

## Television watershed: Conscientious compliance?

Mothers' Union has been working to end the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood through our *Bye Buy Childhood* campaign since 2010, highlighting the commercial pressures on children and the impact it can have.

Broadcasting regulator Ofcom has a statutory duty to ensure that under-18s are protected from harmful broadcast material in the UK. Following recommendations from the Reg Bailey's independent review, *Letting Children be Children*, Ofcom has released extra guidance on complying with the watershed. The watershed applies to television from 9.00 pm to 5.30 am.

**What can I do to help?** With this survey, Mothers' Union is looking for information on whether the watershed is being upheld. Please answer the questions below relating to any programming you have watched. Find out more about our campaign at [www.byebuychildhood.org](http://www.byebuychildhood.org)

**Ofcom's guidelines:** The excerpt below is taken from Ofcom's Broadcasting Code

1.3 Children must also be protected by appropriate scheduling from material that is unsuitable for them.

Appropriate scheduling should be judged according to:

- the nature of the content;
- the likely number and age range of children in the audience, taking into account school time, weekends and holidays;
- the start time and finish time of the programme;
- the nature of the channel or station and the particular programme; and
- the likely expectations of the audience for a particular channel or station at a particular time and on a particular day.

1.4 Television broadcasters must observe the watershed.

1.6 The transition to more adult material must not be unduly abrupt at the watershed (in the case of television) or after the time when children are particularly likely to be listening (in the case of radio). For television, the strongest material should appear later in the schedule.

1.7 For television programmes broadcast before the watershed, or for radio programmes broadcast when children are particularly likely to be listening, clear information about content that may distress some children should be given, if appropriate, to the audience (taking into account the context).

1.20 Representations of sexual intercourse must not occur before the watershed (in the case of television) or when children are particularly likely to be listening (in the case of radio), unless there is a serious educational purpose. Any discussion on, or portrayal of, sexual behaviour must be editorially justified if included before the watershed, or when children are particularly likely to be listening, and must be appropriately limited.

1.21 Nudity before the watershed must be justified by the context.

**Ofcom's guidance also relates to music videos broadcast on television.**

Music videos are also covered by Rule 1.3 that protects children from unsuitable material by the appropriate scheduling of broadcasts. Although Ofcom does not prohibit the broadcasting of music videos which contain images of dancers clothed in revealing clothing, sexualised imagery, inappropriate lyrics or violent or dangerous behaviour; but the scheduling of music videos must reflect this imperative.

For further detail on how Ofcom apply these Rules, please refer to "*Protecting the Under-Eighteens: Observing the watershed on television and music videos*" available on the Bye Buy Childhood website, [www.byebuychildhood.org](http://www.byebuychildhood.org) and at <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/broadcast/guidance/831193/watershed-on-tv.pdf>



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### Survey Questions

**Do you think the guidelines produced by Ofcom (including its Rules and explanations shown overleaf) set out clearly enough the responsibility of broadcasters to protect children from unsuitable material?**

YES / NO      Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Have you observed the watershed being broken in any way by unsuitable material?**

YES / NO      NAME OF PROGRAMME: \_\_\_\_\_

TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

CHANNEL: \_\_\_\_\_

NATURE OF MATERIAL: \_\_\_\_\_

**Have advisory warnings been issued in advance of programmes scheduled before the watershed that contain potentially unsuitable material?**

YES / NO      NAME OF PROGRAMME: \_\_\_\_\_

TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

CHANNEL: \_\_\_\_\_

WARNING TO ADVISE FOR: \_\_\_\_\_

**Have you observed an abrupt transition in material during a programme which was scheduled across the watershed?**

YES / NO      NAME OF PROGRAMME: \_\_\_\_\_

TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

CHANNEL: \_\_\_\_\_

NATURE OF MATERIAL: \_\_\_\_\_

**Have you observed music videos scheduled pre-watershed that have contained material unsuitable for under 18s?**

YES / NO      ARTIST: \_\_\_\_\_

SONG TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

CHANNEL: \_\_\_\_\_

NATURE OF MATERIAL: \_\_\_\_\_

**Your name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Are you a member of Mothers' Union? YES / NO    If so, which diocese?** \_\_\_\_\_

**If not and you are interested in finding out more, please give your email address here:**

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