

Channel 4 investigation following Dispatches: Russell Brand – In Plain Sight

Summary of findings and recommendations

1. Introduction

1.1 Following the broadcast of *Dispatches: Russell Brand – In Plain Sight* ('the Programme') on 16 September 2023, Channel 4 commissioned an internal investigation following allegations contained in the Programme relating to Russell Brand's ('RB') behaviour whilst engaged in the production of a number of Channel 4 programmes between 2004 and 2007.

1.2 Terms of reference for the investigation were:

- *To investigate whether Channel 4 was aware of the specific allegations of improper behaviour by Russell Brand while he was engaged in the production of programmes commissioned by Channel 4, as contained within the Programme*
- *To investigate whether Channel 4 was aware of any other allegations or concerns of a similar nature about the conduct of RB*
- *If so, to investigate whether those allegations or concerns were escalated within Channel 4 and to whom, and whether any action was taken*

1.3 The investigation was led by Amali de Silva, Controller of Legal & Compliance, assisted by 2 senior lawyers in the Legal & Compliance team. None of the investigation team had any involvement in making of the Programme. Ethical walls were put in place following broadcast of the Programme to separate those in Channel 4's Commissioning and Legal & Compliance teams involved in the making of the Programme from those involved in undertaking this investigation.

1.4 The individuals interviewed for this investigation, and those who reported concerns via Channel 4's Speak Up process, were spoken to on a confidential basis. As the welfare of all individuals involved is of paramount concern to Channel 4, this summary has therefore been anonymised out of duty of care to them.

2. Methodology

2.1 Document searches of hard paper and electronic documents were carried out with the assistance of a team of reviewers from Channel 4's external lawyers, Reed Smith. A total of 111,984 emails (and associated attachments) and 333 files of archived hard copy documents were reviewed.

2.2 Interviews/communications with relevant current or former Channel 4 employees were carried out. 88 individuals were approached for interviews. 60 agreed to be interviewed, 20 responded via email/voicemail, 6 did not respond and 2 declined. Those who provided information included:

- Current and former chief creative officers and commissioning editors;
- Current and former legal & compliance staff, including former Controllers of Legal & Compliance; and
- Other relevant current and former employees identified during the investigation process.

2.3 Following broadcast of the Programme, Channel 4 received 2 confidential reports via Speak Up relating to RB. These were investigated by Channel 4 in accordance with its regular Speak Up processes for employees and third parties.

3. Summary Findings

3.1 The investigation did not find any evidence to suggest that any Channel 4 staff were aware of the claims contained in the Programme about RB's behaviour while he was engaged in the making of the Channel 4 shows named in the Programme.

3.2 Recollections varied amongst those spoken to as to precisely when the team behind what ultimately became the Programme broadcast in September 2023 started to explore this possible story. Development of the Programme was recorded as being formally commissioned on 3 December 2019.

The investigation team noted varying accounts of whether, at earlier times, there had been awareness at senior levels within the Commissioning department of rumours about serious concerns relating to RB's behaviour.

The investigation team did not find evidence to substantiate the allegation contained in the documentary that RB's behaviour had been discussed at a Commissioning department meeting in 2014, along with discussion of possible measures that might be applied to mitigate his behaviours were he to be engaged by Channel 4..

Two of the people spoken to said they thought serious concerns about RB's behaviour involving sexual misconduct had been in circulation within Commissioning in 2018, around the time RB was engaged to appear in a *Celebrity Bake Off Stand Up To Cancer* ("CBO") special recorded in October 2018 (but not broadcast until March 2019), and that these concerns led them to take the view that RB should not be engaged for shows for which they were responsible.

Neither of the people concerned said that they had knowledge of any specific allegations or sources to substantiate these rumoured concerns.

The investigation team spoke with multiple others who were within Channel 4 at the time, including those directly involved in managing the CBO special, none of whom corroborated the recollections of these two people. Further, no record of the existence of such concerns being noted or shared with other colleagues was found in the searches undertaken.

There was no record or other evidence found of complaints being made either to Channel 4 or in public (or indeed within Channel 4) at the time RB's casting in the CBO special was announced, or after the broadcast of that programme in March 2019.

The investigation team concluded that if it had been the case that there was an awareness of unsubstantiated rumours being in circulation, it did not follow that it was an unreasonable decision to cast RB in the CBO special given the lack of any concrete evidence or sources on the record at that time.

3.3 Following the broadcast of the documentary on 16 September 2023, two new worrying allegations were received by Channel 4. One of these was reported anonymously and with limited information. The complainant claimed that they met a former senior member of Channel 4 commissioning staff, several years after that staff member had departed Channel 4. The complaint alleged that the former Channel 4 staff member said that they had witnessed inappropriate behaviour by RB. The complainant declined to provide any further detail. The investigation team spoke to the former Channel 4 staff member who said they were not aware of any non-

consensual behaviour by RB, and they did not recall seeing anyone upset by the way RB treated them.

The second of the two allegations related to RB's conduct towards a Channel 4 staff member while both parties were working on the production of ancillary content involving Channel 4 in 2009.

The investigation found that the allegation was not passed up the management chain nor investigated as it ought to have been in accordance with procedures in place at the time. C4's Commissioning department was not aware of the incident (the content in question was overseen by a different area within Channel 4).

4. Summary Recommendations

4.1 In the last decade, Channel 4 has implemented a number of measures focused on production-staff welfare and to better enable the reporting of concerns directly to Channel 4 including:

- A formal Speak Up process established in 2016;
- A Supplier Code of Conduct implemented in summer 2018;
- Since July 2020 the mandatory requirement for production companies to publish contact details for Channel 4's Speak Up process (or their own equivalent process) on daily call sheets. This is spot-checked from time to time by Channel 4;
- Ad hoc Commissioning meetings as required to discuss issues such as escalating of concerns and sharing knowledge in this area.

4.2 The investigation team has made a series of recommendations designed to improve the ways in which intelligence about the welfare and safeguarding of production teams and specifically those who may come into direct contact with prominent talent is managed within C4:

- Endorsing the creation of (1) a Code of Behaviour setting out our expectations for standards of behaviour from production staff and on screen talent engaged by producers working with Channel 4, and (2) a handbook for commissioning editors setting out clear guidance on topics including duty of care and working with suppliers. (Both of these were already underway.)
- Reviewing Channel 4's internal processes, including the staff Speak Up process, to ensure that there is always involvement from senior members of the Commissioning team in the handling of concerns raised about talent and/or other production staff, from whichever part of C4's activities they may arise.
- Regular reminders within the Commissioning team and elsewhere of the avenues in place for referring and escalating concerns relating to production staff welfare and to share knowledge on how to deal with such issues.
- Enhancing regular engagement between commissioning staff and production companies to encourage and reiterate the importance of production staff welfare, and open and timely discussion of concerns with Channel 4.
- Continuing to engage in discussions regarding the setting up of CIISA to establish a robust standards framework and an effective and appropriate suite of services which support the creative industries in encouraging good behaviours and addressing the bad.

4.3 It remains a real challenge for single media organisations when they become aware of rumoured concerns, as distinct from specific allegations of incidents of inappropriate

conduct. One potential benefit from the establishment of the proposed Creative Industries Independent Standards Authority (CIISA), is that it may provide a practical means by which media organisations may be in a better position to co-ordinate issues, for example if they arise in multiple places.

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