Analysis of complaints 2
Standards of service 2
Summaries of upheld complaints 2
Force apology over racist remarks, bbc.co.uk, 4 April 2005 2
Council mosque decision ‘flawed’, bbc.co.uk, 29 November 2006 2
Council decides on town mosque, bbc.co.uk, 21 December 2006 2
Controversial mosque plan backed, bbc.co.uk, 22 December 2006 2
Inside Out, BBC1 (East), 6 November 2006 3
Newsnight, BBC2 & File on 4, Radio 4, 14 November 2006 3
Scott Mills, Radio 1, 24 November 2006 4
Monkeys, Rats and Me, BBC 2, 27 November 2006 4

Analysis of complaints

From 1 April to 30 June 2007 the Unit reached findings on 81 complaints concerning 73 items (normally a single broadcast or webpage, but sometimes a broadcast series or a set of related webpages). Topics of complaint were as follows:

Table 1

Topics of Complaint	Number of Complaints	Number of Items
Harm to individual/organisation (victim complaint)	14	14
Harm to individual/organisation (3rd party complaint)	1	1
Infringement of the complainant's privacy	1	1
Party political bias	2	2
Other bias	13	10
Factual inaccuracy	15	13
Offence to public taste	9	9
Bad language	5	4
Sensitivity and portrayal	11	9
Racism	2	1

Ruling
The reports were compiled by a team in Manchester on the basis of material broadcast by BBC North West and Radio Lancashire, for sub-editing and formatting by a separate team in Birmingham. During this process, details of the story should have been checked with the original reporters, but that did not happen in this case. As a result, the pages contained a number of errors about the history of the Council's conduct in the matter and the extent to which it had been subject to criticism by the Local Government Ombudsman. The inaccuracies were removed or corrected in response to Cllr Sherras' complaint, and the Unit considered the complaint to have been resolved on that basis.
Resolved

Inside Out, BBC1 (East), 6 November 2006

Complaint
The medical scientist Professor Sir Peter Lachmann complained of the way his contribution had been used in a programme which explored the impact of secret Government tests involving a cadmium-based compound carried out in the 1950s and 60s. Sir Peter had been commissioned by the Government in 1999 to report on the possible health consequences, and found no ground for concern. Subsequently, a surgeon in Norwich had suggested a possible link between the tests and the unusual incidence of oesophageal cancer he had observed in the areas affected. Sir Peter gave an interview in which he put forward

basis on which to mount such a serious allegation. In addition, **File on 4** included an exchange in which the reporter seemed to be assuring a Home Office Minister that the programme had clear evidence that Hizb ut-Tahrir was in breach of the law on glorifying terrorism, whereas the programme's evidence (though it gave legitimate grounds for concern) did not establish this point.

Further action

Ruling
The programme included strong claims by scientists about the efficacy of animal experimentation which were not challenged. As these claims lay within the range of scientific opinion, the issue they raised was one of balance rather than accuracy. Although the programme-makers had recorded material critical of the scientific case for animal experimentation, they did not use it because their research had led them to conclude that the criticisms were not sufficiently substantial. However, irrespective of the scientific merits of the case against animal experimentation, the area of exploration proposed by the programme was such that a way should have been found to reflect it appropriately. The complaints were upheld to that extent.

Although Mr Broughton had been led to understand that scientific arguments against animal experimentation would be reflected in the programme, he had not made this a condition of participating. This aspect of Ms Willetts' complaint was not upheld.

Further action
The issues arising from the finding have been discussed at length with the programme's senior team, and the programme will not be repeated in its present form.

Newsnight Special – Act of Disunion, BBC2, 16 January 2007

Complaint
Jeremy Paxman began an interview with Alex Salmond, Leader of the SNP, by saying *"we spoke to the 25 largest companies in Britain and the 25 largest companies in Scotland and none of them favoured independence"*. A viewer complained that no details had been given of the poll which presumably gave rise to this statement, and that the statement was in any case misleading.

