

I am writing in response to Ofcom's consultation on its review of regional TV production and programming guidance. I am disappointed that on-screen talent is excluded from the criteria for a production to qualify as regional (which includes those badged as produced in one of the UK's nations) and am writing to urge Ofcom to include opportunities for on-screen talent in its revised guidance and explanatory notes for public service broadcasters on regional TV production.

While Ofcom recognises on-screen talent as an important part of the production industry and the benefits of local casting initiatives, it is disappointing that the only reference in the amended guidance to on-screen talent is that it's exempt from the criteria.

A huge diversity of performing talent resides in the regions, and local castings and auditions give performers in the regions an opportunity to be seen and considered for work near where they live. For instance, a lot of the mainstream theatres in Manchester, such as the Royal Exchange, still hold auditions down in London and yet there is a thriving fringe theatre scene in that city with a lot of talent who just aren't being seen by the wider audience they deserve. A more local-focused casting system would also open up employment opportunities to a broader and more diverse range of talent, including those with caring and parental responsibilities.

The purpose of this regulatory structure is to strengthen regional production centres and creative and cultural economies across the UK, including helping to disperse job opportunities in the sector; actors and performers are a key part of their regional creative economies and are a significant factor in the success of productions.

I urge you to include opportunities for on-screen talent in the guidance and explanatory notes on regional production and look forward to your response to this consultation.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Marsden