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Analysis of complaints

From 1 October 2009 to 31 March 2010 the Unit reached findings on 132 complaints concerning 125 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)	9	

against 15 items (12% of the total). One complaint was resolved. This report contains summaries of the findings in those cases.

Standards of service

The Unit's target is to deal with most complaints within 20 working days of receiving them. A target of 35 days applies to a minority of cases (7 in this period) which require longer or more complex investigation. During the period 1 October to 31 March, 82% of replies were sent within their target time.

Summaries of upheld complaints

Credit Crash Britain, BBC2, 13 November 2008

Complaint

Two viewers complained that a comparison between the yield from home-ownership between 1980 and 2000 and the return on investing a similar amount of capital in equities while renting one's home had been incorrectly conducted, and that the conclusion that the renter-investor would have done better than the home-owner was seriously misleading. The ECU did not uphold the complaints in the first instance, but re-opened its investigation in response to further representations from the complainants.

Outcome

Outcome

A representative of the group confirmed to the ECU that there was no basis for such a statement (which may have arisen from a misunderstanding of the information that AC/DC had outsold the Beatles in the US during 2008).

Upheld**Further action**

The programme has been edited in the light of the finding, and will not be re-broadcast in its original form.

Trail and announcement for In Living Memory, Radio 4, 5 August 2009**Complaint**

The programme dealt with the circumstances leading to the introduction of Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 ("Clause 28", which prohibited the teaching in state schools of the acceptability of homosexuality as a "pretended family relationship") and the controversy surrounding it. A trail for the programme described the law as "*notorious*" and "*infamous*", and the word "*infamous*" was also used in the announcement preceding the programme. A listener complained that the use of such pejorative terms was inconsistent with the BBC's commitment to due impartiality in controversial matters.

Outcome

Although opinion has shibartiality in controversial matters. T[r]dm66sn0jETEMC 6in the acas/P ncoersby D v

Points West, BBC1 (West), 2 and 3 November 2009

A viewer complained that items in both programmes incorrectly referred to the Cheltenham and Gloucester as a building society.

Outcome

As the Cheltenham and Gloucester is now a bank, this was inaccurate; and, as the distinction between banks and building societies was relevant in the context, the inaccuracy was material. However, this had already been acknowledged and apologised for by the programme team, and all staff in the newsroom had been briefed on the importance of accuracy in this respect. In the view of the ECU, this sufficed to resolve the complaint.

Resolved

Jewish man jeered at SOAS university debate, News Online, 17 December 2009

The item reported a claim that a Jewish contributor from the floor had been the subject of anti-Semitic abuse. News Online quickly acknowledged that this claim was contradicted by others present, and replaced the original report with a more accurate account of the situation within 24 hours. However, two people involved in the organisation of the debate complained that this action was insufficient.

Outcome

Although the action taken by News Online would be sufficient to resolve a complaint in most circumstances, in this instance the original report had been reflected in other online items and in the press. In addition to replacing it with a more accurate account of the situation, it should have been made clear to visitors to the page that the original account had been misleading.

Upheld

Further action

A note has been added to the revised article to make clear that the original version had been at fault in reporting the claim of anti-Semitic abuse uncritically. News Online staff have been reminded of the importance of adhering to the guidelines on handling corrections to online material.

Weekend Breakfast, Radio 5 Live, 24 January 2010

The programme included a series of interviews on the Equality Bill (which was about to go before the House of Lords), focusing on the argument about whether churches should be free to deny employment to homosexuals in certain capacities. A listener complained that the presenter had shown bias against the Christian viewpoint as represented in the programme.

Outcome

The presenter's approach to the Christian viewpoint as represented in the programme was more combative than was appropriate in the circumstances, and in marked contrast to his approach to an interview with a representative of Stonewall. Listeners might well have been given the impression that the programme was biased against the Christian viewpoint. However, two people involved in the organisation of the debate complained that this action was insufficient.

particularly when attempts to play the role of devil's advocate could be misinterpreted as a "personal" approach by the presenter.