

Archived BBC public responses to complaints

2017

EastEnders, BBC One, 12 January 2017

Complaint

We received complaints from some viewers who felt that the episode contained inappropriate language.

Response

EastEnders is a contemporary drama and has been broadcasting on the BBC for over 30 years and we feel that audiences know what it brings with it. That said, we always take great care with content and language, particularly so in programmes broadcast before the watershed. In this story, as regular viewers will know, Sharon had been pushed to her limits by Phil. She stuck by him as he battled alcoholism, which led to Phil needing a liver transplant. She then found out that Phil is the father of Denise's baby. Sharon was devastated, hurting, and had reached her limit. Michelle also faced her own difficulties. Her self-deprecating account to Sharon about her relationship demonstrated how unhappy she was with herself and her life. She felt that she doesn't belong and that Sharon was no longer there for her. We always think very carefully about the impact of specific words and the context in which they're used, and we believe that on this occasion Sharon and Michelle's unusual outbursts were the result of their pent up emotions and reflected their anguish at the situations they find themselves in. We note that some of those who contacted us felt that the language in this episode was unsuitable for children. We appreciate that there are times when EastEnders will be broadcasting in the presence of children. However, we also feel it's important to point out that it is not a children's programme. So while we always take care with the content of the programme, and will continue to do so, we feel the content of EastEnders is now widely recognised and that parents can make an informed decision as to whether they want their children to watch. Nevertheless, we accept that the language did offend some viewers, and we hope to assure you that we will continue to be mindful of our audience going forwards.

BBC Online - Travel site

Complaint

We received complaints about the closure of the BBC Travel site in February 2017.

Response

Senior staff responsible for the site closure, say that this decision hasn't been taken lightly and forms part of our review of online services. They went on to say:

"Our aim is always to provide high quality, distinctive content and to provide good value for the licence fee. You can read about the details behind this closure in the May 2016 review of online services (section 5), which was published here: http://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/howwework/reports/bbc_ocr_2016. For details about BBC Travel online, please refer to this blog: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/internet/entries/68182816-070d-4600-9835-e83a4fad13d>. Though there won't be a specific Travel site, travel information will be provided on our local BBC news pages at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk>. From this page you can select the Nation, and then the region, to find the Local Live service you need."

Sounds of the 60s, BBC Radio 2

Complaint:

We received complaints from some listeners who are unhappy that from 4 March 2017 the programme is moving in the schedule from 08.00-10.00 to 06.00-08.00 on Saturday mornings.

Response:

With Brian Matthew stepping down from his weekly Sounds of the 60s programme, BBC Radio 2 decided to make changes to the weekend schedule. Brian is irreplaceable, but we're confident that Tony Blackburn will quickly make the live show his own. If it's too early for some listeners, they can listen again to the programme via the BBC iPlayer. BBC Radio 2 remains committed to Sounds of the 60s as well as older listeners, and we really hope listeners will tune in. We're delighted Brian has agreed to record one more episode of Sounds of the 60s which will transmit on Saturday 25 February, followed by a series of occasional programmes called The Brian Matthew Years which will start at Easter.

SS-GB, BBC One, 19 February 2017

Complaint

We received complaints from some viewers who experienced audibility problems after watching episode one.

Response

We are disappointed to learn that some viewers experienced problems with the sound in this drama. The BBC takes audibility very seriously and the producers of SS-GB thought carefully about audibility in advance of transmission, testing the drama in line with sound guidelines. However, in light of viewer comments about audibility following transmission of the first episode, we have looked again at the sound levels to improve the audibility for those viewers who experienced any problems. We hope that our actions demonstrate how important your feedback is to us and that you continue to watch this series of which the BBC is immensely proud.

BBC News, Coverage of The Oscars, February 2017

Complaint

We received complaints from some viewers and listeners who felt there was too much coverage of The Oscars during BBC News programmes and bulletins.

