

## **BBFC Board of Classification Meeting**

**Thursday 17 October 2019**

### **Present:**

Kamlesh Patel	Vice President
Murphy Cobbing	Vice President
David Austin	Chief Executive
Murray Perkins	Policy Director
Craig Lapper (minutes)	Head of Compliance
Amelia Erratt	Head of Age-verification (for item 8)
George Timms	Compliance Officer (for item 6)

### **Apologies**

1. Apologies were received from Patrick Swaffer.

### **Minutes of the previous meeting**

2. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

### **Matters arising**

3. There were no matters arising.

### **Classification issues**

4. The Board viewed the public information film, *City to Sea - Wet Wipe Ahole*. The film encourages viewers not to flush 'wet wipes' down their toilets but does so using both crude visual humour and crude language. While the Cinema Advertising Association were of the view that the film could be shown before 12A films, given the importance of the message and the comic elements, the Board concluded that the humour and language is so crude that it would confound parental expectations if placed before 12A films in a wholly unbidden context. It is classified 15.
5. The Board viewed the public information film, *Scottish Government Road Safety - Young Drivers - Drug Driving - Flush*. The film discourages young people from drug driving in a humorous manner. The Board noted that, although implied hard drug misuse would not normally be accepted at 12A in a purely commercial trailer or advertising context, the BBFC's Guidelines state that the more restrictive approach to trailers and adverts may be

relaxed where an advertisement is part of a legitimate public information campaign. In this case, the fact no drugs or drug misuse is seen on screen, coupled with the humour of the campaign and the value of the message, mean it is permissible at 12A.

6. Ms Timms joined the meeting to present clips from various films and episodic content showing blood, gore and related detail in medical contexts. She explained that the BBFC treats sight of blood and gore less restrictively when it occurs in the context of medical intervention than when it occurs in violent contexts.

While Ms Timms noted that sight of medical detail is unusual at U, a clip was shown from the documentary *Notes on Blindness*, in which there is brief sight of a bloodshot eye with a needle next to it, implying a medical procedure that is about to take place. The Board agreed that, given the lack of detail shown, the specific medical context, the brevity of the sequence and the dreamlike quality of the film it is appropriately classified at U.

A clip was shown from season 8 episode 6 of *Call the Midwife* in which a cyst is lanced. The Board agreed that the manner in which the nurse explains the procedure to the patient as it happens, in a reassuring manner, mean the detail shown is acceptable at PG. However, they also concluded that the existing ratings info description of 'medical gore' is too strong and potentially misleading at PG. The scene is better described as 'medical detail'. A scene depicting an operation was then shown from season 1 episode 13 of *Bangkok Love Stories*, a Thai drama series episodes of which are classified at PG, 12 or 15. While there is some sight of what appears to be blood on bandages, it is not presented very realistically and there is no emphasis on the blood. The scene is dealt with in a sensitive manner and the man survives. Accordingly, the Board agreed with the PG classification.

The Board considered a scene from season 1 episode 4 of the Netflix programme, *Charite*, in which a large needle is inserted into a woman's back in order to remove fluid from her lungs. It was agreed that, in spite of the lack of visual detail (including the fact the needle is not seen to pierce the skin), the emphasis on the woman's discomfort and pain, as well as the duration of the scene, create a level of intensity that is appropriately placed at 12. An extract was shown from season 1 episode 2 of the drama-documentary, *Mars*, in which experts talk about situations that could occur during a mission to Mars, with those scenarios dramatised. The scene in question depicts an astronaut on whom an emergency medical procedure is performed. There is sight of an incision being made and a tube being inserted. The Board considered that, while there is a significant amount of blood shown, it occurs in a context within which professionals are attempting to save a man's life. The scene is scientific in presentation and procedural in nature, with the voice-over explaining what is being done and why. Therefore the 12 awarded to the programme is correct.

A sequence was shown from season 2 episode 3 of *The Break*, a French crime drama, in which what first appears to be a splinter, but turns out to be a pen nib, is removed from a man, who then faints. While the episode is classified 15 for other factors, including self-harm in another scene, and the removal of the nib is shown in close-up with some detail of pus and injury, the Board concluded the scene in isolation is potentially acceptable at 12, given the medical context.

Three clips were shown from season 2 episode 14 of *Chicago Med*: (i) a scene in which a heavily burnt man asks for morphine as the doctors attempt to insert a line into a vein, (ii) a scene in which broken bone in an injured boy's leg is pushed back into place, and (iii) a scene in which a baby is cut from a woman's body in an emergency Caesarian. It was agreed the emphasis on blood and gore in each scene is too strong for 12 but that the sequences in question are mitigated by the serious medical context. It was noted that a similar emphasis on gore or injuries could necessitate an 18 in other contexts, for example where the intention is sadistic rather than medical. In support of the 15 classification, the Board noted the importance of the doctors commenting on the procedures as they perform them, the emphasis on reassuring the patients, and the sense of relief when the suspenseful procedures are successfully completed.

Finally, scenes were shown from *The Autopsy of Jane Doe*, in which an autopsy is performed on a body which turns out not to be dead. While the gory detail of the autopsy is strong, the medical context offers significant mitigation, as does the narrative turn the film takes from apparent medical investigation to supernatural horror. It was also noted that such detail is unlikely to surprise viewers who choose to watch a 15 rated horror film with such an explicit title. The Board agreed with the 15 classification for 'strong bloody violence, gore, threat'.

### **New compliance platform**

7. Mr Lapper demonstrated and explained how Compliance Officers will capture information about submitted works using the new compliance platform.

### **Digital Economy Act update**

8. The Board discussed the recent announcement from the Government. It considered how best the BBFC could support, through its content classification and age-verification experience and expertise, whatever regulatory architecture comes forth under the Government's new approach.

### **AOB**

9. There was no other business.

**Date of next meeting: 20 November 2019**