Public Document Pack

Democratic Services Section
Legal and Civic Services Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet in the Lavery Room, City Hall and via Microsoft Teams on Wednesday, 14th October, 2026 at 5.15 pm, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. **Routine Matters**

   (a) Apologies

   (b) Minutes

   (c) Declarations of Interest

2. **Delegated Matters**

   (a) Licences Issued Under Delegated Authority (Pages 1 - 4)

3. **Restricted Items**

   (a) Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licenses Issued Under Delegated Authority (Pages 5 - 8)

   (b) Update Report - Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) (Pages 9 - 16)

4. **Non-Delegated Matter**

   (a) CCEA - Showing of Unclassified Films (Pages 17 - 46)

LICENSING COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	**Licences Issued Under Delegated Authority**
Date:	14 October 2026
Reporting Officer:	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning & Building Control, Ext. 2300
Contact Officer:	Stephen Hipkins, Building Control Manager, Ext. 2435

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number ☐

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	☐
After Council Decision	☐
Sometime in the future	☐
Never	☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? **Yes** ☒ **No** ☐

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	Under the Scheme of Delegation, the Director of Planning and Building Control is responsible for exercising all powers in relation to the issue, but not refusal, of Permits and Licences, excluding provisions relating to the issue of Licences where adverse representations have been made.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is requested to note the applications that have been issued under the Scheme of Delegation since its last meeting.
3.0	**Main report**

Key Issues

3.1 Under the terms of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 the following Entertainments Licences were issued since your last meeting.

Premises and Location	Type of Application	Applicant
Writer's Square, Donegall Street, Belfast, BT1 1ZZ	Renewal - 7 Day Annual (Marquee)	Gary Hammond, DfC
Writer's Square, Donegall Street, Belfast, BT1 1ZZ	Renewal - 7 Day Annual (Outdoor)	Gary Hammond, DfC
Lagan Lookout & Lagan Weir, Donegall Quay, Belfast, BT1 1AA	Renewal - 7 Day Annual	Gary Hammond, DfC
Custom House Square, Belfast, BT1 3ET	Renewal - 7 Day Annual (Outdoor)	Gary Hammond, DfC
Bank Square, Bank Street, Belfast, BT1 1HL	Renewal - 7 Day Annual (Marquee)	Gary Hammond, DfC
Bank Square, Bank Street, Belfast, BT1 1HL	Renewal - 7 Day Annual (Outdoor)	Gary Hammond, DfC
St Bartholomew's Parochial Hall 183, Stranmillis Road, Belfast, BT9 5EE	Renewal - Occasional 14 Day Unspecified	Ian Berryman, St Bartholomew's Parochial Hall
Cooke Centenary Presbyterian Church Hall, Park Road, Belfast, BT7 2FY	Renewal - Occasional 14 Day Unspecified	Roger MacNeill, Cooke Centenary Church Hall
Central Catholic Club, 43a Rosemary Street, Belfast, BT1 1QB	Renewal - 7 Day Annual	Patrick McAviney, Central Catholic Club
Central Catholic Club, 43a Rosemary Street, Belfast, BT1 1QB	Renewal - 7 Day Annual (Outdoor)	Patrick McAviney, Central Catholic Club
Ten Square, 10 Donegall Square South, Belfast, BT1 5JD	Renewal - 7 Day Annual	Stephen Carson, Loughview Leisure Group Limited
Holy Cross Boys Pitch, Butler Walk, Belfast, BT14 7NY	Renewal - 7 Day Annual (Outdoor)	Niamh Burns, ArdBone Festival

St Molua's Parish Church Hall, St Molua's Church, Upr Newtownards Road, Belfast, BT4 3LR	Renewal - Occasional 14 Day Unspecified	Frances Hastie, St Molua's Church Hall
Templemore Baths 96 Templemore Avenue, Belfast, BT5 4FW	Variation- 7 Day Annual	Paul McFarland, Greenwich Leisure Ltd.
Ardoyne Community Centre, 40 Herbert Street, Belfast, BT14 7FE	Renewal - 7 Day Annual	Yvonne Coyle, BCC Community Services
Parlour Bar, 2-4 Elmwood Avenue, Belfast, BT9 6AY	Renewal - 7 Day Annual	Robert Davis, Regency Hotel (Northern Ireland) Limited.
Empire Social Club, 337a Donegall Road, Belfast, BT12 6FQ	Renewal - 7 Day Annual	Alan McCabe, Empire Social Club
Woodvale Park, Woodvale Road, Belfast, BT13 3BN	Renewal - 7 Day Annual (Outdoor)	Stephen Leonard, BCC City and Neighbourhoods Department
room2, 32-36 Queen Street, Belfast, BT1 6EE	Renewal - 7 Day Annual	Aine Finnegan, Lamington Group Opco Ltd.
Glen Road Community Centre, 2, Carrigart Avenue, Belfast, Antrim, BT11 9HU	Renewal - 7 Day Annual	Yvonne Coyle, BCC Community Services
Divis Community Centre, 2a, Ardmoulin Place, Belfast, Antrim, BT12 4RT	Renewal - 7 Day Annual	Yvonne Coyle, BCC Community Services
Town Square, 12-13 Lower Crescent, Belfast, BT7 1NR	Renewal - 7 Day Annual	Ben Ringland, Victoria 2 Ltd.
The Devenish Complex, 33-37, Finaghy Road North, Belfast, BT10 0JB	Renewal - 7 Day Annual	James Conlon, The Devenish Complex
Hercules Bar, 61-63 Castle Street, Belfast, BT1 1GH	Renewal - 7 Day Annual	Christopher Gilmartin, Castle Publican Limited
Mountainview Social Club, 8 Enfield Street, Belfast, BT13 3DH	Renewal - 7 Day Annual	William McDonald, Mountainview Social Club
QUB, Reboot Café, 92-96 Lisburn Road, Malone Lower, Belfast, BT9 6AG	Variation- 7 Day Annual	Alistair Finlay, QUB
Family Entertainment Centre, Unit 62-63 Kennedy Centre, 564-568 Falls Road, Belfast, BT11 9AE	Renewal - 7 Day Annual	Noel Bardon, Bardon Leisure

3.2 Under the terms of the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 no Amusement Permits were issued since your last meeting.

3.3 Under the terms of the Cinemas (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 no Cinema Licences were issued since your last meeting.

3.4 Under the terms of the Petroleum Consolidation Act 1929 the following Petroleum Licences were issued since your last meeting.

Premises and Location	**Type of Application**	**Applicant**

Sainsburys Petrol Station, 302 Airport Road West, Belfast, BT3 9EJ	Renewal Application	Louis Magari, Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd
Eurospar Filling Station, 250-252 Donegall Road, Belfast, BT12 5NE	Renewal Application	Alan Armstrong, Henderson Retail Limited
Spar/BP Filling Station Ravenhill Road, 318 Ravenhill Road, Belfast, BT6 8GL	Renewal Application	Alan Armstrong, Henderson Retail Limited
Spar Filling Station Knock Road, 211 Knock Road, Belfast, BT5 6QD	Renewal Application	Alan Armstrong, Henderson Retail Limited

3.5 Under the terms of the Street Trading Act (Northern Ireland) 2001 no Street Trading Licences were issued since your last meeting.

