# [GB] Broadcasters Must Do More to Protect Children after the Watershed (and before It too)

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Section One of the Ofcom Broadcasting Code deals with “Protecting the Under-Eighteens” and should be read in conjunction with Section Two (“Harm and Offence”).

Guidance already exists to assist broadcasters to interpret the Code and, in this context, in particular, Rule 1.3. This reads, “Children must...be protected by appropriate scheduling from material that is unsuitable for them”.

However, “a fundamental requirement underpinning these rules is the application of the watershed, which applies to television only”.

The watershed runs between 21:00 - 05:30. Between those hours, one should expect a shift towards so-called “adult content”. But research conducted by Ofcom during 2011 indicates that 33% of parents and/or carers surveyed “expressed some level of concern regarding what their children had seen on TV before 9pm in the previous 12 months.”

More broadly, in 2010, the UK Government nominated the Chief Executive of the Mothers' Union to review the pressures on children to grow up too quickly. The Review included research indicating that “41 per cent of 1,025 parents and carers questioned had seen content on television before the watershed which they considered unsuitable for children because of sexual content. The review also highlighted music videos as an area of particular parental concern.”

Now Ofcom has published a Guidance Note for television broadcasters regarding compliance with rules relating to pre-watershed content in Section One of the Broadcasting Code, in particular in relation to (a) material broadcast before and soon after the watershed and (b) music videos broadcast before the watershed.

Ofcom has a statutory duty to ensure that under-eighteens are protected. This is one of the most fundamental aspects of the Code and for Ofcom’s regulation of standards in broadcasting. Although it issues rules, Ofcom insists that “[e]very complaint or case will be dealt with on a case by case basis according to the individual facts of the case”.

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***Ofcom, Protecting the Under-Eighteens: Observing the watershed on television and music videos***

http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/broadcast/guidance/831193/watershed-on-tv.pdf

***Ofcom Broadcasting Code, Section One***

http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/broadcasting/broadcast-codes/broadcast-code/protecting-under-18s/

***Ofcom, Guidance Notes, Section One: Protecting the under 18s***

http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/broadcast/guidance/831193/section1.pdf

***Bailey Review, "Letting Children Be Children", June 2011***

https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/CM%208078

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