[GB] Channel 5 in breach of guidelines over “inappropriate” Celebrity Big Brother show

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On 6 May 2014, Ofcom found Channel 5 in breach of its guidelines, after the broadcaster repeated a risqué episode of the reality show Celebrity Big Brother, in which housemates talked freely about their sexual experiences, during a time when children were watching.

Five viewers complained to the watchdog, after the show, which also involved celebrities making “rude food”, was rebroadcast on a Sunday (morning) at 11.30 am. Ofcom said that BARB (Broadcasters Audience Review Board) viewing figures revealed that out of 290,000 viewers, 33,500 had been aged 16 or under, including 8,800 children aged between four and nine.

On the show on 19 January 2014, the singer Linda Nolan boasted about having “loads of sex with other men,” while other housemates made a series of jokes about suggestively-shaped bread rolls.

In their response to the complaints, Channel 5 had claimed that the audience for Celebrity Big Brother would have been aware of the programme’s reputation for "cheeky conversation, rude language and mildly sexually suggestive innuendos".

But Ofcom ruled that the broadcaster had breached Rule 1.3 of the Broadcasting Code, which says that children must be protected by appropriate scheduling from unsuitable material.

While the Code does not prohibit sexual discussions pre-watershed, the regulator added that the “cumulative effect” of sexual innuendos and frank discussions on sexual experiences “resulted in an inappropriate, and prominent, sexual theme and adult tone.” It concluded: “We therefore considered the material to be unsuitable for children.”

Ofcom said that while the sexual content was not explicit and was humorous in intent, the programme should have had more careful editing and there was no advance warning to parents of the kind of discussion that was to take place. It therefore found Channel 5 in breach of the code.

Channel 5 said that the episode, first broadcast on Saturday 18 January at 9.45 pm, had been checked and some content had been removed or ‘bleeped’ out, but it accepted that “it may have been prudent to have ensured that an appropriate

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flagging was aired prior to the daytime repeat".

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http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/enforcement/broadcast-bulletins/obb2521/obb253.pdf

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