3.6 Under the terms of the Road Traffic Regulation (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 the following Road Closure Orders were issued since your last meeting.

Location	Type of Activity	Date and Hours permitted	Applicant
Sunningdale Park,	Filming Grant Application - Dagliesh S4	5/10/2026 6-10pm	**Robert Hoffman**

3.7 Under the terms of the Licensing of Pavement Cafés Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 the following Pavement Café Licences were issued since your last meeting.

Premises and Location	Type of Application	Applicant
The Ivy Belfast Brasserie, Cleaver House, 56, Donegall Place, Belfast, BT1 5BB	Grant Application	Anabel Newman, Troia (UK) Restaurants Limited
Jumon, 6 Fountain Street, Belfast, BT1 5ED	Grant Application	Tasmin Claessen, Raven8 Ltd.
Ciao by Italygnam, 101 Cregagh Road, Castlereagh, Belfast, BT6 8PY	Grant Application	Daniele Tedesco, Italygnam Ltd
Mountainview Tavern, 417- 421 Shankill Road, Belfast, BT13 3AG	Grant Application	Wilson McArthur, Mountainview Tavern Enterprises Ltd.
Bob and Berts, 36-40 Ann Street, Belfast, Antrim, BT1 4EG	Grant Application	Debbi McCrory, Bob and Berts Ann Street Limited

Financial & Resource Implications

3.8 None.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

3.9 There are no issues associated with this report.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 6
of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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Belfast City Council

LICENSING COMMITTEE

Subject:	**Request for the exhibition of unclassified films**
Date:	14 October 2026
Reporting Officer:	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning & Building Control, Ext. 2300
Contact Officer:	Stephen Hipkins, Building Control Manager, Ext. 2435

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number ☐

1. Information relating to any individual
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4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	☐
After Council Decision	☐
Sometime in the future	☐
Never	☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? **Yes** ☒ **No** ☐

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	To consider a request from CCEA (Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment Northern Ireland) to permit unclassified films to be screened at Cineworld, as part of a screening event showing films produced by A-Level and GCSE students.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is recommended, having heard from representatives of CCEA, to permit the screening of the unclassified films in accordance with an age classification of 12A which has been specified by CCEA.
2.2	The Committee could instead decide to permit the screening of the unclassified films in accordance with a different age classification; or refuse the screening of unclassified films in the venue.
2.3	Whilst there is a general provision for appeals in relation to the conditions placed on Cinema Licences, there is no right of appeal in respect of this decision.
3.0	**Main Report**
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	The Council licences cinemas and other venues under the Cinemas (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 for the exhibition of films. The main functions of the legislation relate to technical matters such as structural stability and fire safety and, as such, the powers to issue licences are delegated to the Director of Planning and Building Control.
3.2	Unlike other types of Licences there is no public notification and representation process for Cinema Licence applications hence there is normally no involvement of the Committee with Cinema Licensing.
3.3	However, the Order requires the Council to impose conditions or restrictions prohibiting the admission of children to film exhibitions involving the showing of films designated as works unsuitable for children.
3.4	When issuing Licences, the Council establishes Conditions regarding the general running and administration of the premises. One such Condition is that only films which have been classified with a certificate issued by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) may be shown. These conditions are attached at Appendix 1.
3.5	The BBFC is an independent body which classifies all films on behalf of local authorities, and they have strict guidelines and criteria in awarding films a classification. The BBFC categories and criteria guidelines are attached at Appendix 2.
3.6	This system is used by all authorities within the United Kingdom and all commercial films will have been classified through this process. Independent films, shorts and features that have not been classified through the BBFC tend to be shown in private clubs and societies rather than in commercial cinemas licensed by the Council. However, in recent years the Council have received an increased number of requests to consider screening of unclassified films.
3.7	There is a proviso in the Licence Conditions which allows the showing of an unclassified film if the Council is satisfied with the proposal. The Council can also append any Conditions it deems appropriate in relation to that film exhibition, including an age restriction. Such a

	decision does not attempt to 'classify' the film but merely permits its exhibition in the individual situation applied for.
3.8	The Service has previously received requests to screen unclassified films for which the Licensing Committee has provided its approval.
3.9	The Service reserves the right to take action for a breach of licence if any of the unclassified films are found not to be as described.
	Key Issues
3.10	The Service has received a request for unclassified films produced by A-Level and GCSE students to be shown in Cineworld by CCEA. See Appendix 3.
3.11	The films selected by CCEA for broadcast have achieved awards within predefined categories by the examination body.
3.12	The applicant has confirmed that schools, examination bodies and a judging panel have viewed the exhibitions to be broadcast. Further to this, the applicant has identified they do not foresee any issues with appropriateness of content and would regard all films selected as representative of a 12A BBFC rating.
3.13	None of the films will have received classification from BBFC or equivalent body.
3.14	The expertise for film classification is considered to rest with BBFC and other statutory bodies established for this function. The Service has not viewed the films to validate the '12A' rating.
3.15	The audience viewing the exhibitions will comprise students, teachers, Principals and representatives from the film industry.
3.16	The applicant has identified that pupils to be admitted to the screening will be Year 12 and upwards. CCEA have confirmed pupils within these Year groups will be 15 years of age and older.
3.17	A representative from CCEA will be available at Committee to answer any questions Members may have in relation to the films.
4.0	**Financial and Resource Implications** None. Officers will carry out inspections before and during the events which will be catered for within existing Service budgets.
5.0	**Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment** There are no issues associated with this report.
6.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached** • Appendix 1 – Conditions of licence • Appendix 2 – BBFC Classification Guidelines • Appendix 3 – Applicant request

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CONDITION OF LICENCE

1. No film shall be exhibited unless:-

   (a) It has received a 'U', 'PG', '12A', '12', '15',or '18' certificate of the British Board of Film Classification.

   (b) It is a current news-reel which has not been submitted to the British Board of Film Classification.

2. (a) No persons under the age of twelve years, unless they are accompanied by an Adult, shall be admitted to any Exhibition when a '12A' film is in the programme.

   (b) No persons under the age of fifteen years shall be admitted to any Exhibition when a '15' film is in the programme.

   (c) No persons under the age of eighteen years shall be admitted to any Exhibition when a '18' film is in the programme.

3. Notwithstanding the conditions hereinbefore contained, a film may be exhibited, or children, or any class of children, may be admitted thereto, or admitted unaccompanied, if permission of the Council is first obtained and any conditions of such permission are complied with.

4. A representation or written statement of the terms of any certificate given by the British Board of Film Classification shall be shown on the screen immediately before the showing of any film to which it relates and the representation or statement shall be shown for long enough in a form large enough for it to be read from any seat in the auditorium.

