



Providing a service in accordance with ‘Key Commitments’, Preston Community Radio 23

Type of case	Broadcast Licence Conditions
Outcome	In Breach
Service	Juice Radio
Date & time	19 to 25 February 2024
Category	Key Commitments
Summary	The Licensee failed to maintain aspects of its speech requirement specified in its Key Commitments. Breaches of Conditions 2(1) and 2(4).

Introduction

Juice Radio is a radio service for people in Preston, and particularly those who live, work or study in the city of Preston. The licence for Juice Radio is held by Preston Community Radio 23 (“PCR 23” or “the Licensee”).

Like other community radio stations, Preston Community Radio 23 is required to deliver ‘[Key Commitments](http://static.ofcom.org.uk/static/radiolicensing/Community/commitments/cr000158.pdf)’ (<http://static.ofcom.org.uk/static/radiolicensing/Community/commitments/cr000158.pdf>), which form part of its licence. These set out how the station will serve its target community and deliver social gain (community benefits), and also include a description of the on-air programme service.

Ofcom received a complaint about the Licensee’s compliance with its Key Commitments. In order to assess the complaint, Ofcom requested recordings of the output of the service between 19 February to 25 February 2024, as well as a programme schedule for the same week, music logs and an explanation of how the Licensee was meeting its requirements under its Key Commitments.

Having assessed the recordings and requested information from the Licensee, it appeared that Preston Community Radio 23 was not delivering the following Key Commitment:

- “Speech. The main types of speech output broadcast over the course of each week are: news and sports programmes, local and community news and information, interviews, magazine programmes and community of interest programming”.

Ofcom considered that this raised potential issues under Conditions 2(1) and 2(4) in Part 2 of the Schedule to Preston Community Radio 23’s licence. These state, respectively:

2(1): “The Licensee...shall provide the service specified in Part I (b) of the Annex for the remainder of the licence period”.

2(4): “The Licensee shall ensure that the Licensed Service accords with the proposals set out in Part I (b) of the Annex so as to maintain the character of the Licensed Service throughout the licence period”.

Ofcom requested comments from the Licensee on how it was complying with the above condition.

Response

PCR 23 that while it struggles to recruit volunteers to report on news and sports, it asks presenters to include local and community news and information on shows broadcast weekly. The Licensee said that it is actively trying to find new volunteers to assist “with news / sport elements on the station” but this is “one of the hardest challenges”. It further highlighted the ‘What’s on Guide’ and the ‘Juice List’ as the two features that enable it to meet the speech requirement, particularly relating to the broadcast of news.

PCR 23 highlighted that “95% of [its] presenters are from, and live in Preston” and are “involved with and represent the local community in the programming and output of the shows they produce”. It also said that it encourages new presenters to produce new types of shows.

The Licensee set out that it considers that the speech requirements in its Key Commitments are “very broad and the way [its] listeners interact / listen to the station has changed since the licence was granted over 15 years ago”. It said that it intends to consider applying for a change to its Key Commitments following the outcome of this investigation.

PCR 23 also highlighted that it has exceeded its required levels of original and locally-produced output by “giving local people the opportunity to get on-air and broadcast to the community”.

In response to our request for comments on the Preliminary View, the Licensee confirmed that it has already started to implement more content focussed on Preston. It specifically highlighted that it has included local news and sport and made changes to the ‘What’s on Guide’ to “include more local Preston focused content”.

Decision

Reflecting our duties to ensure a diverse range of local radio services, community radio licensees are required to provide the licensed service specified in their Key Commitments. This is a fundamental purpose for which a community licence is granted.

While we acknowledge the difficulties PCR 23 is facing to recruit volunteers to assist in its delivery of news and sports content, it had not informed Ofcom of this prior to us receiving the complaint. We

encourage licensees to contact Ofcom as soon as possible if they encounter any difficulty that might impact their ability to meet their requirements.

The Licensee's speech requirement requires it to broadcast news and sports programmes, local and community news and information, interviews and magazine programmes and community of interest programming on Juice Radio.

The Licensee set out that its news is provided during the 'What's on Guide' and the 'Juice List'. We found that stories included on the 'What's on Guide' were a Dizzee Rascal performance in Liverpool, a band performing at a local venue, a bottomless brunch at a local venue, Steven Sanchez performing at Manchester New Century and Taylor Swift performing at the Manchester O2. The stories included in the 'Juice List' were about local groups and events such as a business networking group; a toddler group and events at a local garden centre. We considered that these programmes focused on local community information and events happening in Preston and surrounding areas. However, the programmes did not include news (including local news) or sport. We did not identify this type of content, nor the required interviews and magazine programming elsewhere in the schedule.

Therefore, it appeared that the Licensee had failed to meet fully the requirement to provide "news and sports programmes, local and community news and information, interviews, magazine programmes and community of interest programming".

We acknowledge PCR 23's admission of the challenges it has in meeting areas of its Key Commitments and we recognise that it has already started to implement changes to comply with its Key Commitments. The Licensee may wish to request a change to its Key Commitments. Such a request must be approved by Ofcom before a licensee makes changes to its output.

Ofcom's Decision is therefore that PCR 23 is in breach of Licence Conditions 2(1) and 2(4) for failing to comply with the following Key Commitment:

- "Speech. The main types of speech output broadcast over the course of each week are: news and sports programmes, local and community news and information, interviews, magazine programmes and community of interest programming".

We expect the Licensee to work to rectify this immediately.

Breaches of Licence Conditions 2(1) and 2(4)