 3: "Northern Ireland" of Chapter 19: Reporting The United Kingdom).

### 2 LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY

We must not adopt terrorist language as though it were our own. Terrorist groups use military and judicial terms to give themselves status: if we report their use of words like "volunteer", "execute", "liberate", "court martial" and so on, we should attribute them.

Reporting terrorist violence is an area that particularly tests our international services. Our credibility is severely undermined if international audiences detect a bias for or against any of those involved. Neutral language is key: even the word "terrorist" can appear judgmental in parts of the world where there is no clear consensus about the legitimacy of militant political groups.

### 3 BOMB WARNINGS

News organisations sometimes receive telephoned warnings from people claiming to have planted bombs. It is essential that areas of the BBC where such calls are most likely to be received (newsrooms, information offices, switchboards) understand that the absolute priority is to pass information received to the emergency services.

If we become aware of bomb alerts at specific locations it may be appropriate for programmes to report them even before we know whether they are genuine or merely hoaxes. Editors have to balance the need to inform and warn the public against the importance of not giving publicity to hoaxes. The prevailing climate, the history of recent terrorist attacks, and preliminary advice from the police may help us make that judgement.

Some bomb warnings will prove to be hoaxes. We do not normally report incidents which turned out to be hoaxes unless they had a serious and evident effect (such as causing major traffic jams). In reporting bomb warnings we never reveal code words used by the callers.

#### 4 INDIVIDUALS AT RISK

We do not normally report terrorist threats against named individuals unless the threats have produced a serious and evident effect (such as the cancellation of a public appearance).

We should be careful when filming the homes of people whose position clearly puts them at risk (politicians, military people, judges etc.). We must try not to give details which might aid a terrorist attack. This includes exact locations, detailed plans, aerial pictures, readable shots of vehicle number plates and so on. We should never reveal details of anti-terrorist devices

We must take care not to identify as possible targets for a terrorist attack people who would otherwise not be in danger. This may mean, for instance, withholding the identity of individuals, whether civilian or otherwise; withholding the names of firms undertaking work for military establishments or withholding the names of animal laboratories, if we have reason to believe that revealing them might put them at increased risk.

#### 5 INTERVIEWS WITH TERRORISTS

The BBC interviews active terrorists only on occasions where we believe the public interest in doing so outweighs the outrage and offence such interviews are likely to cause our audiences. Any proposal to approach a terrorist or terrorist organisation for an interview must have the support of the Head of Department or Commissioning Executive and must be referred in advance to Controller Editorial Policy for approval.

#### 6 STAGED EVENTS

From time to time paramilitary and terrorist groups stage "public appearances", usually to try to get publicity. BBC people should never agree to attend "staged" events without reference to Heads of Department, Commissioning Executives or Heads of Region. World Service.

In the case of such events being staged in the United Kingdom, or in the case of threats being made at events overseas against UK citizens further reference must be made to Controller Editorial Policy. No material recorded at such an event is to be transmitted without separate reference to Controller Editorial Policy.

In the United Kingdom, groups such as the Animal Liberation Front, which have a history of attacks and threats against people, would also come into this category.

BBC people may find themselves present at a legitimate event when paramilitary groups stage an appearance. Sometimes this will be entirely unpredictable, and sometimes it will be likely given the nature of the event (e.g. paramilitary funerals). In such circumstances material may be recorded but programme editors must refer within departments before deciding to transmit. Heads of Department should refer to CEP in any unusual cases.

#### 7 NATIONAL SECURITY ISSUES

Journalists handling material which may have implications for national security in the United Kingdom must reckon with a variety of factors including the Official Secrets Act, the laws on confidentiality and the Defence Advisory Notice (formerly D-Notice) system (see Section 9 below).

Security sensitive matters must be referred through senior editors, to Controller Editorial Policy.

#### 8 THE OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT (1989)

Section One of the Act concentrates on spying and has rarely troubled journalists. Section Five makes it an offence to publish information protected by the act. This includes: security and intelligence, defence, crime and special investigation, interception of mail and telephone calls, and confidential official exchanges between governments and with international agencies. The information must have originated from Crown employees or contractors and have been disclosed without authority. Journalists risk prosecution if they publish official information in these areas without authorisation.

To succeed against a journalist, the prosecution must usually prove that harm was caused or was likely to be caused and that the journalist knew this, or had reasonable cause to believe it. The tests of harm are not especially stringent. The Act does not admit a public interest defence. Journalists can also be prosecuted for aiding and abetting a breach of the Official Secrets Act.

Programme makers should seek legal and senior editorial advice at an early stage when handling material which falls, or might fall, within its terms. More generally, legal opinion should always be one of the factors in a final editorial decision on any security sensitive matter.

#### 9 DEFENCE ADVISORY NOTICES (formerly D-Notices)

The Defence Advisory Notice system offers guidance to the press and broadcasters on information which if published might damage national security. The six Notices themselves are public documents - copies can be obtained from the Editorial Policy Unit and they are also available online at [www.btinternet.com/~d.a.notices/](http://www.btinternet.com/~d.a.notices/). They detail the categories of information on which guidance should be sought. DA-Notices are never "slapped" on a story, nor are they written in reference to any particular broadcast or publication. They are reviewed from time to time by the Defence, Press and Broadcasting Advisory Committee on which sit senior civil servants and representatives of the press and broadcasting organisations. Controller Editorial Policy represents the BBC.

The Secretary to the Committee deals with enquiries from the media. Normally approaches to the Secretary should be made through Controller Editorial Policy. If programmes have made enquiries through government agencies about sensitive matters the DA-Notice Secretary will sometimes be alerted by the government department concerned and may contact programme editors direct. In such cases it is important to inform CEP at once.

### CHAPTER 19 REPORTING THE UNITED KINGDOM



1 GENERAL  
 2 STYLE AND LANGUAGE  
 3 NORTHERN IRELAND  
 3.1 Referral Procedures  
 3.2 Staged Events  
 3.3 Special Legal Considerations

1 GENERAL

BBC programmes and services should be relevant and appropriate for all our audiences in all parts of the United Kingdom. National and regional differences and sensitivities should be taken into account and all parts of the United Kingdom should be reported accurately and fairly.

Audiences in different parts of the United Kingdom can approach BBC programmes in different ways and with different expectations. Audiences in different places have their lives shaped by different cultural backgrounds, different life experiences and different civic and political institutions.

There are already big differences in legal systems across the UK. In education, health and social services the wide variations in policy that already exist are likely to become more marked. All should be reported with particular care.

If not everyone is affected equally by a story or issue this should be made clear, normally in the first sentence. In News programmes it will usually be appropriate to flag this up in the headline as well. News Correspondents should try to make at least one reference to whom the story affects in any subsequent package. Though sometimes there will be a more sophisticated way than simply stating which parts of the UK a story applies to e.g. in a story about schools, pointing up the differences in approach to the curriculum in different parts of the country.

There are differences in the religious institutions between England and Wales and Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Programme makers should be aware that school holidays are different in different parts of the UK (see also section 2 of Chapter 6: Taste and Decency)

Programme makers with particular queries should take advice from the relevant Newsrooms.

Northern Ireland raises particular sensitivities, which are dealt with in section 3.

2 STYLE AND LANGUAGE

Programme makers should always think about how words or pictures will sound or look to different audiences in different parts of the United Kingdom. A particular story may not affect all parts of the UK equally. If it does not this should be made clear.

Our coverage should be accurate, precise and consistent. Geographical locations should be described in a consistent way. Give as much detail as is reasonable.

The word “nation” can mean different things to different people. When the word is used it should be made clear what is meant. It can be clearer to use United Kingdom or “the UK”.

Pronunciation of names and places should be correct. BBC newsrooms and the BBC Pronunciation Unit can give advice.

Stereotypes should be avoided. Clichéd and lazy images or phrases should not be used as shorthand for describing places (for further guidance on stereotypes in humour and drama see Chapter 6: Taste and Decency).

The correct names for the new Parliament and Assemblies and the new political posts in them should be used. They are the *Scottish Parliament*, the *National Assembly for Wales* and the *Northern Ireland Assembly*

Detailed advice on style and language is contained in *The Changing UK* booklet, but the following specific points should be considered:

- groups which have “**National**” in their title do not always have a remit across the UK. The **National** Union of Teachers may be the biggest teaching union in England and Wales but it has no remit in Scotland, where the largest teaching union is the Educational Institute of Scotland
- be accurate and consistent when using graphics and insets. For example, as we would never consider using an English flag to illustrate a story about exam results in English schools and we should never consider using a Scottish flag as an inset on a Scottish education story
- take care when talking about “north, south, east and west...” Yorkshire may be the North if you are watching or listening in Southampton but not if you are in Inverness or Carlisle. If we mean the North of England we should say so
- be consistent in describing where places are. Give as much detail as is reasonable
- the prefix **Anglo-** describes an **English** relationship with something and should not be used as shorthand for the UK’s relationship with something. However, when its usage is so common as in, say, the **Anglo-Irish Agreement** (though this is not its official title) then it would be perverse to use another phrase
- job titles can be different. In Scotland, the word **Depute** (as in Depute Head at a school) is widely used. It is a word that may be unfamiliar to audiences in other parts of the UK. So in scripting it is acceptable to refer to someone as: “her deputy”. However we should not change **Depute** to **Deputy** when using the **official title**
- the use of the word **Principality** as a substitute for Wales can sound out of touch to Welsh audiences (except of course when talking about the Prince of Wales and Wales as a principality in that respect)

- while interviewees may refer to Northern Ireland as **Ulster** our journalists should not use Ulster as a synonym. (Ulster is one of the four provinces of Ireland. It consists of nine counties - the six in Northern Ireland and three in the Republic of Ireland)
- the term "**province**" is often used synonymously with Northern Ireland and it is fine to make secondary references to "**the province**"
- be careful when using the word "**British**" and "English". They are not interchangeable. Say "British" when you mean "British" and "English" when you mean "English"
- while some people in Northern Ireland regard themselves as "**British**" others regard themselves as "**Irish**". When referring to the population as a whole we should use the term "**the people of Northern Ireland**" (but not "the Northern Irish")
- avoid using the word "**mainland**" when talking about Great Britain in relation to Northern Ireland.

### 3 NORTHERN IRELAND

Reporting of Northern Ireland is seen by audiences at home and internationally as a litmus test of the BBC's fairness and independence. Extra care must be taken to avoid even the impression of partiality - both in terms of labelling the people and organisations involved, and in gauging the importance of individual events.

In laying down special referral procedures relating to programming about Northern Ireland we are also determined to do all we can to protect the people who work for the BBC, and who live in what is often a sharply divided community.

It is of cardinal importance that programme makers from elsewhere seek advice from and discuss with local staff their programme plans affecting Northern Ireland. This does not mean that any responsibility for the programme is passed to BBC Northern Ireland: it continues to rest with the originating department.

At many times in recent decades violence has hit the headlines. But life in Northern Ireland reflects all the range and diversity of activity we cover elsewhere. We must explore and report that life, and not always in the context of "the Troubles".

For specific advice on reporting terrorism, including staged events by terrorist groups see Chapter 18: Terrorism and National Security

#### 3.1 Referral Procedures

##### **On-The-Day Journalism**

Network News programmes retain a permanent presence in Belfast, but the contact point for all matters arising on the day is the Head of News and Current Affairs, Northern Ireland.

##### **Longer Term Programme Proposals**

All news programmes must consult the Head of News and Current Affairs Northern Ireland.

All other proposals for programmes or programme items dealing with Northern Ireland or touching on Irish issues in general must be referred to Controller, Northern Ireland. Referral means a formal, usually written, submission of programme plans in whatever detail C.N.I. requires. This should take place at an early stage in the planning process.

In the event of a serious disagreement between C.N.I. and a programme department, referral should be to Controller Editorial Policy.

The Editors of *Radio Times* and *BBC On Air* magazine must ensure that material appearing in their publications conforms to understandings reached with Controller, Northern Ireland, or C.N.I.'s nominee. In addition, Heads of Presentation and Heads of Publicity are responsible for ensuring that publicity, promotion and presentation are in the forms agreed.

Any material published Online about Northern Ireland should observe the same principles as other BBC programmes. Particular care should be taken about use of graphics. Controller Northern Ireland or C.N.I.'s nominee should be consulted.

#### 3.2 Staged Events

From time to time paramilitary groups stage "public appearances", usually to try to get publicity. BBC people should never agree to attend "staged" events without reference through Heads of Department or Commissioning Executives to Controller Editorial Policy. No material recorded at such an event is to be transmitted without separate reference to Controller Editorial Policy.

BBC people may find themselves present at a legitimate event when paramilitaries stage an appearance. Sometimes this will be entirely unpredictable, and sometimes it will be likely given the nature of the event (e.g. paramilitary funerals). In such circumstances material may be recorded but programme editors must refer within departments before deciding to transmit. Heads of Department should refer to CEP in any unusual cases.

#### 3.3 Special Legal Considerations

The provisions of prevention of terrorism legislation impose obligations on all citizens to provide information about, and to refrain from dealing with, criminals or terrorists in Northern Ireland. There is no exemption for journalists.

The Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Acts could also have an important bearing on programme makers.

N.B. At the time of the publication of these Guidelines the Government had announced plans to reform all forms of terrorist legislation. BBC Programme Legal Department will be able to brief on any subsequent changes in the law.

**Programme makers whose plans might bring them into areas where the criminal law imposes obligations must seek guidance, through Heads of Department or Commissioning Executives, from BBC lawyers, and from Controller Northern Ireland or Controller Editorial Policy.**

## CHAPTER 20

## RECORDING THE NATURAL WORLD

- 1 GENERAL
- 2 FILMING NAMED ANIMALS
- 3 LIFE CYCLE PORTRAYAL
- 4 LOCATION
- 5 CAPTIVE SEQUENCES
- 6 VISUAL TECHNIQUES
- 7 RECONSTRUCTION AND SIMULATION
- 8 FILMING ANIMALS AND THE LAW
- 9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

### 1 GENERAL

Natural History programmes have a duty to uphold the same values of truth and accuracy that apply to all factual output. Audiences should never be deceived or misled by what they see or hear.

In the same way that there are perfectly acceptable conventions used in the production of factual programmes (see section 8 "Staging and Re-Staging of Events" in Chapter 2: Impartiality and Accuracy), similar conventions can apply in Natural History programme making that neither deceives nor misleads the audience.

There will be times when it is appropriate to share these Natural History filming techniques with the audience. This should increase audience appreciation of the value of particular "real" sequences filmed in the wild and distinguish them from material filmed in captive situations or controlled conditions.

### 2 FILMING NAMED ANIMALS

Television production methods in wildlife film making rely on single camera location shooting. This sometimes means that when a programme is singularly identifying or focusing on a named animal, it is not always possible to record all the shots at one time.

Where insufficient material of a significant natural event has been recorded it may be necessary to use additional shots or cutaways of the named animal recorded at a different time to the main action to produce a workable sequence. This technique has long been part of the accepted grammar of Natural History programme making. As long as the material depicts natural events in the animal's life cycle, it is perfectly acceptable to combine and compress these events to tell a biological story truthfully. But programme makers should not show action that is significant to the narrative of the film using shots of an apparently identical animal and portray it as the named animal.

Where insufficient material of a routine natural event has been recorded, the use of additional shots of an identical (substitute) animal for insignificant bridging shots or cut-aways may be justified in order to produce a workable sequence. This is an acceptable artifice so long as the shots are used to illuminate the routine event and do not in any way distort the meaning of it. But we should not state that the shots are of the same animal. Commentary

should never suggest the viewers are seeing something they are not.

### 3 LIFE CYCLE PORTRAYAL

Many wildlife programmes aim to tell the life story of an animal or plant and to reflect in detail different aspects of this natural cycle. Unfortunately the realities of survival in the natural world and/or the life span of the animal often mean it is impossible to film an individual consistently. It is acceptable for programme makers to use footage of several different animals or plants to evoke the life cycle from cradle to grave. Again audiences should not be led to believe they are seeing the same animal throughout the programme, for example by giving the "composite" animal a name.

Some types of Natural History films are deliberately anthropomorphic and tell intentionally dramatised stories of a fictional family of animals and their predators. This is a perfectly acceptable way of informing and entertaining viewers so long as the set-up is totally clear. It may be appropriate for programme makers to think about telling the audience at the start of the programme that what they will see, although dramatised, is nevertheless based on scientific fact.

### 4 LOCATION

In Natural History programmes, which aim to provide a portrait of animals or plants living in a particular place, programme makers can legitimately use material filmed at different times and different locations. It is important however to present a fair and accurate picture of what is being portrayed. It would not be acceptable to film at one location and claim to be at another. Also programme makers should not introduce animals to a location that is not their natural home.

### 5 CAPTIVE SEQUENCES

In wildlife film making it is sometimes impractical or unsafe to film certain biological processes or animal behaviour in the wild. In some cases filming could endanger the wild animal or its offspring. In such circumstances it is ethically and editorially justifiable to use captive animals to portray what happens naturally in the wild. However it should never be claimed that the captive sequence was actually recorded in the wild or in the actual location depicted in the film.

### 6 VISUAL TECHNIQUES

Some Natural History films deliberately and legitimately use stylised and visual devices. For example, in a Natural History programme illustrating principles of biology or ecology it might be desirable to use time lapse techniques under laboratory conditions to show the audience what the eye can't normally see. Likewise computer generated graphics or enhanced real images can bring sequences to the screen that would be impossible to produce in any other way. However, where there is a risk of misleading or confusing the audience, such techniques need to be clearly labelled or sign-posted in commentary.

### 7 RECONSTRUCTION AND SIMULATION

Natural History programme makers sometimes use reconstruction as a story telling device. Reconstruction, which is where single events based on corroborated personal testimony are quite explicitly re-enacted, is a technique that must be clearly labelled. Reconstruction is used when people are involved and when the cameras were not present at the original

event. Refer to section 7 “Reconstruction” and section 8 “Staging and Restaging Events” in Chapter 2: Impartiality and Accuracy for more detailed guidance on these subjects.

Simulations are different from reconstructions because they are not based on a single verifiable event. Instead they seek to give the viewer an impression of natural conditions or phenomena, based on testimony and evidence that may have been compiled from different sources at different times. Simulations are permissible when it would have been impossible to film the original event due to its rare or dangerous nature. They recreate natural conditions or phenomena in which animals, and sometimes people, appear. When it is proposed to simulate sequences, programme makers should consider using a variety of signposts in order to inform audiences about their techniques. These might be a combination of presentation announcements, appropriate use of commentary, innovative post production techniques and labels in the body of the film, or, as a last resort, an explanatory caption in the end credits.

In cases where reconstruction or simulation is proposed as a story telling device in natural history programmes, production should not proceed without referral to the Head of the Natural History Unit.

There may be occasions where re-staging routine events involving animals may be justified and may not need to be labelled. However all such interventions require carefully balanced judgements. Producers should also refer to section 9: “Ethical Considerations”.

#### 8 FILMING ANIMALS AND THE LAW

Programme makers working with animals must be aware that animal welfare is controlled by specific acts of law which if not followed could result in prosecution and criminal conviction. In the United Kingdom the following are just four examples of illegal activity:

- capture of any birds for filming purposes
- feeding live mammals, birds and reptiles to any other animal
- tethering or restricting a vertebrate by any means to attract a predator
- cruel goading of an animal to fury

In the UK bull fighting, dog fighting and cock fighting are illegal. Broadcasting such scenes, whether recorded here or overseas, will be rarely justified and must be referred to the Head of Department, Head of ICG or relevant National Controller. It may be acceptable if it is in the public interest and is filmed as “actuality”. See also Section 11 “Use of Animals” in Chapter 37: Matters of Law: General.

#### 9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Programme makers should never be involved in any filming activity with animals which could reasonably be considered cruel i.e. filming which may cause physical harm, anxiety, consequential predation or lessened reproductive success. However, there are times when, in the public interest, programme makers may be justified in recording the harming of animals by third parties for the purpose of gathering evidence or to illustrate malpractice,

cruel, anti-social or controversial behaviour. Permission for such filming should be referred to the Head of Department, Head of ICG or the relevant National Controller.

**For detailed advice on the portrayal of violence involving animals, see Section 2.3 of Chapter 7 Violence.**

For all filming with animals it is important to seek expert advice and to make a detailed assessment of the risks and potential welfare problems. In so doing the following should be considered:

- the effect the type of filming will have on the animal e.g. filming from a hidden position; filming at night; stunt filming
- the amount and proximity of contact with the animal
- hazards posed by the animal and to the animal - what could go wrong?
- length of time it is reasonable to film the animal without causing distress
- animals can cause infection and infestation; allergic reactions; injuries and phobias
- age and experience of those people involved in the filming

The Natural History Unit can offer further advice on the handling and filming of animals.

## CHAPTER 21

### RE-USE AND REVERSIONING OF BBC TELEVISION PROGRAMMES

- 1 GENERAL
- 2 LOGGING CONCERNS
- 3 CLEARANCE FOR REUSE, CONTRACTS AND RIGHTS
- 4 ACCURACY
- 5 SCHEDULING
- 6 SENSITIVE PROGRAMMES
- 7 LOCAL SENSITIVITIES AND INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES
- 8 SUFFERING, DISTRESS AND TRAUMA
- 9 CRIMINAL ACTIVITY
- 10 SURREPTITIOUS RECORDING

#### 1 GENERAL

These guidelines state good practice when BBC television programmes are repeated, reversioned, or reformatted for use on either BBC or Joint Venture Channels.

**When archive programmes are rescheduled and/or edited, they must comply with the BBC Producers’ Guidelines whether for transmission in the UK or overseas.**

Commercial channels, whether broadcasting to the UK, or broadcasting from the UK to international audiences, must also comply with the ITC Programme Code.

All the guidance below also applies when excerpts of programmes are used. Particular attention must be paid to the context within which clips are to be re-used, including their use in trailers. When appropriate, captions should be used to date excerpts.

These guidelines do not apply to programme or library sales.

## 2 LOGGING CONCERNS

Any re-version or re-format of a transmitted programme should be logged, including details of all changes to picture, sound and commentary. When programmes are edited for length or for any other reason, care must be taken to ensure that they are still accurate, impartial, balanced and fair. The re-edited programme must comply with any legal agreements that applied to the original.

Originating production departments (and independent production companies) are responsible up to the point of first transmission for ensuring that all potential concerns about the re-use of material at home or overseas are logged and attached to post-production paperwork. Legal and rights constraints, contributor sensitivities, surreptitious recording and any use of reconstruction should be recorded.

Broadcasters should ensure that the originating production or commissioning department is informed in good time of plans to schedule programmes and must ensure that post-production paperwork is checked for any restrictions on use.

## 3 CLEARANCE FOR REUSE, CONTRACTS AND RIGHTS

Broadcasters, or those to whom they delegate responsibility, should ensure that any programmes or excerpts of programme material which they plan to re-use can be cleared for that use, and have been cleared prior to transmission. When non-news programmes want to use news material they should always consult the relevant news library.

Artists' contracts should be checked for conditions agreed for re-use. Where there are no artists' contracts, producers need to be aware that their programmes are likely to be re-used and inform contributors of this at the time they record their contribution. Wherever possible it is desirable for producers to obtain consent and rights from key contributors in writing. Where this is inappropriate or impossible, or where consent and rights have been restricted, producers must refer to their Head of Department or Commissioning Executive.

Legal scrutiny of a repeated programme should be as careful as it was at the time of the original transmission. It is no defence in a defamation action to argue that material has already been shown. Special care should be exercised in relation to questions of contempt, for example if someone featured in an original transmission is arrested prior to its repeat.

Re-use of archive material must take into account any findings from the Programme Complaints Unit, which are binding on the BBC, and from the Broadcasting Standards Commission, of which the BBC would want to take careful account. If it is proposed to re-broadcast a programme which has been the subject of an upheld complaint, the relevant chief executive (normally Chief Executive Broadcast) should be consulted in advance.

## 4 ACCURACY

Archive material can quickly become out-dated and inaccurate. New facts may emerge and contributors' opinions may change over time. Sometimes it will be justified to show such programmes unaltered. However, where programmes have become factually inaccurate, it must be made clear that the programme is no longer up-to-date. Captions, commentary and billings should be used as appropriate. On-air information may also be given when necessary. Post-production paperwork must also be checked so that any use of reconstruction can be clearly labelled prior to transmission.

## 5 SCHEDULING

Particular care should be taken when programmes are rescheduled to make sure they are suitable for the new slot. Material, including strong language, suggestive dialogue, explicit sexual scenes and violent content, may need to be edited. All BBC television channels in the UK, both public service and commercial, must observe the 9p.m. Watershed policy. The post Watershed period runs from 9.00p.m. until 5.30a.m. the following morning.

## 6 SENSITIVE PROGRAMMES

When repeats of documentary material, drama documentary or factual reconstruction are scheduled, programme makers should consider whether any contributors, or people portrayed, need to be contacted for contractual or legal purposes, or for reasons of courtesy. Post-production paperwork must be checked. Where necessary, key contributors should be informed of the repeat, preferably by the original production or commissioning department. Care should be taken not to suggest that permission to re-transmit is being sought, unless the original contract so requires.

## 7 LOCAL SENSITIVITIES AND INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES

Overseas services need to take local sensitivities into account as regards both content and scheduling. Decisions to broadcast material should be made with due consideration for those featured. Issues such as privacy and fairness must be taken into account, including potential distress, damage and/or danger to contributors, and anonymity ensured when appropriate. Matters of taste and decency and offence to local audiences may also arise. However, in considering local sensitivities, the BBC should do nothing which detracts from its core commitment to due impartiality and accuracy as laid out in Chapter Two of the Producers' Guidelines (see also section 5: "International Audiences" in Chapter 6: Taste and Decency).