Response

The Academy Awards are a very high profile, global event which many viewers and listeners here in the UK are interested in following, with a high level of interest in the story as reflected in online consumption and social media activity. Many British actors and actresses, directors, writers, animators, designers, production personnel and technical specialists feature among the nominations each year, and they are regularly award winners, so it feels appropriate for the BBC to comprehensively cover the event. This year saw a terrible mistake whereby the prestigious *Best Picture* Oscar was awarded to the wrong recipient. The scale of the error and the highly unusual circumstances surrounding it - as well as the high-profile nature of it, being beamed live right around the globe - meant it was newsworthy in its own right, and so it's been reflected across BBC News output. BBC News has continued to report on a huge range of other news stories, both domestic and international, thus ensuring we bring our audiences coverage of a wide and diverse mix of issues.

BBC News, Coverage of the death of Martin McGuinness, March 2017

Complaint

We received complaints from some viewers that BBC News coverage of the death of Martin McGuinness was too positive, given his past role in the IRA.

Response

Martin McGuinness' life and legacy divides opinion. We have reported his well-documented role in the Northern Ireland peace process, but have also placed his political career within the context of his earlier life and role within the IRA. Our coverage has included a range of voices and reaction, including from politicians and many of those directly affected by IRA and Troubles' violence. We understand the sensitivities involved in this story and the strength of feeling that it has aroused. Our role is to reflect this reality and to provide a managed and inclusive forum in which different views can be expressed. We remain satisfied that our coverage of this story has been proportionate, balanced and impartial.

BBC News at Six, BBC One, March 23.

Complaint

Some viewers felt that in an interview with the Home Secretary, Laura Kuenssberg unfairly referred to concerns about an 'intelligence failure' in the Westminster attack.

Response

In an interview broadcast on the News at Six on March 23rd, Laura Kuenssberg asked the Home Secretary whether the decision by MI5 not to track Khalid Masood, following a previous assessment, looked like 'an intelligence failure'. This was a concern to many people, and it was right that Laura should put this to Ms Rudd, giving her the opportunity to respond. The London attack in a high-profile public area, with several people killed and at least 40 members of the public injured, is the first of its kind in Britain since 7/7, some twelve years ago. The story merited precise and detailed coverage.

Comic Relief, BBC One, 24 March 2017

Complaint

We received complaints from some viewers about the Vic and Bob sketch.

Response

We would like to apologise to any viewers who were upset or offended by a sequence during the interview with Vic and Bob when a prop could be glimpsed underneath Vic's kilt. We reassure you that the prop used was the leg of a plastic toy. The routine was part of an absurd interview with Vic and Bob in character as the outlandish Stotts. Their interviews rely on innocence and silliness to work because the joke is on the interviewee and their reaction to an often ridiculous situation. Comic Relief is live and this introduces a degree of spontaneity and unpredictability. For some viewers that has always been part of its appeal. However, as can sometimes happen in live comedy, this particular skit went a little further than we had expected. Our ultimate aim is to entertain Comic Relief viewers, not to cause offence, so that we can raise the maximum amount for charity and we sincerely hope this did not mar your overall enjoyment of the fundraiser. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to respond to your concerns.

Comic Relief - General offence/Poor Quality, BBC One, 24 March 2017

Complaint

The BBC has received a range of audience feedback related to the quality and the tone of 2017's Comic Relief.

Response

We appreciate the feedback from each and every one of you and the time you spent contacting us, but we need to be mindful about BBC resources, and when this happens we publish responses on our complaints website which hopefully address some of the general issues raised. The night of Comic Relief has become known for pushing at the boundaries of comedy entertainment alongside heartfelt appeal films. This year we had over 7 hours of live television and it was the most watched programme on TV that evening with a peak audience of 7.6 million. Now in its 32nd year, the audience understands there are frequent gear shifts between the light-hearted comedy elements and the emotionally impactful appeal films. The show has always had to tread a fine line in getting the balance right between the comedy fundraising elements and the human tragedy which the charity does so much to address. We hope that ultimately we managed to achieve that balance, and this year on the night we raised £71.3 million to tackle the root causes of poverty and social injustice. The team is also faced with the difficult challenge of booking presenters and scheduling items which appeal to a varied and wide-ranging audience. Getting the language, tone and content of the evening is therefore extremely important and all presenters are carefully reminded to ensure their routine is age appropriate and does not exceed general audience expectations for the timeslot. We would like to take this opportunity to say that we are disappointed if any sections of the programme offended any viewers or if you thought it didn't live up to previous years. We hope you appreciate that a great deal of planning and work goes into the night. The very last thing we want was to take away from all of the hard work everyone put in and we will bear in mind the wide range of audience feedback for all future events.

