

General Guide to Making Effective Complaints

This is a simple set of guidelines put together to show you how to complain effectively. There is a common set of principles that can be applied to all complaints procedures.

Print, broadcast and radio all have regulatory bodies who deal with complaints and have codes of practice or standards of conduct to which the media bodies they regulate must abide by.

Before complaining to a regulatory body, it is usually recommended that you first complain to the editor/producer of the offensive material. In addition to this you should forward your complaint to the relevant regulatory body.

It is important that you identify the right body/authority to which you should complain. There are several bodies that have different remits and identifying the right one to contact is key to getting your complaint heard.

Listed below are the main regulatory bodies and the forms of media they cover:

- [Broadcasting Standards Commission \(BSC\)](#) - covers all broadcasting services within the UK, including radio, T.V, cable, terrestrial, text and digital services.
- [Independent Television Commission \(ITC\)](#) - covers all television services broadcasting in or from the UK (e.g. Channel 4,ITV) but not the BBC license fee funded services and S4C in Wales.
- [The British Broadcasting Corporation \(BBC\)](#) - covers all programmes funded by BBC license fee paying services.
- [The Radio Authority](#) - regulates all commercial radio services within the UK.
- [Press Complaints Commission \(PCC\)](#) - covers all print media, including newspapers, magazines, and journals.
- [The Advertising Standards Authority \(ASA\)](#) - covers all non-broadcasting forms of advertisement.

Key Points

When formulating a complaint be sure to include the following basic points of information:

1. Your name and address

This may sound obvious but can be easily missed out in the heat of the moment. It is absolutely essential you include this to maximize your chances of getting a response.

2. Date, time and place

State exactly where and when the offensive material appeared. E.g. title and date, name of author, name of paper, or name of programme, date and time, name of presenter, channel.

3. Which code does it break

All regulatory bodies have codes of practice or standards to which the media organisations they regulate must abide. Most complaints will only be investigated if you can show specifically which clauses of the code have been broken. For example, state that the article is inaccurate and breaches the accuracy clause.

Full codes can be found on the websites of the regulatory bodies.

4. Be specific

Include specific quotations of what was said or written that you feel is offensive. This makes complaints much easier to deal with and also to identify which clauses of the code of practice/standards have been breached.

For more information on each of the regulatory bodies, and the complaints procedures for each, follow the links on our webpage.

If you need any help or further guidance in formulating your complaint, or with finding further information, please contact the FAIR office and we will be happy to assist in whatever way we can.