## 8 SUFFERING, DISTRESS AND TRAUMA

There are a minority of programmes involving illness, death, emotional trauma or intimate personal revelation. In such cases, the current status of significant participants must be considered. Some programme material becomes less sensitive with the passage of time. However, when re-use may cause damage and/or distress to the individuals concerned, their next-of-kin or those close to them, the views of contributors or their relatives should be sought where possible. It is preferable that this approach is made by the original production or commissioning department. There may be instances where there is sufficient public interest to override objections to re-use. Such decisions should always be referred to senior management who will need to consider contributor issues, including the likely impact of re-using the material on the channel concerned, and the public interest.

If contributors to such programmes object to re-use, or if they cannot be located owing to the passage of time, the basis on which consent was originally given must be carefully considered. People may be sensitive to material that depicts them as children at an age when they were unable to give informed consent on their own account. In all such circumstances, broadcasters must be satisfied that the grounds for repeating such material are defensible and should seek further guidance.

Where the material covers criminal activity, broadcasters should attempt to inform any victims of serious crime or their next-of-kin before re-use if this is appropriate. The programme should normally proceed against the objections of those concerned only if there is a clear public interest.

#### 9 CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

Consideration should also be given to the stigmatising effect of repeating material that reveals an individual's criminal past. The intention to transmit such material, especially if there are to be many repeats or trails, raises questions about fairness. Broadcasters may need to consider re-editing material, granting anonymity to individuals and/or providing new sequences or updated information via a caption.

#### 10 SURREPTITIOUS RECORDING

Before broadcasters re-use material recorded surreptitiously, they should reconsider public interest, privacy and fairness issues. The re-use of any surreptitiously recorded material must be referred to senior management before transmission and a log kept of any decision.

In the case of commercial channels complying with the ITC Guidelines, such reconsideration must be logged by channel managers at each transmission.

### CHAPTER 22 GAME SHOWS AND COMPETITIONS

#### 1 GENERAL

1.1 Competitions run by others

#### 2 SELECTING CONTESTANTS FOR QUIZZES AND GAME SHOWS

#### 3 TREATING CONTESTANTS FAIRLY

#### 4 SAFETY

#### 5 PRIZES

#### 6 DONATED PRIZES

#### 7 ORGANISATION OF COMPETITIONS

##### 7.1 Jointly Organised Competitions

##### 7.2 References to BBC Magazines

#### 8 PRIZES IN JOINTLY ORGANISED COMPETITIONS

#### 9 ENTRY FORMS AND RULES

#### 10 LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS AND PREMIUM RATE LINES

#### 11 CO-SPONSORED EVENTS

#### 12 ITC RESTRICTIONS

#### 1 GENERAL

Game shows, quizzes and viewer or listener competitions should be conducted in a manner which is fair, honest, legal and decent. Careful consideration should be given to matters of taste in game shows to avoid offence.

A variety of programmes may from time to time run quizzes, or viewer or listener competitions. There should always be a clear editorial purpose for any competition which is included in a BBC programme.

The BBC does not normally run game shows or viewer or listener competitions where prizes are offered purely on the basis of chance. In quiz or game shows any significant prizes should be awarded on the basis of games or questions which are a test of skill, knowledge or judgement appropriate to the participants and the target audience. Viewer and listener competitions should always involve a genuine test of skill, knowledge or judgement appropriate to the audience.

It is important that members of the public do not have to pay or buy anything in order to take part in a BBC quiz programme or game show. They should also not be asked to buy anything in order to enter a viewer or listener competition. For guidance on phone-in competitions see section 10 below.

Exceptionally, when a game is organised as part of an official BBC fundraising appeal such as *Children in Need* it may be acceptable to ask for a donation to the charitable appeal. Any such arrangement must be checked well in advance with Editorial Policy and Programme Legal Advice Department. (See also section 10 below)

When running competitions and awarding prizes, the BBC needs to maintain its editorial independence and should take care not to promote any service, product or publication. We should not normally offer prizes of branded products or services, which are referred to editorially elsewhere in the programme.

Questions in competitions, quizzes or game shows should not refer to any branded goods or services that are provided as prizes.

For guidance on coverage of the National Lottery see Chapter 23.

#### 1.1 Competitions run by others

Programmes must not promote any competition which is not organised by the BBC or in conjunction with the BBC.

For advice on suitable coverage of outside events which include contests and awards ceremonies see Chapter 28 Covering Outside Events.

#### 2 SELECTING CONTESTANTS FOR QUIZZES AND GAME SHOWS

There are a range of ways of choosing suitable contestants for game shows. However, steps should be taken to screen out contestants who are clearly unsuitable such as those who have been convicted of very serious offences. It is advisable to ensure that contestants sign a formal declaration to ensure that they conform to the criteria we require of them and that they are aware of the terms of their appearance on the show. Advice should be sought from the Programme Legal Advice Department and Editorial Policy may also be consulted.

#### 3 TREATING CONTESTANTS FAIRLY

Members of the public who take part in quiz or game shows should be treated honestly and fairly. It is also important to consider their dignity. They probably have never been on television or radio before and we must take care not to exploit or patronise them and to treat them sympathetically. We should explain what is going to happen and, if they are going to appear as figures of fun, they need to feel a party to the joke rather than the object of it. It is particularly important to be cautious with contestants who have been volunteered by family or friends as subjects of escapades, which are covertly recorded (for further guidance on secret recording in entertainment programmes see section 9 of Chapter 5: Surreptitious Recording).

Where game shows or entertainment shows involve contributors recounting anti-social activities, this should only involve minor matters. Clearly the BBC must not be seen to endorse serious wrongdoing.

#### 4 SAFETY

We should not put contestants to any significant risk to their health or safety and participants must not be asked to do anything which involves danger to life. Where games and competitions are physically demanding it may be appropriate to ask participants to complete a medical questionnaire to ensure their fitness to take part.

We must take care to minimise and control any inherent risks and a suitable risk assessment should be carried out. BBC producers should consult the appropriate BBC safety manager about safety checks and procedures. For independent productions the Commissioning Executive must check that the company has appropriate health and safety arrangements and access to a competent person to advise on health and safety matters (see also section 12 "Health and Safety" of Chapter 37: Matters of Law: General).

Programmes must ensure that the participant recognises and accepts any risks which may be involved. So that the audience does not think we are acting irresponsibly it may sometimes be appropriate to make it clear on air that we have taken suitable safety precautions and that the participant is aware of any risks.

#### 5 PRIZES

BBC programmes should normally pay for the prizes they offer in game shows and viewer and listener competitions. Programme makers should aim to offer original, rather than expensive prizes. It is inappropriate to spend Licence Fee or Grant in Aid money on prizes of excessive value.

If there is a range of prizes there should be a range of brands or suppliers. Shots of brand logos should be avoided and programmes should not normally refer to brand names or give details about the manufacturer or supplier of a prize. In exceptional circumstances some details may be given on the grounds that description of the prize would be inadequate without them, but there must be no element of plugging.

Cash prizes should be avoided in viewer and listener competitions and should never be offered in children's programmes. Any proposal to offer a cash prize in a game show or studio-based competition must be referred to the Head of Department or Commissioning

Executive and the output Controller should also be informed.

#### 6 DONATED PRIZES

We should aim to pay for competition prizes and only modest donated prizes should normally be accepted such as theatre tickets, football tickets, books, records or CDs. We may accept prizes of visits to special events, including the hospitality offered at the event, but programmes should pay for the travel and accommodation costs involved.

Donations of modest household or consumer goods or services may occasionally be accepted, but only with the approval of the Head of Department

Donations of more substantial prizes are permissible only in exceptional circumstances which do not bring the BBC's editorial integrity into question. For example it might be possible to accept a more substantial prize if offered by an educational institution or a research foundation. Such prizes can be accepted only with the written approval of the Head of Department who may wish to consult Editorial Policy.

If programmes accept donated prizes, the changes should be rung to ensure that the BBC does not appear to favour any institution or company. If tickets are accepted we must avoid giving undue prominence to one particular performer or company.

Programmes must never give an assurance that there will be an on-air credit or any publicity in exchange for the donation of a competition prize. Prizes should be described in an informational, non promotional manner. The name of the supplier should not normally be given and the brand name should be mentioned only if it is strictly necessary editorially. In such cases only one reference should be made. Television programmes should take all reasonable steps to avoid showing brand logos.

#### 7 ORGANISATION OF COMPETITIONS

The BBC must ensure that any game show or competition is organised in a proper manner which would bear public scrutiny.

##### 7.1 Jointly Organised Competitions

Occasionally a viewer or listener competition may be run jointly with a suitable outside body such as an academic or artistic institution. Programmes should not mount viewer and listener competitions in conjunction with commercial organisations. However, in exceptional circumstances, it may be possible to join with a publication or other media organisation to run a competition for a co-sponsored educational award or an award for skills associated with broadcasting such as journalism, music or drama. Local radio stations may join with a local publication to present an award for service to the community. It is not possible to run any other type of on-air competition with a publication. (for advice concerning off-air competitions organised with publications see section 15 of Chapter 24: Commercial Relationships and Appropriate Programme Funding).

Programmes should obtain the written approval of the Head of Department before any agreement is reached for a jointly organised competition. Chief Adviser Editorial Policy (Multimedia and Commercial) should also be consulted. The BBC must pay a substantial part of the costs of any jointly organised competition and no money from the outside

organisation should flow into any programme budget.

#### 7.2 References to BBC Magazines

There are restrictions on mentions of BBC magazines in programmes. If BBC programmes run a viewer or listener competition in association with a BBC magazine the programme should not refer to the magazine. For detailed guidance see Chapter 27: On-Air References to BBC Publications, Products and Services.

Any proposal to mention a BBC magazine in relation to an awards ceremony or an outside event must be referred to Chief Adviser Editorial Policy (Multimedia and Commercial). For detailed guidance see Chapter 28: Covering Outside Events.

#### 8 PRIZES IN JOINTLY ORGANISED COMPETITIONS

The same guidelines apply as for competitions organised solely by BBC programmes. The organisers should only accept modest donated prizes from a third party. No mention of a third party donor should be given on air.

From time to time a BBC publication may print details about a programme competition. However, a BBC publication may not accept large donated prizes from a third party for any on-air competition.

#### 9 ENTRY FORMS AND RULES

If a viewer or listener competition requires entry forms, these must be available by telephoning, writing or e-mailing the BBC or the relevant programme. Forms may also be available at BBC premises. No information should be given on air about entry forms or further details being available in any publication or via any other outlet.

Although BBC publications may include details about programme competitions, no radio or television programme should tell viewers or listeners that there are entry forms or competition details in the *Radio Times* or any other BBC magazine.

However, World Service Radio may tell listeners that entry forms are available in their publication *BBC on Air*. Such references are not permissible in BBC Worldwide television programmes. (See section 12 below on ITC Restrictions.)

Any game show or competition must have clear rules, which conform to legal requirements. The rules and terms of entry to any competition should be checked with the Programme Legal Advice department.

#### 10 LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS AND PREMIUM RATE LINES

There may be a number of legal issues to be addressed when organising competitions and producers should seek the advice of the Programme Legal Advice Department about the arrangements for any new type of competition or game show.

In particular, producers should be aware of the legal constraints imposed by the Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976. The Act may be contravened if a viewer or listener competition is based on a game of chance and some sort of donation, purchase or contribution is made to enter.

The use of premium rate telephone calls for a competition may be deemed to be the making of a financial contribution to enter. If premium rate lines are used, skill must be required to win; otherwise the competition may be interpreted as gambling or a lottery. Competitions which involve predictions about future events are not normally permissible. Producers should refer to the Programme Legal Advice Department before arranging any competition involving premium rate lines.

See also Chapter 32: Phone Ins and the Use of Telephone Services in Programmes.

#### 11 CO-SPONSORED EVENTS

From time to time, the BBC mounts public events, particularly in the arts field, which are co-sponsored by outside bodies. Such events may be run as contests or competitions, for example a co-sponsored contest for best singer or best musician. For further guidance see Chapter 28: Covering Outside Events.

#### 12 ITC RESTRICTIONS

In addition to these guidelines, the ITC Code of Programme Sponsorship and the ITC Programme Code include further detailed provisions concerning game shows, prizes, viewer competitions, jointly run competitions and entry forms. These ITC provisions must be observed by any commercially funded BBC Joint Venture television service broadcast in the United Kingdom or any BBC commercially funded international channel uplinked from the UK

### CHAPTER 23

#### COVERAGE OF THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

- 1 GENERAL
- 2 DETAILED PROVISIONS
- 3 USE OF LIBRARY PICTURES OF LOTTERY PROGRAMMES

##### 1 GENERAL

The National Lottery is an institution which is regulated by Act of Parliament. It interests millions of our viewers who either buy lottery tickets or who are recipients of Lottery grants. National Lottery draws are national events and the BBC covers these draws as a service to viewers and listeners.

##### 2 DETAILED PROVISIONS

All trails for programmes which carry National Lottery draws or games should be promotions for the BBC programme not the National Lottery. They should not include or reflect Lottery logos, Lottery advertising slogans, the music from Lottery adverts or any elements of Lottery advertising or any advertising undertaken by the Lottery Operator, currently Camelot.

We should not use elements of Lottery advertising campaigns in our Lottery programming. Official National Lottery logos may appear on the Lottery draw machines themselves and the stand they are placed on as these are elements of the draw itself controlled by the Lottery Operator. No lottery logos or elements of them should appear elsewhere on the



set or in the programme. There should be no lottery logos on the programme's superimposed graphics.

In order to avoid directly promoting the purchase of Lottery tickets or cards, BBC lottery programming and trails for lottery programming should not show Lottery tickets or cards on air and should not give details about how and where they may be purchased. It is, however, acceptable for the mechanism of Lottery draws to be explained on air in a non promotional manner. Some indication may be given of the chances of winning a prize.

Though the term "National Lottery" may be used on air where appropriate there should be no on-air credits for the Lottery Operator. Any on-air reference to the Lottery operator should be for sound editorial reasons.

Children under sixteen should not be present in the studio and lottery programming should not be specifically aimed at children under sixteen.

Purchase of a lottery ticket must not be a pre-requisite of being on the show. The audience of a lottery programme must not have paid to attend or take part in the show.

The prizes for the National Lottery's own draws or games which are covered by the BBC are provided by the National Lottery prize fund. Apart from the prizes for the National Lottery's own draws or games any other prizes should be provided by the BBC. The National Lottery Operator's promotional budget should not be used to pay for any BBC programme prizes.

The Lottery Operator is responsible for the costs of running and administering Lottery draws and the provision and maintenance of all necessary equipment. All broadcasting and programme costs must be paid for by the BBC.

The BBC will pay for the expenses of any programme contestants who take part in BBC game shows which include Lottery draws.

The BBC retains editorial control over all BBC programmes and trails which feature National Lottery draws or games.

The BBC retains right of approval over all promotional material or activities bearing the BBC brand or featuring BBC programmes which carry National Lottery draws or games.

### 3 USE OF LIBRARY PICTURES OF LOTTERY PROGRAMMES

Other BBC programmes proposing to use library pictures of BBC lottery programming to illustrate items about the Lottery should be careful not to confuse the programmes which cover it with the Lottery itself. The Lottery itself is a matter for government, the Lottery Regulator and the Lottery Operator. Programmes which cover Lottery draws are a matter for the BBC. The only element which is controlled by the Lottery Operator is the mechanism for the draws.

Programmes wishing to illustrate stories purely about the Lottery itself should not use library pictures of Lottery programmes beyond shots of the draws. They should not use pictures of the presenters or titles, or use the title music without consulting Editorial Policy.

They should also consult the Programme Legal Advice Department who will advise on legal restrictions concerning pictures from Lottery programmes and the use of the Lottery logos.

The relevant Lottery programme production team may approve use of footage of parts of Lottery programmes which are purely entertainment, such as musical acts, if no reference is to be made to the Lottery.

## CHAPTER 24 COMMERCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND APPROPRIATE PROGRAMME FUNDING

- 1 GENERAL
- 2 BBC COMMERCIAL POLICY GUIDELINES
- 3 INDEPENDENT PRODUCTIONS
- 4 ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP
- 5 ITC REGULATION
- 6 BBC ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP GUIDELINES
- 7 COVERAGE OF SPONSORED EVENTS
- 8 SPONSORSHIP OF BBC EVENTS
- 9 BBC ORCHESTRAS
- 10 CO-PRODUCTIONS
- 11 CO- FUNDING
  - 11.1 Suitable Co-Funding Partners
  - 11.2 Credits
  - 11.3 Support Material
- 12 HOSTED PROGRAMMES
- 13 JOINT EDITORIAL INITIATIVES
- 14 ON-AIR PROMOTIONS
- 15 OFF AIR PROMOTIONS WITH PUBLICATIONS
- 16 COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS ASSOCIATED WITH PROGRAMMES
- 17 NATIONAL AND LOCAL RADIO
- 18 COMMERCIAL REFERENCES REGISTER

### 1 GENERAL

The BBC operates in an increasingly commercial broadcasting market, involving many relationships with a commercial dimension. However, the BBC must clearly retain its reputation for editorial integrity whilst reflecting a real world.

Audiences must be able to trust the integrity of BBC programmes. They should be confident that decisions are made only for good editorial reasons, not as a result of improper pressure, be it political, commercial or special interest. They should never have reason to suspect that the BBC's integrity has been compromised by any financial pressure or commercial inducement from any outside organisation or interest group.

### 2 BBC COMMERCIAL POLICY GUIDELINES

The Producers' Guidelines are concerned with editorial issues and the BBC's programme making activities and any on-air references to commercial products or organisations. Advice on the BBC's commercial activities and exploitation of the BBC brand can be found in the BBC's Commercial Policy Guidelines. They cover questions such as the acceptability of BBC commercial ventures and how they should be undertaken, use of the BBC brand, promotional activities and fair trading.

### 3 INDEPENDENT PRODUCTIONS

The Producers' Guidelines apply to all independent productions made for the BBC and contracts between the BBC and independent producers must reflect this. Contracts must also ensure that the BBC knows and agrees all sources of funding before the commission is confirmed. BBC commissioning executives responsible for supervising independent productions should ensure that independents are fully aware of guidelines concerning editorial integrity and the financing of programmes. The BBC must approve all promotional material for any independent production made for the BBC.

### 4 ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP

No BBC service funded by the Licence Fee or Grant-in-Aid may carry advertising or sponsored programming.

The BBC's international commercially funded channels and BBC Joint Venture channels are permitted to take advertising and some programme sponsorship in accordance with relevant guidelines and codes of practice.

### 5 ITC REGULATION

All UK commercial television services are regulated by the ITC, for this reason BBC commercially funded television services uplinked from the UK are required to conform to all relevant ITC codes as well as to the BBC Producers' Guidelines. On the whole, the Producers' Guidelines are more exacting and comprehensive than the ITC Programme Code, but those responsible for output on BBC commercial channels should ensure that they are aware of the provisions of The ITC Programme Code as well as The ITC Code of Advertising Standards and Practice, ITC Rules on Advertising Breaks and The ITC Code of Programme Sponsorship.

BBC Knowledge is a special case. It is a publicly funded channel, but at its launch in June 1999 it was temporarily placed on a commercial multiplex. While on this multiplex the channel should be treated in regulatory terms in the same way as others on that multiplex and should be consistent with ITC as well as BBC guidance. In most cases conforming to the BBC Producers' Guidelines will satisfy all ITC requirements, but there are specific issues relating to on air references to support material see section 13 ITC Regulated Services of Chapter 31: Programme Support Services and Support Material.

### 6 BBC ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP GUIDELINES

In order to guarantee its own editorial integrity and impartiality the BBC has drawn up its own guidelines on standards for advertising and sponsorship for its commercial television service. These guidelines embody core BBC principles and contain some provisions not specified by the ITC Codes, for example the BBC will not carry religious advertising or take sponsorship for programming giving general consumer advice.

Specific BBC guidelines have been drawn up for the BBC's Joint Venture Commercial Channels in the UK and for BBC International Television Channels. There are also specific guidelines for jointly branded international channels and BBC branded television channels broadcasting to specific countries and uplinked from outside the UK . All these guidelines are available from Editorial Policy.

### 7 COVERAGE OF SPONSORED EVENTS

The BBC covers a wide range of sporting fixtures and other outside events. Many of these are now supported by sponsorship. For guidance on appropriate coverage see Chapter 28: Covering Outside Events.

### 8 SPONSORSHIP OF BBC EVENTS

From time to time the BBC mounts outside events for which it may accept co-sponsorship from an outside body. Money from an outside sponsor can only be used to enhance the event itself and must not be used to pay for any element of the broadcast coverage. For detailed guidance see Chapter 28: Covering Outside Events.

### 9 BBC ORCHESTRAS

BBC Orchestras may seek commercial support and sponsorship for aspects of their work which go beyond broadcasting, for example in undertaking education and outreach projects, giving public concerts or making national or international tours. The core broadcasting activity of the orchestras, however, should not be sponsored and any arrangement that could reasonably be perceived as direct sponsorship of the orchestra's broadcasting activities should not be accepted. The BBC should retain the right of advance approval for all promotional material and activities associated with any sponsored orchestral event or project.

### 10 CO-PRODUCTIONS

For co-productions, funding is provided in exchange for broadcasting and other rights. The BBC may consider co-productions with other broadcasting companies, recognised programme and film distributors, independent producers, record or video companies and audio publishers. The BBC may also arrange co-productions with theatres, ballet, opera or music companies or other institutions involved in education and the arts.

The BBC should not enter into co-production arrangements with any organisation whose activities could lead to doubts about the editorial integrity of the programme.

Co-productions should not provide a back door for sponsors and BBC producers should make sure they are aware of any funding, sponsorship or promotional agreements which potential co-production partners have with third parties. The same applies to any arrangements proposed by an independent producer. Concerns about funding arrangements for co-production partners should be reported to the Head of Department or Head of the Independent Commissioning Group.

Credits for co-production partners should be simple and non-promotional. Television producers should refer to the BBC Television Credit Guidelines.

### 11 CO- FUNDING

In strictly limited cases and for strong public interest reasons it may be appropriate to supplement licence-fee or grant-in-aid funding for programmes with grants from appropriate non-commercial outside bodies. Such co-funding must not give rise to any suspicion that the BBC's editorial independence or integrity has been compromised or that it is willing to broadcast sponsorship messages.

Co-funding differs from co-production in that it is not undertaken with conventional co-production partners and is not in exchange for broadcasting rights.

On the BBC's domestic services co-funding would not be appropriate for programmes aimed at a general audience. The subject matter of any co-funded programme must be uncontroversial and uncontentious and outside the area of public or political debate. Co-funded programmes must be designed to meet the specific needs of a limited or clearly defined section of the audience. Such outside funding should only be considered when it might seem questionable to meet the entire cost of programming of such a specific nature from the licence fee. For example co-funding might be acceptable for specialised educational or minority language broadcasts.

World Service Radio takes co-funding for some educational programming and for "lifeline" programming which provides an emergency service of humanitarian information for audiences severely affected by war or major disaster.

Co-funding must never be accepted for news, current affairs or consumer advice programming on any BBC domestic or international service.

All co-funding projects must be approved in writing by the Director of Education, or relevant Director. Controller Editorial Policy should also be consulted.

#### 11.1 Suitable Co-Funding Partners

Funds must not be accepted from any organisation whose interests or activities could lead to doubts about the objectivity of the programme. Suitable co-funders might include publicly funded bodies, charities, charitable trusts or voluntary bodies. Commercial funded charitable trusts might be acceptable in some cases as long as the trust is run at arm's length from any commercial interest. Funding from any UK government body or European Union body must be treated with great caution in order to protect the BBC's impartiality and independence. Although it may be legitimate for international agencies to co-fund certain programmes, funds must not be accepted from individual foreign governments.

The BBC retains total editorial control over any co-funded production and it is essential that programmes do not promote the funder or the funder's image.

Further detailed guidance is available from Editorial Policy.

#### 11.2 Credits

For reasons of transparency we should always acknowledge the source of co-funding on air. There should be a single non promotional reference, with no element of advertising.

A credit for the co-funder should be at the end of the programme. For television programmes the credit should be in the final captions, there should be no verbal reference and the co-funder's logo should not be used. Television producers should also refer to the BBC Television Credit Guidelines.

#### 11.3 Support Material

Programme co-funders may also meet some or all of the costs of support material. The source of funding for support material should not be given on air unless there is a particularly strong editorial reason to do so, though a credit may be included on the support material itself. Those responsible for arranging support material should also consult Chapter 31: Support Services and Support Material for further detailed guidance.

#### 12 HOSTED PROGRAMMES

In certain specific cases where there is some specific educational need such as vocational training for a targeted small audience it may be acceptable for the BBC to transmit programmes which have been made and funded by outside bodies. These programmes are placed in off-peak slots targeted at specific niche audiences.

Any such programme must be accurate and impartial and must not have any political purpose. It must meet the standards of the Producers' Guidelines and must also conform to the BBC's detailed guidelines for such programmes available from Editorial Policy. The BBC will retain final editorial control over any hosted programme and must approve the programme before transmission.

Programme providers should be non-profit making, non-commercial bodies such as official training bodies, official bodies representing the professions and voluntary organisations.

Director of Education and Chief Executive Broadcast must approve the areas of BBC output where it is acceptable to take such programming.

#### 13 JOINT EDITORIAL INITIATIVES

Programmes may sometimes enter into a joint editorial initiative with an outside body such as an educational institution. This initiative may take the form of mounting an event or running a competition for an award. In exceptional cases for clear editorial reasons, such an initiative may be undertaken with a magazine or newspaper, though the initiative must not require BBC viewers or listeners to purchase the publication. It is essential that no money from the outside body goes into any programme budget.

Any joint editorial initiative must be agreed in advance by the Head of Department who should consult Editorial Policy. Further detailed guidance can be found in section 7.1, "Jointly Organised Competitions" of Chapter 22: Game Shows and Competitions and section 7.3, "Joint Debates and Forums" of Chapter 28: Covering Outside Events.

#### 14 ON-AIR PROMOTIONS

The BBC cannot agree to give on-air promotion for an outside organisation or publication in return for their promotion of the BBC or a BBC programme or BBC service. Any such arrangement would be contrary to the terms under which the BBC is permitted to broadcast. When organising joint editorial initiatives with outside bodies, care needs to be taken to ensure that they are not compromised by any agreement for mutual promotion.

