



Gordon Ramsay's Food Stars USA

Type of case	Broadcast Standards
Outcome	In Breach
Service	ITV2
Date & time	2 May 2026, 08:25
Category	Offensive language
Summary	The most offensive language was broadcast before the watershed. In breach of Rule 1.14 of the Broadcasting Code.

Introduction

ITV2 is a television channel which primarily broadcasts entertainment, comedy and reality programming. The licence for ITV2 is held by ITV2 Limited ("ITV2" or "the Licensee").

Ofcom received a complaint about the broadcast of offensive language in the optional subtitles for *Gordon Ramsay's Food Stars USA*. Although the programme's audio did not include any offensive language, the subtitles included one instance of the word "*fuck*" and one instance of the word "*fucking*".

We considered this raised potential issues under the following rule of the Ofcom Broadcasting Code ("the Code"):

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

Ofcom therefore requested comments from the Licensee on how the programme complied with this rule.

Response

ITV2 stated that the original programme had been edited to remove offensive language but, having investigated the incident, it found that "regrettably, the subtitles were created from the wrong

version of the programme” due to human error and that “consequently a limited amount of offensive language appeared in them”.

The Licensee said that the *Gordon Ramsay’s Food Stars USA* series appealed to adult viewers and that “BARB audience data records a zero-index rating for children across all age demographics for this particular transmission”, which it said suggested that “the likelihood of children watching the programme and reading the subtitles is remote”. Nonetheless, ITV2 accepted that, in compliance with Rule 1.14, offensive language should not have been included in the programme and it apologised for any offence caused.

ITV2 said that the erroneous subtitles were produced in June 2025, which was “prior to the implementation of new checking processes” which include “steps to ensure that any mismatch” between versions in ITV’s broadcast scheduling system is “apparent and corrected”. ITV2 said that all subtitled versions of *Gordon Ramsay’s Food Stars USA* had been “re-checked” and that it had “reinforced its guidance on re-checking” entries in the system.

Response to Preliminary View

Ofcom prepared a Preliminary View finding the programme in breach of Rule 1.14 and provided it to the Licensee for its comments. In response, the Licensee said that it did not dispute that there was offensive language in the subtitles of the programme and reiterated its apology for the “unintentional error”. It also said that “ITV is committed to maintaining the highest broadcasting standards in its programming” and that it “works continuously to improve processes to ensure that its output is compliant with the Code”.

The Licensee “respectfully suggest[ed]” that the investigation should be considered resolved, rather than a breach of the Code. ITV2 said this was because of “the limited occurrence, the audience who saw the programme, the remedial steps ITV took in response to the incident and the fact that ITV’s scheduling and accessibility teams have worked proactively to improve the technical and workflow processes to prevent future incidents of this nature”. The Licensee said a resolved outcome would be “a proportionate, and the least intrusive, regulatory method to address this issue, consistent with Ofcom published regulatory principles”.

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.

Ofcom takes account of the audience’s and the broadcaster’s rights to freedom of expression as set out in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights when considering a broadcaster’s compliance with the Code.

Rule 1.14 prohibits the broadcast of the most offensive language on television before the watershed.

When considering this case, Ofcom took into account our 2021 research into [Public attitudes towards offensive language on TV and radio](#). This research found that the word “fuck” and its variations were considered by audiences to be among the most offensive language and required clear and strong contextual justification after the watershed. It also found that audiences consider that, in order to protect children, this word should not be aired before the watershed on television.

In this case, the broadcast of the words “fuck” and “fucking” at 08:25 was a clear example of the most offensive language being broadcast before the watershed.

Ofcom's [Guidelines on providing television and on-demand access services](#) state that "people with hearing loss and d/Deaf people...often rely on subtitles...to be able to enjoy TV and on-demand content" and that "a significant proportion of people without hearing loss use subtitles, particularly younger viewers". While the instances of offensive language were not audible to viewers who were not using subtitles, viewers of this programme who were using subtitles would have been exposed to the broadcast of two instances of the most offensive language before the watershed.

We took into account the Licensee's explanation of the circumstances that had resulted in this incident. We also acknowledged that, given the circumstances of the case, the Licensee had asked Ofcom to consider the case resolved. However, Ofcom did not consider that this was warranted given that this was a pre-recorded programme, which ITV2 would have had the opportunity to check prior to broadcast, and that it included two instances of the most offensive language before the watershed. Further, we considered there was no on-air apology made by ITV2 following the broadcast. Ofcom took into account the steps that the Licensee said it had taken since being notified of the incident to prevent future recurrence. However, in Ofcom's view, these steps would not have impacted on the offence caused to viewers as a result of this particular broadcast.

Ofcom's Decision is therefore that the broadcast was in breach of Rule 1.14.

Breach of 1.14