5. There shall be prominently exhibited in each public entrance whenever the premises are open to the public a notice indicating in tabular form and in clear bold letters and figures:-

   (a) the title of each film to be shown on that day, other than trailers and films of less than five minutes' duration;

   (b) the approximate times of commencement of each such film;

   (c) whether each film has received a 'U', 'PG', '12A', '12', '15', or '18' certificate from the British Board of Films Censors;

   (d) the effect of such 'U', 'PG', '12A', '12', '15', or '18' certificate in relation to the admission of persons under the age of eighteen years; and

   (e) appropriate advice in respect of '12A' certificate films to enable an accompanying adult to decide upon the suitability of the film for children under the age of twelve years.

6. The nature of any certificate received in respect of a film from the British Board of Film Classification shall be clearly indicated by the letter 'U', 'PG' , '12A', '12', '15', or '18' in any advertisement of the film displayed at the premises.

7. There shall not appear on any advertisement of a film displayed at the premises any reference to the Council or any wording to the effect that the film has been banned or not passed by the British Board of Film Classification.

8. No advertisement displayed at the premises of a film to be exhibited at the premises shall depict as a scene or incident in the film any scene or incident which is not included in the film as certified by the British Board of Film Classification or approved for exhibition by the Council, as the case may be.

9. Where the Council has given notice in writing to the licensee objecting to an advertisement on the ground that, if displayed, it would offend against good taste or decency or be likely to encourage or incite to crime or to lead to disorder or to be offensive to the public feeling, that advertisement shall not be displayed at the premises except with the consent in writing of the Council.

10. Where the Council has given notice in writing to the licensee prohibiting the exhibition of a film on the ground that it contains matter which, if exhibited, would offend against good taste or decency or be likely to encourage or incite to crime or to lead to disorder or be offensive to the public feeling, that film shall not be exhibited in the premises except with the consent in writing of the Council.

11. The licensee shall ensure that all attendants when on duty at the premises shall wear either distinctive clothing or suitable arm-bands.

12. The premises shall not without consent in writing of the Council be used for the purpose for which the license is granted on:-

    (a) Sunday at any time or,
    (b) other days between the hours of 1.00 am and 8.00 am.

13. Only films which have received a certificate from the British Board of Film Classification in the categories 'U' , 'PG', '12A', '12', '15' and current news-reels will be permitted to be shown on Sundays during the hours of 3.30 pm to 7.30 pm.

N. B. These conditions must be displayed with the licence in a conspicuous place on the premises at all times.

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Classification Guidelines

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36 Annexe – legal considerations

The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) is an independent, non-governmental, not-for-profit, co-regulatory body. Our classification function is funded through fees charged to those who submit films and video works for classification.

We classify:

- films, trailers and advertisements on behalf of local authorities who license cinemas under the Licensing Act 2003[1]
- video works distributed on physical media under the Video Recordings Act 1984
- video works which are distributed over the internet under a voluntary, self-regulatory service
- commercial and internet content distributed via mobile networks under a voluntary, self-regulatory service

In addition to our classification functions, we are designated as the age-verification regulator under Part 3 of the Digital Economy Act 2017. The BBFC's responsibilities under this Act include:

- making sure that online commercial pornography services carry age-verification controls
- providing guidance on what kind of age-verification arrangements will ensure that these services comply with the law
- taking enforcement action against online pornographic services that do not carry effective age-verification and/or those that contain extreme pornographic material (as defined under UK law) which is illegal to possess

[1]*Since 31 March 2016 the BBFC has sub-contracted the assessment of cinema advertisements for commercial goods and services to the Cinema Advertising Association, while retaining responsibility for classifying all feature films, trailers, public information films and charity campaigns.*

Our Classification Guidelines follow an extensive public consultation to which more than 10,000 people contribute across the UK, as well as other research, expert advice and our accumulated experience over many years. The Guidelines, and our practice in applying them, pay particular attention to changes in public taste, attitudes and concerns, and changes in the law. They also take account of new evidence from research and expert sources. The Guidelines are reviewed every four to five years, and how we apply them is reviewed when necessary.

We take responsibility for the Guidelines and for their interpretation. This responsibility is subject to the normal considerations of fairness and reasonableness.

Here, and throughout the Guidelines, video works are taken to include films and programmes released on DVD or Blu-ray, or distributed by means of download or streaming on the internet.

The Guidelines cannot be a comprehensive account of everything that may at any time be of concern. If issues arise which are not specifically covered here, they will be dealt with by us on their merits and in line with the standards expressed and implied in these Guidelines. The Guidelines are not a legal document and should be interpreted in the spirit of what is intended as well as in the letter.

We will provide guidance on the interpretation of these Guidelines on request and their application to particular films.

Guiding principles

Our guiding principles are:

- to protect children and vulnerable adults from potentially harmful or otherwise unsuitable media content
- to empower consumers, particularly parents and those with responsibility for children, to make informed viewing decisions

We fulfil these roles chiefly by providing age classifications and publishing advice (known as ratings info) for individual films and videos. Ratings info gives a detailed breakdown of the issues that result in a particular classification, as well as other issues likely to be of relevance to viewers.

Our extensive research into public opinion guides us as we seek to ensure that classification decisions generally reflect public sensibilities and expectations as these change over time. We seek to ensure that films and videos reach the widest audience that is appropriate for their theme and treatment.

While media effects research and expert opinion can provide valuable insights, it can be inconclusive or contradictory on issues of suitability and harm. In such cases we must rely on our own experience and expertise to make a judgement as to the suitability of a work for classification at a particular age category, taking into consideration whether the availability of the material, to the age group concerned, is clearly unacceptable to broad public opinion.

We do this without infringing the right of adults to choose what they view provided that it remains within the law and is not potentially harmful.

In relation to harm, we will consider whether the material, either on its own, or in combination with other content of a similar nature, may cause any harm at the category concerned. This includes not just any harm that may result from the behaviour of potential viewers, but also any moral or societal harm that may be caused by, for example, desensitising a potential viewer to the effects of violence, degrading a potential viewer's sense of empathy, encouraging a dehumanised view of others, encouraging anti-social attitudes, reinforcing unhealthy fantasies, or eroding a sense of moral responsibility. Especially with regard to children, harm may also include impairing social and moral development, distorting a viewer's sense of right and wrong, and limiting their capacity for compassion.

We will not classify material which is in conflict with the criminal law, and we will have regard to whether the material has arisen from the commission of an unlawful act.

We act as a regulator across the United Kingdom. However, the UK does not have a single legal system, and so we take account of the different legal systems that coexist in the UK. Further details about the applicable legislation can be found in the Annexe – legal considerations.

General classification considerations

There are general factors that may influence a classification decision at any level and in connection with any issue. These factors are of particular importance when a work lies on the borderline between two age categories.

Context

We consider the context in which an issue (such as sex, language or violence) is presented within a film or video. In doing this we take account of factors such as the setting of a work (historical, fantasy, realistic, contemporary); the manner of presentation (for example, an aggressive and directed use of bad or discriminatory language may result in a higher classification than a light-hearted and self-referential use of the same term); the apparent intention of the film; the original production date of the work (for example, outdated attitudes might be considered less offensive, and consequently classified at a lower category, in an old, obviously dated, work); the expectations of the likely audience; and any special merits of the work.