BBC News, Twitter, 24 April 2017

Complaint:

Some of our audience were unhappy about a tweet posted by Laura Kuenssberg on April 24. Some felt a reference to a 'tory strategy' regarding Jeremy Corbyn's presence in Scotland suggested a bias against Labour and betrayed a personal viewpoint.

Response:

As the BBC's Political Editor, Laura can't publish 'personal' views on politics. Her role instead brings a professional and informed insight to events, based on her specialist knowledge and experience in the field. This tweet conveyed the contrast in the two leaders, reflecting the tactics and mindsets in each party's campaign. Laura was making the point that because of the conflicting positions on Trident within the Labour party, the Conservatives had made a conscious decision not to engage on the issue at that time. Senior staff are engaged in making sure that all BBC News output, including social media, is in line with our editorial guidelines.

BBC News, 3 May 2017

Complaint:

Some viewers felt Laura Kuenssberg's report on the Prime Minister's comments alleging EU interference in the UK's General Election was biased against the Conservative Party and/or Brexit.

Response:

As the BBC's Political Editor, Laura Kuenssberg's role is to provide our audiences with an impartial analysis of key political developments, based on her knowledge and expert judgment. Laura reported the Prime Minister's allegation that the European Commission was interfering in the UK General Election and observed that her comments might influence voters. We don't believe this was evidence of bias. Our Political Editor's assessment based on insight and close observation reflected upon the timing of Mrs May's comments so close to the General Election and on the eve of Local and Mayoral Elections. In Laura's report, we heard from the EU's Chief Brexit Negotiator, the Secretary of State for Exiting the EU, the Chancellor of the Exchequer as well as reflecting the reaction from all the major political parties.

The One Show, BBC One, 9th May 2017

Complaint:

Some viewers were unhappy that Theresa and Philip May were on The One Show.

Our response:

Thank you for your interest in The One Show. This was an opportunity for viewers to find out about the person behind the politics and the discussion touched on a range of topics such as marriage, fashion and holidays. The One Show interview took a very different approach to the standard political interviews that BBC News will be conducting with the party leaders over the General Election period. As stated on the programme, Jeremy Corbyn will also be appearing on The One Show and you can watch that at the end of this month.

BBC News at Six, BBC One, 16 May 2017

Complaint:

Some viewers contacted us querying a figure shown in a graphic relating to the Labour party's manifesto proposals on personal income tax.

Response:

In a report on Labour's tax proposals our economics editor explained that "those earning above £80,000 will pay a tax rate of 45p in the pound. If you earn above that amount the loss will be around £400. For those earning £123,000 the rate rises to 50p. That could leave some with a loss of up to £23,000." The studio graphic behind him gave these figures:

*Income £80,000 pay 45p tax
Loss of £400*

*Income £123,000 pay 50p tax
Loss of £23,000*

This made it look as if the £23,000 figure might apply to an income of £123,000, which it does not. You would have to earn £500,000 to pay that much extra in tax. This was made clear in a subsequent report in the News at Ten later that day.

BBC Election Debate 2017, BBC One, 31 May 2017

Complaint:

Some viewers contacted us querying the composition of the audience for the event.

Response:

The BBC commissioned polling company ComRes to recruit an audience reflecting the country demographically and politically. The BBC Election Debate 2017 involved a discussion between seven different parties, and while some members of the audience were more vocal than others this does not mean its composition was not balanced. The Conservative and Labour parties had the largest share of supporters in the room. ComRes has published a fuller summary of its methodology here: www.comresglobal.com/comres-recruitment-for-the-bbc-tv-debate-31-may-2017/.