#### 15 OFF AIR PROMOTIONS WITH PUBLICATIONS

Off-air promotions for programmes should be treated with great caution as it is essential that they reflect the BBC's editorial values. From time to time, newspapers or magazines may wish to run competitions or other interactive promotions in association with BBC

programmes. Such arrangements are only rarely acceptable. Any such promotions must be editorially driven and the BBC must not enter into the arrangement for financial gain. There must be no mention on air of the newspaper or magazine and associated advertising should not imply BBC endorsement of the publication.

Interactive promotional competitions arranged with publications require the prior approval of the relevant Director and the Chief Adviser, Editorial Policy (Multi-media and Commercial) should also be consulted. Detailed guidelines are available from Editorial Policy.

#### 16 COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS ASSOCIATED WITH PROGRAMMES

The BBC produces a range of commercial products which arise from programmes and which support, extend and enhance the service offered to the public. BBC products must not be promoted within programmes. However there are special on-air trails for BBC publications, videos, tapes and CD Roms which complement an associated BBC programme and extend access to its subject matter. Such products need to reflect the BBC's core values and standards and must conform to the BBC's Commercial Policy Guidelines. There can be no on air promotion for other BBC merchandise associated with programmes (see Chapter 27: On Air References to BBC Products, Services and Publications).

Particular care must be taken if independent producers have rights to develop merchandise associated with programmes. The BBC's reputation for integrity could be compromised by inappropriate arrangements concerning commercial products or retailers as there is a risk of implied endorsement by the BBC. Contracts with independent producers should stipulate that the BBC must approve any promotional material related to associated merchandising. All such commercial activity licensed by the BBC must conform to the BBC's Commercial Policy Guidelines.

#### 17 NATIONAL AND LOCAL RADIO

The BBC's radio stations in the Nations and BBC local radio stations welcome local participation in their activities, but they must not accept any sponsorship for programmes nor can they accept money or facilities in exchange for broadcast publicity.

In exceptional circumstances, editors may consider offers of practical help from appropriate bodies of a non-political or non controversial nature for programmes concerning matters such as education, the arts or religious affairs. They should not accept assistance from local councils. Editorial control must remain with the BBC and there must be no implication that the BBC is favouring any religious denomination or outside organisation. All proposals for outside support must be approved by the Director, National and Regional Broadcasting.

#### 18 COMMERCIAL REFERENCES REGISTER

Each Directorate maintains a current register of co-sponsored events, sponsored support material, sponsored support services, co-funding, co-sponsored competitions, donated competition prizes and sponsored events covered in programmes. The purpose of this register is to ensure that the BBC is aware of the level of its overall involvement with any outside organisation.

### CHAPTER 25

### PRODUCT PROMINENCE AND FREE OR REDUCED COST PRODUCTS AND FACILITIES

#### 1 PRODUCT PROMINENCE

- 1.1 Product Placement
- 1.2 Undue Prominence of Branded Products and Services in Programmes
- 1.3 Products used as props
- 1.4 Reviewing Products and Services
- 1.5 Testing Products
- 1.6 Details of products
- 1.7 Books and Other Publications
- 1.8 Commercial Recordings
- 1.9 Use of Commercials

#### 2 USE OF FREE OR REDUCED COST PRODUCTS

- 2.1 Consumer and lifestyle programmes
- 2.2 Supply of Props

#### 3 USE OF FREE OR REDUCED COST FACILITIES

- 3.1 Holiday and travel programmes
- 3.2 Media facility and fact finding trips

#### 4 CREDITS

#### 5 ONLINE, CEEFAX AND DIGITAL TEXT SERVICES

#### 1 PRODUCT PROMINENCE

BBC programmes need to reflect the real world and from time to time reference will be made to commercial products and commercial concerns. However, programmes must never give the impression that they are endorsing or promoting any product, service or company.

References in programmes to all products and services must be editorially justifiable and not promotional.

We should always have good reasons for naming a particular company, product or service in a news or factual report. We must remain on guard against featuring too readily any story which has been generated on behalf of a commercial company. A skilful public relations company may make simultaneous approaches to several programmes. The BBC's reputation for impartiality is not enhanced if the same commercially-orientated story appears on several programmes over a short period of time. Journalists and producers should think carefully about editorial justification, integrity and labelling before deciding whether to use material provided by a commercial company (see also Chapter 26: Material Supplied by Outside Organisations).

Presenters, reporters and production staff should have no substantial connection with products and firms featured in stories they are covering (see Chapter 10: Conflicts of Interest).

##### 1.1 Product Placement

A product or service must never be included in sound or vision in return for cash, services or any consideration in kind. This is product placement and it is expressly forbidden in BBC programmes. It is illegal to make any such arrangements in the UK or anywhere else within the European Union.

##### 1.2 Undue Prominence of Branded Products and Services in Programmes

References to trade and brand names should be avoided where possible and made only if they are clearly justified editorially. No undue prominence should be given to any branded

product or service and there must be no element of plugging. When featuring branded products or services, we must take great care not to give an impression that the programme is being influenced in any way by a commercial concern. Television shots should not linger on a brand name or logo unless justified for strong editorial reasons.

**No BBC programme must ever accept free or reduced cost products or services in return for an on-air credit or any visual or verbal reference to the product or the provider (see also section 3).**

**For BBC ONLINE, a hot link must never be included in return for cash, services or any other consideration in kind.** Editorial references to companies or outside organisations should not normally contain any use of their logo. For further advice, see the BBC ONLINE Guidelines.

#### *1.3 Products used as props*

In drama, comedy and entertainment, programme producers have to consider whether there is a really strong editorial justification for using branded products. If products are used, as props, setdressing or elsewhere in drama or entertainment they must be varied as much as possible to ensure that there is no suggestion of a particular brand being promoted. As far as possible, labels and logos should be turned away from the cameras and close-ups, which show the branding, should be avoided. Verbal references to brands may be more intrusive than visual ones and should be used sparingly both on television and radio. It is hard to justify a simultaneous visual and verbal reference to a branded product used as a prop and if possible verbal references to the brand should not be included in any scene which includes a product in vision (for further guidance on the supply of props see section 2.2).

#### *1.4 Reviewing Products and Services*

Consumer programmes and many other types of programmes frequently review products or services. Care should be taken to cover a range of products. If for some strong editorial reason one product or service is reviewed in detail, there should normally be reference to others which are comparable. Where this is not possible on some holiday and travel programmes, every effort should be taken over a period of time to mention a range of tour operators.

Where a consumer programme reviews a product or service, it may be editorially appropriate for Ceefax, digital text or the online support page to give non-promotional details of the products reviewed. Pages reviewing products or carrying details of products should never give an impression of BBC endorsement. See the BBC ONLINE Guidelines for specific advice about hotlinks to the sites of the manufacturers, suppliers or retailers of any goods or services mentioned.

Companies which have received a favourable review may wish to state this in their promotional literature or point of sale displays. This may be acceptable in some limited circumstances, though no impression should be given of BBC endorsement and no BBC logos should be used (for further guidance see sections 4.26 and 4.27 of the BBC's Commercial Policy Guidelines).

#### *1.5 Testing Products*

The type of testing featured in programmes may vary from experts deciding which product tastes best to a programme undertaking carefully controlled experiments. A range of products should be featured and the precise nature of the tests should be made clear. It is important that we report the results in a non-promotional manner. We should simply say how products have fared in the test and which may be good value. Every effort should be made to ensure that where outside experts are used to assess products they have no vested interest in promoting any of them.

#### *1.6 Details of products*

We do not normally give details of how to obtain products. We should only do so where it is strictly editorially justifiable, and we should cover a full range of suppliers.

#### *1.7 Books and Other Publications*

Mentions of publications within programmes should be editorially justified and there must be no element of promotion. If experts from magazines or newspapers are interviewed, care should be taken over time to vary the publications whose experts are featured (for further guidance on references to BBC publications, see Chapter 27: On Air References to BBC Products, Services and Publications).

Chat shows and people shows often interview celebrities who have recently published a book, however, we should take care that the interview focuses on the person and the subject matter of the book, rather than appearing to encourage people to go out and buy it. Television programmes should not normally show a close up or still of the book cover unless the programme includes a measured and critical review of the work in question. An item which merely marks the publication date or interviews the author does not necessarily count as a review.

Credits are normally given when books are reviewed. If material is quoted from a book under review, there is an obligation under the Copyright Act to mention the title and author. Reference is also usually made to the publisher. Details about publications under review should normally be given within the programme itself, rather than in continuity announcements (see also Chapter 40: Matters of Law: Copyright and Other Intellectual Property Rights).

#### *1.8 Commercial Recordings*

It is important that we are not seen to plug particular recordings or artists on our music programmes. Though presenters may express a personal view about a recording, they should not urge listeners either to buy it or not to buy it. It is essential that the music played is chosen for sound editorial reasons and that the choice is not improperly influenced by any record company or music promoter.

Specialist music presenters are employed on Network Radio because of their knowledge of a particular area of music and the credibility this gives them with the audience. However, as they are key figures in their respective genres, in some cases they do have some financial connection with the music industry. Where this is the case such a connection must be registered with the network and all playlists must be approved in advance by the Head of Music Policy (or equivalent) for the network.

*1.9 Use of Commercials*

Programmes may use excerpts from television or radio commercials only for sound editorial reasons such as consideration of how a company is promoting itself or how advertisers promote products. Great care must be taken to ensure that the BBC does not appear to be promoting any product or service by showing sections from advertisements.

There are also copyright considerations concerning use of advertisements which must be checked with the Intellectual Property Department.

Advice on the use of BBC presenters, characters or brands in non BBC commercials can be found in Chapter 10: Conflicts of Interest and Chapter 29: Advertising, Promotional Activities and the BBC Brand.

**2 USE OF FREE OR REDUCED COST PRODUCTS**

Products used by BBC programmes must be selected for sound, non promotional reasons. Products which are actually featured on programmes must be selected on editorial grounds. Products which are not shown, but are used as part of the programme making process, must be selected on grounds of suitability.

In order to resist commercial pressures and to retain its impartiality, the BBC should normally pay for the goods it uses. However programmes may take advantage of the BBC's size and purchasing power to negotiate discounts providing these discounts are in line with similar discounts offered to other large organisations.

Only a few specific programme areas may accept free or substantially reduced cost products (see 2.1 and 2.2 below).

We do not normally credit the suppliers of products. Any on-air reference to products should be for very sound editorial reasons (see section 4 below).

**No products or services should be used or accepted as the result of any inducement or pressure from the provider.**

**Under no circumstances should those working for the BBC receive personal benefits from the providers of goods or services.**

*2.1 Consumer and lifestyle programmes*

Consumer and lifestyle programmes which review or feature a wide range of products may under certain circumstances accept products free or at considerably reduced cost. This is permissible because the very large number of products featured enables programmes to ensure that they are not favouring any particular product or supplier.

- Any programme which accepts free or reduced cost products must keep an accurate record of all such arrangements. This should include details of the product, when and how it was used and what information if any was included on support material. The producer must be able to demonstrate that no supplier or manufacturer is being favoured or discriminated against. It is essential that products are not featured merely because they can be secured free or at a very reduced cost

- Suppliers should be reminded in writing of the BBC policy in this area and should be informed that there can be no question of the product being accepted in exchange for an assurance of an on-air reference
- No guarantee can be given that the product will be reviewed in a favourable light, or that it will feature in the programme at all
- Suppliers should not be afforded an editorial say in the programme nor a preview of it
- Programme makers should be wary of the promotional dangers posed by unsolicited offers of free or reduced cost products from manufacturers or suppliers. Any placement of products in exchange for reduced cost is prohibited (see section 1.1 above)

Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring that proper records are kept and that the acceptance of any reduced cost products is appropriate within the terms of these guidelines (see section 3 below for guidance on facilities and trips).

*2.2 Supply of Props*

In drama and entertainment care must be taken to ensure that products supplied by any outside agencies or other organisations are selected only at the producer's initiative. Suppliers of props, set dressing or clothing should be informed that there is no guarantee that the product will be used or that it will be shown in a favourable light. Props should not be accepted from suppliers if they are subject to editorial restrictions on their use.

If any programme accepts props free or at greatly reduced cost accurate records of all such arrangements should be kept in accordance with section 2.1 above.

**3 USE OF FREE OF REDUCED COST FACILITIES**

Programmes should pay for travel, accommodation and other facilities. Discounts can only be accepted if they are in line with discounts offered to other large organisations. Trips should only be accepted free in exceptional circumstances when acceptance is the only way to cover a significant event (see section 3.2 below)

*3.1 Holiday and travel programmes*

Holiday or travel programmes which regularly review a range of travel facilities and accommodation must not accept trips free and must pay a significant contribution towards the costs. They must never cover holidays offered by one company merely because they are offered to them at a particularly advantageous rate. A range of tour operators should be covered in the course of a series. Detailed records must be kept of all facilities which have been accepted at a reduced cost in accordance with 2.1 above.

*3.2 Media facility and fact finding trips*

From time to time, BBC programmes and people working on them receive invitations from public or private bodies to go on expenses paid trips. These may be for the purposes of gathering material for broadcasting (i.e. a media facility trip), or they may be for briefing and background information. These invitations can come from a variety of different organisations e.g. the British Armed Forces, foreign governments, lobbying groups, the European Commission. The following principles should be observed:

- Such invitations must not be accepted by individuals or programmes if their acceptance might adversely affect the BBC's editorial integrity or its reputation for impartiality
- Any programme maker proposing to accept the offer of either a media facility or a fact finding trip must receive the approval in advance of their Head of Department
- The BBC should be free to decide who, if anyone, accepts the invitation. Where invitations are open only to named individuals rather than programmes, the presumption should be against acceptance.

The BBC will not accept an offer of a free place or places on a media facility trip to gather material *unless* it is the only way to report a significant event, such as an inaugural flight or voyage or military operation. Where a trip is open to a range of media, the programme must be satisfied that the trip is editorially necessary. The programme should point out in writing that it is not normal policy to accept such trips and should offer to make a realistic contribution to the costs involved.

If a commercial operator provides the facility, there should not normally be any reference - verbal or visual - to the operator. If there is a clear editorial need to make a reference, it must avoid promoting or endorsing the operator. In those rare circumstances where a reference to the commercial operation is considered editorially justifiable it must be discussed with and approved in advance of transmission by the Head of Department.

On briefing and fact-finding trips, the BBC must take care that its editorial integrity would not be compromised by the acceptance of such a trip. Any acceptance needs to be able to pass the test of public reaction were the nature of the trip to be publicised. Again, the BBC should offer to make a realistic contribution (e.g. air fares) towards the costs involved. If such an offer is refused the presumption should be against acceptance.

#### 4 CREDITS

In some specific cases, the BBC may decide to give a credit to the provider of services whether they have been secured at full or reduced cost. For example, it may be editorially necessary to credit a research library or the supplier of archive material. In some cases the BBC will have negotiated supply of information from an outside supplier and a credit will be required (see Chapter 26: Material Supplied by Outside Organisations).

Heads of Department have the discretion to authorise a credit where there is strong editorial justification, and the credit does not promote or endorse the product or service. The company logo or type face should not be used as part of the programme's graphics nor in any end credits.

Any credits in support material should be editorially justifiable, non promotional and should not be in exchange for free or reduced cost facilities.

**The granting of a credit is at the BBC's discretion. Under no circumstances can programme makers agree to a credit as a precondition for the offer of free or reduced cost products or services.**

#### 5 ONLINE, CEEFAX AND DIGITAL TEXT SERVICES

The BBC ONLINE Guidelines give further details on references to products and services and on appropriate hot-links.

There are also detailed guidelines for references on digital text and Ceefax to products, services and publications.

### CHAPTER 26 MATERIAL SUPPLIED BY OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

#### 1 INFORMATION FROM OUTSIDE SOURCES

- 1.1 Varying the sources of outside information
- 1.2 Crediting outside information
- 1.3 Crediting a recognised library, archive or research institute
- 1.4 Computer credits in sports coverage
- 2 RECORDINGS SUPPLIED BY OTHERS
- 3 VIDEO OR AUDIO NEWS RELEASES
- 4 EMERGENCY ANNOUNCEMENTS
- 4.1 Police SOS Messages

#### 5 GOVERNMENT INFORMATION FILMS AND OFFICIAL MESSAGES

#### 1 INFORMATION FROM OUTSIDE SOURCES

BBC programmes use a considerable amount of information supplied by others, including commercial and non-commercial organisations. Examples include weather reports, sports results, exchange rates, and pop charts. News bulletins also draw on information provided by reputable news agencies.

Much of this information, including news agency copy, is paid for. However, when it is provided free particular care has to be taken to ensure that the BBC does not promote the supplier.

Care should also be taken that the supplier of the information does not make improper use of its relationship with the BBC for promotional purposes. The BBC must have right of approval over any use of the BBC's name in the supplier's promotional material.

##### 1.1 Varying the sources of outside information

In some cases we rely on a single source for a particular type of information. For example a programme might include financial information supplied by a particular bank. Where practicable we should vary the source of such information over time if there are other suppliers which are equally reliable.

However, in the case of information supplied by official departments or local authorities, it may not be necessary to vary the source, even if equally accurate information is available elsewhere.

##### 1.2 Crediting outside information

It is often appropriate to state the source of outside information for sound editorial reasons:

- to enable the viewer or listener to assess its authority, or accuracy. For example we would name organisations which have conducted opinion polls or we would say that we have obtained weather information from the Met Office
- to indicate that this is information which is unique to one supplier and cannot be obtained elsewhere
- to make it clear that the BBC has not verified the information. We might name a news agency as a source if we were relying solely on a report from one agency.

The decision on whether to mention the source or to give a formal credit, such as a caption or an announcement, must be made on editorial grounds. We must not accept information free or at reduced cost in return for providing on air or off air publicity to the supplier. All references to the suppliers of information must be brief, factual and non promotional. There must be no element of plugging. No logo of an information provider should appear in any visual credit. Television producers should also refer to BBC Television guidelines for opening and closing screen credits.

There may be occasions when the BBC decides to enter into a formal contractual agreement with an information supplier. This agreement may include a provision that the BBC will reflect the source of the information. Any formal agreement about credits should be made for editorial rather than commercial reasons. Arrangements of this kind should be made only with the approval of the relevant Director or Chief Executive.

(See also Chapter 25: Product Prominence and Use of Free or Reduced Cost Facilities)

### *1.3 Crediting a recognised library, archive or research institute*

Occasionally it may be appropriate to credit outside institutions, such as libraries, which have provided information or considerable research assistance. Decisions about credits should be separate from any financial arrangements.

### *1.4 Computer credits in sports coverage*

Guidelines have been agreed among members of the European Broadcasting Union for credits given to companies which provide timing or computer-based services for sports coverage (see also Chapter 28 Covering Outside Events).

## 2 RECORDINGS SUPPLIED BY OTHERS

Many BBC programmes use pictures or sound recorded and provided by other organisations or individuals. We cannot always vouch for the circumstances under which such material was recorded so we should take particular care in how we use it.

In many cases material is supplied by other reputable broadcasters or agencies on a contractual or reciprocal basis. If it is provided by people who may have a personal or professional interest in its subject matter we must be certain we are using it for the best editorial reasons and avoid giving the impression that we endorse a product, organisation or cause. In general material supplied by interested parties should be labelled to make its provenance clear.

Programme makers should assess the overall editorial value of such material rather than simply its pictorial impact. Video from the emergency services may raise serious issues of privacy and intrusion - for instance where victims or patients are concerned.

Programme makers may be asked to sign contracts before being given such material, and they may contain unacceptable editorial restrictions. Seek advice through Heads of Department, from Editorial Policy and Programme Legal Advice before agreeing.

For guidance on use of CCTV footage see section 6 of Chapter 4: Privacy.

## 3 VIDEO OR AUDIO NEWS RELEASES

Increasingly, official bodies, commercial companies and campaigning organisations provide broadcasters with video or audio news releases or other material. Sometimes the material will have been recorded by the organisation itself, sometimes by others acting on their behalf. Such material may purport to cover stories from an objective standpoint, but is usually slanted to promote the viewpoint of the supplier. We do not normally use any extracts from such releases if we are capable of gathering the material ourselves. If we do use such material for sound editorial reasons we should always ensure that it is clearly labelled on air.

The following points should also be borne in mind:

- we should not normally use video or audio releases of news events or news conferences from which the BBC has been deliberately excluded by the organisers. If, in exceptional cases, such material is used, its source and status should be made clear on air, as should the fact that we were prevented from gathering it ourselves
- we should not normally use any interviews or sound clips from such releases. When there are powerful reasons to do so the source of the material must be made clear on air
- we must be wary of using a News Release to illustrate a story about the organisation which provided it, particularly if it gives an unrealistic or overly favourable impression of the organisation. We should normally use such material only to illustrate the way in which the company or organisation is promoting itself
- sequences which include incidental music or commentary provided by the supplier should be used only to show how the company or organisation tries to portray itself
- if we use any Video News Release material to illustrate a more general story, we must try to select shots which do not promote the supplier or their products. We should try to use it in conjunction with other illustrative material
- we should not accept any editorial restrictions which the supplier places on use of the material.

## 4 EMERGENCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Requests are sometimes received from British or foreign governments or from official bodies for the broadcast of emergency announcements. The BBC gives careful consideration



to such requests in the light of the emergency in question. Local Radio should be especially ready to assist the police and other official bodies in informing the local community about serious accidents and emergencies.

#### 4.1 Police SOS Messages

From time to time, BBC Radio will broadcast police SOS messages. These messages must adhere to strict guidelines: reference should be made to the Head of Presentation, Radio.

#### 5 GOVERNMENT INFORMATION FILMS AND OFFICIAL MESSAGES

The Central Office of Information makes films for broadcast on television. The BBC will broadcast only genuinely non-political public information under these arrangements. Broadcasting and Presentation decides which films will be broadcast and where they will be scheduled.

There is provision for government departments to approach broadcasters to relay official messages or information films about issues which involve a degree of public or political controversy. Any such approach must be referred through Controller Editorial Policy and Chief Executives to the Director-General. Such material will normally be accepted only if the BBC is satisfied that the public interest requires this type of initiative and that the information can be conveyed in a manner consistent with the BBC's commitment to accurate, thorough and balanced treatment.

### CHAPTER 27 ON-AIR REFERENCES TO BBC PRODUCTS, SERVICES AND PUBLICATIONS

- 1 GENERAL
- 2 TRAILS
- 3 BBC MAGAZINES
  - 3.2 Mentions of magazines within programmes
  - 3.3 Events organised by BBC Magazines
- 4 BBC MAGAZINES: REFERENCES ON RADIO AND ONLINE
- 5 COMPETITIONS RUN IN ASSOCIATION WITH BBC MAGAZINES
- 6 ON AIR REFERENCES TO OTHER BBC MERCHANDISE
  - 6.1 Local Radio Campaigns
  - 6.2 Online
- 7 CEEFAX AND DIGITAL TEXT SERVICES
- 8 REFERENCES TO BBC COMMERCIAL TELEVISION CHANNELS
- 9 COMMERCIALY FUNDED BBC ONLINE SITES

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## CHAPTER 28 COVERING OUTSIDE EVENTS

### 1 GENERAL

### 2 COVERAGE OF SPONSORED EVENTS

#### 2.1 Titles

#### 2.2 Placards carrying the name, logo, or slogans of the sponsor

#### 2.3 On-air credits for sponsors of events

#### 2.4 Presentations

#### 2.5 Credits for sports events

- 2.6 Tobacco Sponsorship
- 2.7 Events organised by outside organisations and sponsored by BBC Magazines
- 3 ADVERTISING AT OUTSIDE EVENTS
- 4 ADVERTISEMENTS ON CLOTHING AND BACKDROPS
- 5 RELATIONS WITH EVENT ORGANISERS
- 6 PROMOTION OF NON-BBC EVENTS
- 7 BBC ORGANISED EVENTS
  - 7.1 Performance Based BBC Events
  - 7.2 Detailed Provisions for Organising Co-sponsored BBC Events or Exhibitions
  - 7.3 Promotions by event sponsors
  - 7.4 Joint debates and forums
  - 7.5 Coverage of events organised by BBC Magazines
  - 7.6 Programme related events
- 8 ON AIR PUBLICITY FOR OUTSIDE EVENTS

## 1 GENERAL

The BBC covers a wide range of outside public events, such as sporting events and concerts. All programme and broadcasting costs for coverage of any event must be borne by the BBC or shared with other broadcasters.

The event organiser may pay for all costs associated with the mounting of the event, including performance rights and fees. The costs for mounting the event may be defrayed by sponsorship but sponsors and event organisers must not pay for any programme costs. The BBC can take no money from a sponsor or organiser for coverage of an outside event.

The BBC has a tradition of mounting public events in the arts and mounting events associated with programmes. For guidance see section 7 below.

## 2 COVERAGE OF SPONSORED EVENTS

When covering sponsored events, programme makers should ascertain whether the event is free-standing. Events we cover should not be created by a sponsor merely to attract broadcast coverage. The BBC should not allow its coverage to be used as a vehicle for the sponsors' goods, services or opinions. Producers must never agree to display or mention the sponsor's goods or services.

The BBC's contract for the broadcasting of all outside sponsored events should be with the event organiser or the organiser's nominee, not with the sponsor.

### 2.1 Titles

The incorporation of the sponsor's name into the title of some sporting events has become established, but the BBC does not necessarily use the sponsor's name in the title of the programme covering the event. Sponsors' names are not as frequently incorporated into the titles of artistic events and their use in programme titles may be inappropriate.

### 2.2 Placards carrying the name, logo, or slogans of the sponsor

Sponsor banners or placards are established features of sporting events, and reflections of sponsor messages painted on the pitch are also now being frequently used. Sponsor messages should not be so prominent that they distract from the action of the event and they should not be placed between the viewer and the action. The number and type of banners acceptable will depend on the event and the size of the venue. Detailed guidance

can be obtained from the Head of BBC Sport, the Controller Television Sport or the relevant National Controller.

