[GB] Protecting Children Taking Part in Programmes

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The UK communications regulator Ofcom has recently considered complaints that two BBC “police dramas” infringed rules protecting children. The programmes are Line of Duty and Good Cop.

As regards Line of Duty, the issue was the failure to protect a 13 year-old child actor from being exposed to sexually explicit language and violence. In one scene, the character was head-butted and attempted to sever a policeman's finger with pair of bolt-cutters and there was also a scene where sexually-explicit language was directed at him. Issues arising were (i) whether the programme complied with rules of care regarding the physical and emotional welfare of the child and (ii) whether unnecessary distress was caused by his involvement in the programme (Rules 1.28 and 1.29). Ofcom decided that the BBC had infringed Rule 1.28 and ‘is requiring the BBC to attend a meeting to reiterate the paramount importance of ensuring its compliance with the Code rules to protect child participants in its programmes.’

As regards Good Cop, the issue was the screening of a trailer for the programme, which was aired on BBC One HD before the watershed. Screened at about 1840 GMT, the item showed a police officer being violently assaulted by a group of men and having a television dropped on him following a call-out. The trailer was found to be in breach of Rule 1.3, which requires that children must be protected by appropriate scheduling from material that is unsuitable for them.

Of general interest is that Ofcom has taken the opportunity to publish in the relevant issue of the Broadcast Bulletin a ‘Note to Broadcasters :The involvement of people under eighteen in programmes’ stating that ‘Ofcom is taking this opportunity to remind all broadcasters of the paramount importance of ensuring their compliance with the relevant Code rules in this area.’

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http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/enforcement/broadcast-bulletins/obb220/obb220.pdf

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