

Update on BBC Review into Conduct of Russell Brand and call for information

On 19 September 2023 the Director-General announced that I would lead a review into Russell Brand's conduct during his engagement as a broadcaster with the BBC. This work is ongoing but I wanted to provide a summary update on the work undertaken so far, what further steps we are taking and to ask anyone with relevant information to come forward.

The terms of reference for this review are set out at the end of this update. The review is focussed on the BBC's handling of any complaints about the conduct of Russell Brand during his engagements with the BBC, in particular for 6 Music and then Radio 2 (2006-8).

Following recent media reporting, we have undertaken significant work to identify what complaints or allegations were made to the BBC about Russell Brand's conduct. The passage of time means this is not a straightforward task – for example, the BBC did not maintain a centralised record of staff complaints regarding bullying and harassment (including sexual harassment) at the time.

We have established that some complaints and concerns were raised. It would not be appropriate for me to reach any conclusions until I am satisfied all lines of enquiry have been exhausted. In particular, we are concerned to ensure that anyone who has relevant information has the opportunity to speak to us. Therefore I am now sharing my terms of reference and updating on progress to date, I am also encouraging anyone who has information which may be relevant to the terms of reference of this review to come forward and contact us confidentially via bbc.investigation.service@bbc.co.uk.

Progress to date

The nature of the complaints I am investigating to date can broadly be categorised as complaints about alleged conduct related to Russell Brand's BBC engagements including: allegations of inappropriate conduct in the workplace (including urinating in bottles in a BBC studio); alleged inappropriate use of BBC cars; further allegations of conduct in and around the studio falling below the standards expected of someone engaged by the BBC; and, the 2008 allegation in Los Angeles (see below). The majority of these have been reported in the media. I am treating all of these allegations seriously.

Our investigations so far indicate a total of five complaints directly to the BBC: two individuals raised complaints and concerns during 2006-8 and raised these issues again after Russell Brand left the BBC. A separate complaint was made by another individual after Russell Brand had left the BBC in relation to the 2008 allegation in LA. Two further complainants have come forward since the review began. Some others have also come forward to share their observations and to raise general concerns about that period. It is also clear from Audience feedback that there was a wider concern about the tone and content of some of Russell Brand's shows.¹

Since my work began, the BBC has reviewed documentation from multiple sources across the BBC, including HR records, legal records, archived material and editorial compliance and audience logs. We have also already spoken to a significant number of individuals including

¹ During this period audience complaint numbers relating to BBC output featuring Russell Brand were as follows: For 2006, there were 62 complaints. For 2007 there were 317 complaints. For 2008 there were 225 complaints (this excludes any complaints generated by the editorial breach in respect of which Russell Brand left the BBC).

current and former employees and third parties. I am grateful to all those who have shared their experiences with us and thank them for taking the time to do so.

I want to emphasise the importance of understanding how complaints were addressed at the time and whether the BBC's actions were appropriate. Although my work is in no way complete and therefore I cannot yet reach any conclusions, it would appear that no disciplinary action was taken against Russell Brand during his engagement with the BBC in 2006-8 prior to his departure from the BBC.

Audience complaints

We are also reviewing audience complaints and comments from 2006-8. The majority of the complaints over the two year period relate to the general tone, topics and language of the show. These are outside of my terms of reference but as part of the review I will consider whether this in and of itself should have raised alarms within the BBC. There are around 10 audience complaints which do fall within my terms of reference as they raise concerns about on air references to the type of conduct and issues we are currently investigating.

Use of BBC cars and LA allegation

Two of the more widely reported allegations relate to Russell Brand's use of BBC cars during his engagement with the BBC and an incident at BBC premises in Los Angeles in 2008:

Use of BBC cars

In relation to the use of cars, we have heard accounts that Russell Brand did have access to a car or cars provided by third parties for the BBC and that different arrangements were in place at different times during his engagement with the BBC. Due to the passage of time the BBC's records of car bookings are no longer available. This means that we have not been able to identify the precise details of this or any records or details of specific journeys or bookings made for Russell Brand. We have spoken to a number of individuals who either had knowledge of the BBC car arrangements at the time, or who drove vehicles for the BBC at or around the time. No one we have spoken to so far recalls driving Russell Brand at the time. Our investigations are continuing.

LA allegation

In relation to the 2008 Los Angeles allegation, we have established that a complaint was formally reported to the BBC in 2019. We have spoken to a number of individuals, including some who were based in Los Angeles at the time, but the work on this continues. Alongside understanding the extent of any knowledge of that incident within the BBC prior to 2019, I am also looking at what was broadcast at the time.

Call for information

I would like to encourage anyone who has information which may be relevant to the terms of reference of this review to contact us confidentially via bbc.investigation.service@bbc.co.uk.

Because we do not yet know if we have heard from everyone who may want to come forward, it is difficult to provide a timescale at this stage but we hope to provide substantive outcomes in the New Year.

Review Terms of Reference

Russell Brand was engaged as a broadcaster by the BBC between 2006 and 2008, first for 6 Music and subsequently for Radio 2. He also worked intermittently with the BBC outside of that period, including as a contributor in relation to a number of other short-term projects. The objective of the review is to assess:

- (a) any complaints about the conduct of Russell Brand during and in connection with his engagement at the BBC, including whether these were brought to the attention of the BBC at any time, except insofar as the complaint relates solely to broadcast standards; and
- (b) if any complaints were brought to the BBC's attention, what actions were taken at that time as a result and whether such actions were appropriate.

The review will conclude with the production of a report to the Executive Committee and the Board and its findings will be made public.