[GB] Cartoons not Suitable for Children if Smoking is Glamorised

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A viewer has complained to the UK regulator, Ofcom, about certain scenes in cartoons featuring Tom and Jerry ("Texas Tom" and "Tennis Chumps"). In both, the issue is smoking, either to impress or to glamorise it. Rule 1.10 of Ofcom's Broadcasting Code states:

The use of illegal drugs, the abuse of drugs, smoking, solvent abuse and the misuse of alcohol:

- must not be featured in programmes made primarily for children unless there is strong editorial justification;

- must generally be avoided and in any case must not be condoned, encouraged or glamorised in other programmes broadcast before the watershed, or when children are particularly likely to be listening, unless there is editorial justification;

- must not be condoned, encouraged or glamorised in other programmes likely to be widely seen or heard by under eighteens unless there is editorial justification.

On receipt of the complaint, Turner, the licensee for the affected channel, Boomerang, conducted an internal review to determine the context of smoking scenes in the "Tom and Jerry" library. 56% of Bommerang's audience is composed of 4-14 year olds. Turner has proposed editing out all scenes in which smoking is apparently "condoned, acceptable, glamorised or where it might encourage imitation…"

Ofcom, in its adjudication, stated that it is required to have regard for those under eighteen years old and, in particular, the very young. Whilst Ofcom states that it is unaware of "…evidence from research in the UK that shows a direct correlation between children who see smoking on television with a greater propensity to take up smoking", it nonetheless accepts that there are concerns that "smoking on television may normalise smoking". Thus, pre-watershed programming should generally avoid showing such scenes, especially as, whilst when the cartoons were made, they tended to be watched by families, it is now more likely that they will be watched by children alone.

The decision is that the matter is "Resolved", given "…Turner's commitment to adopt a precautionary approach [and] its review of archive material and action

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taken to minimise the possibility of harm."

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http://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv/obb/prog_cb/obb67/

Ofcom Broadcasting Code Protecting under 18s

http://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv/ifi/codes/bcode/protectingu18/

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