Banners and prominent sponsor messages are not common in the more formal environment of theatres or concert halls and are unlikely to be appropriate during the coverage of arts events, such as concerts or recitals.

In covering an awards ceremony, some discreet signage for the sponsor may be acceptable, but all reasonable efforts must be taken to ensure that it is not to be included in the main shots. When covering such award ceremonies producers should refer to their Head of Department, who would normally consult Chief Adviser, Editorial Policy (Multimedia and Commercial).

### 2.3 On-air credits for sponsors of events

The BBC seeks to credit fairly the enabling role played by event sponsors. It is essential that any credits make it clear that it is the event that has been sponsored and not the programme. All decisions on credits rest with the BBC. Normally only the prime sponsor will be credited, but there are some occasions when more than one sponsor may be acknowledged. Crediting more than two sponsors should be avoided.

There should normally be a maximum of two verbal credits for the overall event sponsor and they should be delivered in a non-promotional style. When coverage lasts for many hours, the Head of Department will decide on appropriate verbal credits.

On television there may also be a single visual reference in end credits. The event sponsor's logo should not be used. Written credits must appear in the same style and type as other programme credits. Credits should always be agreed with the Head of the Department responsible for coverage.

When covering events outside the sports area, television producers should refer through their Head of Department before making any commitments concerning credits.

### 2.4 Presentations

The presentation of an award by someone associated with the sponsor is an accepted part of many sporting competitions and artistic award ceremonies. The BBC should endeavour as far as possible to limit the number of sponsor references during such presentations. Normally there should be only one mention of the sponsor in the introduction to the presentation and if possible the person presenting the award should be asked to restrict themselves to a single reference to the sponsor. If the design of the award or trophy itself prominently reflects the sponsor's name, slogans or logo care should be taken to ensure that it does not dominate main shots.

### 2.5 Credits for sports events

#### Television Coverage

As the sponsor's name is often reflected visually at a sports ground, a written end credit is not usually given for sports coverage. However, if a sponsor's name is incorporated into the title of a sports event, it is acceptable to include the name of the sponsor on the scorecard or results information.

The suitability of credits will vary according to the type and duration of the event. Some major international sporting events may require specific types of credits. Advice may be obtained from the Head of BBC Sport or the Controller Television Sport.

#### Television News

Event sponsors should be mentioned only for sound editorial reasons. Detailed guidelines for sports events are available from the Sports News Organiser, Television News.

#### Radio Credits

Detailed guidelines have been drawn up for sponsor credits for sports coverage on Network Radio and for mentions of sponsors in news bulletins. These guidelines are available from the Managing Editor, BBC Sport.

#### Computer Credits

Guidelines have been agreed among members of the European Broadcasting Union for broadcasting credits to be given to companies which provide timing or computer-based services for sports coverage. Both radio and television editors should take care to restrict these credits as far as is reasonably possible within the terms of the relevant agreements.

#### 2.6 Tobacco Sponsorship

A number of major sports events are sponsored by tobacco companies. Particular care must be taken in the coverage of such events.

Coverage of tobacco sponsored sports events in the United Kingdom is subject to official regulation. However, the BBC has its own more stringent restrictions on coverage of sport sponsored by tobacco companies in the UK and retains the right to impose further conditions. The BBC will not sign new contracts to cover tobacco-sponsored sports or other tobacco sponsored events which it has not previously covered.

Programme makers wishing to cover a sports event which attracts a significant degree of tobacco sponsorship should consult Head of BBC Sport or Controller Television Sport about any further BBC restrictions.

#### Stills in News and Current Affairs Programmes

When selecting stills, care should be taken to try to minimise tobacco images. For example, when selecting stills of Formula One racing drivers to illustrate a general point, if possible pictures should be used from races in countries where cars and drivers' clothing are not permitted to carry tobacco sponsors' names.

#### Non-Sporting Events Sponsored by Tobacco Manufacturers

Tobacco sponsorship is less frequent for arts events decisions about coverage are made on an individual basis. Any proposed coverage of a non-sporting tobacco sponsored event should be referred to the Head of Department and the relevant Controller. Advice should also be sought from Chief Adviser (Multimedia and Commercial) Editorial Policy.

#### Events sponsored by tobacco related brands

Some tobacco brand names, have been used for non – tobacco products. **Any proposal to mount coverage of an event sponsored by a tobacco related brand should be referred to the Chief Adviser Editorial Policy (Multimedia and Commercial).**

#### 2.7 Events organised by outside organisations and sponsored by BBC Magazines

There are particular restrictions on references on television to BBC magazines.

In exceptional circumstances a BBC magazine may sponsor an established outside event mounted by a non - BBC organisation. In such circumstances it may be possible to mention the magazine's role as sponsor but any coverage must not give more prominence to the BBC magazine than that given to other sponsors of similar events (see sections 2.2 – 2.5 above). **Since the BBC must ensure compliance with its undertaking to the OFT, Chief Adviser Editorial Policy (Multimedia and Commercial) must be consulted about any such sponsorship at a very early stage before any commitment is made. Reference should also be made to Chief Adviser about proposals for sponsorship by any other type of BBC commercial publication or service.**

For guidance on coverage of an event which has been directly staged by a BBC magazine see section 7.3 below.

#### 3 ADVERTISING AT OUTSIDE EVENTS

There are often advertising boards at outdoor events. In negotiating contracts with event organisers the BBC must stress that it does not wish coverage of sport or any other event to be used as a vehicle for advertising. Advertising of a party political nature is unacceptable at any event covered by the BBC, and this should be made clear to events organisers.

Producers responsible for coverage should make every effort to ensure that the advertising does not interfere with the action of the event. Cameras should follow the action and not dwell on any perimeter or billboard advertisements

Advertisements painted onto the pitch can severely interfere with the viewing of the event, where ever possible cameras should not dwell on them (see also 2.2 above). In negotiating contracts with event organisers, the BBC should seek to restrict any such advertisement.

Further advice may be obtained from the relevant Head of Department, Controller Television Sport or the relevant Controller.

#### 4 ADVERTISEMENTS ON CLOTHING AND BACKDROPS

Sponsorship now forms such an integral part of sport that in some cases it is impossible to avoid showing some reflection of sponsors on clothing or on backdrops at press facilities.

However, the BBC should try to avoid giving undue prominence to sponsors' or advertisers signage. Close-ups of advertisements on the clothing of participants should be avoided where at all possible.

#### 5 RELATIONS WITH EVENT ORGANISERS

Even when events are not sponsored, the BBC may need to take care to ensure that coverage does not unduly promote the event organiser. For example events organised by pressure groups or charities should be treated carefully.

There must be no suggestion that BBC coverage of the event is an endorsement of one charity over another. BBC coverage should not be used as a method of direct fundraising except for BBC nominated appeals such as Children in Need and Comic Relief. The BBC reserves the right not to include the name of a charity in the title of the broadcast programme. Any such proposal should be referred to the Department Head and the Charity Appeals Secretary, advice may also be sought from Chief Adviser, Editorial Policy (Multimedia and Commercial). See also Chapter 30: Social Action Programming, Campaigning Groups and Charities.

#### 6 PROMOTION OF NON-BBC EVENTS

Sponsors or events organisers may run promotions or advertising campaigns to publicise an event which the BBC is covering. This may well give details of the BBC's scheduled coverage. Such advertising should not exploit the BBC's name in support of the event organiser or the sponsor. If this happens, the BBC may decide to withdraw from coverage.

#### 7 BBC ORGANISED EVENTS

The BBC may be involved in staging several types of event.

These include events mounted primarily for programme coverage, such as concerts. In general these events are organised by production departments.

The BBC may also be involved in staging events such as exhibitions which are a showcase for BBC brands. These events are usually mounted by BBC Worldwide. Even when these events or exhibitions are not covered by BBC broadcast services, they still need to conform to these guidelines. The event must properly reflect the values and editorial standards of the programme or service that it is promoting. If these events are mounted in conjunction with a BBC magazine it is essential that any coverage conforms to the BBC's undertaking to the Office of Fair Trading (see section 7.5 below).

See also the BBC's Commercial Policy Guidelines sections 4.29-4.34.

##### 7.1 Performance Based BBC Events

In its role as patron of the arts and of innovative and original entertainment, the BBC may wish to mount a range of freestanding musical, theatrical and other events. These freestanding performances are staged at outside venues with an audience. The BBC may also wish to broadcast coverage of these events. In some circumstances it is acceptable to supplement the cost of mounting the event, but only the event, with co-sponsorship from a suitable outside body.

It is essential that money from the co-sponsor is used only to enhance the event itself and no sponsorship money may be used to pay for any broadcast coverage. Clearly separated accounts must be kept to show the distinction between event costs and broadcasting costs. No money from the co-sponsor may go into the programme budget.

The contractual and commercial arrangements must not lead to any suggestion that the BBC's broadcast programmes have been sponsored.

It is essential that the choice of co-sponsor is appropriate. Any proposal for co-sponsorship should be agreed with the Head of Department in consultation with the Chief Adviser Editorial Policy (Multimedia and Commercial). See also detailed provisions in section 7.2 below and section 2.3 concerning on air credits.

##### 7.2 Detailed Provisions for Organising Co-sponsored BBC Events or Exhibitions

The following guidelines should be observed for the staging of any a BBC event or exhibition. They apply to all such events irrespective of whether they are likely to be covered on air by the BBC.

- the BBC should not enter into a sponsorship arrangement with any partner whose commercial activities could call the suitability of the association into question
- any commercial sponsorship should normally be associated with the company or organisation's generic name or brand. We would not normally accept sponsorship directly tied to one specific product made by the sponsor
- any organisation involved in organising or financing the event must be consistent with the overall values and reputation of the BBC and the choice of sponsor should not cast any doubt over the editorial integrity of any associated programme
- there should be no direct connection between the sponsor's activities and the event theme or that of a related programme or service
- there must be no suggestion either implicit or explicit, that the BBC or a BBC programme endorses any third party products or services
- there must be clear separation between the sponsor's brand and the BBC brand, sub brand or programme brand
- it is not acceptable for the sponsor's name, logo or slogan to appear in the title of the BBC event
- any broadcast event held on BBC premises may not be sponsored
- events connected with news or current affairs programmes may not be sponsored
- events based on consumer advice programmes dealing with a range of topics may not be sponsored

**Any proposal for outside sponsorship of a BBC event should be referred well in advance to the Chief Adviser Editorial Policy (Multimedia and Commercial) who will advise on suitability of sponsors and appropriate arrangements.** The Commercial Policy directorate representative should also be consulted for events involving BBC Worldwide.

Arrangements and credits for sponsored events must be agreed with the Head of Department and all publicity material for the event must be approved by the BBC before it is published.

*7.3 Promotions by event sponsors*

Care must be taken to ensure that sponsors do not use their sponsorship to imply any BBC endorsement. While sponsors may wish to publicise the event the BBC must approve all such publicity material in advance. The material should always focus on the event rather than the sponsor's involvement. There must be clear separation of brands and it must be clear that the BBC does not endorse the sponsor's brand, product or service.

*7.4 Joint debates and forums*

Occasionally programmes may wish to organise an event such as a debate or forum in conjunction with an outside body. Such a debate or forum may be mounted with an academic, educational, professional or artistic institution. They should not be mounted in conjunction with a commercial organisation, though in exceptional circumstances for clear editorial reasons they may be mounted with a suitable publication. The choice of partners for the mounting of any such joint event should be referred to Editorial Policy and approved by the relevant Director of Television or Radio or equivalent.

See also Chapter 24: Commercial Relationships and Appropriate Programme Funding.

*7.5 Coverage of events organised by BBC Magazines*

If programmes cover a BBC event which is mounted in conjunction with a BBC magazine, great care has to be taken to ensure that any coverage does not promote the magazine or could be deemed an encouragement to buy the magazine. Such an event must be covered only for editorially robust reasons. References to the magazine should be avoided as far as possible and producers should avoid shots of magazine logos. Cameras should not dwell on any other symbols or words on display which clearly represent the magazine. Live coverage of events should be planned to advance to minimise the risk of incidental shots showing placards or symbols carrying magazine logos.

**Coverage of such events must comply with the OFT undertaking about promotion of BBC magazines and the Chief Adviser, Editorial Policy (Multimedia and Commercial) must be consulted about coverage in advance** (see also Chapter 27: On-air References to BBC Products, Services and Publications).

Careful consideration should be given to covering directly comparable events mounted by others to ensure that we are not giving preferential treatment to BBC commercial events.

*7.6 Programme related events*

BBC Worldwide may run events connected to individual BBC programmes. Programme producers should ensure that any on-air mention of the event is clearly editorially justifiable. While programmes may legitimately cover such BBC events and give details of them, such coverage should not put a BBC commercial event at an unfair advantage over a commercial rival.

**8 ON AIR PUBLICITY FOR OUTSIDE EVENTS**

Care must be taken when giving any information in programmes about events organised by the BBC or other bodies. Information should be editorially justified and non promotional.

Continuity announcements will not normally carry information about events apart from giving details of the BBC's on air coverage. However, some details may be given in continuity announcements about special public service events run by the BBC.

**CHAPTER 29  
ADVERTISING, PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES AND THE BBC BRAND**

**1 GENERAL**

**2 PROTECTING THE BBC'S BRANDS AND PROPERTIES FROM EXPLOITATION BY ADVERTISERS**

**3 PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY INDIVIDUALS ASSOCIATED WITH THE BBC**

3.1 Promotions undertaken by presenters, reporters or programme experts

3.2 Promotional activities undertaken by artists

3.3 Artists who perform as BBC owned characters in programmes

3.4 Artists and producers who own rights to characters and formats in programmes broadcast by the BBC

**1 GENERAL**

The BBC needs to ensure that outside interests and commercial companies do not undermine its brand values of impartiality and integrity. It is therefore essential that no advertising or promotion by an outside company or organisation gives the impression of BBC endorsement of their product or service.

In many cases we can and should take action to prevent exploitation by advertisers of the BBC brand and BBC properties such as programme titles, formats and characters. In other cases careful judgements need to be made about how far we can restrict the activities of artists and performers. The lawyers in the BBC's Intellectual Property department can advise on the BBC's legal position in relation to any advertising. See also Chapter 4 of the Commercial Policy Guidelines.

**2 PROTECTING THE BBC'S BRANDS AND PROPERTIES FROM EXPLOITATION BY ADVERTISERS**

The BBC will not normally agree to its name, initials, logos, channel names, programme titles, formats or characters being used by commercial advertisers or in any promotions for outside organisations.

Some very limited exceptions may be permitted for testimonials and point of sale material for goods or services used, tested or reviewed by the BBC (see BBC Commercial Policy Guidelines Chapter 4 sections 25 – 27).

Any other proposed exceptions must be referred to Controller, Editorial Policy who will consult Chief Executive, BBC Broadcast.

**3 PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY INDIVIDUALS ASSOCIATED WITH THE BBC**

Presenters, programme experts, actors and other artists who appear on BBC programmes may of course wish to undertake non-BBC advertising or promotional work.

But the acceptability of this work to the BBC will depend the nature of the individual's contribution to BBC programmes and the nature of the promotion. Heads of Department will initially make judgements about the acceptability of any promotional work in line with the principles set out in this chapter and the guidelines set out in Chapter 10: Conflicts of Interest. In cases of difficulty Editorial Policy and BBC Broadcast or BBC News management should be consulted.

However if individuals do appear in promotions or adverts it is essential that they do not refer to the BBC or any BBC programmes in which they appear

*3.1 Promotions undertaken by presenters, reporters or programme experts*

Regular presenters or reporters in News must not associate themselves with the advertising, promotion or endorsement of **any** non BBC product, service or company.

Presenters or reporters on other BBC programmes should not undertake advertising or promotional work associated with the subjects of any of the programmes in which they appear.

Care should also be taken to ensure that expert contributors to programmes do not undertake promotional work that might give rise to doubts about their objectivity or compromise the programmes in which they appear. They may be able to endorse products that are not connected to the theme of their BBC programmes, but expert contributors who give consumer advice must under no circumstances advertise or endorse products in the area on which they give advice.

For further detailed guidance it is essential to consult section 5 and 6 of Chapter 10: Conflicts of Interest.

*3.2 Promotional activities undertaken by artists*

In certain cases the commercial value an artist can derive arises largely from the prominence achieved from their connection with BBC programmes. We must ensure that these associations are not exploited inappropriately.

Some artists who appear in BBC programmes carry out advertising and promotional activities for non BBC products in addition to their BBC commitments. It is a fundamental requirement that such outside work must pose no risk to the BBC's reputation. Such activities must not suggest BBC endorsement of outside organisations, products or services (see also Chapter 10: Conflicts of Interest).

Before contracting artists and experts there must be comprehensive and open discussions to establish what, if any, commercial work they are committed to, or are considering, to avert the risk of editorial compromise.

*3.3 Artists who perform as BBC owned characters in programmes*

Where the BBC owns the rights to characters, we ensure that the artists who play them do not undertake, in those roles, any advertising or promotional activity which may suggest an association between them, the BBC and the programmes in which they appear. The standard

Equity contract stipulates that the artist should not appear in an advert or promotion which associates them with "their" character without the written permission of the BBC.

However, we do not wish to prevent professional performers from carrying out commercial work outside their commitments to BBC programmes. It may therefore be acceptable for actors and professional performers to appear in promotions or advertisements for products or services providing they do not appear as 'their' BBC character and the advertisements or promotions do not replicate or reflect BBC programmes. Such work must not bring the BBC into disrepute and should not imply BBC endorsement.

*3.4 Artists and producers who own rights to characters and formats in programmes broadcast by the BBC*

In some cases, particularly in entertainment, the artists own the rights to characters they perform in programmes, or these rights are held by someone outside the BBC; independent production companies may also own the rights to characters and formats that are used for BBC programmes. Advertisers may seek to use such characters and formats in promotional campaigns and in such cases we would ask to be consulted. It should be clear that such commercial activities associated with these characters must exclude anything which might be harmful to the BBC or its reputation; for example, advertisements or promotions for tobacco. Similarly, we ask them to avoid involvement in any television advertisements at times which coincide with the broadcasts of the related BBC programmes. We may also feel it is appropriate to offer advice on proposed advertisement scripts. In the unlikely event of the unwillingness of an artist or producer to co-operate, this may make it more difficult to contract them in future.

**CHAPTER 30  
SOCIAL ACTION PROGRAMMING, CAMPAIGNING GROUPS AND  
CHARITIES**

- 1 SOCIAL ACTION PROGRAMMING
- 2 IMPARTIALITY AND SOCIAL ACTION PROGRAMMES
- 3 CAMPAIGNING GROUPS
- 4 CHARITIES AND CHARITABLE APPEALS
  - 4.1 Emergency Appeals
  - 4.2 Appeals Charter and the Charities Act
  - 4.3 Specific BBC Fundraising Projects
  - 4.4 Outside Fund Raising Events
  - 4.5 Joint Initiatives
  - 4.6 Programmes and Items about Charitable Work
  - 4.7 Fact Sheets and Further Information
  - 4.8 National and Regional Broadcasting
  - 4.9 Premium Rate Telephone Calls

**1 SOCIAL ACTION PROGRAMMING**

Social action programming differs from other programming in that it not only raises awareness of important social issues, but also encourages the audience to take action. Director Radio, Director Television, Director Education, the relevant National Controller or equivalent must approve plans for any social action initiative.

Social action programming covers areas of social need such as health, social welfare and adult education. Producers need to be sure that they offer adequate back-up for such

programmes (see Chapter 31: Support Services and Support Material). Further guidance on support services for Social Action programmes is available from the BBC's Social Action Co-ordinator or the Head of Learning Support, Education.

## 2 IMPARTIALITY AND SOCIAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

Such programmes require the utmost care and the BBC must always be seen to set its own social action agenda and decide on its own priorities. Social action programming may sometimes coincide with government campaigns but it is important that we maintain a proper arms length relationship with governments and individual politicians. The BBC must not be thought to be acting on behalf of the government in any area of possible controversy. Even when the cause is non controversial politicians may try to gain advantage through association with a BBC campaign and we must guard against this. In particular we must take care to ensure that politicians and lobbyists do not use BBC programme settings or brands for political advantage.

Social action programming should maintain a sceptical approach to its subject matter and should ask awkward questions where appropriate. News and factual reporting of BBC social action campaigns needs to maintain clear objectivity.

## 3 CAMPAIGNING GROUPS

To protect the BBC's independence and integrity we need to ensure that we do not get involved with campaigning programming which is politically contentious. Programmes should not embrace the agenda of a particular campaign or campaigning group and we need to take great care in all our programming that we treat campaigning groups objectively. Any proposal to mount programmes in association with a particular campaigning group must be referred well in advance to the Controller, Editorial Policy.

In coverage of campaigning issues where there are several pressure groups or lobbying organisations we should be careful to remain even handed in our coverage of the range of groups involved.

## 4 CHARITIES AND CHARITABLE APPEALS

The BBC broadcasts regular appeals for charitable causes on BBC Television and Radio 4. The responsibility for allocating these appeals rests with the BBC Governors and the BBC Appeals Advisory Committee (AAC). The AAC also advises on general policy matters relating to BBC appeals.

The AAC is appointed by the Governors and consists of specialist external advisers who represent a broad range of interests across the charitable field. The AAC aims to spread appeals as widely and equitably as possible among suitable charities and makes recommendations to the Governors on the allocation of appeals. Detailed guidelines concerning the broadcast appeals are available from the Appeals Secretary.

There are also charity appeals in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales which are allocated by Appeals Advisory Committees in the Nations (see section 4.8 below on National and Regional Broadcasting).

When serious emergencies occur, there is a special approval procedure for any emergency broadcast appeal (see section 4.1 below on Emergency Appeals.) In addition the BBC is involved in specific fund-raising projects such as *Children in Need* and *Comic Relief* which are also subject to scrutiny by the AAC and the BBC Governors. BBC programmes made as part of such fund-raising projects should take care to avoid campaigning on controversial areas of public policy.

Apart from these specific BBC wide fund-raising projects, programmes should not endorse particular charities or make any appeal for funds. It is important that programmes do not give any particular charity an advantage over others and do not distort the careful balance which the AAC seeks to achieve in regular appeals. The BBC should normally avoid programme proposals intended to promote charitable causes. See section 4.5 below on Joint Initiatives.

### 4.1 Emergency Appeals

The BBC may decide to broadcast a special appeal when a serious emergency occurs. Requests for emergency appeals must be made through the BBC Secretary. Such appeals need to be approved by the Chairman on behalf of the Board of Governors. Emergency appeals are usually also broadcast by other broadcasters. If the emergency is in the United Kingdom, a public fund must have been set up to meet the needs of the victims. Appeals for emergencies abroad are normally given on behalf of the United Kingdom Disasters Emergency Committee, which is composed of U.K. charities involved in overseas relief work.

Any proposal to use a BBC journalist to present an international, national or regional emergency appeal must be considered with great care at a senior level to ensure that the objectivity of our journalism is not compromised.

### 4.2 Appeals Charter and the Charities Act

The BBC and ITV, together with others involved in broadcast appeals, have drawn up a charter of good practice for television and radio appeals. This takes account of the requirements of the Charities Act (1992). Copies of the charter can be obtained from Broadcasting Support Services. Local radio producers can obtain further specific guidelines from the Directorate Secretary, National and Regional Broadcasting. In Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland advice can be obtained from The Secretary.

### 4.3 Specific BBC Fundraising Projects

Separate guidelines exist for the BBC Children in Need appeal. Copies of the guidelines and further advice can be obtained from the Director, Children in Need and the relevant Directorate representative. In the Nations these guidelines are available from the Children in Need Trust National Co-ordinator.

Advice on coverage of other BBC wide fundraising projects such as Red Nose Appeal should be sought from Editorial Policy.

### 4.4 Outside Fund Raising Events

Any proposal to give broadcast coverage to an outside fund-raising event, such as a major charity pop concert, must be notified to the Appeals Secretary at an early stage. In the



Nations, The Secretary must be notified. The BBC may appear to be associated with the cause concerned and the implications may need to be discussed with the AAC or its Chair. Producers should also refer to Editorial Policy for advice on the nature of any on-air coverage (see also section 5 Relations with Event Organisers in Chapter 28: Covering Outside Events).

#### *4.5 Joint Initiatives*

There is a danger that the BBC's balanced approach may be distorted by programmes launching campaigns or aligning themselves with specific charities. In exceptional circumstances directorates may decide to schedule programmes which are connected to a campaign, but the decision to schedule such programmes must be made at Director or Chief Executive level. A proper balance must be struck between competing charities and causes. Advice should be sought at an early stage from the Appeals Secretary or The Secretary in the Nations.

#### *4.6 Programmes and Items about Charitable Work*

None of the BBC's news outlets, whether international, national or regional, should associate themselves with direct appeals on behalf of a charity. News programmes must be perceived as objective and should not be involved in any campaigning or fund-raising activity. The fact that an Emergency Appeal is to be broadcast may be judged newsworthy enough to be reported in a news programme, but the programme should not itself make or endorse the appeal.

If a news report is likely to produce a large public response from people wishing to give donations, the BBC Information Office should be alerted so that it can provide the name and address of the charity concerned.

Documentary or magazine programmes which feature a charity or charitable venture should take care to treat the subject objectively and must avoid any direct or indirect appeal for funds. Any discussion of the charity's financial needs or targets must be justified strictly on editorial grounds. Care should be taken not to promote one charity when there are also others working in the same field. BBC dramas should also not appear to endorse any charity or charity appeal.

Programmes concerned with a range of issues from medical problems to wildlife may also draw on the expertise of charities but they should draw on as wide a range of expertise as possible and not endorse any particular charity.

On-air references to charities should be given only for clear editorial reasons. Addresses or telephone numbers should not normally be given. Any references to charities in programme credits should be cleared with the Appeals Secretary, or The Secretary in the Nations and where appropriate with Broadcasting and Presentation.