Theme

Classification decisions will take into account the theme of a work, but will depend significantly on the treatment of that theme, and especially the sensitivity of its presentation. The most challenging themes (for example, sexual violence, paedophilia and suicide) are unlikely to be appropriate at the lowest levels of classification (U or PG). However, there is no reason in principle why most themes, however difficult, could not be presented in a manner which allows classification at 18 or even, where suitable, at lower levels. Classification decisions are likely to be less restrictive where difficult themes are handled in a reassuring and age appropriate manner, or where there is a positive outcome. Classification decisions are likely to be more restrictive where difficult themes are handled in a manner likely to create or reinforce anxiety.

Tone and impact

The overall tone of a work may also affect the classification decision. While the presentation of specific issues, such as sex and violence, may not be problematic at a particular category, a work with a dark or unsettling tone may receive a higher classification. Other tonal considerations which might have an influence on classification include the extent to which the work presents a despairing view of the world, or the extent to which transgressive or harmful behaviour is condoned or made to appear normal.

We take into account the impact of a work (i.e. how it makes the audience feel), for example the presentation of credible real world scenarios about which viewers, especially younger viewers, are likely to be anxious (e.g. terrorism, abduction, suicide, self-harm). We also take account of audience expectations regarding genre, for example in relation to horror films where threat may be more significant than the level of violence, or in the case of action films, where viewers are likely to have certain expectations regarding the type of highly choreographed and unrealistic violence they are likely to contain.

Where multiple classification issues are present in the same work, this may produce a cumulative impact that makes a higher classification more appropriate.

Specific classification considerations

This section of the Guidelines identifies concerns which apply, to a greater or a lesser degree, at all classification levels, and sets out the general approach that we take. The concerns are listed in alphabetical order.

Pages 18 to 28 of the Guidelines provide specific guidance for U through to R18 with regard to such concerns. This should be read together with the General classification considerations.

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Dangerous behaviour

Classification decisions will take into account any detailed portrayal of criminal and violent techniques, and glamorisation of easily accessible weapons, such as knives. Works which portray anti-social behaviour (for example, bullying) uncritically are likely to receive a higher classification. Works which, taken as a whole, actively promote illegal behaviour may be cut or refused a classification.

Portrayals of potentially dangerous behaviour (especially relating to suicide, self-harm and asphyxiation) which children and young people may potentially copy, will be cut if a higher classification is not appropriate. The relative ease and likelihood of imitation are also considered.

Classification decisions may be less restrictive where the risks of any dangerous behaviour are likely to be obvious to the intended audience, or where material is intended to educate younger viewers about dangers. Classification decisions will be more restrictive where novel information is presented (for example, about specific suicide techniques), where harmful behaviour is glamorised, or where risks are not made clear.

Discrimination

Potentially offensive content relating to matters such as race, gender, religion, disability or sexuality may arise in a wide range of works, and the classification decision will take account of the strength or impact of their inclusion. The context in which such content may appear also has a bearing. Works with such content may receive a lower category where discriminatory language and behaviour is implicitly or explicitly criticised; or the work has a historical setting within which outdated attitudes or outmoded expressions would be expected; or the work is obviously dated, with little or no appeal to children; or the work seeks to challenge discriminatory attitudes and assumptions. Works with such content may receive a higher category where discriminatory language and behaviour is accompanied by threat or violence; or where there is a clear power imbalance; or where such behaviour is left unchallenged; or where discriminatory attitudes and assumptions are normalised. Where discriminatory language or behaviour occurs, this will normally be indicated in ratings info.

Drugs

No work taken as a whole may promote the misuse of drugs and any detailed portrayal of drug misuse likely to promote the activity may be cut. Works which normalise or glamorise drug misuse are likely to receive a higher classification than works which show drug misuse while emphasising the dangers.

Where smoking, alcohol abuse or substance misuse feature to a significant extent in works which appeal to children, this will normally be indicated in ratings info. Classification decisions will also take into account any promotion or glamorisation of such activities.

Language

Language which people may find offensive includes the use of expletives with a sexual, religious or racial association, derogatory language about minority groups and commonly understood rude gestures. The extent of offence may vary according to age, gender, race, background, beliefs and expectations brought by viewers to the work as well as the context in which the word, expression or gesture is used.

For these reasons, it is impossible to set out comprehensive lists of words, expressions or gestures which are acceptable at each category. The advice at different classification levels, therefore, provides general guidance taking account of the views expressed in public consultation exercises.

Nudity

Nudity with no sexual context is in principle acceptable at all classification levels, but will not generally occur more than occasionally at U.

Nudity with a sexual context will receive a higher classification. Where the principal purpose of depicting nudity is to sexually arouse it will usually only be passed at the adult categories (18 or R18).

Sex

The portrayal of sexual activity can range from kissing to detail of unsimulated sex. The normalisation of overtly sexualised behaviour is a concern at the junior categories (U, PG and 12A/12). The classification system allows progressively stronger portrayals of sexual behaviour as the categories rise.

Sex works (works whose primary purpose is sexual arousal or stimulation) will only be passed at 18 or R18.

We will apply these Guidelines in relation to sex to the same standard regardless of sexual orientation of the activity portrayed.

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Sexual violence and sexual threat

Depictions of the stronger forms of sexual violence, including rape, are not permitted at the junior categories.

When considering scenes of sexual violence, aggravating factors include:

- the presence of a gang dynamic (e.g. a 'gang rape' scene)
- a focus on the victim being overpowered or powerless
- prolonged, detailed or gratuitous depiction
- an emphasis on nudity
- an emphasis on the pleasure of the attacker
- a strong emphasis on the distress and fear of the victim
- a credible 'real world' setting
- a protracted build-up of sexual threat

Mitigating factors include:

- brevity and lack of detail
- a clear educational message aimed at young people
- a strong narrative justification

We may refuse to classify content which makes rape or other non-consensual sexually violent behaviour look appealing or acceptable, reinforces the suggestion that victims enjoy such behaviour, or invites viewer complicity in such behaviour.

References to sexual violence are likely to be treated less restrictively than depictions of sexual violence, although any references at the junior categories will generally be oblique or undetailed.

Sexual threat and abusive behaviour are not permitted at the lowest levels of classification and will only be permitted at 12A/12 if brief and negatively presented.

Threat and horror

Where films are targeted at a younger audience, classification decisions will take into account factors such as the frequency, length and detail of scary or otherwise unsettling scenes as well as factors such as the impact of music and sound, and whether there is a swift and reassuring outcome.

The classification of threat and horror will take account of the general tone, impact, realism and supernatural elements of a work as well as the level of detail in individual scenes. Fantasy settings or the inclusion of humour may be mitigating factors. The presentation of 'real world' issues and fears may be an aggravating factor.

Violence

Classification decisions will take account of the degree and nature of violence in a work.

Works which feature the following are likely to receive a more restrictive classification:

- portrayal of violence as a normal solution to problems
- heroes who inflict pain and injury
- callousness towards victims
- the encouragement of aggressive attitudes
- characters taking pleasure in pain or humiliation
- the glorification or glamorisation of violence
- gratuitous violence
- violence presented in a credible and realistic context (e.g. gang violence, domestic violence)

Works which feature the following are likely to be treated less restrictively:

- violence in a historical context
- violence in an action or fantasy context
- violence that lacks detail
- violence that looks unreal, fake or overly staged
- comic violence
- violence that is challenged or punished
- violence in a context where it is likely to be expected by the intended audience

We are unlikely to classify content which is so demeaning or degrading to human dignity (for example, it consists of strong abuse, torture or death without any significant mitigating factors) that it may pose a harm risk.

