



Providing a service in accordance with ‘Key Commitments’, Salaam Radio Ltd

Type of case	Broadcast Licence Conditions
Outcome	In Breach
Service	Salaam Radio
Date & time	10 to 16 June 2024
Category	Key Commitments
Summary	The Licensee failed to meet its character of service, original output, speech requirements, and deliver its social gain objectives as stated in its Key Commitments. Breaches of Licence Conditions 2(1) and 2(4).

Introduction

Salaam Radio is a community radio station based in Peterborough. The licence for Salaam Radio is held by Salaam Radio Ltd (“Salaam Radio” or “the Licensee”).

Like all other community radio stations, Salaam Radio is required to deliver ‘[Key Commitments](http://static.ofcom.org.uk/static/radiolicensing/Community/commitments/cr100792.pdf)’ (<http://static.ofcom.org.uk/static/radiolicensing/Community/commitments/cr100792.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 requested full 24-hour recordings for the week 10 to 16 June 2024 to ensure that Salaam Radio was complying with its Key Commitments. This was following Ofcom’s plan to monitor the station following our [Breach Decision](#) (<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/about-ofcom/bulletins/broadcast-bulletins/2023/issue-483/salaam-radio---key-commitments>) published in October 2023. We also requested a full programme schedule for the week beginning 10 June and an explanation of how Salaam Radio was meeting its Key Commitment obligations.

Having assessed the recordings, associated programme schedule and information from the Licensee, we found that Salaam Radio was not delivering the following Key Commitments:

- “Salaam Radio is for the Muslim community of Peterborough from various ethnic backgrounds, including White British, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, African, Middle Eastern, Far Eastern and Eastern European. It promotes community cohesion and offers participation and training opportunities to members of the community to develop radio skills”.
- “Speech. The main types of speech output broadcast over the course of each week are: community news and information, poetry and readings, interviews, sports news, discussions and recitations from the Qur’an”.
- “The service provides original output for a minimum of six hours per day”.¹
- “The service provides a range of community benefits (social gain objectives mandated by statute) for the target community, both on-air and off-air, and in doing so, achieves the following objectives:
 - the facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion,
 - the provision (whether by means of programmes included in the service or otherwise) of education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service, and
 - the better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it”.

Ofcom considered that this raised potential issues under Licence Conditions 2(1) and 2(4). 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): “Subject to Condition 2(5) below..., 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”.

We requested comments from the Licensee on how it was complying with the above conditions.

Response

Character of service and social gain

The Licensee stated that it is dedicated to serving its target community and meets its character of service by broadcasting live “multilingual programming” in English, Urdu, Bengali, Tetum and Latvian. The Licensee also stated that it has diverse presenters from African backgrounds who host its youth show ‘Tomorrow’s Voice.’ In addition to this, Salaam Radio stated that it intends to request an amendment to its character of service to better reflect the community it serves.

In relation to social gain, the Licensee stated that it meets its requirements by:

- Offering training opportunities to its target community.

- Collaborating with local organisations to provide educational content.
- Broadcasting programmes to raise awareness of domestic abuse and related issues impacting local women, especially from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- Collaborating with a national project which offers support to pregnant women from the radio station's target community, by broadcasting the 'Midwifery Insights' programme.
- Promoting local events on-air and social media and collaborating with local organisations to support food banks, hot food services and homeless shelters.

The Licensee also explained that it had launched a training programme delivered by an individual with experience at a major broadcaster covering a range of topics. It also stated that presenters undergo equipment training and that it has introduced "a three-month appraisal system to ensure continuous quality improvement".

Following receipt of Ofcom's Preliminary View, the Licensee stated that it felt that it was meeting its social gain requirements because it works with local organisations by encouraging them to create radio shows, and also supports these organisations' events off air as a "media partner". It also highlighted the community news and information and interviews it provides in programming as examples of providing social gain.

Original output

The Licensee admitted that it was falling short of its requirement to broadcast six hours of original output a day. Salaam Radio explained that it has "recently invested in a new operating system", which will allow presenters to present programmes remotely and in the studio. Having trained its presenters in July, the Licensee stated that implementing "voice-tracked shows" will achieve 20 hours of original output on a weekly basis. Salaam Radio stated that it intends to request an adjustment to its original output hours set out in its Key Commitments to ensure that it is able to meet its requirements.