The Andrew Neil Interviews, BBC One, 1 June 2017

Complaint:

Some viewers were unhappy with the way in which Andrew Neil questioned Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron.

Response:

The Andrew Neil Interviews have provided viewers with the opportunity to see detailed scrutiny of the policies and track record of the party leaders ahead of the General Election. The interviews have been robust and challenging, but have allowed the leaders time to respond in detail to some of the big questions facing their campaign. The same level of scrutiny is applied to all his interviews. While courtesy should always be observed, politicians are just as professional in handling questions as our interviewers are in posing them. The task of informing voters sometimes demands a degree of persistence which would be out of place in everyday conversation. How a guest responds to the questions can influence how the interview progresses. If a particular point is not addressed, interviewees can expect to be pressed for further comment. Each party leader has faced difficult questions on specific areas. In terms of tone and content, Andrew's treatment of Mr Farron was fair, respectful and entirely consistent with his treatment of the other leaders in this series.

BBC News - Grenfell Tower Coverage - 14th June 2017

Complaint:

Some viewers felt that our news coverage of the Grenfell Tower fire has been sensationalist or insensitive in nature.

Response:

BBC News has been careful to report on this distressing event while being aware of the sensitivities of victims and their families. We know that not everyone will agree on how much detail we should include in our coverage but by its very nature the tower block fire has involved some difficult or uncomfortable information. BBC News always tries to take great care over the selection of pictures and interviews. We are fully aware of the need to report with sensitivity while we try to provide our audiences with comprehensive and informed coverage of this terrible event.

BBC News, Prime Minister Interview, 16 June 2017.

Complaint:

Some viewers felt that an interview with Theresa May following the Grenfell Tower fire was not balanced or fair.

Response:

We raised this issue with the Newsnight team involved, speaking to senior staff about the objections raised. They've replied as follows:

"We feel that Emily Maitlis conducted the interview with the Prime Minister in a fair, impartial, balanced way. There were serious questions for Mrs May to answer over what she and the Government had done for the victims of the Grenfell Tower fire. Had they done enough for the victims, those made homeless, had they misread the public mood and sense of anger in North Kensington? That day there had been demonstrations demanding justice, information, and answers from Government and the media. One of the roles of interviews on the programme is to ask questions viewers want asked. Mrs May was given time to develop her points during the interview including setting out the £5 million emergency fund. However at times there were interruptions. We hope you understand the need to clarify or to question a point during a television programme. Time constraints sometimes lead to interruptions and overlaps between contributors and presenters. We always try to keep those to a minimum. Politicians are just as professional in handling questions as our interviewers are in posing them. The task of informing viewers sometimes demands a degree of persistence which would be out of place in everyday conversation. A number of viewers have

remarked that the Prime minister repeatedly chose not to address Emily Maitlis' questions. How a guest chooses to respond can influence how the exchange progresses. If a particular point is not addressed, interviewees can expect to be pressed for further comment. Newsnight's interviews are robust and challenging, allowing guests time to respond in detail to specific questions. The same level of scrutiny and rigour is applied to all interviews. In terms of tone and content, Emily Maitlis' treatment of the Prime Minister was firm but fair, as with her approach to all party representatives."

Glastonbury Coverage, BBC News, 24 June 2017

Complaint:

Some viewers contacted us with concerns that News coverage of Jeremy Corbyn's appearance at Glastonbury suggested a pro-Labour bias.

