

## Protecting participants in TV and radio programmes

Further consultation on new broadcasting rules

Global response – July 2020

1. Ofcom are re-consulting on requirements for new Broadcasting Code rules and guidance to offer further protection for the welfare of adults taking part in television and radio programmes. As was the case in September last year, Global welcomes the opportunity to comment on the important issues raised within the consultation.
2. We believe that Ofcom already has the means and a clear history via the Broadcasting Code of holding radio broadcasters to account for any potential harm or offence caused to participants. We acknowledge that Ofcom has tried to make the rules and guidance sufficiently flexible but we remain unclear what benefit the additional rules would bring to radio broadcasters, participants and audiences.
3. The rules for radio and for television should not, and need not, be the same. The type and intensity of interaction with participants is completely different, as are the associated budgets. As drafted, the rules are aimed squarely at television broadcasters and do not take account of the differences with radio. We are concerned that introducing new rules would add an additional burden to the commercial radio sector, which is already struggling as a result of Covid-19.
4. Our preferred option would be to create a radio specific Code of Conduct rather than adding additional, less relevant, requirements to the Broadcasting Code. This could be managed on behalf of the sector by RadioCentre. This has already been done on Premium Rate Interaction, where radio is subject to a less stringent set of guidelines than television, so there is a precedent.
5. Global has recently reviewed its Duty of Care policy for vulnerable contributors to ensure it offers the highest ethical standards to cover our on air output, competitions, social media and also care for internal staff and presenters. We believe we are already following best practice around planning content involving vulnerable contributors and therefore anything

additional may start to impinge upon our ability to create entertaining content.

6. The station that would be most affected by any changes would be LBC, where we receive thousands of calls each week. Our producers are trained to handle calls sensitively and given specific guidance on providing appropriate aftercare. The danger is that we and Ofcom could spend a disproportionate amount of time investigating every single instance of indirect harm or offence being caused, irrespective of whether the person involved had complained.
7. It is absolutely right that there should be consistency around the standard of care provided by broadcasters but within this there needs to be a recognition that the type of content produced, and interaction with, participants is very different between television and radio. It is clear from the production guidance that it is structured for television and isn't appropriate for radio.
8. Radio is also very different to television and without recognition of this within the guidelines it risks being overly onerous to radio broadcasters. We believe that radio should be exempt from this guidance and that we should work with Ofcom and RadioCentre to develop a separate Code of Conduct to encompass those issues that are very specific to radio.