

Dear Sirs,

Hello. My name is Karen Bartke and I am an actress and voice over performer who lives and is based in Glasgow, Scotland.

I am writing in response to Ofcom's consultation on its review of regional TV production and programming guidance. I was disappointed to see that on-screen talent is excluded from the criteria for a production to qualify as regional (which includes those badged as produced in one of the UK's nations) and am writing to urge Ofcom to include opportunities for on-screen talent in its revised guidance and explanatory notes for public service broadcasters on regional TV production.

I appreciate that Ofcom is revising the guidance in an effort to ensure that regional production is truly regional, reflecting investment and development of skills and talent outwith the M25. As an actor, I feel very strongly that this should apply to on-camera talent too.

While Ofcom recognises on-screen talent as an important part of the production industry and the benefits of local casting initiatives, it is disappointing that the only reference in the amended guidance to on-screen talent is that it's exempt from the criteria.

It has long been an accepted norm in my industry that the only real way to have a successful career as an actor is to live within the boundaries of the M25. As I'm sure you can imagine, many actors like myself choose to live outside of London for a whole variety of reasons - family, caring responsibilities and of course, financial.

I was raised in a single parent family during a time of significant economic turmoil and did not have the sort of disposable income and financial backing to make going to drama college a viable option. I simply couldn't afford the cost of auditioning and travelling to auditions and instead put my ambitions to one side and went to university in Glasgow. When I graduated, I found a job in the private sector and continued to perform as a hobby only, but I always wanted to find a way to make the transition to a professional acting career.

I was very fortunate to be able to pick up some professional work around my full time job, which allowed me to join Equity and build a Spotlight CV, but I still felt I had no option but to treat acting as a sideline only.

After 15 years, I was made redundant and it was only at that point, thanks to the redundancy settlement I received, that I had sufficient funds to actually make the leap into being a full time actor.

I have invested thousands of pounds over the course of my career in travelling to London for castings or work. Overall, it is still more financially viable for me to live in Glasgow and commute to London, rather than try to uproot my family life and find a property there. However, it seems counter-intuitive that, if I wish to audition for most of the work made in Scotland in the last 5 years, I would have to travel to London to do so.

By excluding on-screen talent from the guidance, it seems to me that you are further perpetuating this situation and leaving future generations of actors to face the same financial challenges I have faced over the last 15 years.

A huge diversity of performing talent resides in the regions, and local castings and auditions give performers in the regions an opportunity to be seen and considered for work near where they live. It also opens up employment opportunities to a broader and more diverse range of talent, including those with caring and parental responsibilities.

The purpose of this regulatory structure is to strengthen regional production centres and creative and cultural economies across the UK, including helping to disperse job opportunities in the sector; actors and performers are a key part of their regional creative economies and are a significant factor in the success of productions.

I urge you to include opportunities for on-screen talent in the guidance and explanatory notes on regional production, and look forward to your response to this consultation.

Kind regards

Karen Bartke