[GB] “Big Brother” Programme Breaches Code of Practice

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ICSTIS is the Independent Committee for the Supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services in the UK. It is the “industry funded regulatory body for all premium rate charged telecommunication services”.

In a recent adjudication involving Channel 4 and two service providers, ICSTIS decided that its Code of Practice had been breached. It is the two service providers who actually have the obligations.

The problem arose when a “phone vote” appeared to have resulted in the eviction of a number of “Big Brother House” occupants. However, several were subsequently re-admitted, thus allowing them to be eligible to win prizes.

Following this, 2600 complaints were received by ICSTIS. ICSTIS said that “The unprecedented number of complaints for this type of service, combined with the undoubted strength of feeling of the complainants, clearly indicated that voters genuinely felt that they had been misled over this twist”.

Channel 4 and the two service providers concerned, iTouch(UK) Ltd and Minick, were the subject of an investigation. ICSTIS ruled that Channel 4’s voting service breached its Code of Practice on the grounds that its viewers had been misled.

The two premium rate phone firms were not fined, but ordered to pay in excess of GBP 40,000 – towards the costs of the investigation.

ICSTIS Code of Practice (Tenth Edition, Amended July 2005) came into effect on 15 September 2005

http://www.icstis.org.uk/publications/cop/default.asp

iTouch (UK) Ltd & Minick Ltd adjudication

http://www.icstis.org.uk/consumers/adjudications/default.asp?node=&cdate=05/10/2006

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