We also note that in the Licensee's response to Ofcom's initial request for information and recordings, it stated that it was unable to broadcast a number of scheduled shows due to the:

- unavailability of presenters due to work commitments or family emergencies, or choosing to spend time with their families during Eid celebrations;
- one of the presenters was a local councillor and, under purdah rules, was not allowed to present until after the General Election; and
- guests cancelling at short notice.

Speech

Salaam Radio stated that it meets its speech requirements through the programmes it broadcasts, setting out a number of examples of how it includes the specific types of speech programming required in its Key Commitments. This included covering community news during its programmes 'Friday Night Prime', 'Drive Time' and 'Maternity Insights'.

In relation to sports news, it stated that it has challenges in broadcasting this type of programming due to the difficulty in securing presenters. It stated that it is actively finding a solution to this issue and is considering requesting a change to its Key Commitments in this area.

Salaam Radio also stated that it intends to broadcast four new programmes, one of which, is in collaboration with ‘Peterborough Women’s Aid.’

Decision

Reflecting our duty 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.

In considering this case, Ofcom noted that the Licensee had been [found in breach of licence conditions 2\(1\) and 2\(4\) of its licence in February 2023](#)¹ for failing to comply with its original output and speech requirements as well as its social gain objectives between 11 and 17 July 2022. The Licensee had again been found [in breach of the same licence conditions in October 2023](#)² for failing to comply with its character of service, original output, speech and language requirements as well as its social gain objectives between 12 and 18 June 2023.

Character of service and social gain

We found that the output for the week commencing 10 June was for Muslims from all communities due to broadcasting Quranic recitation, which is familiar among all Muslims regardless of the language spoken. We also noted that while the programming was predominately targeting the Pakistani Muslim community, there was programming targeted specifically at other ethnicities set out in the character of service.

However, the content was repetitive, consisting of Quranic recitation, Islamic information and short segments of Islamic discussions from third party sources such as YouTube, and poetry and readings in the form of ‘naats.’ Apart from a single one-hour interview with a physiotherapist from the local community who was invited to speak on issues relating to Women’s Health, there was no content which targeted the Muslim community in Peterborough. The content was instead aimed at a Muslim audience which could have resided anywhere in the UK.

In addition, we found that the Licensee did not broadcast any content to suggest that it was meeting its social gain objective of facilitating discussion and the expression of opinion on-air. As set out in detail below, Salaam Radio delivered significantly fewer hours of original output than its requirement for the week monitored. A lack of original output makes it challenging for a station to facilitate discussion and the expression of opinion on-air. Whilst, in the Licensee’s most recent response, it is encouraging to see that the station supports local organisations, the Licensee did not provide enough evidence to show that this social gain objective was being met off-air either.

The Licensee’s character of service specifically references the training social gain objective. We are encouraged that since our last breach decision the Licensee has launched training programmes for its volunteers, and has engaged the services of an individual with broadcasting experience to conduct the training covering various topics. We also acknowledge that the Licensee provided training to its presenters on its new transmission software in July. Taking all of this into account, we consider that the Licensee offers “participation and training opportunities to members of the

¹ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/about-ofcom/bulletins/broadcast-bulletins/2023/issue-468/broadcast-licence-conditions---salaam-radio?v=329245>

² <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/about-ofcom/bulletins/broadcast-bulletins/2023/issue-483/salaam-radio---key-commitments?v=330249>

community to develop radio skills” as stated in its character of service and is meeting the specific social gain objectives to provide “education or training to individuals not employed by the person providing the service”.

Overall, we consider that Salaam Radio is not meeting its character of service as a whole due to the lack of content related to Muslims living in Peterborough specifically or the social gain objective in relation to the facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion.

