

Ofcom Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin

Issue 401
27 April 2020

Jeremy Vine

Type of case Broadcast Standards

Outcome Resolved

Service Channel 5

Date & time 14 February 2020, 09:15

Category Offensive language

Summary During a live phone-in discussion before the watershed, a caller used the most offensive language. Given the on-air apology, we considered the matter resolved.

Introduction

Jeremy Vine is a topical magazine programme broadcast live on weekday mornings on Channel 5. The licence for Channel 5 is held by Channel 5 Broadcasting Limited ("Channel 5" or "the Licensee").

The programme is presented by Jeremy Vine and features a panel of guests who discuss various news items. Viewers are also invited to participate in discussions via telephone and social media.

A viewer alerted Ofcom to offensive language in the above programme during a discussion about Valentine's Day cards. At 10:26, a telephone caller identified as "Tim" was put to air, who said:

"Hi Jeremy. We, like, agree, like, we've been married, like, you know, we've been together 30 years, we've been married 28 years. But, you know, we've never bought each other Valentine's cards and you're a cunt!"

The call was terminated immediately, and Jeremy Vine said:

"I must apologise for the language used by that caller who, by the way, as he started talking, I thought 'this guy's not for real'. Really sorry for that. We do everything we possibly can to avoid any bad language on the programme. We know it offends some viewers. It's downright rude

to everyone when a caller can't control their language. We apologise for that".

Ofcom considered that this material raised potential issues under the following Code rule:

Rule 1.14: "The most offensive language must not be broadcast before the watershed (in the case of television)..."

Response

Ofcom did not consider it necessary to request comments from the Licensee before reaching its Preliminary View.

In reaching our Decision, we gave the Licensee the opportunity to provide its comments on our Preliminary View, which was to resolve this complaint, and Channel 5 said it had no comments to make.

Decision

Reflecting our duties under the Communications Act 2003, Section One of the Code requires that people under eighteen are protected from unsuitable material in programmes. Rule 1.14 of the Code states that the most offensive language must not be broadcast on television before the watershed.

Ofcom's research on offensive language clearly indicates that the word "cunt" is considered by audiences to be among the most offensive language and unacceptable pre-watershed. In this case, the broadcast of the word "cunt" at approximately 10:26 was therefore a clear example of the most offensive language being broadcast before the watershed.

Programmes which feature live interaction with viewers or listeners clearly carry an increased risk of offensive language being used on air. Broadcasters should have procedures in place to minimise this risk, as far as practicable.

Ofcom took into account the live nature of this programme and the unequivocal on-air apology given immediately afterwards by the presenter. Ofcom also took into account that the on-air apology referenced steps being taken to minimise the risk of offensive language being broadcast in the programme. We considered this provided viewers with helpful reassurance that efforts had been made to prevent such incidents. Ofcom's Decision therefore is that this matter is resolved.

Resolved