Other matters

Education videos
When classifying an education video, including a sex education video, for use in schools, we will take account of the educational purpose of the video and the context in which it is to be viewed (for example in the classroom mediated by a teacher).

Music videos
In addition to the usual issues, the classification of a music video will take account of any elements which are of particular concern to parents, including glamorisation of behaviour which they consider inappropriate such as drug misuse or sexualised behaviour. Where music videos are short and self-contained, material may be less likely to be justified by context.

Photo or pattern sensitivity, motion sickness and reactions to low frequency sound
A small number of viewers are sensitive to flashing and flickering light, or some shapes and patterns, and may experience seizures or other serious physical effects. Some viewers experience feelings of motion sickness or other symptoms when viewing works which feature hand held or otherwise moving camerawork, or which feature very low frequency sounds.

It is the responsibility of film makers and distributors to identify works in which such issues arise and to ensure that, when required, appropriate warnings are given to viewers. However, if it is obvious during viewing that the work contains strong examples of such imagery or sounds, we will advise the distributor of the need to ensure that appropriate warnings are in place. Where necessary, we may require assurances regarding the display of appropriate warnings as a condition of classification.

Release format
Classification decisions may be stricter on video works than on film. This is because of the increased possibility of under-age viewing as recognised in the Video Recordings Act (see Annexe), as well as the increased possibility of works being replayed or sections viewed out of context. Accordingly, a video work (either packaged or online) may occasionally receive a higher classification than on film, or require new or different cuts. (Video works may also receive a higher classification because they contain additional content.)

The screen format or visual presentation of a submission may also alter a classification, for example, if the image has been processed in the 3D format, or is shown with an altered aspect ratio such as on an IMAX screen, or if the work is experienced as a piece of immersive linear VR (virtual reality).

Titles
We will require changes as a condition of classification if the title of a work incites racial or religious hatred, or other criminal behaviour, or encourages an interest in abusive or illegal sexual activity.

If the title of a work is likely to cause significant offence to a significant number of people if displayed in a public place, we will advise the distributor to consider carefully the places in which it is likely to be seen and to take appropriate action, for example, by obscuring certain words on packaging or marketing materials. (This advice is not given in relation to video works classified R18 as such works may only be supplied or offered for supply in a licensed sex shop.)

Trailers and advertisements
Audiences may choose to see a full-length feature based on expectations of the particular genre at the given classification and on the published ratings info. In contrast, audiences have no choice, and often no expectation, about the accompanying trailers or advertisements which may be very different in tone and content to the film the audience has chosen to view. In addition, because trailers and advertisements are short and self-contained, material is less likely to be justified by context and more likely to cause offence.

For these reasons, classification decisions for trailers and advertisements may be more restrictive than for equivalent material in a main feature. Strong language will not be allowed in trailers at the U, PG and 12A/12 categories. Strong language may be permitted in trailers at 15, unless significantly aggravated by other factors. Infrequent very strong language may be permitted in trailers at 15 but usually only where there are mitigating factors such as a comic context.

The more restrictive approach set out above may be relaxed where an advertisement is part of a public information campaign or has a charitable purpose.

Cinemas are responsible for the exhibition of cinema trailers and advertisements, and we have no involvement in deciding which films they precede. Questions or complaints about the exhibition of trailers or advertisements should be directed to the cinema management in the first instance.

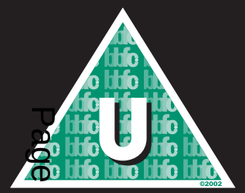
Video games
With a few limited exceptions we do not classify video games. We consider for classification those video games contained on discs which feature primarily linear video content and any pornographic video games.

We also advise the video games authority on the classification of linear video footage contained in games which is not integral to the game. This includes, for example, rewards and video content in games which is designed to be viewed in its own right, without taking forward the narrative drive of the game.

Virtual reality
The BBFC is responsible for classifying linear VR (virtual reality) content whereas the video games authority is responsible for classifying non-linear VR content.

The classification categories

We endeavour to classify submitted works in one of the following categories:



The following pages set out guidance on how the specific classification considerations (for example, sex and violence) are applied from U through to R18. The criteria should be read in combination with the general approach set out earlier under 'Guiding principles', 'General classification considerations' and 'Specific classification considerations'.

Because works from time to time present issues in ways which cannot be anticipated, these criteria will not be applied in an over-literal way if such an interpretation would lead to an outcome which would confound audience expectations.

Universal

Suitable for all

A U film should be suitable for audiences aged four years and over, although it is impossible to predict what might upset any particular child. U films should be set within a positive framework and should offer reassuring counterbalances to any violence, threat or horror.

Dangerous behaviour
Potentially dangerous or anti-social behaviour which young children may copy must be clearly disapproved of or be presented unrealistically. No emphasis on realistic or easily accessible weapons.

Discrimination
Discriminatory language or behaviour is unlikely to be acceptable unless clearly disapproved of.

Drugs
References to illegal drugs or drug misuse must be infrequent and innocuous, or have a clear educational purpose or anti-drug message suitable for young children.

Language
Infrequent use only of very mild bad language.

Nudity
Occasional nudity, with no sexual context.

Sex
Only very mild sexual behaviour (for example, kissing) and references to such behaviour.

Threat and horror
Scary or potentially unsettling sequences should be mild, brief and unlikely to cause undue anxiety to young children. The outcome should be reassuring.

Violence
Violence will generally be very mild. Mild violence may be acceptable if it is justified by context (for example, comedic, animated, wholly unrealistic).

Parental Guidance

General viewing, but some scenes may be unsuitable for young children

A PG film should not unsettle a child aged around eight or older. Unaccompanied children of any age may watch, but parents are advised to consider whether the content may upset younger or more sensitive children.

Dangerous behaviour
No detail of potentially dangerous behaviour which young children are likely to copy, if that behaviour is presented as safe or fun. No glamorisation of realistic or easily accessible weapons such as knives. No focus on anti-social behaviour which young children are likely to copy.

Discrimination
Discriminatory language or behaviour is unlikely to be acceptable unless clearly disapproved of, in an educational or historical context, or in a particularly dated work with no likely appeal to children. Discrimination by a character with whom children can readily identify is unlikely to be acceptable.

Drugs
References to illegal drugs or drug misuse must be innocuous or carry a suitable anti-drug message.

Language
Mild bad language only. Aggressive or very frequent use of mild bad language may result in a work being passed at a higher category.

Nudity
There may be nudity with no sexual context.

Sex
Sexual activity may be implied, but should be discreet and infrequent. Mild sex references and innuendo only.

Threat and horror
Frightening sequences or situations where characters are in danger should not be prolonged or intense. Fantasy settings and comedy may be mitigating factors.

Violence
Violence will usually be mild. However, there may be moderate violence, without detail, if justified by its context (for example, history, comedy or fantasy).

