

I am writing in response to Ofcom's consultation on its review of regional TV production and programming guidance. I am disappointed that on-screen talent is excluded from the criteria for a production to qualify as regional (which includes those badged as produced in one of the UK's nations) and am writing to urge Ofcom to include opportunities for on-screen talent in its revised guidance and explanatory notes for public service broadcasters on regional TV production.

While Ofcom recognises on-screen talent as an important part of the production industry and the benefits of local casting initiatives, it is disappointing that the only reference in the amended guidance to on-screen talent is that it's exempt from the criteria.

A huge diversity of performing talent resides in the regions, and local castings and auditions give performers in the regions an opportunity to be seen and considered for work near where they live. It also opens up employment opportunities to a broader and more diverse range of talent, including those with caring and parental responsibilities.

The purpose of this regulatory structure is to strengthen regional production centres and creative and cultural economies across the UK, including helping to disperse job opportunities in the sector; actors and performers are a key part of their regional creative economies and are a significant factor in the success of productions. I would also point out that the growth of production centres in cities like Manchester so far has supported an increase in the amount and quality of talent living and looking for work in the city and region but the lack of requirement to cast locally / regionally has not developed the availability of jobs in line with that. Casting and agency companies have developed but could develop much further; the nations and regions have changed significantly since 2010 as regards talent - it is now easier to cast appropriately outside of London. It therefore feels discriminatory that individual talent has to bear the large costs of travelling to London to be seen whereas those based in London don't and that the likelihood of securing those roles is much less for talent based in the nations and regions. If Ofcom is serious about balancing production across the UK, especially that made with public money, it should address this issue properly.

I urge you to include opportunities for on-screen talent in the guidance and explanatory notes on regional production, and look forward to your response to this consultation.