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## Complaining about Television and Radio Programmes and Advertisements

A guide to complaining effectively if you see or hear something on television or radio which concerns you.

Information about the various bodies who could help.

The DCMS works closely with the broadcasting industry and viewers and listeners to help increase choice, ensure competition and maintain programme standards and quality.

Our role is to set a framework designed to encourage high quality broadcasting.

**We do not intervene in complaints about individual programmes and advertisements or schedules.** The Government has created regulators to do that. The 'Regulators' section of this leaflet explains more about these bodies.

① More information on the work of the Department can be found on our website [www.culture.gov.uk](http://www.culture.gov.uk)

or via our **public enquiry unit** on

☎ 020 7211 6200

10:00-12:00pm & 2:30-4:30pm Mon  
to Fri

e-mail: [enquiries@culture.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@culture.gov.uk)

## Broadcasting Regulation

Broadcasters are regulated to make sure they meet high standards of quality and choice.

The regulatory bodies are the Office of Communications (**Ofcom**), the Governors of the **BBC** and the Welsh Fourth Channel Authority (**S4C**) and for broadcast advertising, the Advertising Standards Authority (**ASA**).

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### Who appoints the regulatory bodies?

These bodies are appointed by the Government, but operate independently. They are responsible for safeguarding the public interest in broadcasting and set out the rules and guidance with which broadcasters must comply.

**The regulators have a duty to ensure that programmes and advertisements contain nothing which offends or is harmful against generally accepted standards.**

Within this framework the broadcasters have to make judgements about what individual programmes contain and the time of broadcast.

**It is a longstanding principle that the Government does not intervene in programme matters, either on the content of programmes and advertisements, or arrangements for scheduling.**

## Codes of Practice

The regulators maintain Codes of Practice for programme makers, which set out the rules for programmes and advertisements on:

- Content and nature
- Timing
- Calculating advertising time
- Separating advertisements clearly from programmes
- Commercial sponsorship



The Codes also recommend when warning announcements about programmes should be made.

Viewers can obtain copies of the Codes from the individual regulators and on the regulators' websites.

Ofcom: [www.ofcom.org.uk](http://www.ofcom.org.uk)

BBC: [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

S4C: [www.s4c.co.uk](http://www.s4c.co.uk)

ASA: [www.asa.org.uk](http://www.asa.org.uk)

## The Regulators




### Who should I complain to?

- First consider contacting the television or radio company directly. You can find contact details for all television and radio broadcasters on the Ofcom website [www.ofcom.org.uk](http://www.ofcom.org.uk)
- If, after contacting the broadcaster, you are still seriously concerned about a programme or advertisement, or you want Ofcom or the ASA to deal with it straight away and consider that regulatory codes have been breached you should contact the regulators.

! When you make a complaint you need to provide as much information as possible, including channel, date and time of broadcast and the nature of the broadcast.

**The regulators do not preview programmes and can consider a complaint about a programme only after it has been broadcast.**

### Contacting the regulators



- ✉ BBC (Board of Governors)  
Broadcasting House  
London W1A 1AA
- ✉ The Viewers' Hotline  
S4C  
Parc Ty Glas  
Llanishen  
Cardiff CF14 5DU  
 0870 600 4141

## Ofcom [www.ofcom.org.uk](http://www.ofcom.org.uk)

Under the Communications Act 2003 the **Office of Communications (Ofcom)** took on legal responsibility for licensing and regulating all commercially broadcast TV and radio material in the UK.

Ofcom also regulates the BBC and S4C in issues of harm and offence and fairness and privacy.

### You can contact Ofcom at:

- ✉ Ofcom Contact Centre (OCC)  
Riverside House  
2a Southwark Bridge Road  
London SE1 9HA  
 0845 456 3000 or 020 7981 3040  
 0845 456 3333

**Textphone:** is available on 0845 456 3003

**E-mail:** [contact@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:contact@ofcom.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.ofcom.org.uk](http://www.ofcom.org.uk)

## ASA [www.asa.org.uk](http://www.asa.org.uk)

The **Advertising Standards Authority** took over responsibility for handling broadcast advertising complaints from Ofcom on 1 November 2004.

### You can contact the ASA at:

- ✉ Advertising Standards Authority (Broadcast)  
Mid City Place  
71 High Holborn  
London WC1V 6QT  
 020 7492 2222  
 020 7242 3696

**Textphone:** is available on 020 7242 8159

Online complaints form: [www.asa.org.uk](http://www.asa.org.uk)