12A/12

Suitable for 12 years and over

Films classified 12A and video works classified 12 contain material that is not generally suitable for children aged under 12.

No one younger than 12 may see a 12A film in a cinema unless accompanied by an adult. Adults planning to take a child under 12 to view a 12A film should consider whether the film is suitable for that child. To help them decide, we recommend that they check the ratings info for that film in advance.

No one younger than 12 may rent or buy a 12 rated video work.

Dangerous behaviour
No promotion of potentially dangerous behaviour which children are likely to copy. No glamorisation of realistic or easily accessible weapons such as knives. No endorsement of anti-social behaviour.

Discrimination
Discriminatory language or behaviour must not be endorsed by the work as a whole. Aggressive discriminatory language or behaviour is unlikely to be acceptable unless clearly condemned.

Drugs
Misuse of drugs must be infrequent and should not be glamorised or give detailed instruction.

Language
There may be moderate bad language. Strong language may be permitted, depending on the manner in which it is used, who is using the language, its frequency within the work as a whole and any special contextual justification.

Nudity
There may be nudity, but in a sexual context it must be brief and discreet.

Sex
Sexual activity may be briefly and discreetly portrayed. Moderate sex references are permitted, but frequent crude references are unlikely to be acceptable.

Sexual violence and sexual threat
There may be verbal references to sexual violence provided they are not graphic. The stronger forms of sexual violence, including rape, may only be implied and any sexual threat or abusive behaviour must be brief and negatively presented.

Threat and horror
There may be moderate physical and psychological threat and horror sequences. Although some scenes may be disturbing, the overall tone should not be. Horror sequences should not be frequent or sustained.

Violence
There may be moderate violence but it should not dwell on detail. There should be no emphasis on injuries or blood, but occasional gory moments may be permitted if justified by the context.

15

Suitable only for 15 years and over

No one younger than 15 may see a 15 film in a cinema.
No one younger than 15 may rent or buy a 15 rated video work.

Dangerous behaviour
Dangerous behaviour (for example, suicide, self-harming and asphyxiation) should not dwell on detail which could be copied. Whether the depiction of easily accessible weapons is acceptable will depend on factors such as realism, context and setting.

Discrimination
The work as a whole must not endorse discriminatory language or behaviour, although there may be racist, homophobic or other discriminatory themes and language.

Drugs
Drug taking may be shown but the work as a whole must not promote or encourage drug misuse (for example, through detailed instruction). The misuse of easily accessible and highly dangerous substances (for example, aerosols or solvents) is unlikely to be acceptable.

Language
There may be strong language. Very strong language may be permitted, depending on the manner in which it is used, who is using the language, its frequency within the work as a whole and any special contextual justification.

Nudity
There are no constraints on nudity in a non-sexual or educational context. Sexual nudity may be permitted but strong detail is likely to be brief or presented in a comic context.

Sex
Sexual activity may be portrayed, but usually without strong detail. There may be strong verbal references to sexual behaviour. Repeated very strong references, particularly those using pornographic language, are unlikely to be acceptable. Works whose primary purpose is sexual arousal are unacceptable.

Sexual violence and sexual threat
There may be strong verbal references to sexual violence but any depiction of the stronger forms of sexual violence, including rape, must not be detailed or prolonged. A strong and sustained focus on sexual threat is unacceptable.

Threat and horror
There may be strong threat and horror. A sustained focus on sadistic threat is unlikely to be acceptable.

Violence
Violence may be strong but should not dwell on the infliction of pain or injury. The strongest gory images are unlikely to be acceptable. Strong sadistic violence is also unlikely to be acceptable.

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18

Suitable only for adults

No one younger than 18 may see an 18 film in a cinema.
No one younger than 18 may rent or buy an 18 rated video work.

Adults should be free to choose their own entertainment. Exceptions are most likely in the following areas:

- where the material is in breach of the criminal law, or has been created through the commission of a criminal offence
- where material or treatment appears to us to risk harm to individuals or, through their behaviour, to society. For example, the detailed portrayal of violent or dangerous acts, or of illegal drug use, which may cause harm to public health or morals. This may include portrayals of sadistic violence, rape or other non-consensual sexually violent behaviour which make this violence look appealing; reinforce the suggestion that victims enjoy rape or other non-consensual sexually violent behaviour; or which invite viewer complicity in rape, other non-consensual sexually violent behaviour or other harmful violent activities
- where there are more explicit images of sexual activity in the context of a sex work (see right)

In the case of video works, which may be more accessible to younger viewers, intervention may be more frequent than for cinema films.

Sex works at 18
Sex works are works whose primary purpose is sexual arousal or stimulation. Sex works containing only material which may be simulated are generally passed 18. Sex works containing clear images of real sex, strong fetish material, sexually explicit animated images, or other very strong sexual images will be confined to the R18 category. Material which is unacceptable in a sex work at R18 is also unacceptable in a sex work at 18.

R18

To be shown only in specially licensed cinemas, or supplied only in licensed sex shops, and to adults only

The R18 category is a special and legally-restricted classification primarily for explicit works of consenting sex or strong fetish material involving adults. Films may only be shown to adults in specially licensed cinemas, and video works may be supplied to adults only in licensed sex shops. R18 video works may not be supplied by mail order.

The following content is not acceptable:

- material which is in breach of the criminal law, including material judged to be obscene under the current interpretation of the Obscene Publications Act 1959 (see Annexe – legal considerations)
- material (including dialogue) likely to encourage an interest in sexually abusive activity which may include adults role-playing as non-adults
- the portrayal of sexual activity which involves real or apparent lack of consent. Any form of physical restraint which prevents participants from indicating a withdrawal of consent
- the infliction of pain or acts which are likely to cause serious physical harm, whether real or (in a sexual context) simulated. Some allowance may be made for non-abusive, consensual activity
- penetration by any object likely to cause physical harm
- sexual threats, humiliation or abuse which do not form part of a clearly consenting role-playing game

Intervention

Where possible we will carry out our responsibilities through appropriate use of the classification categories, particularly in order to protect children from any potential harm.

If necessary, however, we may cut or even refuse to classify a film or video work.

In some cases, we require assurances, cuts or other changes (for example, the addition of warning captions) as a condition of classification, or as a condition of classifying at a particular category. In some circumstances we may refuse to classify a work at any category. We publish details of all interventions on our website.

Cuts for category

If the submitted work is suitable for classification, but only at a category higher than that requested by the customer, we will consider whether a lower category could be achieved through relatively minor or simple changes. If so, we may offer the customer a choice of accepting either the higher or lower category (the latter with defined changes as necessary).

Cuts for category are unlikely to be available if the required changes would be very extensive or complex, or would not address for example, a tonal or thematic issue running throughout the work.

