

# Ofcom seeks comment on new rules to protect TV and radio participants

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Ofcom has opened a consultation proposing the introduction of new rules to protect people taking part on TV and radio shows. According to the regulator: ‘There has been growing openness and concern in society about mental health and wellbeing in recent years. Ofcom has also seen a steady rise in complaints expressing concern about the welfare and wellbeing of people who take part in programmes’. Katerina Capras, associate at Harbottle & Lewis, recommends that broadcasters review their internal safeguarding policies and codes of conduct in preparation for Ofcom’s decisions regarding the new rules. The closing date in order to respond to the consultation is 23 September 2019.

Ofcom has proposed two new rules to its Broadcasting Code in an effort to better ‘protect the welfare and wellbeing of people taking part in programmes on TV and radio’. They are as follows:

- due care must be taken over the welfare, wellbeing and dignity of participants in programmes
- participants must not be caused unjustified distress or anxiety by taking part in programmes or by the broadcast of those programmes

Capras recommends that, as Ofcom receives feedback in preparation for its final decisions in the winter, ‘broadcasters should be reviewing or putting in place clear internal safeguarding policies and codes of conduct (covering the whole lifecycle of a show) to ensure that adequate measures are being taken to protect the welfare and wellbeing of participants’.

She also notes that the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport’s inquiry ‘into reality TV is still ongoing, which is considering production companies’ duty of care to participants’. Consequently, the ‘outcome of the inquiry should provide more clarity on how responsibility for the welfare of those involved in reality TV will be allocated between production companies and broadcasters’.

Responses to the consultation can be sent using the following [word document](#).

The consultation document can be found [here](#).

Source: [New rules to protect people in TV and radio shows](#)

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