## Analysis of complaints

From 1 October 2016 to 31 March 2017 the Unit reached findings on 142 complaints concerning 122 items (normally a single broadcast or webpage, but sometimes a broadcast series or a set of related webpages). Topics of complaint were as follows:

Table 1
Topics of Complaint

| | No of Complaints | No of Items |
|---|---|---|
| Harm to individual/organisation | 7 | 7 |
| Bad example (adults) | 1 | 1 |
| Bad example (children) | 2 | 2 |
| Political bias | 4 | 4 |
| Other bias | 41 | 35 |
| Factual inaccuracy | 40 | 36 |
| Offence to public taste | 21 | 11 |
| Offensive language | 5 | 5 |
| Sexual conduct | 3 | 3 |
| Violence | 1 | 1 |
| Sensitivity and portrayal | 7 | 7 |
| Racism | 5 | 5 |
| Commercial concerns | 2 | 2 |
| Standards of interviewing/presentation | 3 | 3 |
| Total | 142 | 122 |

In the period 1 October 2016 - 31 March 2017, 14 complaints were upheld (3 of them partly) - 10% of the total. 2.024 407.09 Tm[( )] TJ14.1 55( t)-5(h)5(e467.49a52ca)4

## Complaint

The programme included a phone-in about CORMAC, the company owned by Cornwall Council which maintains Cornwall's roads. CORMAC and the Council complained of a number of comments in the course of the phone-in which they said were factually inaccurate and unfair to them and should not have been broadcast. In particular, they objected to comments which suggested that CORMAC had benefited from insider trading in the award of contracts; that CORMAC had profited by making additional visits to the site of road repairs which could have been completed at the first visit; and that the Board of CORMAC included a disproportionate number of former Councillors. They also complained that the presenter, Laurence Reed, had not maintained due impartiality.

## Outcome

In the view of the Executive Complaints Unit, Laurence Reed had not expressed an opinion on any controversial matter (and so had not exceeded the bounds of due impartiality), while the comments the complainants objected to were not made in terms, or in a context, which would have led listeners to take them as statements of fact. However, they did amount to the kind of criticism to which CORMAC and the Council should have had a timely opportunity to respond, and it was unfair to them that such an opportunity was not provided.

## Partly upheld

## Further action

It was agreed that Laurence Reed would broadcast an apology to the complainants in his programme of 16 January, including an apology on behalf of the BBC for the lengthy delay in resolving the complaint, in the following terms:

> *In May 2016 we broadcast a phone-in about CORMAC, the company owned by Cornwall Council which maintains Cornwall's roads. The phone-*

## Complaint

The programme included an item on the treatment of animals by chiropractic, which (according to the introduction) it was becoming more common for vets to recommend. A representative of the Good Thinking Society complained that the item gave an unwarrantedly positive impression of a therapy for which there was no good scientific evidence, and did not make clear that animals may only receive such treatment under particular circumstances.

## Outcome

The item did not reflect the existence of a degree of controversy surrounding chiropractic treatment of animals, including criticisms that it is not supported by meaningful evidence and has never been subject to a controlled clinical trial. It also failed to make clear that such treatment may only be administered under the direction of a vet.

## Upheld

## Further action

Programme-

## Complaint

A viewer complained that the programme gave a misleading impression of the 1975 referendum,

## Complaint

The programme included a report on the state of the public finances in Scotland. A viewer complained that the presenter's introduction, which included the sentence *"The Scottish Government is spending nearly £15 billion more than it's bringing in in tax"*, gave a misleading impression.

## Outcome

The sentence complained of gave the impression that the report which followed was about revenue raised and spending incurred by the Scottish Government, whereas it about combined figures for the Scottish and UK governments. Though the report itself was duly accurate, it did not offset this misleading impression.

## Upheld

## Further action

The management of BBC Scotland reminded programme teams of the importance of ensuring due accuracy when scripting headlines to accompany news stories.

## Complaint

The item was presented as an account by “Marvin”, an Eritrean boy, of his experiences in Eritrea

## Complaint

The programme included a discussion about a claim by Tom Watson MP that some of the new

## Complaint

The item quoted an expert on football finance as saying that Ibrahimovic's shirt sales alone would almost offset the cost of failing to qualify for the Champions League. A reader complained that it was preposterous to suggest that increased shirt sales were likely to generate income for Manchester United on such a scale.

## Outcome

As the expert subsequently acknowledged, his comments did not take account of the contract between Manchester United and Adidas, under which the club only receives royalties after shirt sales have reached a certain level, the amount of income then depending on whether the shirt had been sold by the club itself or by an independent retailer. Consequently, the impression of