

BBFC Board of Classification Meeting

Thursday 29 April 2021

(Meeting held remotely)

Present

Patrick Swaffer	President
Murphy Cobbing	Vice President
Kamlesh Patel	Vice President
David Austin	Chief Executive
Dave Barrett	Deputy Chief Executive
Matt Tindall	Senior Policy Officer (minutes)
Edward Lamberti	Policy Manager (for items 3 and 4)
Chris Davies	Compliance Manager (for items 5 and 6)
Sarah Peacock	Compliance and Education Manager (for items 5 and 6)
Faye Harcourt	Director of Marketing and Outreach (for item 5)
Tom Cairns	Head of Business Services (for items 6 and 7)

Minutes of the previous meeting

1. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Matters arising

2. There were no matters arising.

VOD ratings

3. Ed updated the Board on efforts to ensure greater coverage of BBFC ratings on VOD and streaming platforms, to better protect children and provide trusted guidance to families.

Discrimination policy

4. The Board discussed the current policy position on describing issues related to discrimination in Ratings Info ahead of the commencement of a new research project that will ensure that the BBFC's classification policies are in line with

the expectations of UK audiences as regards discrimination and racism in particular.

Language research

5. Chris and Sarah briefed the Board on the findings of the recent language research. The BBFC commissioned Magenta to undertake research into people's views on strong and very strong language in media content. While the research revealed that usage of bad language, including strong language, has increased among the general population, there remains a desire to protect young people from over-exposure to strong and very strong language. The findings indicated that people do not wish to see an increase in the allowance of strong language at 12A, or very strong language at 15. Aggravating and mitigating factors were highlighted, and correspond with current BBFC policy. However, in exceptional circumstances there is some increased allowance for isolated or infrequent use of 'motherf**ker' at 12A. The research also indicated that people prefer to be warned of spoken language as opposed to 'bleeped strong language', so BBFC short ratings info policies will be updated to accommodate this (e.g. if a work contains a bleeped use of 'f**k', but also a use of 'prick', short RI will read 'moderate bad language'). The research also indicated that acronyms (e.g. WTF) are generally understood by what word is being implied, and so should be treated as if the word is being spoken, unless there are sufficient mitigating factors to defend the acronym at a lower level.
6. The research also looked at reclaimed use of the 'n-word', typically written as 'nigga', when used between members of the black community in a peer-to-peer context. There was some recognition that the term, when used in this context, was not the same as the racist iteration of the word, and nor was it the same as 'bad language/swearing'. The BBFC is therefore trialling 'racial language' in short RI where this word is a category defining issue, but will look to the upcoming discrimination research to further develop our understanding.

Netflix

7. Tom updated the Board about progress on the BBFC/Netflix self-rating pilot.

Pilot proposal

8. The Board discussed a new pilot proposal to enable greater coverage of BBFC age ratings online. The pilot, which would see us work initially with a couple of platforms to develop and refine with them an offering for wider use by VOD platforms, was approved.

AOB

9. The Board discussed their recent viewings of RUN HIDE FIGHT and THE UNITED STATES VS. BILLIE HOLIDAY..

10. RUN HIDE FIGHT is a US horror thriller, in which a teenager decides to fight back against a group of students who embark on a killing-spree in her high school. The film was classified 15 for violence, threat and language, as well as a scene of sexual threat.

11. THE UNITED STATES VS. BILLIE HOLIDAY is a US biopic of the iconic singer. The film presents a range of challenging issues including drug misuse, racism and domestic abuse. However, the manner in which the drug misuse was shot and the clear messages and themes around racism along with the historical/contextual justification meant it could pass at 15.

Date of next meeting: 27 May 2021