If unsolicited donations are sent to the BBC as a result of a programme, they should be acknowledged and passed on to the appropriate charity, or if this is not feasible returned to the sender.

#### *4.7 Fact Sheets and Further Information*

#### **Domestic Services**

If a fact sheet or literature is produced in association with a programme, we should not normally distribute it through any particular charity. Normally it should be distributed by the BBC. If any charity is mentioned on the fact sheet, all other significant organisations working in the field should also be listed.

Advice on support material, helplines and other support activities which may involve charities can be obtained through Heads of Department from the Appeals Secretary or The Secretary in the Nations. See Chapter 31: Support Services and Support Material.

A number of local radio stations organise back-up services in conjunction with Community Service Volunteers. Advice on suitable partnership arrangements with CSV can be obtained from National and Regional Broadcasting.

#### **BBC World Service and BBC Worldwide Television**

To enable efficient distribution abroad, fact sheets and support material for World Service Radio programmes and Worldwide Television programmes may be distributed via appropriate charities, non-governmental agencies or other international agencies. Advice on this should be sought from Directorate Secretary, World Service or Head of Programming, International Networks, BBC Worldwide.

#### *4.8 National and Regional Broadcasting*

The Nations have a number of scheduled appeals on television and radio for nationally and regionally based charities. Appeals Advisory Committees in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales allocate these appeals and scrutinise arrangements. The Secretary in each Nation is responsible for the administration of the relevant AAC.

There must be no charity appeals in any national or regional news programmes on radio or television. From time to time other national and regional television or radio programmes may wish to be associated with a charitable initiative or emergency appeal which is of specific relevance to the Nation or Region. In the Nations, The Secretary should be consulted in advance. Any such proposal in the English regions should be notified in advance to National and Regional Broadcasting which will notify the Appeals Secretary. The Chair of the AAC may also be consulted.

Local radio stations are sometimes involved with appeals and other initiatives connected with charities at a local level. This is part of their involvement in the community, but producers must take care to ensure that appeals are never broadcast as part of the news output of stations. The guidelines in this chapter apply to all such activities. There are also further specific guidelines for National and Regional Broadcasting.

Local Radio Advisory Councils have been given formal responsibility by the Board of Governors to advise stations on appeals and in some cases charitable trusts have been established to handle appeals. However, any major appeal or charitable initiative planned by a local radio station must be notified to the Director National and Regional Broadcasting before it is undertaken. The Appeals Secretary and the Chair of the AAC will be consulted if necessary.

4.9 Premium Rate Telephone Calls

Normally the BBC avoids using premium rate telephone lines in connection with any fund-raising activity with which it is directly involved. However, there may be occasions when programmes using premium rate calls for votes or competitions may wish to donate any net revenue to charity. Such donations are controlled by the Charities Act 1992. Heads of Department should consult Editorial Policy about the suitability of any arrangements. (For more advice on premium telephone lines, see Chapter 32: Phone-ins and the Use of Telephone Services in Programmes)

**CHAPTER 31  
PROGRAMME SUPPORT SERVICES AND SUPPORT MATERIAL**

- 1 GENERAL
- 2 COPING WITH DEMAND
- 3 HELPLINES AND BBC AUDIENCE LINES
  - 3.1 Audience Feedback and Confidentiality
- 4 AUTOMATED INFORMATION SERVICES
- 5 FACTSHEETS AND BOOKLETS
- 6 FUNDING FOR SUPPORT SERVICES
- 7 OUTSIDE FUNDING FOR PROGRAMME SUPPORT SERVICES
- 8 CREDITS FOR SUPPORT MATERIAL
- 9 JOINT INITIATIVES
- 10 DISTRIBUTION OF SUPPORT MATERIAL
- 11 TRAILS
- 12 ONLINE SERVICES
- 13 ITC REGULATED SERVICES

1 GENERAL

The BBC offers a range of off-air support services for its programmes. These give viewers and listeners the opportunity to extend their knowledge, enjoyment and understanding of BBC programmes and offer advice and support to them in dealing with issues raised in our output.

The range of support services available includes fact sheets, helplines, information lines, booklets, audiotapes and videos, information on Ceefax, CD Roms, information on the Internet and off-air events such as roadshows.

Support services may be offered free or on a cost recovery basis. They must not be designed to make a profit. Any publication or service designed to make a profit is a commercial venture and is subject to the BBC's Commercial Policy Guidelines.

Though support services provide a useful backup, it is important to remember that only a small proportion of the audience takes advantage of such services. Producers should ensure that the programmes are meaningful and enjoyable by themselves. Producers must avoid getting involved in the provision of support services which are not directly linked to particular programmes.

BBC support services should not promote any particular agency, charity or organisation and they should not carry advertisements for any merchandise supplied by any organisation or company. Where possible we should give details of the range of agencies which may offer help or advice. If information is given about products we should give a range of comparable

products and not promote any manufacturer or supplier.

2 COPING WITH DEMAND

Support services should only be offered if we are confident that we can cope with the likely demand – whether in print, on the phone or via e-mail. This is particularly important if we offer a telephone helpline after a sensitive programme. There must be sufficient telephone capacity and a sufficient number of trained staff or trained volunteers to offer a high quality service to viewers or listeners. Early planning is vital.

3 HELPLINES AND BBC AUDIENCE LINES

A telephone helpline staffed by trained people can provide information or support concerning issues raised by BBC programmes or it may refer callers to suitable advice agencies. When a programme has dealt with distressing issues, helpline staff can provide support or advice on obtaining counselling. In other cases a helpline may offer factual information about the issues discussed in the programme and give advice on where further information can be obtained. It is essential that all the information provided is impartial and objective and gives details of a wide range of agencies, charities and statutory organisations. No agency should be promoted at the expense of others.

BBC Audience Lines provides helplines and action lines for Radio, National and Regional Broadcasting and Learning Support. Other areas may use BBC Audience Lines or other service providers. Care must be taken to ensure that any outside agency which runs a helpline is capable of providing an objective, high quality service. Heads of Department should seek advice from the Head of Learning Support or Editorial Policy.

We do not generally trail helplines run by charities or pressure groups though it may be appropriate to do so in cases where one group, such as The Samaritans, offers a particular service. Any proposal to trail a helpline provided by an outside organisation or charity should be referred to Editorial Policy.

Helplines are usually offered on freephone numbers. **Premium rate lines must never be used for helplines.**

Programmes should consider well in advance if helplines will be needed and budget accordingly. The use of lines should be discussed with the Head of Learning Support or the Audience Lines manager (see also Chapter 32: Phone Ins and Telephone Services in Programmes).

3.1 Audience Feedback and Confidentiality

Take-up of support services such as helplines can help the BBC to get a better picture of the needs, interests and concerns of viewers and listeners. However, there are issues concerning confidentiality if we publicise comments from particular callers or distribute details about them widely within the BBC.

In some cases callers are eager to tell their stories and are keen for them to be developed into programme items. But it is essential that we make it clear on what terms we are gathering information from people. Callers who voluntarily "opt-in" to give their story to the BBC should know what to expect.

Those organising helplines may alert programmes or programme areas to stories but they should never distribute callers' names or telephone numbers generally throughout the BBC. Programme makers, who are interested in the story, will be required to ring Audience Lines or any other provider of the service to obtain any personal details.

#### 4 AUTOMATED INFORMATION SERVICES

Programmes may from time to time wish to offer "dial and listen" information services. The recorded message must be simple, factual and non-promotional and directly relevant to the programme. The duration of calls should be kept to a minimum. For strong public service reasons, such lines may sometimes give information about goods or products featured on a programme, but they must not promote any commercial product, retailer or supplier. Details of how to obtain merchandise should be given only if the merchandise is not widely available. Information lines must never be used as a means of selling BBC commercial merchandise or any other commercial merchandise.

A range of telephone call rates is available including national call rates and local rates. Premium rate lines should not be used for information lines associated with social action programmes or for programmes concerned with education or welfare issues. Further advice is available from BBC Audience Lines. See also Chapter 32: Phone Ins and the Telephone Services in Programmes.

#### 5 FACTSHEETS AND BOOKLETS

When the BBC produces fact sheets or booklets, they should offer accurate and objective information, which does not promote any particular agency, charity or other organisation. Where possible, they should give details of a range of agencies which may be able to offer help or advice. If fact sheets accompany consumer programmes all details must be given in a non-promotional manner. We should aim to include a range of comparable products.

#### 6 FUNDING FOR SUPPORT SERVICES

Careful judgements need to be made as to whether support services should be free or charged on a cost recovery basis. If programmes wish to offer such services free, consideration must be given as to whether it is justified to use licence fee or Grant-in-Aid funds or whether financial support should be sought from outside organisations. Support services paid for principally by the Licence Fee or Grant-in-Aid must offer a genuine educational, social, cultural or other public service benefit to the target audience.

If it is decided to charge on a cost recovery basis for support services or support material, advice should be sought from the Directorate Commercial Policy representative (see also the BBC's Commercial Policy Guidelines).

#### 7 OUTSIDE FUNDING FOR PROGRAMME SUPPORT SERVICES

Seeking funds for support services from an outside organisation may enable programmes to offer support services free or at a reduced cost to the licence payer. However, the BBC must not accept funding from any individual or organisation whose interests or commercial activities could lead to doubt about the objectivity of the programme or the support service. Support services for news, current affairs or consumer advice programmes should not normally receive any funding from outside organisations.

Funds for support services may be sought from government departments, agencies, publicly funded bodies, charities, professional associations, certain trade associations and independent trusts. Acceptance of funds from commercial bodies must be treated with great caution. No support material may be used to promote any outside body.

If outside funding is agreed, editorial responsibility for the support material must rest entirely with the BBC.

#### 8 CREDITS FOR SUPPORT MATERIAL

There should be no on-air credits for the outside funding organisation and no credit on any telephone line. However, print material may carry a discreet credit. If telephone support lines are sponsored, the sponsor should not normally be credited, unless there is a particularly strong editorial reason to do so. Advice may be sought from Editorial Policy. For ITC regulated services including BBC KNOWLEDGE see section 13.

#### 9 JOINT INITIATIVES

Where particular expertise is required, the BBC may wish to offer support material or support services in conjunction with an appropriate outside body which is well respected in the field, such as a charity or educational institution. The BBC must remain editorially responsible for the broadcast programme.

But if there is joint editorial responsibility for the support material or support service, the outside body may be credited on print material. The body should only be mentioned on air if there are sound editorial reasons for an on-air reference (see also section 10 below on distribution of support material).

Sometimes we may wish to offer as support material a leaflet or booklet produced entirely by a reputable charity or agency, or a helpline may be provided by a reputable outside agency (see section 3 above). In such cases there may be strong editorial reasons for stating on air which body is responsible for the support material or helpline. Heads of Department can seek advice on this from the Head of Learning Support or Editorial Policy.

If we distribute material produced by others we must ensure that we are not unduly promoting any particular charity or agency when there are other comparable organisations working in the same field. We must not distribute material which contains appeals for money. The only exceptions to this rule are in connection with approved BBC charity appeals broadcasts or recognised BBC charity campaigns such as *Children in Need*.

#### 10 DISTRIBUTION OF SUPPORT MATERIAL

Support material is normally distributed by programmes or through Learning Support. Some Local Radio stations work in partnership with local voluntary organisations to produce and distribute support material. In addition, programmes may also wish to distribute tapes or booklets, produced by the BBC, via publications or magazines. In such cases we should take care that the publication is editorially appropriate. Editorial Policy should be consulted on suitable partnership arrangements. The BBC should approve all promotional material which includes any reference to the tape or booklet. We should choose publications which are available from a range of outlets so as to avoid any suggestion of BBC endorsement of a particular retailer. It is essential that we do not refer on air to any publication or retailer

involved in the distribution of the material. This restriction applies to BBC publications as well as to publications published by others. See also Chapter 26: On Air References to BBC Products, Publications and Services.

If support material is available as a “give away” with a publication, it must also be available elsewhere. Viewers and listeners, who contact the BBC to obtain the material, should not be asked to pay more than they would pay if they bought the magazine.

See section 4.2 of Chapter 32: Phone-Ins and the Use of Telephone Services in Programmes for advice about the use of premium rate calls for the distribution of support material.

## 11 TRAILS

Support services and back-up material may be trailed within programmes and in continuity announcements providing the material or service is free or provided on a cost recovery basis.

On television, all information concerning support services should be included within programmes or their closing credits, if possible. Mentions of support services within continuity announcements are at the discretion of Broadcasting and Presentation. If a programme considers it necessary to trail a helpline in a continuity announcement, Broadcasting and Presentation should be warned at the earliest opportunity.

It may be useful to say within a programme that details about support material or a support service will be given at the end of the programme to allow viewers or listeners time to find a pen.

Trails for any BBC back-up material designed to make a profit are subject to very tight rules. Such material cannot be trailed within television programmes and trails in continuity announcements are subject to tight restrictions (see Chapter 26: On Air References to BBC Products, Services and Publications).

## 12 ONLINE SERVICES

It may be appropriate to provide support services online via the Internet if this is a suitable method of reaching the relevant target audience. Support material should appear on the BBC’s publicly funded Internet pages, not on any commercially funded pages. The standards, which apply to the BBC’s broadcast services, apply also to BBC material on the Internet. See the BBC ONLINE Guidelines for detailed advice.

## 13 ITC REGULATED SERVICES

The ITC Code of Programme Sponsorship requires on-air sponsor credits for support material. The following BBC guidance for our commercial television services also applies. There may only be a discreet written credit in the same font as any other text displayed. Logos may not be used. There should be no verbal credit. There should be no reference to the outside funders of support material within the programme and it should be clear that it is only the support material and not the programme that has outside funding.

BBC KNOWLEDGE is a special case. It is temporarily on a commercial multiplex and therefore needs to be treated equally, in regulatory terms, with others on that multiplex,

notwithstanding that it is a BBC public service channel. While this service stays on the commercial multiplex, on air credits for sponsors of support material should be consistent with ITC rules on such credits for its commercial services.

## CHAPTER 32 PHONE-INS AND THE USE OF TELEPHONE SERVICES IN PROGRAMMES

- 1 GENERAL
- 2 PHONE-INS
- 3 WHICH TYPE OF CALL TO USE
- 4 PREMIUM RATE TELEPHONE NUMBERS
  - 4.1 General
  - 4.2 Financial and Technical Requirements
  - 4.3 Paying for Support Material via Premium Rate Calls
  - 4.4 Price Messages and Call Cut Offs
  - 4.5 Children’s Services
  - 4.6 Phone Services and Competitions
  - 4.7 Voting by Phone
  - 4.8 Donations to Charity and Charity Appeals
  - 4.9 Services not controlled by the BBC
- 5 EVENT INFORMATION LINES
  - 5.1 Event Information Lines Provided by the BBC

### 1 GENERAL

Telephone services can be used to enhance programmes by allowing the public to give their point of view or to interact directly with programmes. Both Factual and Entertainment programmes use telephone lines in a wide variety of ways in order to provide individual contributions to programmes or to get an immediate mass response from thousands or even millions of people.

Telephone information lines can provide useful back-up information for the audience and helplines offer advice and support (see also Chapter 31: Support Services and Support Material).

### 2 PHONE-INS

Phone-ins play an important role in BBC programming. They allow the public direct access to air their own views and to question politicians and other public figures.

BBC phone-ins are generally live in order to provide genuine spontaneity. This means that producers must constantly be alert to the possibility of callers breaking the law or causing widespread offence in matters of taste, decency or language. To minimise the risks involved, potential contributors should be called back and should not normally be put straight on the air.

Producers should ensure that presenters are properly briefed on the law and BBC guidelines, and are able to extricate the programme from a difficult situation with speed and courtesy. When the subject matter of a phone-in programme leads a producer to anticipate particular problems, callers, as well as presenters, should be briefed before they go on air.

Presenters and producers should also be aware that the law might differ in different parts of the United Kingdom (see Chapter 19: Reporting the United Kingdom).

### 3 WHICH TYPE OF CALL TO USE

Programme makers will normally use local rates for local and regional programme phone-ins and the national rate for UK wide phone ins. In some cases local calls rates may be used for calls from all over the UK, but the cost of this to the BBC needs to be justifiable.

The freephone rate is appropriate for helplines or where the BBC is offering an essential service. It may also be used when the caller is being asked to help the BBC on some way.

Premium rate calls are used for a variety of reasons and are subject to detailed guidelines below. Premium rate lines should never be used for phone-in discussion programmes or helplines.

It may be advisable to state on air what sort of rate is being used.

**Programmes must always specify when a premium rate line is being used** (see section 4.3 below).

### 4 PREMIUM RATE TELEPHONE NUMBERS

#### 4.1 General

Using premium rate telephone numbers may sometimes be the only way to offer certain services to programmes as these numbers enable large volumes of calls to be handled. Using premium numbers may be the only viable way to register mass audience reaction quickly, as with voting for the *Eurovision Song Contest*. As premium rate numbers can sometimes generate profits, it is particularly important that we only use them for clear editorial objectives and that the cost to the public is kept a minimum.

When using premium rate telephone numbers, such as those beginning 0891, programme-makers should remember:

- licence fee payers should be able to get enjoyment from a programme without being encouraged to pay more by making a premium rate call
- before a premium rate line is provided, production staff should have established that a similar service cannot be provided on a non-premium rate service
- durations should be kept to a minimum. Most calls should last no more than a minute; in many cases they will be shorter. We should not encourage people to ring back or ring another premium rate number
- premium rate lines should never be used for phone-in discussion programmes or for helplines. They should also not be used for 'dial and listen' information lines associated with education, welfare, or social action programming (see Chapter 31: Support Services and Support Material).
- independent productions made for the BBC may use premium rate telephone lines only with the express permission of the Commissioning Executive responsible for supervising the production.

- programmes may choose an appropriate provider for the service, subject to the arrangements outlined below.

#### 4.2 Financial and Technical Requirements

**Under no circumstances should programmes use premium rate lines with the aim of generating revenue.**

Arrangements in the telephone industry mean that use of premium rate lines may generate a profit, however in order to guard against premium rate lines being used inappropriately the BBC has restricted the percentage of revenue raised by premium rate lines which can be returned directly to production departments or independent producers. Guidelines concerning these financial arrangements are available from BBC Commercial Policy.

All service providers and programmes must comply with the Code of Practice issued by the independent supervisory body, ICSTIS. Programmes should ensure that any provider of a premium rate service signs a contract which ensures that they will comply with the BBC's financial and technical requirements. They must be able to provide enough line capacity to cope with the likely volume of calls.

#### 4.3 Paying for Support Material via Premium Rate Calls

Where a programme wishes to offer programme support material on a cost recovery basis, it may be appropriate, for convenience to the recipient, to defray the cost of producing and delivering the support material by using a premium rate number. The total amount should be strictly limited. Every care must be taken to calculate costs so as to break-even, not to generate revenue. If this cannot be done, the method should not be used. One drawback is the relatively high percentage of lost orders because of transcription difficulties. Producers should refer to their Head of Department before making any arrangements.

#### 4.4 Price Messages and Call Cut Offs

It is essential that the cost of ringing in on a premium rate line is made clear on air:

- the maximum cost of a call should be given or in some cases it may be more appropriate to give the cost per minute along with the maximum cost which can be incurred. The prices given must include VAT and should cover all relevant time periods
- on television the information should be given in vision. The caption must be horizontal and the characters should be clearly visible. The charge must be shown simultaneously with the telephone number. In some cases it may be advisable to voice the information as well
- on radio, where the price message can only be voiced, it must be done explicitly, not as an aside

Call cut-offs automatically end a call after a given time. They protect the caller from running up heavy charges. Call cut-offs should normally be used on any premium rate services run in association with BBC programmes.

#### 4.5 Children's Services

For all children's services, call cut-offs must be used.

- children must be told on air to seek permission from parents or bill-payers before calling
- the cost of calls for children's services should normally be no more than the cost of writing in
- if in exceptional circumstances calls last more than a minute the message needs to begin by telling children that permission should have been obtained.

#### 4.6 Phone Services and Competitions

Programmes must never use premium rate competitions as means of making money. If questions are too simple, the suspicion may be aroused that the competition is designed as a money making venture. All BBC competitions involving viewers or listeners must provide a genuine test of knowledge, judgement or skill appropriate to the target audience (see also Chapter 22: Game Shows and Competitions).

The Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976 prevents broadcasters from running gambling or lotteries. If premium rate lines are used, skill must be required to win, otherwise the competition may be considered to be gambling or a lottery. Producers must refer to the Programme Legal Advice Department before arranging any competition involving premium rate lines.

The cost of a call for a competition should not normally be more than the cost of writing in. Viewers and listeners should be given sufficient information on air about how to enter rather than having to rely on information provided on the premium rate line.

#### 4.7 Voting by Phone

Call cut offs must be used. Programmes should guard against using the results of a phone-in poll as a valid opinion poll. For further detailed guidance on the limitations of phone-in polls, see Chapter 35: Opinion Polls.

#### 4.8 Donations to Charity and Charity Appeals

If programmes wish to give some of the proceeds from premium rate calls to charity they must first check what is permissible under the Charities Act. Guidance should be sought from the Programme Legal Advice Department.

The BBC provides opportunities for broadcast appeals by charities in accordance with the charity appeals procedure (See Chapter 30) Once appeal slots have been granted, it is for the charities concerned to decide whether to use premium rate numbers, but the BBC must ensure that the appeal includes appropriate details of the cost of the calls.

#### 4.9 Services not controlled by the BBC

BBC programmes should not give out premium rate numbers for services which are not under the BBC's editorial control except for numbers associated with a broadcast charity appeal. Those responsible for pages on Ceefax or digital text services should take care that they do not include numbers for non-BBC services.

### 5 EVENT INFORMATION LINES

The BBC may trail telephone numbers for lines provided by the BBC or outside organisations which give ticket information and other details about events. These lines may be trailed on-air only if they give information about events or performances which will be covered by BBC programmes. The information given on-air must be brief and non promotional and the lines should not be described as 'ticket-hotlines'. Premium rate information lines should not be trailed. The line should not be used as a means of buying tickets by credit card though it may refer callers to another number for telephone sales. Any proposal to trail an event information line must be referred to the relevant output Controller.

There should be a maximum of one verbal and one visual reference to the telephone number in any television programme. In a radio programme there should be a maximum of two verbal references. However there may be a verbal trailer earlier in the programme saying that the number will be given later.

#### 5.1 Event Information Lines Provided by the BBC

BBC channels or programmes may provide their own information lines about outside concerts or other performances which they are covering. These should not be premium rate lines and none of the costs should be met by an outside event organiser or event sponsor. Such lines must not be used as means of buying tickets by credit card, though the telephone number of the relevant box office may be given.

## CHAPTER 33 POLITICS AND POLITICIANS

- 1 POLITICAL IMPARTIALITY
- 2 POLITICAL INTERVIEWS
  - 2.1 Interviews With Party Leaders
  - 2.2 Payment To MPs
- 3 PARLIAMENTARY BROADCASTING
  - 3.1 Parliament at Westminster
  - 3.2 The Scottish Parliament
  - 3.3 The National Assembly for Wales
  - 3.4 The Northern Ireland Assembly
  - 3.5 The European Parliament
  - 3.6 Legal Protection

### 1 POLITICAL IMPARTIALITY

The BBC's Charter and Agreement sets out certain principles, which are central to the BBC's coverage of politics.

- it requires programmes to "contain comprehensive, authoritative and impartial coverage of news and current affairs in the United Kingdom and throughout the world to support fair and informed debate at local, regional and national levels"
- it requires the BBC to treat controversial subjects with "due accuracy and impartiality, both in the Corporation's news services and in the more general field of programmes dealing with matters of public policy or of political or industrial controversy".

In practice this means that the BBC aims over time, to give due prominence to all the main strands of argument and to all the main parties. Although the government of the day will often be the primary source of news, the voices and opinions of opposition parties must also be aired and challenged.

All networked coverage must also reflect the different disposition of political parties in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. For this reason specific party labels are preferable to general descriptions of 'the opposition'. The exception to this is in phrases like "the Official Opposition" and titles like 'The Leader of the Opposition' which in the Westminster context has a formal and specific meaning.

The agreement (5.1.c) also explicitly commits the BBC to refrain from "expressing the opinion of the Corporation on current affairs or matters of public policy". This does not mean that judgements may not be made by correspondents – indeed these are an important part of the BBC's service to its audience. It does mean that a broadcaster's personal views on any aspect of public policy should not be evident on air (see also section 2.2 of Part One of Chapter 2 Impartiality and Accuracy).

## 2 POLITICAL INTERVIEWS

Requests for political interviews should be unambiguous about the programme and context for which they are intended.

When a politician is invited, but refuses or is unable to appear, this should not normally act as a veto on the appearance of other politicians or outside speakers holding different views. However, there may be occasions where the refusal of a key player to take part, invalidates the idea behind the programme proposal.

Anyone has a perfect right to refuse to appear in a programme. It is not normally necessary to mention such a refusal on air. However when the audience might reasonably ask why an individual, viewpoint or party is not represented, it may be appropriate to explain that they were invited and chose not to take part. Programmes should refrain from speculating about the reason for such a refusal.

Politicians or indeed other contributors will sometimes try to place conditions upon programmes before agreeing to appear. Any arrangements must stand public scrutiny and must not prevent the programme asking questions that audiences would reasonably expect to hear asked. In particular if the location for a programme is chosen not for editorial reasons, but for logistical ones (e.g. availability in that place in that time of the politician in question), producers should ensure that the context and the immediate environment are determined by the BBC and not chosen by the contributors for possible party advantage.

Politicians often possess expertise outside the political field, which makes them valuable contributors to, even presenters of, programmes across a wide range of subjects and genres. However care must be taken to ensure that the BBC's casting decisions, made on valid editorial and programme grounds, do not give any politician such prominence as to give them undue advantage over their opponents. Such considerations cannot be confined to election campaigns. The dates of many elections are known months in advance; politicians and potential candidates can gain undue advantage long before an election campaign actually

starts. Producers in any doubt on the appropriateness of inviting any contributor or presenter who carries an overt party political label should consult the Chief Political Adviser.