Original output

In assessing the content and accompanying schedule, we found that Salaam Radio broadcast three hours of original output on Friday, two hours of original output on Monday and Wednesday, one hour of original output on Saturday and no original output on Tuesday, Thursday or Sunday. The Licensee was therefore significantly below its requirement to broadcast six hours of original output a day, for the week commencing 10 June. This lack of original output contributed to Licensee’s failure to comply with its character of service and its social gain objective in relation to facilitation of discussion and expression on-air, as detailed above.

We note that the Licensee stated that it had to cancel some shows due to the unavailability of presenters due to other commitments or family emergencies, a local councillor unable to present their show due to the purdah rules during the General Election and guests cancelling at short notice. However, as we stated in our October 2023 decision, we consider that some of the reasons the Licensee gave to explain the deficit in its original output hours could have been predicted and therefore mitigated against, such as presenters being unavailable during Eid celebrations and the local councillor being unavailable during the General Election purdah period (we note that the General Election was called on 28 May 2024, which was two weeks prior to the week Ofcom monitored).

During the investigation that led to our October 2023 decision, the Licensee informed us that it intended to request a change to its Key Commitments in relation to original output, however at the time of writing, Ofcom has not received such a request from the Licensee.

We are not satisfied that the Licensee is delivering its original output requirements as stated in its Key Commitments.

Speech

Having assessed the content, we found that the Licensee did broadcast poetry and readings in the form of ‘naats,’ Quranic recitation and Islamic information and short segments of Islamic discussions from third party sources such as YouTube. The output also included a one-hour interview regarding women’s health which was of interest to the target community.

However, the Licensee did not broadcast sports news and community news as required. We note that the Licensee failed to meet these elements of its speech requirements in Ofcom’s previous decisions.

During the investigation that led to the breaches recorded in October 2023, the Licensee told us that it intended to broadcast a dedicated sports show for the English Premier League. While the period of monitoring in this case did not coincide with the Premier League season, the Licensee did not refer to having introduced these programmes during the Premier League season and there was no evidence of any sports show in the schedule or the content assessed.

We note that the Licensee stated that it felt that it was meeting its speech requirement in relation to community news, and stated the programmes where this could be found in the schedule. However, upon assessing the content we note that the following programmes it referenced, 'Friday Night Prime', and 'Drive Time', were not broadcast and no content relating to community news was broadcast during these hours. Across the week monitored, the Licensee did not broadcast any community news which contributed to the service being indistinguishable from a service being broadcast anywhere in the UK.

During the investigation that led to our October 2023 decision, the Licensee informed us that it intended to request a change to its Key Commitments in relation to its speech output, however, as stated above Ofcom has not received such a request from the Licensee.

We are not satisfied that the Licensee is delivering its speech requirements as stated in its Key Commitments and consider that this was a contributing factor to the Licensee failing to comply with its character of service.

Conclusion

Ofcom's Decision is that Salaam Radio Ltd is in breach of Licence Conditions 2(1) and 2(4) for failing to comply with the following Key Commitments:

- "Salaam Radio is for the Muslim community of Peterborough from various ethnic backgrounds, including White British, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, African, Middle Eastern, Far Eastern and Eastern European. It promotes community cohesion and offers participation and training opportunities to members of the community to develop radio skills".
- "Speech. The main types of speech output broadcast over the course of each week are: community news and information, poetry and readings, interviews, sports news, discussions and recitations from the Qur'an".
- "The service provides original output for a minimum of six hours per day".¹
- "The service provides a range of community benefits (social gain objectives mandated by statute) for the target community, both on-air and off-air, and in doing so, achieves the following objectives:
 - the facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion,
 - the better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it".

We consider the character of service, along with social gain objectives, to be fundamental in the provision of a community radio station. The station's lack of community news as required by its speech commitment as well as the lack of original output – which makes it challenging for a station to facilitate discussion and the expression of opinion – both contributed to the Licensee's inability to comply with its character of service.

We expect the Licensee to work to rectify these issues immediately. We note that this is the third time within 18 months that we have found Salaam Radio in breach of Licence Conditions 2(1) and 2(4) for failing to comply with its Key Commitments in relation to speech, original output and social gain and the second time within 10 months in relation to its character of service. **We are therefore**

putting the Licensee on notice that this contravention of its licence will be considered for the imposition of a statutory sanction.

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