[GB] BBC publishes response to report on culture and practices in relation to serious sexual misconduct by celebrities

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The BBC has now published its response to Dame Janet Smith's review of its culture and practices in relation to serious sexual misconduct by celebrities, notably Jimmy Saville and Stuart Hall (IRIS 2016-5/18). It sets out the current position and the rules and policies which are in place to prevent a repetition of the major organisational failures criticised in the report, including failings in audience controls, sharing of information and the attitude of staff in general towards sexual harassment.

A new child protection policy has been introduced, supported by a code of conduct which applies to all staff and anyone in a contractual relationship with the BBC. This policy sets out explicitly the behaviour to be expected of any adult who has contact with children, and is supported by a network of 45 trained child protection advisors. A bullying and harassment policy has also been introduced, and the policy on audience controls has been reviewed and updated; it now requires that all under-18s in audiences attend with an adult. Complaints procedures have also been revised and clarified; where a child is involved, staff are guided to contact their divisional child protection officer as soon as possible. There is also a dedicated Support at Work Team in HR which handles all formal claims of bullying and harassment, and there are dedicated whistle-blowing channels.

The BBC continues to work with outside organisations such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and the National Association of People Abused in Childhood to enhance its child protection strategy. Two reviews of its policies have been undertaken by consultants; the GoodCorporation examined policies and practices against a best practice audit framework.

As regards the culture of the BBC and communication within it, both of which were heavily criticised in the report, cohesion and coordination have been increased by reducing the complexity of decision making, including a 64% reduction in the number of boards forming part of the decision-making processes. The role of team managers has been clarified, and management training improved. On the key issue of attitudes to "talent" (that is to say, performers and celebrities), the attitudes and allowances of the past are no longer acceptable,

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and policies on bullying and harassment and on child safeguarding are highlighted in their contractual terms; breaches of these policies are regarded as a serious breach of contract and could place continued engagement with the BBC at risk.

Policies and practices will be reviewed once more in 12-18 months' time.

BBC Response to the Dame Janet Smith Review, December 2016

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/reports/pdf/bbc_djs_review_report_december_2016.pdf

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