Response:

The organisers of the Glastonbury Festival chose to invite the Labour Party leader as their guest speaker on the Pyramid Stage. His appearance was not screened in the BBC Music at Glastonbury television programmes, but like other news outlets, BBC News reported on his speech as it was a newsworthy event. Some later BBC News bulletins included comments from Mr Corbyn's speech in relation to the Grenfell Tower fire. Here we also heard directly from the Prime Minister Theresa May, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Sajid Javid, as well as Council leaders and others thus ensuring a wide range of views were heard. BBC News also comprehensively covered a wide range of other stories, including that day's Armed Forces Day by providing extensive coverage from the Liverpool event which the Prime Minister attended. We appreciate that not everyone will agree with our choices on which stories to cover, and the prominence that we give to them. These decisions are made by our news editors, taking into consideration the editorial merit of the stories at hand, and we accept that not everyone will think that we are correct on each occasion. These decisions are always judgement calls rather than an exact science, but we appreciate the feedback that our viewers and listeners give us.

BBC One, Doctor Who casting announcement, 16 July 2017

Complaint:

Some viewers contacted us unhappy that Jodie Whittaker has been cast as the new Doctor.

Response:

Since the first Doctor regenerated back in 1966, the concept of the Doctor as a constantly evolving being has been central to the programme. The continual input of fresh ideas and new voices across the cast and the writing and production teams has been key to the longevity of the series. The Doctor is an alien from the planet Gallifrey and it has been established in the show that Time Lords can switch gender. As the Controller of BBC Drama has said, Jodie is not just a talented actor but she has a bold and brilliant vision for her Doctor. She aced it in her audition both technically and with the powerful female life force she brings to the role. She is destined to be an utterly iconic Doctor. We hope viewers will enjoy what we have in store for the continuation of the story.

EastEnders, BBC One, 14 July 2017

Complaint:

Some viewers were unhappy with the storyline involving Steven Beale lying about having been diagnosed with a brain tumour.

Response:

We understand that some viewers may have personal experiences of cancer and we appreciate how seeing a character lying about having a brain tumour may resonate with them. Steven has long been depicted as a possessive and controlling character, obsessed with keeping Lauren. He's been shown spying on her at work and his behaviour has become increasingly desperate. When Steven first claimed to be seriously ill, it was in a last-ditch attempt to stop her leaving him, and the character Abi was rightly disgusted, telling him "Our mum had cancer. To lie about something like that is totally out of order." Although we don't always condone the things our fictional characters do or say, it's important for the sake of the drama that they are able to express their behaviours. This is an ongoing storyline and we can assure you that there is absolutely no intention to belittle this serious condition or the suffering of those afflicted by it. Indeed, it's the very seriousness of it that reveals the extent of Steven's dark side as he struggles to deal with a failing relationship.

BBC Talent Pay, BBC Annual Report, 18 July 2017

Complaint:

Viewers and listeners have contacted us with a range of views following disclosure of the BBC's talent pay.

Response:

The BBC is required by its Royal Charter to disclose the pay of all individuals receiving over £150,000 from the licence fee in each financial year. The BBC operates in a highly competitive market alongside the likes of Sky, ITV, Netflix and Amazon. Despite this, it is widely acknowledged that the BBC pays less than its competitors and our Annual Report shows that the total amount spent on paying talent is down this year by 2.5%. The bill for those earning over £150,000 is down 10% year on year, and down by a quarter over the last five years. The amount we pay the very highest earners has dropped by 40% across the same period. The BBC has achieved these savings at a time when there has been significant cost inflation across the industry. The BBC does not exist in a market where it can set the going rate. However, research shows that four out of five members of the public think the BBC should try to get the highest quality presenters, actors and reporters for its programmes and services - even if it means paying similar amounts as other broadcasters. On gender and diversity, the BBC is more diverse than it has ever been. We have set the most stretching targets in the industry for on-air diversity: by 2020 we want all our lead and presenting roles to be divided equally between men and women. Of those on the list we hired or promoted in the last three years, 60% are women and nearly a fifth come from a black, Asian or minority ethnic background. Across the BBC as a whole, our provisional figures (which we will update before April) show that the gender pay gap is 10% against a national average of over 18 percent. The Director General has committed the BBC to closing the gap by 2020 and if we can get there earlier, then we will. You can read his statement at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/speeches/2017/tony-hall-ara-2016-17> and the full BBC Annual Report is available to read at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2017/annual-report>. This is an area where we've made progress, but we recognise there is more to do and we are pushing further and faster than any other broadcaster.