Programmes where invitations to politicians as guests are exceptional rather than regular practice, should seek the advice of the Chief Political Adviser at an early stage of programme planning.

### 2.1 Interviews With Party Leaders

Except for brief news interviews, any BBC programme proposing to interview any of the leaders of parties in the United Kingdom must refer to the Chief Political Adviser in advance. The Chief Political Adviser should also be notified whether such invitations are refused or accepted.

The referral ensures that:

- the BBC as a whole is robust and consistent in its dealings with the party leaders
- at all times of high demand for one or more party leaders, bids are rationalised within the BBC
- over time, due weight is given to appearances by all party leaders.

### 2.2 Payment To MPs

MPs at Westminster, Members of the European Parliament, Members of the Scottish Parliament, Assembly Members of the National Assembly of Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly and politically active members of the House of Lords, who appear on BBC news programmes, will not normally be paid for their contributions. Their appearances on radio or television to express political views are part of political life, and payment is not appropriate. This applies when they answer questions on subjects such as public policy, international affairs, party politics or constituency issues.

If their contribution to a programme is outside the normal course of their duties, politicians may be paid a fee which reflects the amount of preparation required, the length of time spent making the contribution, and the value of the contributor's particular degree of expertise. The fee should not exceed that which might be paid to other individuals for similar contributions.

Programmes sometimes secure the services of an politicians for a substantial period to make a number of contributions whether on political or other matters during the course of a programme. In these circumstances a fee may be paid which would recognise, among other things, that contributors may have to decline other offers including invitations from other broadcasters.

For any contribution politicians may be paid a "disturbance fee" to cover factors such as substantial travel time to a BBC location or attendance during unsociable hours (after 10pm, before 8.00am, or on Sundays). However this will usually be a nominal amount and must

relate to real inconveniences. It must not be used to circumvent the guideline on payment of fees.

Politicians who hold government office or executive office in any elected assembly or who have party front bench responsibilities do not qualify for a fee under any circumstances, including a disturbance fee. Those who chair Parliamentary Committees and leaders of political parties do not qualify either.

### 3 PARLIAMENTARY BROADCASTING

#### 3.1 *Parliament at Westminster*

There are rules laid down by Parliament for the broadcasting of proceedings in both Houses. These cover, for instance, the nature of shooting and editing. The pictures from both the House of Commons and the House of Lords are made available for the broadcasters by the Parliamentary Broadcasting Unit.

Broadcasters are allowed to use the pictures and sound under certain conditions including:

- no internal editing of speeches. When using two sections of a speech, a definite break must be provided to make clear the two sections are not continuous.
- no graphic enhancement or alteration of the pictures. For example one or a group of MPs must not be highlighted and the framing must not be changed
- no speeding up or slowing down of the pictures or sound.

If in doubt seek detailed guidance from Political Programmes at Millbank.

Parliamentary material can be used only in news and factual programmes or for educational purposes. No Parliamentary recording may be used in light entertainment, or fictional or drama programmes, or programmes of political satire. Parliamentary material may be used in the factual parts of magazine programmes but must always be kept separate from musical, fictional or humorous items.

Parliamentary committees can usually be broadcast even if they are sitting away from Westminster, but the broadcasters have to commission coverage in advance. Again BBC Political Programmes at Millbank can help.

#### 3.2 *The Scottish Parliament*

As with Westminster, actuality can only be used in news and factual programmes. No recording may be used in light entertainment, as fictional or drama programmes or programmes of political satire.

The rules for coverage are however much more relaxed than those for Westminster. The guiding principle is that of the “gallery surrogate”: that television viewers should be given the chance to witness everything they could see if they were in the public gallery of the Parliament itself. For example:

- internal editing is allowed but “broadcasters should not distort the meaning of MSP speeches in edits”
- cutaways are allowed
- the arrival of prominent members in the Chambers and shots of the public gallery are allowed.

A full copy of the rules of coverage and details of how to obtain access to BBC recordings are available from the Editor of the Scottish Parliament Unit in BH Glasgow.

#### 3.3 *The National Assembly for Wales*

The same conditions apply on use of material in non-news programmes as those in Westminster and Scotland. The Code of Conduct is similar to that in Scotland with the exception that no demonstration or interference by the public can be shown. A full copy of the code, is available from BBC Wales’ political editor and anyone seeking access to BBC recordings should contact the News Organiser in the BBC Wales’ political unit in BH Llandaff.

#### 3.4 *The Northern Ireland Assembly*

The same conditions apply on use of material in non-news programmes as those in Westminster.

#### 3.5 *The European Parliament*

BBC Westminster can also advise programme makers about how to obtain Coverage from sittings of the European Parliament or its committees. Up-to-date information about recent and forthcoming business is available from the BBC Political Research Unit based at Millbank.

#### 3.6 *Legal Protection*

Most statements made in Parliament at Westminster, in the other devolved parliaments and assemblies in the United Kingdom and in the European Parliament, enjoy qualified privilege when they are reported fairly and accurately. This gives a defence to libel, but it does not extend to reporting things shouted by non-Members in the Public Gallery or things said by Members overheard talking among themselves. There is no defence of privilege available for reporters or broadcasters when they repeat what is said in Parliament where there is a risk of contempt. There is no automatic legal protection against the risk of contempt during a live relay of a Parliament or Assembly, but the Speaker or Deputy Speaker is normally quick to intervene to stop remarks which risk contempt. There is no qualified privilege for members who repeat allegations outside the house.

**Chief Political Adviser is available to offer advice on all aspects of political editorial matters.**

### **CHAPTER 34 BROADCASTING DURING ELECTIONS**

- 1 ACHIEVING BALANCE
- 2 MINOR PARTIES
- 3 CONSTITUENCY REPORTS



- 4 USE OF CANDIDATES IN ISSUE BASED PROGRAMME PACKAGES
- 5 DEVOLUTION
- 6 ONLINE
- 7 AUDIENCE PROGRAMMES
- 8 PARTY LEADER INTERVIEWS
- 9 OPINION POLLS
- 10 VOX POPS
- 11 E-MAILS
- 12 GUIDELINES FOR POLLING DAY

There is no area of broadcasting where the BBC's commitment to impartiality is more closely scrutinised than in reporting election campaigns.

Election 2001 will present us with a number of specific new challenges: –

- Devolution has changed the political map of the UK. We are effectively dealing with 3 main parties in England, and a different combination of 4 main parties in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In addition minor parties, have had significant electoral successes under PR elections which have taken place since 1997.
- This will be the first full Online election.
- The abolition of Section 93 of the RPA will enable programme makers to make far more extensive use of candidates and we will have new guidelines to ensure fairness particularly in constituency reports. These guidance notes which supplement Chapters 2 and 34 of the Producers' Guidelines, have been drawn up following extensive consultation with a wide range of BBC programme makers across the UK who will have to make them work in practice. They are intended to offer a framework within which –
- Journalists can operate in as free and creative an environment as possible.
- Whilst scrupulously delivering to audiences impartial reporting of the campaign which gives them fair coverage and rigorous scrutiny of the policies and campaigns of all parties.
- This guidance is intended to assist programme makers, editors and the BBC as a whole to achieve fairness. They apply to all BBC programmes and outlets. Programmes which do not usually cover political subjects or normally invite politicians to participate should consult the Chief Political Adviser before finalising any plans to do so.

#### 1. Achieving Balance

Daily News magazine programmes (in the nations, regions and UK wide) must achieve an appropriate and fair balance in coverage of the main parties in the course of each week of the campaign.

As a working shorthand for the General Election Campaign we will take the main parties in England to be Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrats; In Scotland these three plus the SNP, in Wales these three plus Plaid Cymru; in Northern Ireland the Ulster Unionists, the SDLP, the DUP and Sinn Fein.

Network programmes must ensure that SNP and/or Plaid Cymru are featured in a fair proportion of items on subjects on which they have distinctive policies. See also Section 5 on devolution.

- This means that each strand (e.g. a drive time show on radio) is responsible for reaching its own targets within the week and cannot rely on other outlets at different times of day (e.g. the breakfast show) to do so for it.

- Single programmes should avoid individual editions getting badly out of kilter. There may be days when inevitably one party dominates the news agenda e.g. when the main party manifestos are launched, but in that case care must be taken to ensure that coverage of similar prominence and duration is given to the other manifesto launches on the relevant days.
- Every edition of the multi-item programmes which cover the campaign e.g. the Regional 6.30 – 7.00 slot, should refer in at least one item to each of the main parties.
- News 24 and television and radio summaries will divide the 24 hour day into blocks and aim to achieve balance across a week in each one.
- Weekly programmes, or running series within daily sequence programmes, which focus on one party or another should trail both forwards and backwards so that it is clear to the audience that balance is built in over time.
- Particular care should be taken over coverage of high profile issues like Europe where there is a multi-faceted debate within and between the parties to ensure a balance of views is maintained.

#### 2. Minor Parties

Minor parties embrace a wide range, from parties which have elected representatives in the European Parliament, the Scottish Parliament, the Northern Ireland Assembly, to those who have not stood before, or who have stood many times with little electoral success. Relevant factors to take into account in deciding how much coverage a party should get are significant levels of previous electoral support, evidence of current support and the number of candidates being fielded.

The following guidance is aimed at ensuring minimum coverage for all those parties. It does not set a maximum. There may well be regional variations in the relative strength of the minor parties and this ought to be reflected in the coverage.

- The manifesto launch of all parties who are standing in at least one sixth of the seats UK wide should be covered on BBC1, BBC2, R1, R2, R4, R5Live, & News 24, in all summaries in the hours following the launch, and with some reference to content in the main news programmes which follow (e.g. the 1, 6, or 10 On BBC1, WATO on R4, Drive on R5, the news belt on Newsnight on BBC2). BBC Parliament will also carry them.
- All daily news and current affairs network programmes should ensure that the policies of each of these parties are explained, and analysed, in at least one substantial item during the course of the campaign.
- All regional programmes in England which report the election should cover the manifesto launch of all parties who are standing in more than one sixth of the constituencies in that region. There should be at least one other substantive item on each of these parties during the campaign.
- All Programme Strands in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland which report the election should cover the manifesto launch and do at least one other substantive item in the course of the campaign, on all parties standing in one sixth of the seats in those nations. They should also include a contribution from these parties in some items on those subjects on which they have distinctive policies.
- The audience will be referred, as appropriate to the full list of parties standing on Ceefax, BBC News Online and/or the national and city sites.

### 3. Constituency reports

Section 93 of the RPA has been abolished but the BBC has a legal obligation to adopt a code of practice in its constituency coverage. All other broadcasters in the UK will adopt the same code.

The abolition of Section 93 of the RPA means that there is no legal distinction for us between the period before close of nominations and the period after it. It also means that candidates who withhold their consent from constituency reports or debates can no longer effectively exercise a veto over all other candidates.

However, this does not weaken in any way the BBC's obligations to fairness. So when the election is called the following guidelines come into effect immediately.

- to be impartial, constituency reports or debates should give due weight to candidates of the main parties. This means that if any candidate takes part in an item about a specific constituency, then candidates of each of the main parties should be offered the opportunity to take part. As a working shorthand for the General Election Campaign we will take the main parties in England to be Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrats; In Scotland these three plus the SNP, in Wales these three plus Plaid Cymru; in Northern Ireland the Ulster Unionists, the SDLP, the DUP and Sinn Fein.
- to be authoritative, it is right to make some distinction in the weight of the contribution between these candidates and others. Constituency reports or debates should also include some participation from candidates representing parties with either previous significant electoral support (for example parties which have gained a few seats in other recent elections or individuals who have been elected before under another label) or parties with evidence of significant current support. Where a party or an individual is mounting a significant campaign in a particular region, this should be reflected appropriately in the coverage.
- to be comprehensive and fair, full-length constituency reports or debates should include a list of all candidates standing. If a constituency is being reported on several times on the same channel in a day, it may be enough to broadcast the full list once a day. Audiences should also be directed to the full list of candidates on Ceefax and Online.
- programmes may decide to use either candidates or party representatives. But if the candidate from one of the parties is invited to take part, the other participants should, where at all possible, also be candidates. In exceptional circumstances if a candidate is genuinely unavailable the opportunity may be offered instead to a suitable party representative from within the constituency (eg: party official, agent or Councillor) but it should be made clear to the audience that the missing candidate(s) was invited and why they were unable to take part. If a party declines to put forward any representative the item/programme will go ahead without them.
- advice as to which parties currently fall into which category can be sought from the Chief Political Adviser. We will take care to ensure that particularly in those cases where a particular constituency is featured often, we do not give undue prominence to any single candidate over time.

### 4. Use of Candidates in issue based programme packages

**The abolition of Section 93 of the RPA also gives far greater freedom to programme makers to use candidates in issue pieces. Indeed, giving candidates of all parties a higher profile during the campaign was one of the key arguments**

**used to secure the abolition of the RPA. National figures who are also candidates have always been able to appear as party representatives. Now, for the first time, regional television and local radio can use candidates far more freely to discuss local issues, but this in no way absolves us of our responsibility to be fair between the parties.**

In order to achieve fairness across the board, when programmes decide to use a local candidate in a package or debate, the other participants should where at all possible, also be local candidates. But candidates do not have to be from the same constituency – they can come from different constituencies within a region. In local issue round-tables where all the participants are candidates, references to eg: local hospitals, bypasses etc, which would have been difficult under the RPA, will now be allowed.

However, if a candidate is being interviewed as a national spokesperson, we should not allow them to gain an unfair advantage over their constituency opponents by making repeated plugs for their own constituency. This can best be achieved by politely advising them in advance of our policy on this, editing out such references if pre-recorded and swift intervention by the interviewer, if live.

Callers to phone-ins must still be checked to see if they are candidates. Before the abolition of the RPA this would have precluded them from appearing as such. Now they can be encouraged to contribute, but the audience must be clear that they are speaking not as ordinary members of the public but as contributors with a stated political agenda. Care must be taken that over time programmes are not giving undue preference to one candidate over another.

The aim of all these guidelines is to encourage vigorous debate and a higher profile to candidates of all parties in general without giving unfair advantage to one candidate over another.

### 5. Devolution

This is the first UK General Election since Devolution. In Scotland, the Scottish Parliament, not Westminster, is now in charge of most domestic matters such as education, health and criminal law, most aspects of home affairs and the environment. In Northern Ireland the Assembly is in charge of education, health, and social services, agriculture, environment, urban and regional development. In Wales the National Assembly is in charge of education, agriculture and health.

- It is essential to make clear to the audience which issues will be influenced by the outcome of the election in each part of the UK. The BBC should be frank with its' audience about the changed nature of the campaign in the nations. Indeed it may be newsworthy to raise this as an issue.
- However, it is unrealistic to expect that candidates and parties in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will confine themselves strictly to matters reserved to Westminster, such as defence, foreign affairs, the macro economy and social security and there is no indication at this stage that the UK General Election will be less keenly fought in the Nations. The contest will be a mixed blend: partly Westminster issues, partly a plebiscite on the performance of the parties in the Scottish Parliament, National

Assembly for Wales and Northern Ireland Assembly. Programmes should reflect that blend to our audience, while making clear who does what in the new political set-up.

- The Scottish Parliament, National Assembly of Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly may well be in session during the UK General Election campaign, though they are unlikely to sit on polling day itself. All relevant programmes will continue to cover these proceedings on news merit, but the guidelines on balance on the main parties, and other parties with elected representatives in those bodies will apply.
- Civil Servants in the devolved institutions will continue to process policy decisions and announcements during the UK election. We will report such announcements on news merit, but all four of the main parties in each nation should be given the opportunity to comment on them.
- Network programmes, in order to report fully the UK to the UK, should ensure that they cover the key election stories in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. In doing so the guidance on party balance in those nations must be followed.

## 6. Online

This is the first online general election.

- All editorial content must comply with the same guidelines on balance, use of candidates etc. which apply to television and radio programmes and monitoring should be carried out on the same basis as for programmes.
- BBC News Online, the Nations' and English regions' sites (in close liaison with each other to ensure a consistent BBC wide approach) will publish a complete list of candidates by constituency. Programmes will refer to this list as a matter of course at the end of full constituency reports.
- BBC News Online and Regional sites will list links to any party site, provided that it does not give strong grounds for concern that this breaches the BBC taste and decency guidelines or the law e.g. defamation or incitement to racial hatred.
- We will not link to the sites of individual candidates, unless there is a very strong editorial justification on news grounds and then only for a limited period (e.g. because major player publishes policy on his/her website which contradicts manifesto on their party's website).
- Any speeches which are carried in full will be selected on news value, bearing in mind the need for balance between the parties.
- Forums and message boards: Care must be taken to ensure that forums and message boards are vehicles for lively debate and not hi-jacked by organised campaigns of one particular group or party. This is not easy to achieve but we are more likely to succeed if:
- Open ended message boards on political issues are avoided during the campaign. Hosts will be required to initiate topics with appropriate questions and to steer threads so as to encourage effective debate about the issues.
- The topics are set by journalists and are based on the issues not personalities. Sites which do not usually engage in political issues should seek the advice of the Chief Political Adviser before doing so.
- Poll type questions which attempt to quantify support for a party, politician, or policy issue should be avoided.
- Pre-moderation or hourly postmoderation (e.g. in the case of Nations, the English Regions and Radio sites) will check that messages are not completely stacked in the

direction of one party or another. The maximum time any message may be up before being checked on a postmoderated board is one hour. But this should not be taken as the acceptable norm. It may be necessary to check more frequently.

- All moderators and hosts should know how to use BBC Online's escalation strategy where appropriate, to protect a postmoderated message board from e.g. nuisance or abuse. For example, they should know how to switch a board from postmoderation into premoderation, at short notice. This will ensure that if necessary an organised campaign can be blocked.
- Revised rules to effect this policy and make it transparent to all users, will be posted on all BBC message boards at the beginning of the election campaign.
- Journalists and moderators will have to make fine judgements between remarks that constitute robust political debate and personal abuse. The rule of thumb should be if we would not broadcast it on radio or TV, it should not be online. Filters for taste and decency and personal abuse will operate as usual but they should not be relied on as a substitute for effective moderation.
- Any live chat or online audio or video interviews by politicians should be subject to the same criteria on balance and fairness as applies to radio and TV interviews. The criteria are set out in these guidelines.

## 7. Audience Programmes

All programmes planning live audiences should consult the Chief Political Adviser to discuss how they plan to select the audience and to achieve an appropriate balance. All such procedures must stand up to public scrutiny.

## 8. Party Leader Interviews

In order to ensure that our audiences are served as well as possible during the campaign by a balanced package of robust interviews across a range of outlets, bids will be co-ordinated well in advance of the election so that a coherent and realistic BBC proposition is put to the party leaders.

With the exception of newsgathering interviews gathered on news value on the day, all bids for party leader interviews must be referred to the Chief Political Adviser before parties are approached. Unsolicited offers should not be accepted without consultation with senior managers and a reference to the Chief Political Adviser.

## 9. Opinion Polls

During the campaign our policy takes into account three key factors:

- that polls should not be ignored during the campaign. They are part of the story and audiences should be informed about them;
- but, context is essential, and so is the language used in reporting them; and
- polls can be wrong. There are real dangers in only reporting the most "newsworthy" polls – i.e. those which, on a one-off basis, show dramatic movement.

So, the rules about reporting polls (chapter 35 of Producers' Guidelines) need to be scrupulously followed. They are:

- not to lead a news bulletin or programme simply with the results of a voting intention poll;
- not to headline the results of a voting intention poll unless it has prompted a story which itself deserves a headline and reference to the poll's findings is necessary to make sense of it;
- not to rely on the interpretation given to a poll's results by the organisation or publication which commissioned it: look at the questions, the results and the trend;
- to report the findings of voting intentions polls in the context of trend. The trend may consist of the results of all major polls over a period or may be limited to the change in a single pollster's findings. Poll results which defy trends without convincing explanation should be treated with particular scepticism and caution;
- not to use language which gives greater credibility to the polls than they deserve: polls "suggest" but never "prove" or even "show"
- to report the expected margin of error if the gap between the contenders is within the margin. On television and online, graphics should *always* show the margin of error;
- to report the organisation which carried out the poll and the organisation or publication which commissioned it.

In addition, during the campaign the BBC will:

- pre-select the main polls;
- report the selected polls on a regular basis on the same outlets throughout the campaign;
- report even single polls in context. For example, on television the graphic will never be separated from the explanatory piece;
- Take particular care with newspaper reviews. Polls should not be the lead item in a newspaper review and should always be reported with a sentence of context (e.g. "that's rather out of line with other polls this week").

The Producers' Guidelines make it clear that care must be taken to ensure that a poll commissioned by the BBC is not used to suggest a BBC view on a particular policy or issue. It is particularly important that a BBC poll is not used to imply BBC intervention in a current controversy. For this reason we will not commission voting intention polls in any medium during the election campaign.

Detailed guidance as to how this policy should be implemented in practice will be issued by the Chief Political Adviser before the start of the campaign.

#### 10. Vox Pops

The value of Vox pop to programmes is to allow different sides of an issue in question to be expressed through the voices of the man and woman in the street. But the context should always make it clear that they are an expression of one side of an argument, not an indication of the weight of opinion on either side of it. It follows that special care must be taken with vox pops during an election campaign to edit them in such a way as to ensure different sides of the issue are covered.

#### 11. E-mails

The same principle applies to any e-mails we broadcast. E-mails offer immediacy and interactivity to many programmes but they too are an expression of opinion, not an indication of the weight of opinion on one side or the other of a question. What matters is the balance of what we broadcast, not the balance of those we receive.

Programme makers should be particularly alert during an election campaign to organised e-mail campaigns by parties and pressure groups. During this period they should ask e-mail contributors to include their address and telephone number so that checks can be run if necessary, if mass mailings are suspected.

#### 12. Polling Day Guidelines

The BBC ceases to report election campaigns at 6am (5 GMT) and restricts coverage to factual accounts of the days events until the polls close at 10pm (9GMT). Judgements as to what can or cannot be said should be based on the principle that while the polls are open, nothing in our output should be construed as influencing the ballot.

Factual accounts of the days events would include

- The weather.
- Turnout. But beware of jumping to big conclusions from the evidence of one polling station.
- The new postal voting rules.
- Pictures of national figures voting for example, party leaders are fine but those candidates where the main interest centres on the contest in their constituency are not.
- Online. Although all the archived material remains available, the front page will be cleared of all campaign coverage, and these guidelines apply to all new material. This applies to all programme sites as well.
- Message Boards will be closed down for the day and re-open after the polls close at 10pm.

### CHAPTER 35 OPINION POLLS

- 1 COMMISSIONING OPINION POLLS
- 2 REPORTING OPINION POLLS
- 3 POLLS AT ELECTION TIMES
- 4 POLLS FOR USE IN ELECTION RESULTS PROGRAMMES
- 5 SURVEYS
- 6 PHONE-IN POLLS AND STUDIO AUDIENCES
- 7 FOCUS GROUPS AND PANELS
- 8 VOX POPS
- 9 ONLINE AND NEW MEDIA

#### 1 COMMISSIONING OPINION POLLS

There are many circumstances where polls may add value to programmes and augment our journalism but care must be taken to ensure that a poll commissioned by the BBC is not used to suggest a BBC view on a particular policy or issue. It is particularly important that a BBC poll is not used to imply BBC intervention in a current controversy. Only in very rare

circumstances does the BBC commission or sponsor opinion polls purporting to sample party political support or voting intentions in the electorate at large. Joint polls with other organisations often carry particular problems of impartiality in presentation and should be avoided.

**Any proposal to commission an opinion poll on politics or any other matter of public policy for any BBC service should be referred to the Chief Political Adviser for approval. Technical advice should also be sought from the Political Research Unit.**

## 2 REPORTING OPINION POLLS

The following rules for reporting the findings of voting intention polls in the United Kingdom conducted by any polling organisation must be rigorously applied:

- do not lead a news bulletin or programme simply with the results of a voting intention poll
- do not headline the results of a voting intention poll unless it has prompted a story which itself deserves a headline and reference to the poll's findings is necessary to make sense of it
- do not rely on the interpretation given to a poll's results by the organisation or publication which commissioned it: look at the questions, the results and the trend
- report the findings of voting intentions polls in the context of trend. The trend may consist of the results of all major polls over a period or may be limited to the change in a single pollster's findings. Poll results which defy trends without convincing explanation should be treated with particular scepticism and caution
- do not use language which gives greater credibility to the polls than they deserve: polls "suggest" but never "prove" or even "show"
- report the expected margin of error if the gap between the contenders is within the margin. On television and online graphics should *always* show the margin of error
- report the organisation which carried out the poll and the organisation or publication which commissioned it
- report the dates of the fieldwork and draw attention to events which may have had a significant effect on public opinion since it was done (e.g. "The poll was carried out last Monday, before the party announced.....").

## 3 POLLS AT ELECTION TIMES

As with all political reporting, special care has to be taken in reporting polls at election times.

BBC policy takes into account three key factors:

- polls should not be ignored during the campaign. They are part of the story and audiences should be informed about them
- but, context is essential, and so is the language used in reporting them
- polls can be wrong. There are real dangers in only reporting the most "newsworthy" polls – i.e. those which, on a one-off basis, show dramatic movement.

So, in addition to the stipulations about polls in general (see previous section) coverage of polls at election times will:

- pre-select the main polls
- report the selected polls on a regular basis on the same outlets throughout the campaign
- report even single polls, in context. For example, on television the graphic will never be separated from the explanatory piece.

Detailed guidance as to how this policy should be implemented in practice will be issued by the Chief Political Adviser before the start of the campaign.

## 4 POLLS FOR USE IN ELECTION RESULTS PROGRAMMES

In spite of the considerable thought and effort which has gone into refining the methodology, exit polls have not proved a sufficiently reliable way of predicting the results of elections. Our journalistic credibility is based on the audience's expectation that information the BBC broadcasts is accurate.

