

Ofcom ref: 00510918

Information Requests

Email: information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

06 February 2018

Ref: 00510918 Freedom of Information: Right to Know Request

Thank you for your request for information on complaints about violent imagery. Your request was received on 15 January 2018 and I am responding under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

You requested the number of complaints made involving violent imagery pre-and post-watershed, and the most complained about programme.

Before responding to your question, I would like to provide some background information on Ofcom's complaints procedures and reporting.

Complaints about content standards are handled under *Ofcom's Procedures for investigating breaches of content standards for television and radio*¹.

Individual complaints received by Ofcom are assigned to cases. A case is opened when Ofcom is assessing a specific programme or issue and may consist of one or more complaints.

Ofcom assesses every complaint it receives. Based on an initial assessment of the complaint and a consideration of the related content, Ofcom will consider whether there may have been a breach of the Broadcasting Code (or other Ofcom codes or licence conditions). In cases where Ofcom considers there may have been a breach, it will launch an investigation. The possible outcomes of an investigation are that we judge an issue is in breach, resolved or not in breach of our rules.

Ofcom's Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin, published every fortnight on our website, includes decisions about the complaints we have considered. The Bulletin covers a range of cases, including those which Ofcom has escalated for full investigation, and those which, after careful assessment, Ofcom has decided not to pursue because they did not raise issues warranting investigation. The Bulletins can be accessed via the following link to our website: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/bulletins/broadcast-bulletins>.

¹ Available at:

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/information-for-industry/guidance/procedures>

Ofcom has a duty to protect viewers from harmful and offensive content on television, radio and on demand services. Protecting children in particular is one of Ofcom’s most important duties. Our Broadcasting Code sets strict standards for television and radio shows and broadcasters must follow its rules. The 9pm watershed is the time after which television programmes which might be unsuitable for children can be broadcast. Watershed rules state that the transition to more adult material after 9pm must not be unduly abrupt, and the strongest material should appear later in the evening. But even then, Ofcom's rules protect viewers from harmful and offensive content.

Turning to your request, although details of all complaints we have considered about programmes are listed in the Bulletins, we only hold searchable information on our complaints database for cases from 2014 onwards.

We log complaints on our complaints database by category of the complaint issue (with reference to the rules in our codes). Complaints about violence would usually be logged under the category “violence”.

We have therefore searched all television broadcast standards complaints from 1 January 2014 to 15 January 2018 logged under the category “violence”.

In that period Ofcom received 73,392 complaints in total, of which 2,600 were logged under the category “violence”. 2,121 complaints related to programmes before the watershed, 459 complaints related to programmes after the watershed, and 20 complaints did not specify the time of the broadcast.

The most complained about programmes logged under the category “violence” from 1 January 2014 to 15 January 2018 are listed below.

Top programme complaints by specific transmission date

Programme	Date of transmission	Number of complaints
Coronation Street	27/10/17	545
Emmerdale	6/3/17	269
Emmerdale	24/4/17	102
Big Brother	27/6/15	94
Coronation Street	5/1/18	90

Top programme complaints across different dates

Programme	Number of complaints
Coronation Street	834
Emmerdale	668
Big Brother	144
Britain’s Got Talent	96
EastEnders	75

We hope this information is of assistance. If you have any queries, then please contact information.requests@ofcom.org.uk. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

Information Requests

If you are unhappy with the response or level of service you have received in relation to your request from Ofcom, you may ask for an internal review. If you ask us for an internal review of our decision, it will be treated as a formal complaint and will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom. We will acknowledge the complaint and inform you of the date by which you might expect to be told the outcome.

The following outcomes are possible:

- the original decision is upheld; or
- the original decision is reversed or modified.

Timing

If you wish to exercise your right to an internal review **you should contact us within two months of the date of this letter**. There is no statutory deadline for undertaking internal reviews and it will depend upon the complexity of the case. However, we aim to conclude all such reviews within 20 working days, and up to 40 working days in exception cases. We will keep you informed of the progress of any such review. If you wish to request an internal review, you should contact:

Steve Gettings
The Secretary to the Corporation
Ofcom
Riverside House
2a Southwark Bridge Road
London SE1 9HA

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF