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Complaint

## Analysis of complaints

From 1 October 2008 to 31 March 2009 the Unit reached findings on 107 complaints concerning 97 items (normally a single broadcast or webpage, but sometimes a broadcast series or a set of related webpages). Topics of complaint were as follows:

**Table 1**

<b>Topics of Complaint</b>	<b>Number of Complaints</b>	<b>Number of Items</b>
Harm to individual/organisation (victim complaint)	4	4
Infringement of privacy	1	1
Political bias	4	4
Other bias	22	21
Factual inaccuracy	37	30
Offence to public taste	16	12
Offensive language	5	4
Sexual conduct	1	1
Violence	m(Number	

longer term, gave rise to serious behavioural problems, and should be abandoned in favour

## **Upheld**

### **Further action**

The Commissioning Editor has made arrangements with the independent production company for more effective editorial supervision of any future editions of the programme.

### **Bonekickers, BBC1, 8 July 2008**

#### **Complaint**

A viewer complained that a scene in which a Muslim character was decapitated with a sword by a member of an extreme Christian group was unacceptably graphic (even for a drama beginning at 9.00pm), and might provoke imitation by Muslim extremists.

#### **Outcome**

In the context of a drama which was closer to the fantastic than the realistic end of the spectrum, this action by an obsessed and somewhat deranged character was unlikely to give rise to imitation. However, the graphic and explicit depiction of the moment of decapitation was beyond what viewers would have been led to expect by the content of the programme up to that point.

#### **Partly upheld**

### **Further action**

The programme will be re-edited before any repeat by the BBC.

### **The ONE Show, BBC1, 7 August 2008**

#### **Complaint**

The programme included an item about price comparison websites in relation to motor insurance. The focus of the item was on Moneysupermarket.com (MSC), which complained that the item had unfairly reported that it had performed poorly when its results had been compared with prices derived from the insurers' own websites. The programme-makers had relied on searches which MSC had not been able to replicate, and had disregarded subsequent searches which, MSC claimed, had produced good results. Further, the item had given the entirely misleading impression that the good search results claimed by MSC had been discredited by subsequent searches by the programme-makers.

#### **Outcome**

The only direct evidence in relation to the results of the programme-makers' original searches consisted of contemporaneous print-outs, which were consistent with the results reported in the item. In relation to the subsequent searches, it was no longer possible to verify what they had revealed, as printouts had not been obtained before these searches expired. From an analysis of the relevant weblogs, however, it was clear that, despite inviting MSC to participate in a further search, the programme-makers had reached the conclusion that no further searches were in fact necessary before they were in a position to verify the accuracy of the subsequent search results. As MSC had acted on the programme-makers' invitation, and had made them aware of claims which, if true, cast doubt on their story, due efforts to test those claims should have been made in the week that remained before transmission of the item. The failure to do so resulted in unfairness to MSC.

Unfairness also arose from the fact that a line of script intended to reflect MSC's claims was garbled in delivery in a way which gave the misleading impression that the claims conflicted with search results subsequently obtained by the programme-makers.

#### **Partly upheld**

**Further action**

The programme team were reminded of the importance of checking the status of claims made by parties who are the subject of criticism within the programme.

**Would I Lie To You?, BBC1, 22 August 2008****Complaint**

A viewer complained about two occurrences of the f-word within the first 15 minutes of the programme.

**Outcome**

**BBC News (6.00pm), BBC1, 29 September 2008****Complaint**

A viewer complained that a report on the Conservatives' proposal for a Council Tax freeze in England made the incorrect claim that the Council Tax freeze introduced by the Scottish Executive in Scotland had led to cuts in services, which in turn had prompted protests in Aberdeen.

**Outcome**

The reporter's words were "There's already a council tax freeze in Scotland following a deal between councils and the SNP government - a freeze that's led to protests about cuts in cities like Aberdeen", and they were accompanied by pictures of protest demonstrations in Aberdeen. This would have given viewers the impression that the demonstrations were about cuts resulting from the freeze. However, press coverage at the time made no direct mention of the freeze and reported the demonstration as attributing the spending cuts which were being proposed to historic overspending and/or the funding formula for local government as it had been applied to Aberdeen. Although it is argued by some that the freeze has intensified Aberdeen's problems, it was not the focus of the demonstrations, and the report was misleading in that respect.

**Upheld****Further action**

Editors will stress again to correspondents and producers the importance of making sure of the exact context of pictures of specific events being used to make a general point.

**Global Business, World Service, 3 October 2008****Complaint**

The programme was the first in a three-part series on the Israeli and Palestinian economies, and included an interview with a former minister of the Palestinian Authority. A listener complained that a question which described the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories as "the real stumbling block to any change" lacked impartiality, as there were a number of impediments to change in the Palestinian economy, some of them attributable to the Palestinian Authority itself.

**Outcome**

In a different context, the question might have been unexceptionable. However, it occurred in a context where the focus was on the actions of the Israeli government and the interviewer did not sufficiently challenge the interviewee's position. This resulted in a lack of impartiality.

**Upheld****Further action**

The Editor has discussed the issues arising from the finding with the presenter, and has briefed the programme team on the need to be alert to all relevant lines of questioning.

**George Lamb, 6Music, 23 October 2008****Complaint**

A listener complained that, by referring by name to the manufacturer of a digital radio set which had been sent to him, George Lamb had given undue prominence to a commercial product.

**Outcome**

The point of the reference was to bring out the fact that George Lamb, although a presenter on a digital network, had not owned a digital radio until the arrival of this unsolicited gift – a

fact which listeners might have found amusing. However, naming the manufacturer added nothing to the humour, and was not editorially justified.

**Upheld**

**Further action**

The Controller of Radio 2 discussed the issues arising from this and other recent complaints with George Lamb, to ensure that he has a clear understanding of the boundaries set by the BBC's Editorial Guidelines.

**Top Gear, BBC2, 2 November 2008**

**Complaint**

A dealer in Aston Martins complained of a statement in the programme that a particular model of Aston Martin had lost half its value 12 months after being sold as new, the example in question being a car which was in fact between 22 and 34 months old.

**Outcome**





**Outcome**

Although the Western Wall is the holiest of those places whose locations are known and accessible, the site of the Holy of Holies of the Temple (which is on Temple Mount, though its exact location is not known) is regarded by religious authorities as the holiest place in Judaism.

**Upheld****Further action**

This story has been amended, and changes are also being made to the special background