Polls carried out on polling day, by whatever method, have their limitations and should be seen for what they are - a device to sustain the programme until the real results come in. They may give an indication of the way things are going, but because of the pitfalls of sampling error, should always be used in bands, as in "it looks as if x are to be the biggest party with between x and x seats". A precise seat projection should wait for sufficient real results to establish the actual trend.

## 5 SURVEYS

Surveys of small specific groups like MPs or health authorities when used responsibly can be a very useful way of informing our audience and gathering information, but like opinion polls they must be both conducted and reported with care and after seeking appropriate advice. Contact should be made at an early stage both with Political Research Unit, who will advise as to whether the survey is practical, and from the Chief Political Adviser, who will advise on the necessary thresholds for responses and on appropriate content.

Surveys must never be reported as polls. The audience should be in no doubt about the status of the information they are receiving. Their remits should not be translated into percentages but reported in straight numbers e.g.: "Of the 81 MPs in this group we spoke to 60, of whom 40 were in favour of x and 20 were opposed to it".

## 6 PHONE-IN POLLS AND STUDIO AUDIENCES

Phone-in polls (unlike professionally conducted polls using the telephone) rely on people telephoning in to register a vote. Phone-in polls may accurately be described as “straw polls” even when the subject is serious. Programmes which want to carry them out need to understand their severe limitations. They do not sample opinion; they are simply a programme device which illustrates certain viewpoints. A programme’s audience is self-selected and is never representative of the population. When asked to give views on a topic, a minority, again self-selected, responds. If voting takes place during an extended period it may encourage repeat voting by people who feel strongly about the issue.

Questions in phone-in polls should be as neutrally worded as the context calls for. Slanted questions give slanted results.

Phone-in polls must never be used by programmes as a means of gathering serious information on party political support. In other contexts, phone-in polls may produce interesting, even impressive results (“Ten thousand of our listeners/viewers called in and they are four to one in favour of ...”). But we should make clear that the results have no wider significance.

The results of phone-in polls are not even remotely indicative of wider opinion, and programmes must not treat them in any way which implies that they are. Consequently publicity should not be sought for the results of phone-in polls outside of the programmes in which they are conducted. BBC News programmes should not normally report the results of phone-in polls.

Programmes which feature phone-in polls on the same subject taken at different times (for example at the start of the programme and again at the end) must not present the results in such a way as to suggest that they demonstrate a shift in opinion by the people who voted.

Straw polls of the views of studio audiences should be treated with similar care. No claims should be made for the significance of the views expressed beyond that they represent the opinions of those in the audience at the time, even on those occasions where the audience has been selected to be broadly representative of, for example, party allegiance. Again, questions need to be properly framed.

## 7 FOCUS GROUPS AND PANELS

The same principles apply to the use of panels or focus groups. It is inappropriate to imply that the views of panels, however carefully selected, could represent the views of the entire population, and they must not be used as a means of trying to estimate party support in the electorate at large. Panels or focus groups, when properly selected, may be more appropriately used to examine why certain views are held rather than the extent to which they are held.

The advice of the Chief Political Adviser should be sought before commissioning any focus group research on political party issues and the methodology should be checked with the Political Research Unit.

## 8 VOX POPS

Vox pop interviews do not even remotely indicate wider public opinion. Their value to programmes is to allow different sides of an issue in question to be expressed through the voices of the man and woman in the street. But the context should always make it clear that they are an expression of one side of an argument, not an indication of the weight of opinion on either side of it. It follows that great care must be taken with vox pops on politics or matters of public policy to edit them in such a way as to ensure both sides of the issue are covered.

## 9 ONLINE AND NEW MEDIA

The principles outlined in this chapter apply with equal force to online sites and to other new forms of interactive voting (e.g. interactive television).

Interactivity of every sort is part of the central appeal of any online site. However, on BBC sites, especially News Online and programme sites which may relate to political or public policy issues, care has to be taken that expressions of opinion are not translated into anything that could be construed either as the BBC’s opinion or as an accurate representation of public opinion as a whole. So any summary of online voting or expression of opinion must:

- not be called a poll
- not be reported in BBC editorial content, whether on or off the site
- not be expressed in percentage terms. The results should be expressed in terms of how many hits the yes button has received and how many the no button.

Any summary of online voting or expression of opinion about political or public policy issues must include a disclaimer the effect that “This is not a representative poll and the figures do not purport to represent public opinion as a whole on this issue”.

## CHAPTER 36 PARTY BROADCASTS

There is no formal legal obligation on the BBC to make airtime available for party broadcasts but in the absence of political advertising in the UK it has traditionally offered unmediated airtime to the political parties as one element in the range of sources of political information available to the audience.

There are series of election broadcasts in the campaigns for General Elections, and elections to the European Parliament, Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, the Northern Ireland Assembly and Local Authorities throughout the UK.

In addition, broadcasts are offered to the parties at key points in the annual political cycle, for example the Budget and the Queens Speech.

Party broadcasts are quite separate from the BBC’s own journalism and their transmission does not imply BBC support for the views contained in them. Parties make these broadcasts at their own expense and are responsible for their content. However they do have to abide

by ground rules laid down by the BBC and the ITC, which include an obligation to observe the law, for example on libel, incitement to racial hatred and violence and to the broadcasters' own guidelines on taste and decency. These ground rules are available on request from the Chief Political Adviser.

In truly exceptional circumstances giving rise to widespread national anxiety or concern, the BBC and ITV (Channel 3), provide the opportunity for a direct address to the nation by the Prime Minister or relevant senior minister should this be requested. In this event appropriate arrangements, in as short a time span as possible will be made for responses by the leaders of the opposition parties.

## CHAPTER 37 MATTERS OF LAW: GENERAL

- 1 GENERAL
- 2 WHO TO CONTACT
- 3 INJUNCTIONS AND INTERDICTS
- 4 IDENTIFICATION OF CRIME VICTIMS AND WITNESSES
  - 4.1 Identification of children
  - 4.2 Courts Sitting in Private
  - 4.3 Victims of Sexual Offences
  - 4.4 "Jigsaw" Identification
- 5 TRESPASS
  - 5.1 The law in Scotland
- 6 REPORTING OF COMMITTAL PROCEEDINGS
- 7 OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACT
- 8 EUROPEAN DIRECTIVE: TELEVISION WITHOUT FRONTIERS
- 9 RACIAL DISCRIMINATION
- 10 DATA PROTECTION ACT
- 11 CONFIDENCE
- 12 USE OF ANIMALS
- 13 HEALTH AND SAFETY
  - 13.1 Flashing Images and Repetitive Patterns on Television ("Strobing")
  - 13.2 Images of Very Brief Duration
- 14 REPEATED PROGRAMMES
- 15 FURTHER ADVICE

### 1 GENERAL

Great problems can be caused for programme makers by legal difficulties they are unaware of. It is vitally important to seek the views of BBC lawyers whenever problems are encountered or suspected.

No summary can cover all the legal issues affecting broadcasting. Producers would do well to familiarise themselves with one of the following books; McNae's *Essential Law for Journalists* or *Media Law* by Robertson and Nicol, or the 6th Edition of *Scots Law for Journalists* by McKain, Bonnington and Watt. But even these are no substitute for specific legal advice.

There are significant differences between the legal systems of England and Wales and those of Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Channel Islands and the Isle of Man are different again. If not observed these differences can cause serious problems.

There may be occasions, especially overseas, where providing accurate, impartial and fair coverage makes it impossible to remain within the law locally.

Where such cases arise, producers must first consider what effect breaking the law might have on the BBC, on people concerned in the area, and on our future coverage of the region. The Head of Department or Commissioning Executive and BBC Lawyers should be consulted, and if necessary Controller, Editorial Policy. Where our coverage has been distorted or censored by local laws, this must be made clear to the audience (see also section 9 "Observing Local Law" in Chapter 3: Fairness and Straight Dealing).

### 2 WHO TO CONTACT

Any programme maker can consult BBC lawyers at any stage of production. The earlier the consultation the better, if necessary as soon as the programme idea is conceived. Repeated consultation may be called for.

On matters involving Scottish law consult the in-house lawyer at BBC Glasgow.

Advice on foreign legal matters can be obtained through the Legal Adviser's Division, which keeps a list of lawyers in various countries.

Lawyers in the LEGAL ADVISER'S DIVISION work in six departments:

- **PROGRAMME LEGAL ADVICE DEPARTMENT:** helps programmes to minimise the risk of libel and to avoid breaking the law.
- **LITIGATION:** deals with problems that arise after a programme has been broadcast, as well as attempts at prior restraint and outside requests for programme material for legal purposes.
- **REGULATORY:** deals with EC law, procurement and sponsorship, constitutional matters arising under the Charter and Agreement and the Broadcasting Acts, competition, regulation of the broadcasting and telecommunications industries, TV licensing, Data Protection and European Law including Human Rights, Freedom of Information and public procurement law.
- **INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY:** gives advice on all aspects of the protection and exploitation of the BBC's intellectual property rights and the infringement of such rights.

For copyright advice on contributions to specific TV and radio programmes, programme makers should consult the lawyers (Legal Affairs Section) in the Rights Group in BBC Production.

- **COMMERCIAL:** legal advice, drafting and negotiation involving major commercial contracts, corporate commercial compliance, joint ventures, IT contracts, contracting out/tender documentation, confidentiality agreements, commercial contracts with news agencies, radio sports contracts, insolvency and Company Law.

- The WORLDWIDE LEGAL DEPARTMENT provides a comprehensive legal service to BBC Worldwide

### 3 INJUNCTIONS AND INTERDICTS

An injunction, in Scotland an interdict, is a legal Order by a judge directing a party to do or refrain from doing things specified in the Order.

Anyone, whether individuals or organisations, can seek an injunction or interdict if they think their interests or reputation are about to be damaged by a programme. Applications are often associated with claims for breach of contract or breach of confidence, and may sometimes be sought for defamation.

Orders against programmes are sometimes sought outside court hours: we may have little or no warning. They can be granted and enforced over the telephone at night or at the weekend. Breach of an injunction or interdict is viewed seriously by the court. Fines and/or prison sentences can be imposed on offenders.

In addition to injunctions aimed at particular programmes, injunctions may be granted to prevent the media generally giving certain information, for instance the identification of children in wardship or childcare proceedings. Such injunctions will usually be notified to all programme areas by Programme Legal Advice Department.

Care should be taken when there is an injunction or interdict against another part of the media preventing their publishing certain information. If we broadcast the same material we would not be in breach of the injunction but might be in contempt of court. If in doubt, seek the advice of BBC lawyers.

**Programme-makers dealing with highly contentious factual subjects, or with people or organisations with a history of litigation, must be alert to the possibility of injunctions.**

**Producers must be able to organise at short notice evidence to help the BBC resist applications for injunctions.**

**The Programme Legal Advice Department must be consulted at the earliest possible stage in any case where there is a risk of a BBC programme being served with an injunction.**

### 4 IDENTIFICATION OF CRIME VICTIMS AND WITNESSES

In legal cases where the law or editorial policy requires the protection of the identity of individuals, producers should note that anonymity plainly means no name, no address and no photograph. It also means no strong clues.

When contributors ask for anonymity it is important to establish the degree of anonymity sought. It may be sufficient simply to ensure that contributors are not readily recognisable to

the general public, or it may be necessary to ensure that they cannot be identified even by friends or family.

Such situations require careful judgement. Err on the side of caution where anonymity is concerned, but do not suppress valid journalism unnecessarily.

There is a range of cases where the identity of one or more of those involved, including witnesses, may not be reported. A breach of such a ruling would be contempt of court.

#### 4.1 Identification of children

**There are various laws protecting children from being identified in court proceedings. Refer to Chapter 14; Children And Programmes for full details.**

#### 4.2 Courts Sitting in Private

It is a contempt to broadcast detailed accounts of certain proceedings in courts sitting in private. This will include proceedings involving children, e.g. wardship, adoption or guardianship, or proceedings where the court sits in private for national security reasons. In wardship cases it is not a contempt to report the court's order or an accurate summary of it, unless the court expressly forbids this.

#### 4.3 Victims of Sexual Offences

The BBC does not normally reveal the identity of victims of sexual crimes. This has long been BBC policy and, in England and Wales it is now required by law.

The law prevents the identification of victims of rape and other sex crimes, including incest, underage intercourse, child abuse, buggery and indecent assault.

Judges may, on occasion, lift the restriction. At the request of the defence, they can do this to get witnesses to come forward and to ensure a fair trial, or to allow the reasonable reporting of a case of public interest. If a victim were identified in another, unrelated, criminal case, then the reporting of that case would not be restricted.

Victims can be identified if they agree to it. The consent should be in writing and must not be the result of any pressure.

The courts may be asked at times to restrict more information on the grounds that it would lead to the identification of the victim.

#### 4.4 "Jigsaw" Identification

It is not enough that we do not name the victims of sexual crime. We need to take special precautions to avoid what is known as the "jigsaw effect". This happens when different news organisations give different facts about the victim, which can then be pieced together. The risk is at its highest when reporting sexual crime within the family, where naming the accused and the alleged offence could in effect identify the victim. In 1993 most newspapers and broadcasters agreed in principle that in such cases we will report the name of the accused/convicted person but we will refer to the crime merely as "a serious sexual offence". Where the accused and the victim are related, if we identify the accused we should refer to the victim merely as "a young woman", "a child" and so on.



The objective, however, is to protect the victim. In some individual cases some sections of the media have published details of **the offence**. In these circumstances it may be necessary for the BBC to follow suit and avoid naming the offender. One way or another, we must not complete the jigsaw. In such situations Programme Legal Advice and Editorial Policy should be consulted.

In other cases where there is a danger of the jigsaw effect, we should avoid any detail that might, with corroborating facts, lead to identification. Take care not to give an address, any link with another person in the story, or any link between the victim and the scene of the assault.

These restrictions may make it difficult or impossible to convey in our reporting the incidence of certain sexual crimes by reference to individual cases. Programmes should still address these issues but without referring to identifiable instances.

#### 5 TRESPASS

Trespass can be defined as unauthorised entry onto private property. This should never be taken lightly by programme makers. However, in most cases trespass is a civil offence. It is usually a matter between the BBC and the lawful occupier and there is no question of programme makers committing a criminal act.

In general, we should ask for permission before entering private property. But private property can be anything from an individual's home to a public shopping precinct, and no blanket rule can apply. Programmes must be satisfied that, where permission has not been or could not be granted, it is appropriate in the circumstances for the BBC to proceed.

Whenever we are on private property and are asked by the legal occupier to leave, we should do so promptly.

In some circumstances trespass can also be a criminal offence. The law is designed to cover demonstrations and large gatherings of people on private land. Normal journalistic activity seems unlikely to lead to a prosecution. But the law could affect coverage of demonstrations and "doorstep" interviews on private land.

Programme makers intending to gather material on private land in the open air without permission should:

- ensure their activities do not impede or obstruct people going about their lawful business
- keep the numbers of BBC people present to an absolute minimum
- remain on private land for the minimum amount of time necessary
- limit verbal contact with those going about their lawful activity so that our questioning of them does not disrupt that activity

Police officers present at the scene have powers to order people to leave private land if they reasonably believe that criminal trespass may be committed. If programme makers are present on private land in the open air and are asked to leave by police they should do so immediately, and should not return. The very act of returning could itself constitute a criminal offence.

Programme makers in doubt about gathering material on private land in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland without permission should consult the Programme Legal Advice Department and, through Heads of Department or Commissioning Executives, Controller Editorial Policy.

#### 5.1 The law in Scotland

The laws of trespass in Scotland are different from those of England and Wales, though the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994 does apply in Scotland and creates the same trespass offences in Scotland as in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Traditionally the law of trespass is interpreted more liberally in Scotland with free access to the Scottish countryside, irrespective of ownership, being regarded as the norm. Nevertheless programme makers should generally ask for permission before entering private property and observe the guidelines in section 5 of this chapter. Programme makers may seek advice from the BBC's solicitor in Scotland, who is based at Broadcasting House, Glasgow.

#### 6 REPORTING OF COMMITTAL PROCEEDINGS

Reporting of committal proceedings in England and Wales is restricted by the Magistrates Court Act 1980 and earlier legislation. Restrictions may be lifted by the court on application by the accused. If they are not, only the following categories of information can be reported:

- the name of the court and the names of the magistrates
- the names, addresses, occupations and ages of the defendant and witnesses
- the offence in the charge
- the names of counsel and solicitors
- the decision of the court on whether to commit for trial
- the charges on which the defendant is committed
- the court to which the defendant is committed
- the date and place to which any committal is adjourned
- whether bail is granted or refused - but not the reasons for refusal.

#### 7 OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACT

The Obscene Publications Act applies to broadcasting as well as printed material. It is an offence to broadcast anything that would "tend to deprave and corrupt". Such a broadcast could be defended in court if it was "in the interests of science, literature, art or learning, or of other objects of general concern".

Producers should also be aware of undertakings on taste and decency given by the BBC outlined in the Agreement attached to the Corporation's Charter (see also Chapter 6: Taste and Decency).

#### 8 EUROPEAN DIRECTIVE: TELEVISION WITHOUT FRONTIERS

The European Commission TV Without Frontiers Directive 1997 Article 22.1, Protection of Minors, requires Broadcasters in Member States to take "appropriate measures to ensure that television broadcasts ... do not include any programmes which might seriously impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors, in particular programmes that involve pornography or gratuitous violence". Articles 22.2 and 22.3 also require Broadcasters to use "acoustic" or visual warnings to alert viewers to other programmes "which are likely to impair the physical mental or moral development of minors". The BBC must comply with the terms of this directive.

The BBC's policy is that an "acoustic warning", in the form of a presentation announcement is the absolute minimum requirement. It should be clear from the Producers Guidelines that it is inconceivable that the BBC would wish to broadcast a programme that might impair, seriously or otherwise, the physical, mental or moral development of minors. Any programme maker who feels that any material they are dealing with might do this should seek urgent advice from their line management, who must consult Editorial Policy.

The BBC's guidelines on content warnings, presentation announcements, and use of the Watershed are outlined in Chapter 6: Taste and Decency.

#### 9 RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Section 70 of the Race Relations Act, 1976, makes it "an offence to publish or distribute written matter which is, or to use in any public place words which are, threatening, abusive, or insulting in a case where hatred is likely to be stirred up against any racial group".

An offence can be committed even if there is no intent on the part of the speaker or writer. Journalists must exercise particular caution when reporting events or issues in this area which are contentious (e.g. an inflammatory speech by a politician). The Attorney-General must, however, consent to the launching of a prosecution under this section.

Programmes are also subject to the provisions of the Public Order Act that make it an offence to stir up racial hatred or to possess racially inflammatory material. No action can be taken against a programme without the consent of the Attorney General but there is provision for "search and seizure" of programme material. This could cause difficulties at a time of racial tension.

#### 10 DATA PROTECTION ACT

The Data Protection Act 1998 gives people certain rights in relation to information stored about them. The Act applies to all electronic systems for storing information, including images and sound recordings. There is a limited media exemption for material acquired for "journalistic, artistic or literary" purposes.

Programme makers with any queries about the Data Protection Act should contact the BBC's Data Protection Officer. Any formal requests for information under the Act **must** be dealt with by the Data Protection Officer. Where there is a danger of a prosecution under the Act programme makers should contact Programme Legal Advice and the Editorial Policy Unit.

#### 11 CONFIDENCE

The law recognises various categories of confidential relationship. These occur mainly in the world of commerce and employment, and in domestic life. Confidential information generated or disclosed within such relationships is protected by law, and it is ultimately for the courts to decide whether the information is confidential. A threatened breach of confidence may be subject to an injunction. Moreover, if the BBC is notified of an order against another media defendant, it will be bound by it and will risk being in contempt of court if it fails to observe the terms of the order. Confidence may also attach to formats or ideas for programmes submitted to the BBC by third parties.

In news broadcasting, there will often be a public interest defence, and it is generally a good defence that the material is in the public domain.

#### 12 USE OF ANIMALS

Animals performing in programmes must be registered in accordance with the Performing Animals (Regulation) Act, 1925. Owners and trainers whose animals are used in a programme must comply with the registration provisions of the Act. They should be asked to show their registration certificates before their contract with the BBC starts. Local Environmental Health Officers require notification of any wild animals brought into the studio.

#### 13 HEALTH AND SAFETY

An extensive body of law, civil and criminal, covers the health and safety of employees and the public. Advice is given in a range of BBC publications. Advice should also be sought from the Manager Safety Services, or from BBC lawyers.

Should any material be obtained by recklessly or wilfully endangering a member of the production team, an artist or a member of the public, the BBC may decide not to transmit the material and may take disciplinary action. Those responsible may also be liable to prosecution.

##### 13.1 Flashing Images and Repetitive Patterns on Television ("Strobing")

Fast cutting and flashing or intermittent lights in television programmes can cause problems for some viewers who have photosensitive epilepsy. It is estimated that about one person in four thousand is susceptible. Many of those who experience seizures have their first while watching television. **People under 20 are the most susceptible group and many are unaware of their susceptibility.**

Television presents some inherent risk because it is a flickering medium. But that risk can be reduced by following some basic rules, which have been endorsed by BBC Occupational Health.

Programme content should not flash, flicker or change at a frequency greater than three times per second. This applies where there is a visible change in brightness of more than ten percent of the screen area.

Prominent and regular patterns - especially light and dark bars and checks which cover a large proportion of the screen - should be avoided. Flickering or reversing patterns are particularly hazardous. Those which flow smoothly do not cause problems.

Flashing or flickering images involving red are dangerous and should be avoided.

Where it may be difficult to minimise the effects, for example with a live news report, and there is significant risk, viewers should be given an appropriate warning. But this should not be used as a substitute for careful shooting and editing.

For further guidance, contact Presentation Control

#### 13.2 Images of Very Brief Duration

Section 5.1 (f) of the Agreement associated with the BBC's Charter states that BBC programmes should not "include any technical device which, by using images of very brief duration or by any other means, exploits the possibility of conveying a message to, or otherwise influencing the minds of, persons watching or listening to the programmes without their being aware, or fully aware, of what has occurred." Any programme maker who feels their programme might contain such images should consult their editor, line manager or commissioning executive, who can contact Editorial Policy for further advice.

#### 14 REPEATED PROGRAMMES

When repeated, programmes should be subject to the same legal scrutiny as when they were originally transmitted. Special care should be exercised in relation to questions of contempt, if someone featured in an original transmission is arrested prior to its repeat.

It is no defence in a defamation action to argue that material has already been shown (see also Chapter 21: Re-Use and Reversioning of Television Programmes).

#### 15 FURTHER ADVICE

Programme makers who are in doubt about any aspect of the law as it applies to programmes should consult the Programme Legal Advice Department.

### CHAPTER 38 MATTERS OF LAW: DEFAMATION

- 1 GENERAL
- 2 PICTORIAL DEFAMATION
- 3 NEGATIVE CHECKS
  - 3.1 General
  - 3.2 Problem Areas

#### 1 GENERAL

If we broadcast something about an individual, a group or an organisation which is defamatory we may commit libel. The risk exists whether the defamatory statement is

scripted or spoken off-the-cuff, and the BBC is liable no matter who speaks the words in its programmes - and no matter whether the programme is a factual programme or a drama, made 'in house' or by an independent, or wherever in the world it is broadcast.

The tests normally applied by the courts to determine if a statement is defamatory include:

- does it reduce a person in the eyes of right-thinking people?
- does it cause a person to be shunned or avoided?
- does it expose the person to hatred, ridicule or contempt?
- does it injure them in their office, profession or trade?

The principal defences to libel are:

- **Justification** ("veritas" in Scotland): proving that the statement is true.
- **Fair comment on a matter of public interest:** showing that the statement was an honest opinion based on provable fact, was not prompted by malice, and was on a matter of public interest.
- **Privilege:** statements made during broadcasts of fair and accurate reports of judicial and parliamentary proceedings and public meetings will have privilege in libel proceedings. This means that for normal purposes we are safe to report comments made as part of parliamentary proceedings or of court proceedings, in certain state documents, or made during the course of meetings which are freely open to the general public.

These are complicated defences which apply to a wide range of programmes and reports. If anything in your programme is potentially defamatory, you should seek the help of the Programme Legal Advice Department.

#### 2 PICTORIAL DEFAMATION

It is possible to defame people by juxtaposition of words and pictures. This may happen by the careless use of general background shots (or "wallpaper"). For example:

- a general view of a football crowd, in which individuals are clearly identifiable, with a commentary about hooligans
- a general view of a children's playground, in which children are recognisable, with a commentary about child abuse
- a graphic of holiday brochures, with a commentary about holiday companies going bust
- a general view of Muslims, in which individuals are clearly identifiable, with a commentary about alcohol

Another way of pictorially defaming people is in the use of imprecise shots: the picture of a plain clothes policeman handcuffed to an arrested man, in which it is not clear which man is the criminal; or the picture of a suburban house which is an alleged bomb factory, in which the numbers of two houses are both shown, and it is not clear which house is being referred to.

### 3 NEGATIVE CHECKS

#### 3.1 General

The negative check system tries to ensure that a name invented for a BBC programme or publication does not exist in reality or that its use is not defamatory. Expensive legal action could result from misusing a real name.

Negative checks for all output areas are carried out by the Information Research Library at Television Centre.

A wide range of items can be checked including addresses, flight numbers, clubs, companies, products and trade names, dentists, doctors, lawyers, MPs, judges, schools, shops, ships, and so on.

The checking system takes about two weeks. It is best not to ask too early because clearances can become outdated. When a name is submitted, two alternatives should also be included.

Use of some names may infringe the rights of third parties. The checking system includes a basic trade mark search but further advice should be obtained from the Intellectual Property Department if the position is unclear.

#### 3.2 Problem Areas

In the Register of Limited Companies some small firms are listed by area. If a name is to be checked in the Companies Register the precise setting and location of the production should be included; so, too should the period (i.e. 1920s, 1950s etc).

At the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency in Swansea fictitious car numbers are available but they must not be used on public roads. To do so is an offence.