World Athletics Championships, BBC Two, 8 August 2017

Complaint

We received complaints from some viewers unhappy with how Dr Pam Venning was interviewed during the programme.

Response

We understand that some viewers were unhappy about the way in which Dr Pam Venning, Head of Medical Services at the IAAF, was questioned by our presentation team on the programme. There were important questions for the IAAF to answer about the case of Isaac Makwala not being able to run in the Men's 400m final. We felt that the tone of the questioning was respectful to Dr Venning and she was able to present the IAAF's position clearly and effectively.

Today, Radio 4, Thursday 10th August 2017

The BBC's Executive Complaints Unit upheld aspects of this complaint on further investigation at stage 2 of the complaints process. You can find its publishing in the link provided below: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints/>

Complaint:

Some listeners complained that Lord Lawson was an inappropriate choice of interviewee to talk about climate change issues, that he made factually inaccurate statements and that we did not challenge him sufficiently on some of the points he made.

Response:

The Today programme responds:

“The interview with Lord Lawson was one of a number of items on the 10 August programme about climate change. Before 0700 we spoke to our environment analyst about the science. We had a long interview at 0709 with Al Gore who was talking about his new film, the US Government's approach and the global effort to tackle climate change and we heard from the filmmaker, Fisher Stevens, who directed the 2016 film 'Before the Flood'. Like Mr Gore, Lord Lawson has been a frontline politician and since leaving office he has gone on to take an interest in this area as chairman of the Global Warming Policy Foundation. In the interview our aim was to focus on the subsidy regime and Mr Gore's claim that there are policy makers who do not "join the dots", and Justin Webb challenged Lord Lawson in both these areas. The next morning we fact checked the claims around levels of subsidies for renewables and fossil fuels and we ran through the latest scientific evidence on extreme weather events and the links to climate change. We appreciate that listeners may disagree with the position Lord Lawson takes on this issue, but his stance is reflected, for example, in the current US administration which has distanced itself from the Paris Agreement. As we pride ourselves on hearing opinions from all sides on Today, we are confident that we gave listeners the context and facts to make their own minds up about the views expressed. The BBC is absolutely committed to impartial and balanced coverage on this complex issue. Our position remains exactly as it was - we accept that there is broad scientific agreement on climate change and we reflect this accordingly. We do however on occasion offer space to dissenting voices where appropriate as part of the BBC's overall commitment to impartiality.”

World Athletics Championships, BBC One, 13 August 2017

Complaint

We received complaints from some viewers unhappy with the coverage of Usain Bolt's farewell presentation

Response

Usain Bolt's presentation, of which we did show the majority live, was made at the end of what has been an action-packed ten day Championship with much to reflect back on during the final evening. The sound from the public address system was not strong enough to include in our programme and we made the decision to move away from it to show an overview of this year's championships in a short film. We did go back to the stadium and show Bolt's lap of honour and we also heard from the President of the IAAF Sebastian Coe on the man himself. Across our coverage of the Championships, we have fittingly honoured Bolt's incredible career, including a very special tribute from Michael Johnson on the final night.

Final Score, BBC One

Complaint

We received complaints from some viewers unhappy with the new format of the programme.

Response

The graphics used on Final Score are part of the new BBC Sport look which started rolling out at the beginning of the 2017/2018 football season. This is the first update in seven years and the work was commissioned to reflect the significant changes in audiences' consumption of BBC Sport content across TV and digital platforms. We are always looking to improve our offering and believe the new font and colours (moving from darker to lighter and cleaner graphics) will allow on screen graphics to be easier to read and clearer especially on small devices. If you would like more information regarding the BBC Sport font and refresh, you can find it here:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/aboutthebbc/entries/c617f26f-fd2d-42ae-bbad-3adca798078e>

BBC News, 4 October 2017

Complaint

We received complaints about BBC News coverage of Theresa May's speech at the Conservative Party Conference. Some viewers felt it was biased against her and failed to focus on the detail of the announced policies.