Compulsory cuts

If a submitted work raises issues or concerns that cannot be addressed by classification at a particular age category, we may require cuts or other changes as a condition of classification. Such intervention is most likely when the submitted work contains:

- material which may promote criminal activity
- material which is obscene or otherwise illegal
- material created by means of the commission of a criminal offence
- portrayals of children in a sexualised or abusive context
- material which makes rape, other non-consensual sexually violent behaviour, or sadistic violence look appealing
- graphic images of real injury, violence or death presented in a salacious or sensationalist manner which risks harm by encouraging callous or sadistic attitudes
- material which reinforces the suggestion that victims enjoy rape or other non-consensual sexually violent behaviour
- material which invites viewer complicity in rape, other non-consensual sexually violent behaviour, or other harmful violent activities
- sex works which contain material listed as unacceptable at R18

When the issue relates to the circumstances of filming (for example, in relation to animal cruelty or public indecency) the customer will normally be given an opportunity to present evidence before a final decision is reached.

Refusal to classify

As a last resort, the BBFC may refuse to classify a work, in line with the objective of preventing non-trivial harm risks to potential viewers and, through their behaviour, to society. We may do so, for example, where a central concept of the work is unacceptable, such as a sustained focus on rape, other non-consensual sexually violent behaviour or sadistic violence. Before refusing classification we will consider whether the problems could be adequately addressed through intervention such as cuts. In deciding whether to refuse to classify, we will keep in mind the inherent difficulty of using behavioural research to draw conclusions about real world risks, and will have regard to the full range of available evidence, including the views of the public and our own knowledge and experience.

Engagement with the public

We publish detailed information about the content we classify, which we call ratings info. It's a helpful guide, particularly for parents, that gives a summary of how and why a film or video was given its age rating.

Ratings info includes:

- a short description of the issues contained in a film or video, and this appears on the black card shown on the cinema screen before a film starts, for example:

strong violence, sex, language, drug misuse

- we publish a longer, fuller version on our website and app

All content classified since the early 2000s has a short line of ratings info, and content classified more recently also has a longer version, giving you a detailed idea of what issues – bad language, drugs, sex and violence, or the use of discriminatory language or behaviour, for instance – you're likely to find in the film. It also raises any other issues that may be of concern, such as divorce or bereavement.

We try to avoid giving away major plot points. When ratings info does contain plot spoilers we always post a warning. Occasionally, the longer version of ratings info describes full sequences in a film – for example, it might describe a specific fight scene to give you a flavour of the sort of violence in the film and how strong it looks and feels – so be aware of this.

We publish ratings info the moment a film or video is classified, but the longer version may not be available until 10 days before the film opens. Sometimes, we classify films many weeks or even months before they are due to open, which is why not all films listed on our website will have a link to the longer ratings info yet. We encourage viewers to check ratings info when they are choosing content for children and for themselves.

bbfc.co.uk
Our website provides a comprehensive database of all the content we classify, including ratings info and information about cuts. You can read the Classification Guidelines, search through our press releases, research and Annual Reports. We also publish case studies on films, including many set film texts for Film Studies courses in the UK, a timeline of key events in our history and regular podcasts.

cbbfc.co.uk
Content for younger children, including the chance to rate trailers for children's films and learn more about our work, can be found on CBBFC, our website for children. Parents can also find advice about choosing content for children on VoD platforms and information about our education programme.

BBFC app
Our free app for iOS and Android devices lets you check the latest film classifications and ratings info, watch trailers and read our Guidelines.

Twitter – @BBFC
We update our Twitter account, @BBFC, with all our news and latest film classification decisions. You can ask us quick questions there too. For more detailed questions, you can email us on feedback@bbfc.co.uk

Newsletters
We produce a regular newsletter about our latest classification decisions, podcasts and news. Our education team sends a newsletter to teachers once a term, focussing on our outreach programme, partnerships and resources, including case studies. For industry we send a regular update on our services, news and classification turnaround times each quarter. You can sign up to receive any of these newsletters on our website, bbfc.co.uk

Podcasts
You can stream and download our regular short podcast on our website, Soundcloud and iTunes. Each episode focuses on a particular theme, film or TV series, and their age rating, highlighting key issues we took into account and any interesting facts about the classification process, for example any advice we gave, or reductions made by the film maker or distributor to secure a particular age rating.

Appeals, advice viewings and feedback

Appeals

We offer a formal reconsideration procedure which is open to any customer dissatisfied with the determination made in respect of their work. The reconsideration is free of charge and will normally take fewer than 10 working days.

A customer may also appeal directly to an independent authority. Such an appeal may take place following, or instead of, our reconsideration. In the case of films, the customer (or any member of the public) may address itself to the local authority which licenses cinemas in a particular area. In the case of video works a customer may appeal to the Video Appeals Committee. The VAC is independent of the BBFC and can be contacted by post as follows:

The Secretary
The Video Appeals Committee
3 Soho Square
London
W1D 3HD

Customers should note that a reconsideration or an appeal involves looking at the issues afresh. This means that the outcome could, in some circumstances, be more restrictive than the original determination.

Advice viewings

A customer may submit works for advice at any stage of the production process. We will inform them of the likely classification a work will receive, and where appropriate any changes required to achieve the customer's preferred classification. However, advice given in such circumstances is not binding and we reserve the right to reach a different decision when the final version of the work is submitted formally for classification. If the final version of the work submitted for classification differs in any significant respect from that seen for advice, and if those changes appear to reflect advice we have given, then details of the changes will appear on our website.

Feedback

If you want to send us any feedback about our age ratings or classification decisions, please don't hesitate to email us at feedback@bbfc.co.uk or write to us at:

Chief Executive's Office
BBFC
3 Soho Square
London
W1D 3HD

Annexe – legal considerations

The following legislation is not listed according to chronology or importance. Instead, it reflects a useful way of explaining the structure of the legal framework that applies to our work.

The Licensing Act 2003
England and Wales
Cinemas (Northern Ireland) Order 1991
Northern Ireland
Cinemas Act 1985
Scotland

Cinemas require a licence from the local authority in which they operate. The licence must include a condition requiring the admission of children (anyone under 18) to any film to be restricted in accordance with our recommendations or those of the licensing authority. One of the key reasons for the licensing requirement is the protection of children, including from potentially harmful content in films.

The Video Recordings Act 1984
Video works (including films, TV programmes and some video games) which are supplied on a disc, tape or any other device capable of storing data electronically must have a BBFC classification unless they fall within the definition of an exempted work.

When considering whether to award a certificate to a work, or whether a work is suitable at a particular category, we are required by the Act to have special regard to the likelihood of works being viewed in the home, and to any harm that may be caused to potential viewers or, through their behaviour, to society by the manner in which the work deals with:

- criminal behaviour
- illegal drugs
- violent behaviour or incidents
- horrific behaviour or incidents
- human sexual activity

In considering these issues we have in mind the possible effect not only on children but also on other vulnerable people.

The Obscene Publications Acts 1959 & 1964
England and Wales
The Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982
Scotland
The Obscene Publications Act 1857
Northern Ireland

It is illegal to publish a work which is obscene. A work is obscene if, taken as a whole, it has a tendency to deprave and corrupt a significant proportion of those likely to see it. Under the Obscene Publications Act 1959, no offence is committed if publication is justified as being for the public good on the grounds that it is in the interests of science, art, literature or learning or other objects of general concern.

In Scotland, case law implies a similar test would be applied. In Northern Ireland, while there is no express defence of "public good" it is likely that English law would be taken into consideration.

Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008
England, Wales and Northern Ireland
Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2010/Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982
Scotland

It is illegal to be in possession of an extreme pornographic image. Under the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 an extreme pornographic image is one which is pornographic and grossly offensive, disgusting or otherwise of an obscene character, which features an apparently real person, and which portrays, in an explicit and realistic way, an act which:

- threatens a person's life
- results, or is likely to result, in serious injury to a person's anus, breasts or genitals
- involves sexual interference with a human corpse
- involves intercourse or oral sex with an animal
- involves non-consensual penetration of a mouth, vagina or anus with a penis or non-consensual sexual penetration of a vagina or anus by anything

Under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 an extreme pornographic image is one which is pornographic and obscene, and which depicts in an explicit and realistic way, an act which:

- takes or threatens a person's life
- results, or is likely to result, in a person's severe injury
- involves rape or other non-consensual penetrative sexual activity
- involves sexual activity involving (directly or indirectly) a human corpse
- involves sexual activity between a person and an animal

Works we classify under the Video Recordings Act are excluded from the scope of the offence across the UK.

The Protection of Children Act 1978
England and Wales
Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982
Scotland
Protection of Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1978
Northern Ireland

It is illegal to make, distribute, show or possess indecent photographs or pseudo-photographs of a child. It is also illegal to make, distribute, show or possess indecent images of children which have been derived from a photograph or pseudo-photograph (for example, by tracing). Offences relating to the possession of such images are contained within the Criminal Justice Act 1988 (England, Wales and Scotland), and the Criminal Justice (Evidence, Etc.) (Northern Ireland) Order 1988. A child is defined as a person under the age of 18.

The Coroners and Justice Act 2009
England, Wales and Northern Ireland
The Criminal Justice and Licensing Act 2010
Scotland

It is illegal to be in possession of a prohibited image of a child. A prohibited image of a child is a non-photographic or non-pseudo-photographic image which is pornographic and grossly offensive, disgusting, or otherwise of an obscene character, and which focuses solely or principally on a child's genitals or anal region, or which portrays specified sexual acts by, of, or in the presence of a child, including masturbation, oral sex or penetration, including sexual acts with animals. A child is defined as being under 18 and an image of a child or other person can include imaginary representations. Works we classify under the Video Recordings Act are excluded from the scope of the offence unless images have been extracted from such works for the purpose of sexual arousal.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003
England and Wales
Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009
Scotland
The Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008
Northern Ireland

It is illegal to expose oneself with intent to cause alarm or distress – this offence augments the common law misdemeanour of indecent exposure. It is also prohibited for a person to record the private act of another, where the intention of the recording is for the sexual gratification of himself or a third party and where the recorded party has not consented to so being filmed.

The Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015
England and Wales
Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Act 2016
Scotland
Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2016
Northern Ireland

It is an offence to disclose a private sexual photograph or film without the consent of any individual who appears in the photograph or film, if it is done with the intention of causing that individual distress (or causing them fear, alarm or distress in Scottish law).

The Public Order Act 1986
England, Scotland and Wales
The Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987
Northern Ireland

It is illegal to distribute, show or play to the public a recording of visual images or sounds which are threatening, abusive or insulting if the intention is to stir up racial hatred or hatred on the grounds of sexual orientation, or if racial hatred or hatred on the grounds of sexual orientation is likely to be stirred up. It is also illegal to distribute, show or play to the public a recording of visual images or sounds which are threatening if the intention is to stir up religious hatred.

In Northern Ireland the relevant group of persons may be defined not only by colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins, but also by "religious belief" or "sexual orientation" or "disability".

The Cinematograph Films (Animals) Act 1937
England, Scotland and Wales

It is illegal to show any scene "organised or directed" for the purposes of the film that involves actual cruelty to animals. This Act applies to the exhibition of films in public cinemas but we also apply the same test to video works. For the purposes of this legislation and The Animal Welfare Act 2006, only vertebrates which are domesticated or otherwise under the control of man are defined as "animals".

The Animal Welfare Act 2006
England and Wales
The Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011
Northern Ireland
The Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006
Scotland

It is illegal to supply, publish, show or possess with intent to supply a video recording of an "animal fight" that has taken place within the UK since 6 April 2007.

The Tobacco Advertising and Promotion Act 2002
It is illegal, in the course of a business, to publish a tobacco advertisement.

Blasphemy
In Scotland and Northern Ireland, the common law crime of blasphemy exists but has not been utilised for prosecution in modern times. The offences of blasphemy and blasphemous libel under the common law of England and Wales were abolished in The Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008.

Human Rights Act 1998
The Act permits such restrictions on freedom of expression as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.

The Digital Economy Act 2017
Under Part 3 of the Act it is unlawful to make pornographic material available on the internet to persons in the United Kingdom, on a commercial basis, other than in a way that secures that, at any given time, the material is not normally accessible by persons under the age of 18. The BBFC is the designated age-verification regulator under Part 3 of the Act. The BBFC may take enforcement action against non-compliant pornographic services and/or where a service makes extreme pornographic material, as defined by the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008, available on the internet to persons in the United Kingdom.

Other unlawful material
In carrying out its responsibilities the BBFC will have regard to whether the material itself appears to be unlawful in the United Kingdom, or has arisen from the commission of an unlawful act.

Get more info on our app
bbfc.co.uk/app

British Board of Film Classification
3 Soho Square,
London,
W1D 3HD

T 020 7440 1570

bbfc.co.uk/about-bbfc/contact-us

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Many thanks for your swift reply and I hope you are keeping well too.

I have reviewed the report from last year and it is broadly representative of this year's circumstances, as the annual event format remains the same every year.

In relation to the particulars of the event proposed last year, the following assertions still apply to this year's showcase, which is currently scheduled to take place in Cineworld on Thursday 26th November 2026:

- *No films will have received classification from BBFC or equivalent body*
- *Films to be broadcast are 'the top three films in six competitive categories'; the unclassified films will therefore have been viewed by the supervising teacher at the school in which the pupil attended, and, the examination board which assessed the submission prior to grading for the purposes of GCSE / A Level award*
- *With the assumption that schools have viewed the exhibitions to be broadcast, schools or CCEA will therefore be in a position to provide the Service written confirmation, for example, that films have been viewed and would be considered to fall within the BBFC classification description of a 12a rated film;*
    - *British Board of Film Classification – 12a rating link* BBFC | BBFC
- *Children who will be in attendance at the exhibitions will be accompanied by teachers, who fulfill the requirement for a supervising adult to be present, as detailed by the BBFC description*

I can now confirm that following our judging process, the final showcase films have been selected and confirmed by the judging panel.

As was the case last year, we do not foresee any issues with appropriateness of content and would regard all films selected as representative of a 12A BBFC rating.

I can also confirm again that the youngest students in attendance are generally in Year 12 (not 11). This means that they would most likely fall into the 15/16 age bracket in any case.
All students will be under the supervision of their teachers when attending (they all tend to arrive in larger school groups) and in the case of some students, their parents will also attend in person.

Please let me know if you need any more information from me to progress this further and thanks again for your support with this matter.

Kind Regards

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