Registered trade marks can sometimes mistakenly be used as generic terms. Apart from giving uncalled for publicity when the context is favourable or neutral, there is a risk of legal action when registered trade marks are used generically. Rather than use a term such as "Hoover", "Outward Bound", or "Portakabin" we should use the proper generic "vacuum cleaner", "activity holiday" or "portable building".

The Intellectual Property Department can advise whether terms which are in common use are registered as trade marks.

### CHAPTER 39 MATTERS OF LAW: CONTEMPT

#### 1 WHAT IS CONTEMPT OF COURT? 2 THE DANGERS OF COMMITTING CONTEMPT 3 DEFENCES AGAINST CONTEMPT

#### 1 WHAT IS CONTEMPT OF COURT?

Contempt of Court arises if an action or statement gives rise to a substantial risk that the course of justice will be seriously impeded or prejudiced. All courts exercising the judicial power of the state are covered by contempt, from the Coroner's and Magistrates Courts to the House of Lords. Contempt rules also apply to some Royal Commissions and Tribunals.

Courts possess considerable powers in this area and use them frequently. In Scotland, the law is robustly applied. For example, Scottish courts almost invariably regard publication of a picture of a defendant (known in Scotland as an "accused") as a serious contempt of court.

Generally contempt risks arise only when proceedings are 'active'. In most criminal cases the 'active' period starts with the arrest of a suspect or the issue of a summons; in most civil cases, it starts when arrangements are made for a hearing. There are exceptions to this, especially in Scotland. The 'active' period ends once sentence is passed in criminal cases and when judgement is given in civil cases. Consult BBC lawyers in cases of doubt.

#### 2 THE DANGERS OF COMMITTING CONTEMPT

For BBC journalists, the main hazards during the active period are:

- broadcasting pictures or comment which could influence those involved (witnesses, judges, jurors, lawyers and parties in the action). A detailed account of evidence likely to be given in a case would run the risk of contempt if broadcast during the active period
- broadcasting material which could affect the way in which one of the parties conducts the case
- broadcasting an interview with a witness before the case is over
- having dealings with witnesses (e.g. interviews, or negotiations over possible interviews) which might influence or be thought likely to influence their evidence
- speaking to a juror in a case, about the case (see below)
- reporting what a judge has forbidden to be reported
- speculating about the outcome of a case
- commenting on a case due for retrial
- repeating what is said in court in the absence of the jury.

**A particular risk of contempt arises where there is a proposal to talk to a juror about the case they are involved in. This applies at any time before, or during the hearing - and applies whether or not the report is actually transmitted. After**

**the case is over it may be permissible to interview jurors but it is a serious offence, for them and for the BBC, if they discuss the deliberations (i.e. statements made, opinions or arguments expressed or votes cast by jurors) in the jury room. This applies whether or not such comments are broadcast. Any proposal to speak to a juror in a case must be referred to Programme Legal Advice.**

Although journalists run the most obvious risks, contempt may be committed in other kinds of programmes, for example in a dramatisation of contemporary court proceedings. Any department dealing with a real case must take care.

See also section 3 "Dealing With Witnesses" in Chapter 15: Crime.

### 3 DEFENCES AGAINST CONTEMPT

The defence of public interest is of very limited value in cases of contempt. Judges may overlook minor or unintentional acts. They may also resist attempts by third parties to use contempt as a means of preventing the broadcasting of material of proper interest to the public.

There is a statutory right to provide a fair, accurate and contemporaneous account of court proceedings heard in public, but this right is qualified. Judges have the freedom to postpone the reporting of an entire case or certain details of it. Reporting is also constrained by statutory restrictions on coverage of committal hearings in magistrate's courts, and of preparatory hearings in Crown Courts, and by restrictions relating to courts dealing with sexual offences, juvenile and matrimonial matters (see also Chapter 14: Children And Programmes).

Programme makers who feel they may be in danger of committing contempt of court should consult the BBC's Legal Advice Department.

## CHAPTER 40

### MATTERS OF LAW: COPYRIGHT AND OTHER INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

#### 1 GENERAL

#### 2 COPYRIGHT, MORAL RIGHTS AND PERFORMERS' RIGHTS

##### 2.1 Copyright works

##### 2.2 Use of Copyright Material without Permission

##### 2.3 Music Copyright

##### 2.4 Video and film copyright

##### 2.5 Moral rights

##### 2.6 Performers' Rights

#### 3 TRADE MARKS

#### 4 PATENTS AND PROGRAMMES FEATURING INVENTIONS

#### 5 PASSING OFF

#### 6 CONFIDENTIALITY

#### 1 GENERAL

"Intellectual Property rights" are the legal rights that protect the products of the human intellect. They include statutory rights of copyright, moral rights, performers' rights, trade marks, patents and designs, and rights to prevent "passing off" and breach of confidence.

**The Intellectual Property Department in Legal Adviser's Division gives advice on all aspects of the protection and exploitation of the BBC's intellectual property rights, and the infringement of such rights.**

### 2 COPYRIGHT, MORAL RIGHTS AND PERFORMERS' RIGHTS

The laws of copyright exist to protect and reward creators and owners of original work, including books, films, and songs. Copyright is one of the most complex areas of the law affecting programmes. There are no simple answers to some copyright problems.

**Producers wishing to commission or clear copyright works for use in BBC programmes or to contract performers must seek advice from the Rights Group in BBC Production. Rights Group will generally provide the contracting service and contact should be made with them as early as possible.**

#### 2.1 Copyright works

Copyright exists in a wide range of creative works, for example:

- literary works: scripts, novels, poems, essays, letters, lyrics or newspaper articles
- paintings, photographs and other visual images
- sculptures, models, architecture and works of artistic craftsmanship
- tables (eg timetables), compilations, databases and computer programs
- dramatic works, plays, dance and mime
- music
- sound recordings, including gramophone records, CDs, audiocassettes and any other sort of recording
- any recording that can produce moving images, eg film, video and videodiscs, or moving images generated on computer displays
- radio or television broadcasts (terrestrial and satellite), cable programmes and online services
- the typographical arrangement of a published work.

#### 2.2 Use of Copyright Material without Permission

Copyright may not have to be cleared if the work or the use of it falls under the categories below. However, these possible exceptions should always be checked with the Rights Group.

- works that are "out of copyright"
- insubstantial part: some short extracts of copyright works can be used without consent - if they are "insubstantial" parts of the whole work
- fair dealing: there are exceptions in the 1988 Act which allow fair dealing with a copyright work for certain purposes. These include criticism or review (with a suitable acknowledgement), or reporting current events

The main UK broadcasting organisations have signed an agreement governing the use of each other's sports footage in news programmes. Programme makers working in this area should consult the Sports News Access Code Of Practice

- incidental inclusion: copyright in a work is not infringed by its incidental inclusion in a radio or television programme, for example a news report or location shot which incidentally includes a painting in the background
- spoken words e.g. interviews
- artistic works in public places: This exception does not apply to paintings (or other graphic works) or photographs
- other exceptions: Ideas as such are not protected by copyright. A succession or combination of ideas such as the plot of a novel may however qualify, and the law of confidentiality may also apply

### 2.3 Music Copyright

The Music Copyright section in the Rights Group will advise on all aspects of music and recordings of music to be included in BBC programmes.

The BBC has various special arrangements for the music it includes in its output. Music Copyright covers three main areas:

#### Payment of composers/writers

The BBC has agreements with the societies that collect royalties on behalf of composers (the Performing Rights Society and the Mechanical Copyright Protection Society). These agreements allow the Corporation to broadcast and record the PRS/MCPS repertoire. No advance clearance is needed, nor are any direct charges made to programmes for this material. However, programmes containing "dramatico-musical" works (such as operas, ballets, musicals) and parodies and burlesques are not included.

All music (even an insignificant or background use) must be reported on the programme's music reporting form.

#### Commercial Gramophone Records, CD's Tapes etc.

The BBC has agreements with Phonographic Performance Limited which collects royalties on behalf of most record companies. These agreements allow the Corporation (with certain

limitations) to broadcast and dub (re-record) commercial sound recordings made by PPL members. For advice on the current limitations, please consult Music Copyright.

Material can be broadcast in return for the appropriate payment. There is no exemption for review purposes. Special clearance may be needed for recordings, which are not subject to these agreements.

Special clearance may be needed for recordings which are not subject to these agreements and for records dubbed into television programmes that will be sold outside the UK. The use of all commercial sound recordings must be reported on the music reporting form.

#### Specially Commissioned Music

The Music Copyright section within Rights Group is responsible for all music specially commissioned by the BBC.

#### 2.4 Video and film copyright

Extracts from commercially produced films or videos are subject to a number of rights agreements. Advice on use of material and relevant payment should be sought from Television Programme Acquisition Department.

#### 2.5 Moral rights

These are the rights to be credited as author or director, not to have one's work subjected to "derogatory treatment", not to have work incorrectly attributed, and of privacy in relation to privately commissioned photographs, videos and films.

Advice on moral rights should be sought from the Rights Group.

#### 2.6 Performers' Rights

A similar right to copyright also exists in performances, for example: dramatic performances (including dance or mime), musical performances, readings or recitations of literary works, a performance of a variety act or similar presentation.

The Rights Group will advise on all aspects of the contracting of performers for BBC programmes. Consent is required from the performer for the recording, broadcast or subsequent exploitation of the performance. Note that sound recordings or footage acquired from other producers or broadcasters may contain performances which require clearance.

#### 3 TRADE MARKS

Trade marks are distinctive names, words or logos which identify a product or service as originating from a particular source.

When deciding on a programme title or character name, producers should consider:

- might the name infringe a third party's rights? (see also section 3 "Negative Checks" in Chapter 38: Defamation)

- does any outside party - for example a performer or independent production company - consider that they might have rights in the title?
- might the BBC wish to register the title as a trade mark (advisable for a long-running series or where "spin-off" products are envisaged)?

Please refer any queries on trade marks to the Intellectual Property Department.

#### 4 PATENTS AND PROGRAMMES FEATURING INVENTIONS

Patents grant monopoly rights to new inventions.

Care should be taken by programmes intending to invite members of their audience to submit ideas for possible inclusion. The act of submitting an idea could be interpreted as making it available to the public, unless a confidentiality agreement is in place, and could therefore invalidate any subsequent patent application.

Programme makers should consider whether any ideas submitted could amount to a new invention, and contain enough detail to describe the invention fully. If so, it may be necessary to incorporate a brief warning about possible patent implications into any material (i.e. on screen announcements, telephone hotlines) that solicits such ideas. Any material received should be treated in strict confidence and should not be broadcast without the specific consent of the contributor.

Please refer any queries on patents to the Intellectual Property Department.

#### 5 PASSING OFF

Broadly speaking, "passing off" means taking advantage of someone else's reputation to promote a product or service. The BBC's rights may be infringed where a third party makes a misrepresentation that is damaging to its reputation and goodwill. This may occur through unauthorised use of a well known programme name, or by suggesting that the BBC has endorsed a product, for example by advertising it "as featured" on a BBC programme. But care should be taken by BBC Producers to avoid the use of a programme title which suggests a connection with a product or service in which a business reputation has been built up by someone else.

Please refer any queries on passing off to the Intellectual Property Department.

#### 6 CONFIDENTIALITY

The law recognises various categories of confidential relationship. These occur mainly in the world of commerce and employment, and in domestic life. Confidential information generated or disclosed within such relationships is protected by law. A threatened breach of confidence may be subject to an injunction. Moreover, if the BBC is notified of an order against another media defendant, it will be bound by it and will risk being in contempt of court if it fails to observe the terms of the order. Confidence may also attach to formats or ideas for programmes submitted to the BBC by third parties, and care should be taken always to put in place appropriate contractual arrangements.

Any queries on breach of confidence should be referred to the Intellectual Property Department.

## CHAPTER 41 RELATIONS WITH THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

- 1 GENERAL
- 2 DEALING WITH ENQUIRIES
- 3 COMPLAINTS
- 4 KEEPING PROGRAMMES
- 5 RELATIONS WITH THE PRESS
  - 5.1 General
  - 5.2 BBC Publicity Departments
  - 5.3 Publicity Material
  - 5.4 The Corporate Press Office
  - 5.5 Controversial issues
  - 5.6 Letters And Articles for Publication

### 1 GENERAL

As a public institution the BBC must account to the public for all its dealings.

We have to monitor and respond to public concerns, whether these concerns arise in letters, phone calls or e mails, are raised through the press or other media, or through more formal means. It is also important to have opportunities for the public to express opinions about programmes both on air and online. We should try and ensure that every experience of dealing with the BBC is a positive one.

Most of the unsolicited contacts the BBC attracts are from people stimulated by, and supportive of, our programme making. They want more information about something which interests them.

Members of the public make no distinction between programmes made by BBC "in house" and those made by independent production companies. The BBC is accountable for all of them. Independent productions must make adequate arrangements for follow up enquiries or complaints.

### 2 DEALING WITH ENQUIRIES

Letters, phone calls and e-mails from the public are an important source of information and the BBC aims to respond quickly and courteously to comments and questions.

In the first instance unsolicited enquiries from the public are dealt with by the BBC's Information Centre in Belfast (or the Scottish and Welsh BBC Information teams), who will then liaise with the relevant department about enquiries that require a more detailed response. Where appropriate, factual information can be provided about programmes in advance to BBC Information, to help them deal with enquiries.

The telephone number for the BBC's Information Line should not be trailed on air. Programme makers who wish to solicit contacts from audiences should use the BBC's Audience Lines based in Glasgow (see Chapter 32: Phone Ins and Telephone Services in Programmes).

Where practicable, we should answer all letters, particularly when viewers or listeners raise important questions and complaints, as soon as possible. Where a reply cannot be sent promptly, a holding letter or e mail should be sent, explaining the reasons for the delay. Replies should be courteous and sensitive. Where there has been a genuine error it is best to make a frank admission and offer an apology if appropriate.

If viewers' and listeners' letters, phone calls or emails are to be quoted on air, permission to broadcast them should be asked for. The selection of extracts for broadcasting and voices to read them needs to be done with care, to avoid charges of trivialising or patronising the audience

In the World Service, most letters and e-mails about programmes which require answers are dealt with by International Audience Correspondence who also deal with telephone enquiries.

**Sometimes requests are made for BBC programme material both transmitted and untransmitted. For detailed guidance on these issues consult Chapter 14: Confidentiality And Release Of Programme Material.**

### 3 COMPLAINTS

Complaints warrant a well-judged and prompt reply. We should ask whether a point made is reasonable. If it is we should do something about it. If it is not we should reject it - courteously.

Remember that viewers and listeners have a right to expect our programmes to have been made in accordance with these Producer Guidelines. If we have departed from them we will need to explain the reasons why.

The BBC's Programme Complaints Unit deals with serious complaints (see Chapter 42). Before referring a member of the public to the PCU, the unit should be contacted to establish whether the complaint is within its remit.

It is important to alert BBC lawyers, through Heads of Department or Commissioning Executives, to enquiries which threaten legal action.

### 4 KEEPING PROGRAMMES

The BBC and other broadcasters are obliged by law to keep recordings of all programmes broadcast. Television recordings have to be kept for 90 days from broadcast; radio recordings for 42 days. When a programme is repeated the period starts from the day of the repeat.

These recordings are called for to meet the needs of the Broadcasting Standards Commission when they consider complaints (see Chapter 43 )and also to satisfy the requirements of the law on obscene publications and on racially inflammatory material.

### 5 RELATIONS WITH THE PRESS

#### 5.1 General

The Press is a major source of information to the public about the BBC. The Press and Media also provide the BBC with information about its audiences' opinions and attitudes. Good relations are obviously important. All our dealings with the media should adhere to high standards of integrity. Statements, information and publicity material, must uphold BBC values such as fairness, accuracy and impartiality (see section 5.3).

#### 5.2 BBC Publicity Departments

Publicity departments provide a specialist link between programme makers and the press and media. They help producers win attention for their programmes. They also have expertise in dealing with sensitive issues. It is sensible to involve publicity people at an early stage, either in publicising a programme or coping with interest on a controversial matter.

#### 5.3 Publicity Material

The BBC often puts out advance press releases and publicity material to publicise its own programmes. This is an important part of drawing the audience's attention to BBC programmes. However it is important that in rightly trying to sell our own programmes we do not do so in a way which either unfairly distorts or over-simplifies the content of the programme. The impact of a programme over which a great deal of careful judgement has been exercised, in getting the emphasis and tone of the programme just right, can be negated or obscured by a careless or over-hyped press release. BBC publicity material must adhere to the same principles of fairness and impartiality as the programmes which such material publicises.

In particular, care should be taken to ensure that in publicity material:

- quotes from contributors are used in a way which takes account of the context in which they are used in the programme.
- where important elements of context have been included in the programme this is also reflected in the press release
- in programmes with a long lead time it may sometimes be necessary to remind contributors that publicity material about the programme may be released in advance of the programme
- any reporting of the results of polls and surveys in press releases meets the Producer's Guidelines on the reporting of polls (see Chapter 35: Opinion Polls)

Programme and publicity teams should also be aware that press releases can sometimes raise as many legal issues as the programme itself. Programme Legal Advice should be asked to look at any publicity material about a programme which has required legal clearance.

#### 5.4 The Corporate Press Office

The Corporate Press Office deals with the media on all corporate matters and also handles general queries from newspapers.

Outside normal office hours, and up to 11pm every night, the Corporate Press Office acts as the spokesman for all matters relating to the BBC's activities. The Press Office should be



informed of developments in any running BBC story so that comments made to the media on behalf of the Corporation are well informed and up to date.

*5.5 Controversial issues*

BBC programmes can be controversial. This can be known in advance or anticipated; but it can also come without warning before or after transmission. Advance publicity can sometimes be damaging and must be calculated carefully.

Producers should make sure that publicity departments and BBC Information are fully informed about any actual or likely controversy and know who to get in touch with for further information. All contacts with the press on controversial matters - whether to do with BBC policy or programmes - should be handled through Press and Publicity. BBC contracts of employment are specific about relations with the press and media, particularly speaking to or writing for the press. Copies of programmes or of scripts should not be released without approval. In an increasingly competitive broadcasting environment, information is valuable and should not be used carelessly. Inexperienced programme people should be forewarned against attempts to get information and material. Before speaking to the Press or media, approval should be sought from Press and Publicity, who will consider, and advise on, the wider implications of commenting or making a statement.

*5.6 Letters And Articles for Publication*

BBC people intending to write letters and articles dealing with BBC issues should seek approval from their Head of Department (see also Chapter 10: Conflicts of Interest). Letters should also be cleared by Press and Publicity. Press officers can advise on style, tone and timing and help ensure that letters are published.

**CHAPTER 42  
PROGRAMME COMPLAINTS UNIT**

Viewers and listeners with serious complaints about what is broadcast by BBC licence fee funded services on television, radio and online may write to the Head of Programme Complaints, based in the BBC Secretary's office. The Head of Programme Complaints is responsible for ensuring prompt investigation and reply. Programme makers are expected to co-operate fully with the Head of Programme Complaints' enquiries.

The Programme Complaints Unit provides a clear route for complainants who wish to take it. However, the fact that complaints can ultimately be dealt with centrally does not lessen the need for programme makers to reply promptly and adequately to letters addressed to them. When complainants are dissatisfied with the programme makers response it may be appropriate to refer them to the PCU- but always check with the Unit first, to establish whether the complaint is within its remit.

The **Governors' Programme Complaints Appeals Committee** considers appeals from viewers and listeners who have complained about what we have broadcast and who are dissatisfied with the response from the Head of Programme Complaints or the relevant Directorate. Programme makers are expected to co-operate with the Committee's proceedings. The point of contact is the secretary to the Governors' Complaints Appeals Committee in the BBC Secretary's office.

The BBC's Board of Governors publish a quarterly bulletin outlining complaints that have been upheld. Where a complaint is upheld the bulletin also shows what action is being taken as a result. The bulletin is a public document, which is available on the BBC's public web site.

The Programme Complaints Unit does not deal with complaints about World Service or the BBC's commercial and international television services. Serious complaints about programmes broadcast by the World Service are dealt with by the Chief Executive, World Service. Complaints about the BBC's commercial and international television services are dealt with by the Head of Programming, International Networks, BBC Worldwide.

**CHAPTER 43  
THE BROADCASTING STANDARDS COMMISSION**

- 1 Publication of codes
- 2 Complaints
- 3 Who can complain?
- 3.1 Fairness and infringement of privacy:
- 3.2 Sex, violence and matters of taste and decency.
- 4 What happens if the complaint is upheld?
- 5 What other actions are taken?

The Broadcasting Standards Commission publishes guidance on programme matters and considers complaints from the public about programmes.

**1 Publication of codes**  
Under the Broadcasting Act 1996, the Commission has a duty to publish a code relating to broadcasting standards, offering guidance on the portrayal of violence, sexual conduct and general standards of taste and decency. All broadcasters in Britain are required to "reflect the general effect" of this code, and its provisions have been taken into account in the preparation of the BBC's Producers' Guidelines. The BSC also has a duty to draw up guidance on fairness and privacy, and it also commissions research and other studies.

**2 Complaints**  
The Commission will consider complaints relating to

- unjust or unfair treatment in a programme
- unwarranted infringement of privacy in, or in connection with the obtaining of material included in, a programme
- the portrayal of violence or sexual conduct in programmes
- other matters of taste and decency.

**3 Who can complain?**

*3.1 Fairness and infringement of privacy:*  
Complaints about unfair or unjust treatment and infringement of privacy are referred to as "fairness" complaints. These may be lodged only by, or on behalf of a person or organisation

“affected” by the programme concerned. However, complaints may be made on behalf of those affected - including those who have died within the preceding five years. The Commission may refuse to entertain a fairness complaint if it considers that the complainant has no “direct interest” in the matter, but it may interpret this latter phrase broadly.

Similarly, in considering “unwarranted infringement of privacy” the key word will be “unwarranted”. Secret recording, for instance, may or may not be considered justified according to the circumstances. It is also possible that programme material gathered in a public place may be challenged on the grounds of infringement of privacy. The way that programme makers act in gathering material may constitute breach of privacy even if the material is not transmitted.

The Commission cannot entertain a complaint if it is already the subject of court proceedings in the UK. However, complainants do not have to waive their legal rights in applying to the Commission and, because the line between unfairness and defamation is unclear, a complaint could be a rehearsal for a court action.

### 3.2 Sex, violence and matters of taste and decency.

Anyone may complain to the Commission about matters of taste and decency - “standards” complaints - within two months of the last transmission of a television programme and within three weeks of the transmission of a radio programme. The Commission has the power to extend these deadlines if it considers it appropriate to do so. The complainant does not need to have any direct interest other than to feel that the programme has breached standards of taste and decency.

### 4 What happens if the complaint is upheld?

If a complaint about fairness or standards is upheld, the Commission has the power to require broadcasters to publish a summary of the complaint and its findings on the complaint. The broadcaster may be required to publish the finding in the Press as well as on the air. The Commission normally requires publication for upheld fairness complaints, but it is very unusual for it to require publication for an upheld standards complaint.

### 5 What other actions are taken?

The Commission has no power to punish other than to require the broadcasting and/or publication of findings as set out above.

If it is proposed to re-broadcast a programme which has been the subject of a complaint upheld by the Commission, the Chief Executive Broadcast should be consulted about what changes, if any, are appropriate in the light of the finding.

**The contact point in the BBC for the cases before the Commission is The Head of Programme Complaints.**

## APPENDIX

Section 5.1 (c) of the Agreement associated with the BBC’s charter requires the BBC to do all it can to secure that all programmes :

“ treat controversial subjects with due accuracy and impartiality, both in the Corporation’s news services and in the more general field of programmes dealing with matters of public policy or of political or industrial controversy, and do not contain any material expressing the opinion of the Corporation on current affairs or matters of public policy other than broadcasting and matter contained in programmes in either House of Parliament or proceedings of a local authority or a committee of two or more local authorities ;”

Paragraph 5.2 also states :

“ In applying paragraph 5.1(c) a series of programmes may be considered as a whole.”

In order to fulfil the provisions of 5.1(c) above the Agreement requires the BBC to draw up an impartiality and accuracy code. The relevant sections of the Agreement are as follows :

### Section 5.3:

“ The Corporation shall -

(a) draw up, and from time to time review, a code giving guidance as to the rules to be observed in connection with the application of paragraph 5.1(c) in relation to its services and programmes; and

(b) do all that it can to secure that the provisions of the code are observed in the provision of services and programmes

and the Corporation may make different provisions of the code for different cases and circumstances.”

5.4 The rules specified in the code referred to in subclause 5.3 shall in particular, take account of the following matters:-

(a) that due impartiality should be preserved on the part of the Corporation as respects major matters falling within paragraph 5.1(c) as well as matters falling within that provision taken as a whole; and

(b) the need to determine what constitutes a series of programmes for the purposes of subclause 5.2.

5.5 The rules so specified shall, in addition, indicate to such extent as the Corporation considers appropriate:-

what due impartiality does and does not require, either generally or in relation to particular circumstances;

the ways in which due impartiality may be achieved in connection with programmes of particular descriptions;

the period within which a programme should be included in a service if its inclusion is intended to secure that due impartiality is achieved for the purposes of paragraph 5.1(c) in connection with that programme and any programme previously included in that service taken together; and

in relation to any inclusion in a service of a series of programmes which is of a description specified in the rules:-

(i) that the dates and times of the other programmes comprised in the series should be announced at the time when the first programme so comprised is included in that service, or

(ii) if that is not practicable, that advance notice should be given by other means of subsequent programmes so comprised which included material intended to secure or assist in securing, that due impartiality is achieved in connection with the series as a whole;

and those rules, shall, in particular, indicate that due impartiality does not require absolute neutrality on every issue or detachment from fundamental democratic principles.”

Chapter 2 of the Producers Guidelines constitutes the BBC's code as specified in 5.3 (a) above. Cross references given within Chapter 2 are for convenience to point to related guidance in the Producers' Guidelines. This related guidance does not constitute part of the Impartiality and Accuracy Code.