Response

The Party Leader's efforts to complete the speech were a notable aspect of its delivery. Those unusual setbacks during a key part of her Party's Conference produced much comment and reaction – both positive and negative. Our correspondents analysed the impact the speech would have as an event and what it would most be remembered for. Questions had been raised for weeks over Mrs May's ability to lead the Conservative Party, with internal party criticism of her overall performance (which she chose to address as the first item in her speech). The P45 stunt during a major political speech raised questions on the Prime Minister's security for the Conference organisers, with the prankster being arrested and released by Police. Our coverage included scenes of support, with an ovation to spur the PM on through her speech after the disturbance. We included her off-the-cuff responses to the various trials she faced, showing a less scripted and humorous response to her bad cold, amongst other things. Supportive reaction from her cabinet colleagues was included, with a range of opinion from Party members on her resilience and determination. Across BBC News, we covered the series of policies announced within the speech as well – the draft bill for a price cap on energy bills, an additional £2bn being provided for affordable housing, opt-out organ donation, more free schools. We'll continue to report on those policies as they come into being, on this occasion the manner of their announcement was as memorable as the detail involved.

Abortion on Trial, BBC Two, 16th October 2017

Complaint

A number of viewers contacted us with concerns that the programme was biased in favour of abortion.

Response

We are very aware that abortion, as well as being a controversial subject, is also a very personal issue. At every stage of the production the team behind the film took great pains to ensure it was fair and impartial, using expert consultants (both anti-abortion and pro-choice), conducting a nationwide poll to get a snapshot of how Britain views this subject, and casting contributors with a wide range of views. The programme's particular focus was on whether all aspects of current legislation remain fit for purpose 50 years on. The aim of the film was to capture not just both sides of the debate, but to reflect the range of opinion within the debate, and to hear views informed by personal experience. Our contributors included those who believe abortion is wrong in any circumstance, and those who believe abortion should be available 'on demand', with a full gamut of positions between also reflected in the programme.

Gunpowder, BBC One, 21 October 2017

Complaint

We received complaints from people who were unhappy about the portrayal of violence in this historical drama, and in particular the execution scenes in episode one.

Response

The gunpowder plot is one of the best known stories in Britain and this drama looks at the history behind it. The execution scenes served to establish the motives behind the plot. We felt it was important to understand the prevalence and the brutality of religious persecution at that time in order to comprehend the murderous acts envisaged by the plotters. The methods depicted are grounded in historical fact, and we sought to portray them accurately and realistically. However, we appreciate that some scenes might upset viewers despite the historical accuracy so we took care with scheduling and we included a clear warning before episode one started. The starkest sequence in the first episode came after 9.30pm, with earlier scenes having set the tone and given viewers a sense of what was to follow.

Have I Got News For You, BBC One, 3 November 2017

Complaint

We received complaints from some viewers about the programme's coverage of recent allegations of sexual harassment at Westminster.

Response

Have I Got News For You is a long-running panel show that takes a satirical approach to covering the latest news stories and events. It has built a reputation for irreverent satire and, as such, contains jokes and provocative comment rather than genuine political reporting or debate. The programme has dealt with many subjects over the last 27 years, and this show reflected the speculation around the biggest news story at the time of record. Given the extensive coverage that arose from allegations of sexual misconduct in Westminster it would have been odd for *Have I Got News For You* to ignore this story. Guests are booked in advance, rather than for particular topics, and we try very hard to book guests from all areas of the political spectrum. This means there will sometimes be panel members with views that the audience and others on the show may disagree with. We do not necessarily share or endorse the views of the panellists and their material doesn't reflect the opinions of the BBC. The host is also there to chair the show and to add perspective and balance when needs be – as we saw when Jo Brand made her points so eloquently in taking panel members to task in this edition. While most viewers know what to expect from the programme, it doesn't set out to deliberately offend viewers. Its purpose is to be entertaining and to maintain the standards the show has set over the last 27 years. That said, we accept that tastes vary enormously and that some viewers might have a different point of view.