Ruling
Newsnight had not commissioned a formally-conducted poll or opinion survey, but had conducted its own straw poll of the companies concerned (though putting the same questions as had been used in a survey previously commissioned from the polling organisation ORB). This was an acceptable way of taking a snapshot of business opinion, and there was no requirement to publish further information about the basis on which it had been arrived at. However, the great majority of the companies contacted had declined to express a view on independence, so the results of the exercise didn't warrant the claim that none favoured it, or the implication that the biggest Scottish and British companies were ranged against it.

Further action
The finding has been discussed with the Editor of **Newsnight** and his senior management team, who have been reminded of the importance of clarity and transparency when reporting and describing snapshots and straw polls of opinion on stories and subjects (as distinct from fully-fledged scientific polls or surveys).

Today, Radio 4, 24 January 2007

Complaint
The programme included an interview between James Naughtie and the Archbishop of York, in which James Naughtie said the Roman Catholic Church taught that homosexuality was a sin, and the Archbishop, without dissenting from this statement, went on to make clear that the Anglican Church did not teach that homosexual orientation was in itself sinful. A listener complained that this misrepresented Catholic teaching, which was in fact the same as Anglican teaching on the issue.

Ruling
This was a slip on James Naughtie's part. It is homosexual acts which are sinful according to Catholic teaching, not homosexual orientation, and Anglican teaching does not differ from this in any way material to the complaint.

Further action
The Deputy Editor of **Today** has discussed the points arising from the finding with James Naughtie. The topic will be discussed at the Radio News Editorial Strategy Meeting and a reminder note will be sent to all Radio News Editors.

Top Gear, BBC2, 28 & 31 January 2007

Complaint
This was the edition in which Richard Hammond returned after his accident. Two viewers complained that Jeremy Clarkson's enquiry, *"Are you now a mental?"* perpetuated an offensive stereotype.

Ruling
The welcome for Richard Hammond from his fellow presenters was in the robust and provocative style characteristic of the progr

it was inaccurate; Pierhead Housing had never refused to meet Amicus, and had in fact met twice with the union by the time the report was broadcast. Following representations from Pierhead Housing's solicitors, Amicus had removed the claim from its website.

Ruling
The first attempt by the programme-makers to contact Pierhead Housing was at about 2.30pm, when an answerphone message was left which was not picked up until after the 3.00pm broadcast. In the circumstances, this did not amount to an adequate opportunity for Pierhead Housing to respond to a serious allegation against them.

Further action
The editor of Radio Merseyside discussed the finding with the journalists involved, emphasising the need to check facts rigorously and allow due opportunity to respond to allegations before such stories are broadcast. The incident will be used as a case study in discussions with the wider Radio Merseyside team.

Football Focus, BBC1, 24 March 2007

Complaint
A representative of the Muslim Public Affairs Committee UK complained that the reporter in the film broadcast immediately before the England v Israel football match had referred to Jerusalem as the capital of Israel (whereas Israel's claim to sovereignty over Jerusalem is not recognised by the UN and most governments). Although the programme-makers had apologised privately and removed the reference from the programme's website, the matter was one of such sensitivity and concern to the Palestinian people that a broadcast correction and apology was necessary.

Outcome
The reference was a passing one in a context where the focus was on sport, not politics. While recognising the sensitivity of the issue of the status of Jerusalem, the ECU took the view that the programme-makers had taken sufficient action by apologising and rectifying the website.
Resolved

BBC News (6.00pm) BBC1 (date withheld)

Complaint
A viewer complained that his partner had been in shot in one of the reports in the bulletin, and had been recognised in circumstances which gave viewers information the couple had wished to keep confidential.

Ruling
The circumstances were such that the couple had a reasonable expectation of some degree of privacy, even though the filming was conducted in a public place. The programme-makers had no intention of infringing privacy, and had not thought that the shot in question raised a risk of identification. However, there was a moment when the person in shot was briefly illuminated, in a way which allowed recognition.

Further action
The Editor of the 6.00pm **News** and the managers of the correspondent involved in this story have taken their respective production teams through the finding. Staff have been reminded of the extent to which privacy considerations may apply in public and semi-public places, and of the corresponding need for sensitivity in the handling of picture-gathering and picture-selection.