

12 December 2023

Louise McLornan

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

Dear Mrs. McLornan,

Thank you for your letter of 10 November 2023 regarding Belfast City Council's request that the BBFC consider adopting a new 15A classification for films. It was my pleasure to participate in the Council's Licensing Committee meeting on 18 October and thank you again for the invitation to do so.

To introduce a new age rating for cinema films would require the support of licensing officers, film distributors, cinema exhibitors, the UK government and the general public. This was the case in 2002 when the BBFC replaced the 12 cinema rating with a new 12A rating.

To date, we know of no widely expressed support for a 15A. When Belfast City Council agreed in 2022 to permit *The Batman* to be shown as a 15A in Belfast, we were interested to see if this would become more common across the UK. Since then, the only request for a 15A that we are aware of is the request Belfast City Council received in October 2023 regarding *Five Nights at Freddy's*.

After the decision regarding *The Batman*, we decided to carry out research to gauge the appetite for a 15A across different groups. We consulted the experts on our Advisory Panel on Children's Viewing, who advise the BBFC on matters related to child development and welfare. The Panel were unanimously of the view that the introduction of a 15A would represent a significant child protection risk. We also discussed matters with the industry and have taken account of concerns they have raised with us regarding the prospect of a 15A.

This year, the BBFC has been carrying out its large-scale public consultation on our Classification Guidelines. We conduct this research every 4-5 years, to update our guidelines in line with what UK audiences tell us they want and expect. The quantitative stage of the research included questions regarding under 15s seeing 15-rated films in the cinema. We have concluded the consultation research and will be publishing the findings early next year, and I shall be happy to update you at that time.

I hope this clarifies our position, but if you have any questions about it, please don't hesitate to let me know.



Yours sincerely,



Edward Lamberti
Policy Manager