Howards End, BBC One, 12 November 2017

Complaint

We received complaints from some viewers who felt that the music was too loud and overpowered the dialogue throughout the programme.

Response

The music was specially composed for *Howards End* with the aim of underpinning moods and feelings, and at times adding dimensions to or conveying character emotions. We are most disappointed if this interpretation spoiled your viewing. The BBC takes audibility very seriously and the producers thought carefully about the sound and music in advance of transmission. The sound quality and level was carefully checked before the film was shown and it met industry technical standards. That said, we take comments from our viewers very seriously and are looking at ways to refine the music for the remaining episodes of *Howards End*. We hope our actions demonstrate how important your feedback is to us and that you continue to watch and enjoy the rest of the series, of which the BBC is immensely proud.

Newsnight, BBC Two, 22 November 2017

Complaint

We received complaints from viewers who were unhappy that the programme incorrectly showed a clip of Jeremy Corbyn speaking at the delivery of the Spring Budget, during a report about the Autumn Budget.

Response

The clip of Mr Corbyn, speaking at the delivery of the Spring Budget, was accidentally selected to be used in Wednesday's programme due to a production error. Newsnight have tweeted an acknowledgment of the error, along with the correct clip which should have been used: <https://twitter.com/BBCNewsnight/status/933688079164100608>. The programme team has edited the version of the programme available on BBC iPlayer to make sure it includes the correct clip. We apologise for this mistake, and the programme team have put actions in place to make sure this clip isn't incorrectly used again.

BBC News, November 2017

Complaint

We received complaints from viewers who feel there has been too much coverage given to the engagement between Prince Harry and Meghan Markle.

Response

There are several factors that we take into consideration when deciding how to put together our news bulletins. For example, whether the story is new, how notable the story is, and how much national interest there is in the story. Across our network we still offered a range of items including national and international events: the Brexit papers, the Chennai Six being released from prison in India, the current situation in Syria and the developing story of the possible eruption of Mount Agung in Bali.

The Apprentice, BBC One, 6 December 2017

Complaint

We received complaints from some viewers that the candidates behaved inappropriately in the male model casting audition.

Response

We raised audience concerns with The Apprentice production team. They would like to reassure everyone that neither the models nor anyone present during the filming of the scene felt that anyone's behaviour was inappropriate, nor were they unhappy with the events portrayed on screen. The audition was intended to be viewed as being light-hearted, which was very much in the spirit of the events that the candidates were tasked with planning.

BBC News, 8 December 2017

Complaint

We received complaints from people who felt there was insufficient coverage of Jeremy Corbyn's speech at the UN and insufficient coverage of him being awarded the Séan MacBride Peace Prize.

Response

Many speeches and award ceremonies take place around the world every week. We decide which ones to cover on a case by case basis, taking into account their strength as a news story relative to the day's other events. There will sometimes be disagreements about whether we should have covered certain stories, and the prominence we give to others.

EastEnders, BBC One, 29 December 2017

Complaint

We received complaints from viewers who felt that the portrayal of the delivery of Abi Branning's premature baby was inaccurate or insensitive.

Response

EastEnders has a rich history of dealing with difficult issues and we always take great care when planning these storylines. It is never our intention to upset our viewers; however we do appreciate that certain storylines such as this one may resonate, especially with people who may have experienced something similar. As with all storylines involving medical procedures, we sought professional advice from medical experts. Abi was 27 weeks pregnant and a premature baby such as this would be immediately placed in an incubator. However, given the extreme circumstances in this case, where a mother has been pronounced brain-dead and the family are distraught and in need of support and comfort, we were advised that at the discretion of the medical staff, and if it were deemed safe for the baby, a family member could be allowed to briefly hold the child. As with any fictional drama, an element of dramatic licence can be used in order to effectively tell the story, but we hope we have explained that this was carefully researched.

We appreciate that many viewers will have had different experiences and we trust that audiences understand that this was not intended to be representative of all premature births.